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► **To cite this version:**

Bardia Shabani. Le rôle des événements et des innovations culturelles dans la construction de l'image d'une destination touristique. Géographie. Université Paul Valéry - Montpellier III, 2022. Français. NNT : 2022MON30014 . tel-03890359

**HAL Id: tel-03890359**

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# THÈSE

Pour obtenir le grade de  
Docteur

Délivré par l'**Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3**

Préparée au sein de l'école doctorale  
**Territoires, Temps, Sociétés et Développement**  
Et de l'unité de recherche  
**Acteurs, ressources et territoires dans le  
développement (UMR 5281)**

Spécialité : **Géographie et aménagement de l'espace**

Label Doctorat Européen

Présentée par **Bardia Shabani**

**The role of cultural events and innovations  
in shaping the destination image**

Soutenue le 18 juillet 2022 devant le jury composé de

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M. José Antonio DONAIRE BENITO, Professeur, Université de Gérone	Président du jury et Rapporteur
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## Résumé court

La croissance rapide de l'industrie du tourisme a créé des défis importants en matière de marketing touristique pour de nombreuses destinations. Les destinations touristiques doivent se concurrencer pour attirer de nouveaux touristes ou persuader les précédents de renouveler leur visite. En conséquence, ils doivent imaginer une image tentante pour leur marché cible. Par conséquent, l'image de la destination est un concept marketing crucial qui joue un rôle central dans la compréhension de la sélection de la destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Comprendre pourquoi les touristes choisissent une destination spécifique parmi plusieurs options et pourquoi ils choisissent une destination particulière, même lorsque les offres semblent identiques, est l'un des domaines les plus importants de l'étude du tourisme aujourd'hui (Khan et al., 1993).

Bien que le terme «image de destination» ait été un domaine d'étude important pour les chercheurs, la nature de l'image d'une destination est restée un peu floue. Cependant, plusieurs études ont illustré l'importance de l'image de la destination et son influence sur le comportement des touristes et leur mécanisme de comportement de voyage pour construire leur projet de visite (Beerli et al., 2007 ; Crompton, 1992 ; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997 ; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002 ; Sirakaya et al., 2001 ; Um, 1998 ; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

Par conséquent, afin d'attirer des visiteurs vers une destination spécifique, les spécialistes du marketing et les experts en tourisme s'efforcent de développer une image favorable qui joue un rôle important dans la prise de décision de voyage des touristes et peut avoir un impact sur leur comportement envers une destination particulière.

La littérature sur le tourisme contient plusieurs études conceptuelles et empiriques qui peuvent être utilisées pour mieux comprendre les processus de sélection des destinations des voyageurs (J. Crompton, 1992 ; Mansfeld, 1992 ; Um & Crompton, 1990 ; A. Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Cette littérature explique également que les processus décisionnels des visiteurs sont influencés par des facteurs rationnels (utilitaires) et psychologiques (symboliques) (Sirakaya et al., 2001).

De nombreuses études antérieures dans le domaine ont montré que les médiateurs

intermédiaires influencent les intentions de visite des touristes potentiels, sont capables de se forger des opinions et de façonner les comportements (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001), et par conséquent, les décisions de visite des gens sont fortement influencées par l'image de la destination. (Alcaniz et al., 2009 ; J. Chen & Hsu, 2000 ; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991 ; Tasci et al., 2007).

A l'origine, Echtner et Ritchie (1991) définissent l'image de la destination touristique comme un ensemble de qualités fonctionnelles (utilitaires) liées au comportement touristique, telles que les infrastructures touristiques, les attractions et la tarification des produits touristiques (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993 ; P. Pearce, 1982). Cependant, de nombreux autres facteurs influents peuvent jouer un rôle important. Cette recherche de doctorat en philosophie (PhD) explore le rôle des événements et des innovations culturelles (telles que la gamification) dans l'amélioration de l'image de la destination touristique en étudiant leurs impacts, car l'image peut affecter directement le choix de la destination touristique (Beerli et al., 2007 ; Crompton, 1992 ; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997 ; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002 ; Sirakaya et al., 2001 ; Um, 1998 ; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

Les événements, en particulier les plus petits, pourraient être considérés comme l'un des outils utilisés en faveur des destinations touristiques lorsqu'elles sont en concurrence avec d'autres. Cependant, une grande partie de l'attention a été concentrée sur des événements à grande échelle ou méga-événements, avec peu de connaissances ou de compréhension des contributions apportées par leurs homologues beaucoup plus petits. Les événements culturels locaux, contrairement aux méga-événements, nécessitent peu d'investissements ou de développement d'infrastructures (Gursoy et al., 2004), ce qui les rend facilement accessibles aux milliers de petites lieux qui cherchent à renforcer leur image.

Les destinations touristiques peuvent retirer une gamme d'avantages des événements. Cependant, jusqu'à récemment, la plupart des études se sont concentrées sur l'impact des méga-événements, en particulier l'impact financier des événements sportifs (Knott et al., 2015 ; C.-K. Lee & Taylor, 2005 ; Preuss, 2007 ; Xing & Chalip, 2006). Bien qu'il y ait eu un intérêt croissant pour différents types d'événements (Bauer et al., 2008), seules quelques études se sont penchées sur l'impact des événements à petite échelle, en particulier les événements culturels (Gursoy et al., 2004).

Ces petits événements sont souvent fortement liés à leur lieu d'accueil, et ils peuvent servir

de base précieuse pour développer des stratégies de marketing de destination (Litvin et al., 2001 ; Olsen, 2010 ; JRB Ritchie, 1984), et s'ils sont bien planifiés et promus correctement, ils peuvent contribuer à changer la perception que les touristes ont de la destination, ce qui se traduit par une augmentation des revenus (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2018 ; Y.-D. Liu, 2014).

Outre les événements, les innovations culturelles dans les destinations touristiques deviennent un nouveau mot à la mode dans les destinations ; la gamification fait partie des tendances qui pourraient aider les destinations dans cette compétition, notamment en ce qui concerne le goût des nouvelles générations (Gen Y et Z). Cependant, comme il s'agit d'un nouveau sujet, peu d'études ont été utilisées pour analyser le résultat de cette tendance et si la gamification peut aider les destinations à améliorer leur image.

L'objectif global de cette thèse est d'offrir des informations solides sur la façon dont les destinations peuvent améliorer leur image et attirer plus de touristes en utilisant des moyens créatifs, dans les dimensions qui viennent d'être évoquées. De plus, les événements culturels et les innovations, populaires dans de nombreux endroits, ont de bons résultats en matière d'économie, de socialisation et de culture et sont considérés comme des outils pratiques. En conséquence, les organisations de marketing de destination (OMD) et les décideurs auront plus d'informations et de connaissances sur ce domaine d'étude et d'arguments pour soutenir leurs processus de prise de décision. Ce domaine spécifique est actuellement sous-étudié et a sa place dans l'étude plus large de l'industrie du tourisme et des impacts des événements.

En conséquence, cette thèse tente d'enrichir la littérature théorique et méthodologique en se concentrant sur la question des événements et des innovations culturelles ; comment peuvent-ils contribuer efficacement à l'amélioration de l'image des destinations et les rendre plus attrayantes ou tentantes pour les touristes ?

## Abstract

The fast growth of the tourism industry has created significant challenges in tourism marketing for many destinations. Destinations need to compete with each other to attract new tourists or persuade the previous ones to repeat their visit. Accordingly, they need to picture a tempting image for their target market. Therefore, the destination image is a crucial marketing concept that plays a pivotal role in understanding destination selection (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Understanding why tourists pick a specific destination from multiple options and why they choose a particular destination, even when the offerings appear identical, is one of the most significant fields in studying tourism today (Khan et al., 1993).

Although the term "destination image" has been a significant area of researchers' study, the nature of destination image studies has been left a little undefined. However, several studies have illustrated the importance of destination image and its influence on tourists' behaviour and their travel behaviour mechanism for making their visiting plan (Beerli et al., 2007; Crompton, 1992; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002; Sirakaya et al., 2001; Um, 1998; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

As a result, in order to attract visitors to a specific destination, marketers and industry experts are working to develop a favourable image, which plays a significant role in tourists' travel decision-making and can impact their behaviour toward a particular destination.

The tourism literature has several conceptual and empirical studies that may be used to understand better travellers' destination selection processes (J. Crompton, 1992; Mansfeld, 1992; Um & Crompton, 1990; A. Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). The literature also explains that visitors' decision-making processes are influenced by rational (utilitarian) and psychological (symbolic) factors (Sirakaya et al., 2001).

Many previous studies in the field have shown that intermediaries influence the visiting intentions of potential tourists, are able to form opinions, and shape behaviours (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001), and as a result, people's visiting decisions are significantly influenced by the destination's image (Alcaniz et al., 2009; J. Chen & Hsu, 2000; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Tasci et al., 2007).

Echtner and Ritchie (1991) define the destination image as a collection of functional (utilitarian) qualities connected to tourist behaviour, such as tourism infrastructure, attractions, and tourism product pricing (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; P. Pearce, 1982). However, many other influential factors can play an important role. This Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research explores the role of events and cultural innovations (such as gamification) in improving destination image by studying their impacts as destination image can directly affect destination choice (Beerli et al., 2007; Crompton, 1992; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002; Sirakaya et al., 2001; Um, 1998; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

Events, especially the smaller ones, could be considered one of the tools used in favour of destinations when competing with others. However, much of the attention has been focused on large-scale or mega-events, with little knowledge or understanding of the contributions made by their much smaller counterparts. Local cultural events, unlike mega-events, need little investment or infrastructure development (Gursoy et al., 2004), making them easily accessible to the many thousands of smaller venues looking to boost their image.

Destinations may get a range of benefits from events. However, until recently, most studies have focused on the impact of mega-events, particularly the financial impact of sporting events (Knott et al., 2015; C.-K. Lee & Taylor, 2005; Preuss, 2007; Xing & Chalip, 2006). Although there has been a rise in interest in different types of events (Bauer et al., 2008), only a few studies have looked at the impact of small-scale events, particularly cultural events (Gursoy et al., 2004).

These smaller events are often strongly related to their hosting location, and they may serve as a valuable foundation for developing destination marketing strategies (Litvin et al., 2001; Olsen, 2010; J. R. B. Ritchie, 1984), and in case they are well planned and promoted correctly, they can assist in changing tourists' perceptions of the destination, resulting in increased revenues (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2018; Y.-D. Liu, 2014).

Apart from events, cultural innovations at destinations are becoming a new buzzword at destinations; gamification is one of the trends that could help the destinations in this competition, especially when it comes to the taste of new generations (Gen Y and Z). However, as this is a new topic, few studies have been employed to analyse the result of this trend and if gamification can help destinations improve their image.



The overall goal of this thesis is to offer solid information on how destinations may improve their image and attract more tourists using creative means. Furthermore, cultural events and innovations, which are popular in many places, perform well in economics, socialisation, and culture and are regarded as practical tools. As a result, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and policymakers will have more information and awareness of this field of study and evidence to support their decision-making processes. This specific field is currently under-researched and has a place within the broader study of the tourism industry and event impacts.

Accordingly, this thesis attempts to add to the theoretical and methodological literature by focusing on How can events and cultural innovations effectively assist in destination image improvement and make them more appealing or tempting for tourists?

## Résumé détaillé

La croissance rapide de l'industrie du tourisme a créé des défis importants en matière de marketing touristique pour de nombreuses destinations. Les destinations touristiques doivent se concurrencer pour attirer de nouveaux touristes ou persuader les précédents de renouveler leur visite. En conséquence, ils doivent imaginer une image tentante pour leur marché cible. Par conséquent, l'image de la destination est un concept marketing crucial qui joue un rôle central dans la compréhension de la sélection de la destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

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Bien que le terme «image de destination» ait été un domaine d'étude important pour les chercheurs, la nature de l'image d'une destination est restée un peu floue. Cependant, plusieurs études ont illustré l'importance de l'image de la destination et son influence sur le comportement des touristes et leur mécanisme de comportement de voyage pour construire leur projet de visite (Beerli et al., 2007 ; Crompton, 1992 ; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997 ; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002 ; Sirakaya et al., 2001 ; Um, 1998 ; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

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La littérature sur le tourisme contient plusieurs études conceptuelles et empiriques qui peuvent être utilisées pour mieux comprendre les processus de sélection des destinations des voyageurs (J. Crompton, 1992 ; Mansfeld, 1992 ; Um & Crompton, 1990 ; A. Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Cette littérature explique également que les processus décisionnels des visiteurs sont influencés par des facteurs rationnels (utilitaires) et psychologiques (symboliques) (Sirakaya et al., 2001).

De nombreuses études antérieures dans le domaine ont montré que les médiateurs intermédiaires influencent les intentions de visite des touristes potentiels, sont capables de se forger des opinions et de façonner les comportements (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001), et par conséquent, les décisions de visite des gens sont fortement influencées par l'image de la destination. (Alcaniz et al., 2009 ; J. Chen & Hsu, 2000 ; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991 ; Tasci et al., 2007).

A l'origine, Echtner et Ritchie (1991) définissent l'image de la destination touristique comme un ensemble de qualités fonctionnelles (utilitaires) liées au comportement touristique, telles que les infrastructures touristiques, les attractions et la tarification des produits touristiques (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993 ; P. Pearce, 1982). Cependant, de nombreux autres facteurs influents peuvent jouer un rôle important. Cette recherche de doctorat en philosophie (PhD) explore le rôle des événements et des innovations culturelles (telles que la gamification) dans l'amélioration de l'image de la destination touristique en étudiant leurs impacts, car l'image peut affecter directement le choix de la destination touristique (Beerli et al., 2007 ; Crompton, 1992 ; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997 ; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002 ; Sirakaya et al., 2001 ; Um, 1998 ; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

Les événements, en particulier les plus petits, pourraient être considérés comme l'un des outils utilisés en faveur des destinations touristiques lorsqu'elles sont en concurrence avec d'autres. Cependant, une grande partie de l'attention a été concentrée sur des événements à grande échelle ou méga-événements, avec peu de connaissances ou de compréhension des contributions apportées par leurs homologues beaucoup plus petits. Les événements culturels locaux, contrairement aux méga-événements, nécessitent peu d'investissements ou de développement d'infrastructures (Gursoy et al., 2004), ce qui les rend facilement accessibles aux milliers de petites lieux qui cherchent à renforcer leur image.

Les destinations touristiques peuvent retirer une gamme d'avantages des événements. Cependant, jusqu'à récemment, la plupart des études se sont concentrées sur l'impact des méga-événements, en particulier l'impact financier des événements sportifs (Knott et al., 2015 ; C.-K. Lee & Taylor, 2005 ; Preuss, 2007 ; Xing & Chalip, 2006). Bien qu'il y ait eu un intérêt croissant pour différents types d'événements (Bauer et al., 2008), seules quelques études se sont penchées sur l'impact des événements à petite échelle, en particulier les événements culturels (Gursoy et al., 2004).

Ces petits événements sont souvent fortement liés à leur lieu d'accueil, et ils peuvent servir de base précieuse pour développer des stratégies de marketing de destination (Litvin et al., 2001 ; Olsen, 2010 ; JRB Ritchie, 1984), et s'ils sont bien planifiés et promus correctement, ils peuvent contribuer à changer la perception que les touristes ont de la destination, ce qui se traduit par une augmentation des revenus (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2018 ; Y.-D. Liu, 2014).

Outre les événements, les innovations culturelles dans les destinations touristiques deviennent un nouveau mot à la mode dans les destinations ; la gamification fait partie des tendances qui pourraient aider les destinations dans cette compétition, notamment en ce qui concerne le goût des nouvelles générations (Gen Y et Z). Cependant, comme il s'agit d'un nouveau sujet, peu d'études ont été utilisées pour analyser le résultat de cette tendance et si la gamification peut aider les destinations à améliorer leur image.

L'objectif global de cette thèse est d'offrir des informations solides sur la façon dont les destinations peuvent améliorer leur image et attirer plus de touristes en utilisant des moyens créatifs, dans les dimensions qui viennent d'être évoquées. De plus, les événements culturels et les innovations, populaires dans de nombreux endroits, ont de bons résultats en matière d'économie, de socialisation et de culture et sont considérés comme des outils pratiques. En conséquence, les organisations de marketing de destination (OMD) et les décideurs auront plus d'informations et de connaissances sur ce domaine d'étude et d'arguments pour soutenir leurs processus de prise de décision. Ce domaine spécifique est actuellement sous-étudié et a sa place dans l'étude plus large de l'industrie du tourisme et des impacts des événements.

En conséquence, cette thèse tente d'enrichir la littérature théorique et méthodologique en se concentrant sur la question des événements et des innovations culturelles ; comment peuvent-ils contribuer efficacement à l'amélioration de l'image des destinations et les rendre plus attrayantes ou tentantes pour les touristes ?

### **Contexte de recherche et objectif de l'étude**

La croissance rapide de l'industrie du tourisme au cours des vingt et vingt et unième siècles a créé des défis importants dans le marketing touristique des destinations. L'image de la destination est un concept marketing crucial qui joue un rôle central dans la

compréhension de la sélection des destinations de vacances (Baloglu et McCleary, 1999).

Comprendre pourquoi les touristes choisissent une destination spécifique parmi plusieurs options et pourquoi ils observent des préférences de destination de vacances particulières, même lorsque les offres semblent identiques, est l'un des domaines les plus importants de l'étude du tourisme aujourd'hui (Khan et al., 1993).

Au cours des dernières décennies, les autorités du tourisme et les universitaires ont travaillé dur pour apprendre comment les gens forment, stockent et interprètent les images de destination dans leur esprit (J. Crompton, 1979 ; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Selon Dolnicar et Grun (2013), l'image de destination des individus est la question la plus souvent étudiée dans la recherche sur le tourisme. "De plus amples études sont nécessaires pour mieux comprendre comment l'image de la destination influence le comportement de voyage des visiteurs", déclare l'auteur (Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2011, p. 542).

Bien que le terme "image de destination" ait été un domaine d'étude important pour les chercheurs, la nature des études d'image de destination n'a pas été définie. Cependant, plusieurs études ont illustré l'importance de l'image de la destination et son influence sur le comportement des touristes et leur mécanisme de comportement de voyage pour faire leur projet de visite (Beerli et al., 2007 ; Crompton, 1992 ; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997 ; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002 ; Sirakaya et al., 2001 ; Um, 1998 ; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

Les images positives et négatives peuvent être liées à une destination, images difficiles à changer. Avec environ 200 nations et plus de 2 millions de destinations, les visiteurs potentiels pourraient choisir (Balakrishnan, 2008), le marché du tourisme est devenu très compétitif. Par conséquent, afin d'attirer des visiteurs vers une certaine destination, les spécialistes du marketing et les experts de l'industrie s'efforcent de développer une image de destination favorable, qui joue un rôle important dans la prise de décision des touristes en matière de voyage et peut avoir un impact sur leur comportement envers une destination particulière.

C'est la raison pour laquelle comprendre pourquoi les touristes choisissent une destination spécifique parmi une variété d'options et pourquoi ils préfèrent une destination particulière, même lorsque les offres semblent être identiques, est l'un des domaines les plus importants dans l'étude du tourisme aujourd'hui (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997 ; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002 ; Sirakaya et al., 2001 ; Um, 1998 ; Walmsley & Young,

1998). Les spécialistes du marketing de destination bénéficient grandement d'une bonne anticipation des choix de destinations touristiques (Oppermann, 1996). La littérature sur le tourisme compte plusieurs études conceptuelles et empiriques qui peuvent être utilisées pour mieux comprendre les processus de sélection des destinations des voyageurs (J. Crompton, 1992 ; Mansfeld, 1992 ; Um & Crompton, 1990 ; A. Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). La littérature explique que les processus décisionnels des visiteurs sont influencés par des facteurs rationnels (utilitaires) et psychologiques (symboliques) (Sirakaya et al., 2001).

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Les destinations peuvent tirer toute une gamme d'avantages des événements. Cependant, jusqu'à récemment, la plupart des études se sont concentrées sur l'impact des méga-événements, en particulier l'impact financier des événements sportifs (Knott et al., 2015 ; C.-K. Lee & Taylor, 2005 ; Preuss, 2007 ; Xing & Chalip , 2006). Bien qu'il y ait eu un intérêt croissant pour différents types d'événements (Bauer et al., 2008), seules quelques études se sont penchées sur l'impact des événements à petite échelle, en particulier les événements culturels (Gursoy et al., 2004).

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L'objectif global de cette thèse est d'offrir des informations solides sur la façon dont les destinations peuvent améliorer leur image et attirer plus de touristes en utilisant des moyens créatifs. De plus, les événements culturels et les inventions, qui sont populaires dans de nombreux endroits, ont de bons résultats en économie, socialisation et culture et sont considérés comme des outils pratiques. En conséquence, les organisations de gestion de destination (DMO) et les décideurs auront plus d'informations et de connaissances sur ce domaine d'étude et de preuves pour soutenir leurs processus de prise de décision. Ce domaine spécifique est actuellement sous-étudié et a sa place dans l'étude plus large de l'industrie du tourisme et des impacts des événements.

## **Le but de l'étude**

Cette thèse tente d'enrichir la littérature théorique et méthodologique en se concentrant sur la question centrale suivante : comment les événements et les innovations culturelles peuvent-ils contribuer efficacement à l'amélioration de l'image des destinations et les rendre plus attrayantes ou tentantes pour les touristes ?

La proposition centrale de cette recherche est la suivante :

Les événements (surtout socioculturels) et les innovations culturelles (comme la gamification) sont des outils efficaces qui peuvent façonner l'image de la destination. Ces outils peuvent attirer les touristes (notamment les nouvelles générations) et les persuader de prolonger leur séjour voire de renouveler leur visite. De plus, ils peuvent aider les destinations à reconstruire ou à améliorer leur image authentique pendant les crises.

Les questions de recherche liées à la littérature sont les suivantes :

1. Quels sont les différents types d'événements et leur rôle dans la formation d'une image de destination ?
2. L'authenticité des événements culturels innovants accueillis est-elle importante pour la formation de l'image de la destination auprès des touristes ?
  - a) Quels sont les impacts sociaux et culturels (directs et indirects) des événements culturels innovants pour les participants et les communautés d'accueil ?
  - b) Quelles sont les attentes et les expériences des hôtes vis-à-vis des événements culturels innovants ?
  - c) Quelles sont les attentes et les expériences des participants ?
3. Quels sont les effets des crises sur l'image des destinations ?
4. Quelles sont les stratégies efficaces pour récupérer l'image des destinations pendant et après la crise ?
5. Quelle est l'influence de la marque de désignation de site patrimonial (UNESCO) sur



l'image antérieure de la destination, ou « marque » ?

a) Comment et si les populations locales accepteront l'effet de la marque nouvellement attribuée sur leur propre culture.

6. Quels sont les principaux avantages de l'utilisation de l'innovation et de la gamification dans les destinations ?

a) Comment ces outils peuvent-ils aider la compétitivité des destinations à conquérir d'autres concurrents ?

b) Quel est le rôle de l'innovation et de la gamification dans la formation d'une image de destination ?

7. Pourquoi est-il important de distinguer les différentes générations et leurs modèles de comportement ? Quel est le rôle de la gamification dans la formation de leurs comportements ?

Les questions de recherche sont répondues par cinq études empiriques ultérieures qui tentent de répondre à toutes les questions de recherche.

Cette étude adopte une méthodologie rigoureuse et fait progresser la compréhension de Comment les événements et les innovations culturelles peuvent-ils fonctionner comme des outils efficaces pour aider à améliorer l'image de la destination et les rendre plus attrayants ou tentants pour les touristes.

### **Contexte de recherche, implications académiques et politiques de la thèse**

L'étude se concentre sur le rôle des événements et de l'innovation culturelle dans l'amélioration de l'image de la destination. De nombreuses destinations tentent d'améliorer leur image, rivalisent pour attirer les touristes, voire les persuadent de renouveler leur visite. Cependant, les destinations doivent avoir des offres très distinctives parmi les nombreuses options disponibles pour être choisies.

Cette thèse examine le rôle de la crise, de l'accueil d'événements (socio-culturels), de l'innovation et de la gamification sur l'image de la destination et aussi comment cette image pourrait être différente aux yeux des générations (X, Y, Z) à travers cinq études de cas différentes dans trois pays; France, Hongrie et Iran.

Les résultats de cette thèse devraient intéresser à la fois les universitaires et les décideurs des destinations. L'argument est basé sur la littérature actuelle sur l'image de la destination, les études d'événements et le tourisme. Cependant, comme nous le verrons au chapitre 2, il existe de nombreux domaines où il existe des lacunes majeures dans la littérature, de sorte que cette thèse peut contribuer de manière significative aux connaissances et à la compréhension existantes. En outre, les résultats intéresseront les décideurs et les responsables de la mise en œuvre des stratégies de marketing de localisation, étant donné que peu d'études empiriques ont examiné les effets que ces politiques peuvent avoir sur les consommateurs.

### **Structure de l'étude**

Le tableau 1 montre la structure de cette thèse (qui est basée sur le format de la thèse européenne) telle qu'elle est organisée en dix chapitres comme suit, (1) introduction, (2) méthodologie et conception de la recherche, (3) revues de littérature ( Image de destination), (4) revues de littérature (Image de destination et crises) et résultats des études de cas 1 et 2, (5) revues de littérature (Événement et sa typologie), (6) revues de littérature (Les effets des événements sur l'image de destination) et conclusions des études de cas 3 et 4, (7) revues de littérature (Innovation et destinations), (8) revues de littérature (Gamification et destinations), (9) revues de littérature (Génération et tourisme) et conclusions de l'étude de cas 5 (10) Conclusion et discussion.

De plus, cette thèse a bénéficié de cinq études de cas différentes pour discuter de manière exhaustive de l'image de la destination et analyser les facteurs qui peuvent l'affecter.

### **Structure de la thèse :**

**Chapitre 1 :** Introduction ; Contexte de la recherche et formulation des objectifs de l'étude

**Chapitre 2 :** Méthodologie et conception de la recherche ; Élaboration des questions de recherche et présentation des méthodes de collecte et d'analyse des données

**Chapitre 3 :** Image de la destination : Revue de la littérature sur les aspects clés de l'image de la destination

**Chapitre 4 :** Image de la destination et crises ; Revue de la littérature sur la crise et ses

effets sur l'image de la destination

Étude de cas 1 : Un examen de l'effet des sanctions sur l'image de la destination en tant que type de crise

Étude de cas 2 : Un examen de l'image de la destination par rapport aux grandes marques (UNESCO) en tant que type de crise

**Chapitre 5 :** L'événement et sa typologie ; Revue de la littérature sur les aspects clés de l'événement et sa typologie

**Chapitre 6 :** Les effets des événements sur l'image de la destination ; Revue de la littérature sur les effets des événements sur l'image de la destination

Étude de cas 3 : Un examen du rôle des événements socioculturels dans la reconstruction de l'image de l'Iran en tant que destination

Étude de cas 4 : Un examen du rôle des événements socioculturels dans l'amélioration de la destination Image : Montpellier Fête des Lumières

**Chapitre 7 :** Innovation et destinations ; Revue de la littérature sur les aspects clés de l'innovation et son effet sur la destination

**Chapitre 8 :** Gamification et destinations ; Revue de la littérature sur les aspects clés de la gamification et son effet sur la destination

**Chapitre 9 :** Générations et tourisme ; Revue de la littérature sur les aspects clés des générations et leur effet sur le tourisme et la destination

Etude de cas 5 : Le rôle des événements et de la gamification sur l'image du lac Balaton à travers les yeux des différentes générations

**Chapitre 10 :** Conclusions et discussion ; Discussions sur les résultats, les contributions à l'étude, les implications pour les recherches futures et les limites

Le chapitre 1 décrit le contexte de la recherche et la formulation des objectifs de l'étude

Le chapitre 2 expose la méthodologie de l'étude, expliquant les problèmes de recherche identifiés.

Le chapitre 3 décrit le concept d'image de destination utilisé dans cette thèse. Cela

commence par introduire le concept d'image et la définition de l'image de la destination dans le tourisme. Il explore également différents modèles d'image de la destination dans l'industrie du tourisme en passant en revue la littérature sur l'image de la destination.

Le chapitre 4 décrit le concept de crise et ses effets sur l'image de la destination. Cela commence par introduire le concept de crise en passant en revue sa littérature. Ensuite, le chapitre explore plus en détail à travers deux études de cas différentes. Aux fins des études, différents problèmes de recherche ont été identifiés, les données ont été recueillies, analysées et les résultats ont été présentés.

Le chapitre 5 passe en revue la littérature sur les principaux aspects de l'événement et sa typologie. Dans les sections suivantes, les questions entourant le concept ont été examinées de manière critique.

Le chapitre 6 décrit les effets des événements sur l'image de destination. Cela commence par introduire les effets de l'accueil d'événements sur les destinations en passant en revue sa littérature. Ensuite, le chapitre explore plus en détail à travers deux études de cas différentes. Aux fins des études, différents problèmes de recherche ont été identifiés, les données ont été recueillies, analysées et les résultats ont été présentés.

Le chapitre 7 passe en revue la littérature sur les principaux aspects de l'innovation et ses effets sur les destinations. Dans les sections suivantes, les questions entourant le concept ont été examinées de manière critique.

Le chapitre 8 passe en revue la littérature sur les aspects clés de la gamification et son effet sur les destinations. Dans les sections suivantes, les questions entourant le concept ont été examinées de manière critique.

Le chapitre 9 passe en revue la littérature sur les aspects clés des générations et leur effet sur le tourisme et les destinations. Cela commence par introduire la définition des différentes générations en passant en revue sa littérature. Ensuite, le chapitre explore plus en détail à travers une étude de cas. Aux fins de l'étude, différents problèmes de recherche ont été identifiés, les données ont été recueillies, analysées et les résultats ont été présentés.

Enfin, le chapitre 10 traite des conclusions et de la discussion. Il identifie les limites des résultats, fournit les contributions de l'étude et recommande des orientations pour les recherches futures.

## **Épistémologie**

« L'épistémologie s'intéresse aux façons de connaître et d'apprendre sur le monde et se concentre sur des questions telles que la façon dont nous pouvons apprendre sur la réalité et ce qui constitue la base de notre connaissance » (Willis, 2007, p. 6). Pour être rapide et simplifiant, il existe deux grandes écoles de pensée au sein de l'épistémologie : le positivisme et l'interprétivisme. Le positivisme est lié à la position ontologique de l'objectivisme, qui postule que la présence d'une réalité en dehors des acteurs sociaux permet une recherche objective et sans valeur du monde social. En conséquence, les positivistes soutiennent que l'ethos de recherche utilisé en sciences naturelles peut et doit être utilisé dans la recherche en sciences sociales. L'interprétivisme, en revanche, est associé à l'idée que le comportement humain ne peut pas être analysé de la même manière que les objets des sciences naturelles, ce qui implique que le comportement humain doit être compris plutôt qu'expliqué.

Ainsi, l'approche interprétative adopte la notion que les gens agissent en fonction de leurs significations pour l'environnement (Bryman et al., 2021). En conséquence, « c'est le travail du spécialiste des sciences sociales d'avoir accès à la "pensée de bon sens" des gens et donc d'interpréter leurs actions et le monde social de leur point de vue » (Bryman et al., 2021, p. 30). Le chercheur doit mettre de côté toute idée préconçue, pour le dire autrement. De plus, parce que les significations du monde sont constamment produites par l'interaction des personnes, Blumer (1962) soutient que le chercheur doit acquérir une connaissance du monde en tant que processus. En ce sens, le principe épistémologique de l'interprétivisme est lié au principe ontologique du constructionnisme. La présente étude adopte la perspective de l'interprétivisme puisque l'on cherche à comprendre le rôle des événements et de l'innovation culturelle et leur effet sur l'image de la destination.

## **Méthodologie**

Guba (1990) définit la méthodologie comme les méthodes que le chercheur emploiera dans le processus de collecte de données. La méthodologie concerne également des questions telles que la manière dont le demandeur doit obtenir des connaissances ? Cette thèse vise à en savoir plus sur le rôle des événements et de l'innovation culturelle et leur effet sur l'image de la destination. La thèse utilise une technique exploratoire qualitative pour ses cinq études de cas afin d'atteindre son objectif et de rassembler les connaissances

nécessaires pour répondre à la question de recherche.

Le chercheur trouve et choisit les procédures de collecte de données qui aideront le mieux à répondre à la question de recherche au cours de cette phase. La technique la plus appropriée pour cette thèse semble être une étude qualitative car ce style d'étude tente de saisir les visions du monde des individus qui construisent et vivent la réalité que le chercheur tente de comprendre (Saunders & Thornhill, 2009).

Il s'agit toujours d'un élément essentiel de la recherche qualitative, mais cela soulève également une question méthodologique difficile : quelle part de l'arrière-plan doit être fournie par l'étude de recherche ? Il est clair qu'il est impossible d'étudier le monde entier, ses peuples et ses cultures, mais les chercheurs ne veulent pas non plus examiner une pièce du puzzle isolément.

C'est là qu'intervient la recherche d'études de cas, car les chercheurs utilisent un ensemble d'approches pour étudier le phénomène qui les intéresse (in vivo / dans la vie) plutôt que de manière isolée (in vitro - dans un tube de verre). Les chercheurs vont un peu plus loin dans les vies individuelles au lieu de simplement rechercher des participants à la recherche individuels qui correspondent à leurs critères d'étude.

La technique de l'étude de cas a suscité une controverse dans la littérature quant à savoir s'il s'agit d'une méthodologie ou d'une méthode. Hay et Cope (2021, p. 82) définissent une méthode comme « un mécanisme de collecte de données » et Yin et Campbell (2018) voient l'étude de cas de la même manière, la catégorisant aux côtés d'enquêtes, d'expériences, d'analyses d'archives et d'histoires. comme options des chercheurs. En revanche, Robson et McCartan (2016) considèrent une étude de cas comme une stratégie plutôt qu'une méthode comme l'observation ou l'entretien. La présente étude favorise l'interprétation de Hay et Cope (2021), qui prétend qu'une étude de cas est une méthodologie, en raison de l'hypothèse philosophique selon laquelle une compréhension complète et approfondie d'un cas est significative et précieuse sans qu'il soit nécessaire d'étudier tous les cas ou un échantillon statistiquement significatif de cas.

Habituellement, les études de cas qualitatives utilisent une approche d'enquête qualitative pour avoir des questions exploratoires, interprétatives ou descriptives. Cependant, une technique d'étude de cas exploratoire est nécessaire pour en savoir plus sur un « phénomène social complexe » (Ridder, 2012), qui concerne l'image de la destination dans cette thèse. Le design de recherche de cette étude de cas exploratoire qualitative est

développé dans la partie suivante, où le choix de cette approche et les méthodes retenues sont discutés et argumentés.

### **Objectifs de recherche**

Cette thèse tente d'enrichir la littérature en se concentrant sur les questions de recherche suivantes : Cette recherche demande :

Question centrale : comment les événements et les innovations culturelles peuvent-ils fonctionner comme des outils efficaces pour aider à améliorer l'image de la destination et les rendre plus attrayants ou tentants pour les touristes ?

La proposition centrale de cette recherche est la suivante :

Les événements (surtout socioculturels) et les innovations culturelles (comme la gamification) sont des outils efficaces qui peuvent façonner l'image de la destination. Ces outils peuvent attirer les touristes (notamment les nouvelles générations) et les persuader de prolonger leur séjour voire de renouveler leur visite. De plus, ils peuvent aider les destinations à reconstruire ou à améliorer leur image authentique pendant les crises.

Les questions de recherche liées à la littérature sont les suivantes :

1. Quels sont les différents types d'événements et leur rôle dans la formation d'une image de destination ?
2. L'authenticité des événements culturels innovants accueillis est-elle importante pour la formation de l'image de la destination auprès des touristes ?
  - a) Quels sont les impacts sociaux et culturels (directs et indirects) des événements culturels innovants pour les participants et les communautés d'accueil ?
  - b) Quelles sont les attentes et les expériences des hôtes vis-à-vis des événements culturels innovants ?
  - c) Quelles sont les attentes et les expériences des participants ?
3. Quels sont les effets des crises sur l'image des destinations ?
4. Quelles sont les stratégies efficaces pour récupérer l'image des destinations pendant et

après la crise ?

5. Quelle est l'influence de la désignation du site patrimonial (UNESCO ou autres grandes marques) sur l'image antérieure de la destination, ou « marque » ?

a) Comment et si les populations locales accepteront l'effet de la marque nouvellement attribuée sur leur propre culture.

6. Quels sont les principaux avantages de l'utilisation de l'innovation et de la gamification dans les destinations ?

a) Comment ces outils peuvent-ils aider la compétitivité des destinations à conquérir d'autres concurrents ?

b) Quel est le rôle de l'innovation et de la gamification dans la formation d'une image de destination ?

7. Pourquoi est-il important de distinguer les différentes générations et leurs modèles de comportement ? Quel est le rôle de la gamification dans la formation de leurs comportements ?

La première étude de cas (chapitre 4) évaluera les effets des crises (sanctions) sur l'image de la destination pour atteindre ces objectifs de recherche (numéros 3 et 4). La deuxième étude de cas (chapitre 4) évaluera l'influence de la marque de désignation de site patrimonial (UNESCO) sur l'image antérieure, ou « marque », de la destination et comment/si les populations locales accepteront l'effet de la marque nouvellement attribuée sur leur propre culture.

La troisième étude de cas (chapitre 6) évaluera le rôle des événements socioculturels dans la reconstruction de l'image de la destination. La quatrième étude de cas (chapitre 6) évaluera le rôle des événements culturels innovants dans l'amélioration de l'image de la destination. Enfin, la cinquième étude de cas (chapitre 9) s'intéressera au rôle des événements et de la gamification sur l'image du lac Balaton à travers les yeux de différentes générations (X, Y et Z).



## **Conception de la recherche**

Le terme « conception de la recherche » fait référence à un « plan de réalisation d'une étude » (Creswell, 2007). Il explique comment les décisions méthodologiques ont été prises pour répondre à la question de recherche, « qui est l'intention centrale de l'étude » (Creswell, 2007). Par conséquent, l'approche de recherche et les techniques utilisées pour recueillir et analyser les données nécessaires pour répondre à la question de recherche font toutes partie de la conception de la recherche.

La conception de la recherche peut être considérée comme le plan directeur qui explique comment l'étude sera menée. Le but est d'orienter le processus de collecte et d'analyse des données pour répondre à un problème de recherche spécifique. Afin de collecter des informations valides le plus efficacement possible, il est essentiel que l'étude prenne en compte le temps nécessaire pour collecter les données ainsi que le meilleur moment pour collecter les données. Selon Walliman (2017), il est souvent plus approprié de décider d'abord du type d'analyse nécessaire pour étudier le problème de recherche, puis du type de données à collecter pour entreprendre l'analyse.

Il est également essentiel de réfléchir aux outils, aux procédures et aux ressources nécessaires, car différentes méthodologies de recherche nécessiteraient différentes approches de collecte et d'analyse des données. Par exemple, quantitative et qualitative sont les deux méthodes de collecte et d'analyse des données (Creswell, 2007).

À cet égard, la question centrale a été énoncée comme suit : comment les événements et les innovations culturelles peuvent-ils fonctionner comme des outils efficaces pour aider à améliorer l'image de la destination et les rendre plus attrayants ou tentants pour les touristes ? En conséquence, cette thèse vise à étudier le rôle des événements et des innovations culturelles, en particulier les nouvelles tendances telles que la gamification ou les événements innovants, dans l'amélioration de l'image de la destination. En outre, cette thèse examinera l'effet de la crise sur l'image de la destination et examinera également l'image de la destination à travers les yeux des générations futures. Par conséquent, cette thèse est entreprise comme une étude de cas exploratoire qualitative pour y parvenir.

Il est essentiel de noter qu'il n'y a pas d'approche unique pour faire une recherche qualitative, et la façon dont une étude sociale peut être menée est déterminée par les facteurs ontologiques et épistémologiques qui aideront le mieux le chercheur à répondre

à la question de recherche (J. Ritchie et al., 2014). Comme indiqué précédemment, ces questions sont ancrées dans un cadre constructiviste dans cette thèse (voir ci-dessus dans la section philosophie des sciences).

Il convient de mentionner deux aspects essentiels de la conception méthodologique qualitative qui traversent tout le processus de recherche de la thèse. Herméneutique et dialecticisme sont les deux présupposés méthodologiques essentiels du constructivisme (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Le processus herméneutique, aussi appelé cercle herméneutique (Thouard, 2020), est un mouvement réflexif qui va et vient entre différents aspects de l'étude. Les constructivistes pensent que la connaissance est ancrée dans les compréhensions antérieures d'un phénomène social et que la connaissance est formée et fournie au fur et à mesure que le chercheur progresse dans le processus d'étude.

Ce mouvement de va-et-vient peut être caractérisé, par exemple, comme la réécriture continue de la question de recherche et de chaque section particulière de la thèse à chaque étape de la recherche. Cette dynamique permet au chercheur d'évoluer en permanence et de garantir que le cadre théorique et les choix méthodologiques sont les meilleurs pour accompagner le processus de recherche dans la réponse à la question de recherche. De nombreux changements se produisent en raison du processus de recherche, ce qui indique une meilleure compréhension du sujet.

De plus, comme l'a soutenu Guba (1990), le but de l'herméneutique est d'interpréter les constructions avec précision. Selon Lincoln et Guba (2013), une méthode exploratoire interprétative de l'herméneutique apparaît comme la plus adaptée. Il ne s'agit pas seulement d'interpréter mais aussi de tenter de découvrir le vrai sens sous-jacent aux impressions des participants. Spécialement pour les besoins de cette thèse, lors des entretiens et des séances de groupe de discussion, le chercheur a écouté attentivement et activement les participants afin de bien saisir ce qu'ils voulaient dire et ressentir à propos de leur point de vue.

La dialectique joue un rôle important dans cette étude. Il fait référence à de nombreuses constructions concernant le rôle des événements et des innovations culturelles dans l'amélioration de l'image de la destination et le processus de comparaison et de contraste de divers points de vue (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Le but de l'interprétation et de l'analyse n'est pas seulement d'offrir des descriptions des données, mais aussi de déconstruire et de réfléchir sur les significations. Une partie du processus dialectique consiste à reconnaître les défauts des données, car les données présenteront des points de vue distincts des participants. Par conséquent, l'évaluation des similitudes et des différences entre les points de vue des touristes est une partie importante de l'analyse. De ce fait, la dialectique incite à réfléchir sur diverses constructions.

## **Cadre conceptuel**

Sekaran et Bougie (2016) ont défini un cadre théorique comme un "modèle conceptuel de la façon dont on théorise ou donne un sens logique aux relations entre plusieurs facteurs qui ont été identifiés comme importants pour le problème". Dans un premier temps, ces facteurs ou variables sont identifiés à travers l'étude de la littérature en passant en revue les recherches pertinentes et actualisées sur le thème sur lequel l'auteur de cette thèse a décidé de travailler. Après cela, les variables spécifiques décrites dans la littérature seront identifiées et on déterminera comment elles sont liées. Ensuite, sur la base de chaque résumé de chapitre, il est possible de construire un cadre conceptuel pour le concept de facteurs qui affectent l'image de destination. Dans chaque chapitre, la littérature connexe sera étudiée, et sur la base de l'écart existant, le rôle du facteur mentionné sera évalué sur l'image de destination.

## **Approche de recherche**

L'un des aspects les plus importants de la conception de l'étude est de décider s'il faut utiliser un raisonnement déductif ou inductif. La technique inductive se concentre sur la recherche de nouveaux phénomènes ou sur l'examen de phénomènes déjà examinés d'un nouveau point de vue, tandis que l'approche déductive se concentre sur la causalité en utilisant des faits génériques pour arriver rationnellement à une conclusion plus spécifique. De plus, une technique inductive a l'avantage d'être plus efficace avec une taille d'échantillon limitée (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2009). Essentiellement, les techniques de pensée déductive et inductive cherchent à expliquer la vérité à partir de perspectives opposées (Walliman, 2017). La technique déductive est considérée comme pertinente et acceptable compte tenu de l'objectif de cette thèse, qui est d'étudier le rôle des événements

et de l'innovation culturelle et leur effet sur l'image de la destination. De plus, l'approche déductive aborde d'abord les hypothèses générales, et le résultat final est fourni avec plus de détails. En revanche, l'approche déductive ne propose pas de nouvelles idées ; au lieu de cela, il bénéficie des théories et de la littérature actuelles, qui sont ensuite testées empiriquement (Carson et al., 2001).

En conséquence, cette thèse (dans chaque chapitre) est soutenue d'abord par des théories applicables et des recommandations académiques pour les stratégies de recherche, puis par une méthodologie structurée qui décrit la déduction (Saunders & Thornhill, 2009). De plus, la méthodologie de recherche de l'étude, d'autre part, ne se prête pas à un raisonnement logique. Au lieu d'offrir des preuves irréfutables de la vérité, un argument inductif soutiendra la conclusion (Walliman, 2017). En conséquence, l'étude a été menée en utilisant une combinaison de méthodes inductives et déductives. Dans l'ensemble, cette recherche est menée comme une étude exploratoire pour déterminer comment/si les événements et les innovations culturelles peuvent améliorer l'image de la destination ; les approches sont bien fondées dans les théories et la littérature actuelles, mais elles sont destinées à s'adapter aux changements de circonstances si de nouvelles données nécessitent des modifications.

### **Choix de recherche**

Le choix de recherche est de décider si l'étude doit être menée par la méthode qualitative ou quantitative, selon Saunders et Thornhill (2009). Suivant la suggestion de Jenkins (1999), cette recherche est menée à l'aide de techniques qualitatives pour trouver les construits qui sont utilisés par la population d'étude concernant l'image de destination.

L'utilisation d'au moins deux sources indépendantes de données ou de techniques de collecte de données dans une recherche est appelée triangulation des données, selon Bryman et al. (2021). L'utilisation de nombreuses méthodologies vise à accroître la confiance dans les résultats et peut également être utilisée dans les procédures de recherche qualitative. Pour être plus précis, la stratégie de recherche utilisée dans cette étude est connue sous le nom de multi-méthode, qui fait référence à l'utilisation de plusieurs méthodologies de collecte de données (Bryman et al., 2021).

## **La nécessité d'une méthodologie qualitative**

Il n'y a généralement pas d'approche idéale pour recueillir des données dans la recherche en sciences sociales, la méthode étant choisie en fonction de la nature de la question de recherche énoncée et des questions précises que les chercheurs souhaitent poser aux répondants (D. Wilson, 2006). De plus, comme « la fiabilité et l'utilité des résultats de la recherche et leur interprétation sont étroitement liées à la nature et à la qualité des méthodes de recherche utilisées et reflètent souvent la conception de recherche sous-jacente adoptée », la méthode de conception de la recherche utilisée a un impact significatif sur le résultat de la recherche. (Healey & Rawlinson, 1993, p. 221).

Cependant, la conception de la recherche peut être pensée selon un axe extensif-intensif, chaque forme de conception posant différents types de questions, employant différentes approches et procédures, et définissant ses objectifs et ses limites de différentes manières. L'objectif principal de l'étude approfondie est de développer une certaine forme de modèles généraux et de qualités communes dans un groupe. Dans les études, des questionnaires standardisés et des enquêtes par entretien d'échantillons représentatifs de l'ensemble de la population sont souvent utilisés comme statistiques descriptives et inférentielles. La recherche approfondie est la conception de recherche la plus courante dans les approches positivistes des sciences sociales. D'autre part, la recherche intensive est souvent menée à travers des entretiens moins structurés et plus engageants, axés sur l'analyse qualitative.

La plupart des recherches et des études qui ont été menées sur l'évaluation de l'image de la destination ont été principalement réalisées par des méthodes quantitatives. En outre, différentes études utilisant des méthodes structurées mesurent généralement les divers attributs d'image communs à travers un ensemble d'échelles sémantiques différentielles ou de Likert (un type d'échelle de réponse psychométrique), produisant ainsi des évaluations sur chaque attribut. En conséquence, bon nombre de ces échelles résultent d'études qualitatives exploratoires qui ont identifié les attributs et les déterminants importants de l'image de la destination touristique perçue par les individus (Beerli & Martín, 2004).

La recherche quantitative est nécessaire pour découvrir les réponses aux questions centrales qui, quoi, quand, où, combien et comment, tandis que la recherche qualitative est un complément nécessaire lorsque nous souhaitons découvrir les « pourquoi » sous-

jacents au comportement des consommateurs (Denzin, 2010 ; Denzin et Lincoln, 1994 ; Guba, 1990 ; M. B. Miles et Huberman, 1994). Ainsi, les études quantitatives testent les connaissances existantes, tandis que la recherche qualitative génère de nouvelles théories car les informateurs peuvent soulever des problèmes inattendus (Powell et Watson, 2006). Le chercheur est familiarisé avec ces méthodes selon son parcours professionnel.

### **Techniques et procédures**

Les données probantes impliquent des données soutenant des questions ou des propositions, alors que les données font référence à des informations (Thomas, 2011) qui peuvent avoir deux sources différentes : primaires ou secondaires. Les données primaires sont obtenues directement à partir de sources sur le terrain, tandis que les données secondaires sont collectées via des ressources documentaires, audio ou vidéo telles que des manuels, des revues, des archives, des rapports annuels, des statistiques publiées par le gouvernement et des vidéos (Collis & Hussey, 2014 ; Saunders & Thornhill , 2009).

### **Méthode de collecte des données**

La méthode de collecte de données dans cette thèse consiste en des entretiens qualitatifs semi-structurés et des groupes de discussion, car au total, quatre-vingt-sept entretiens semi-structurés (dans les quatre premières études de cas) ont été réalisés, et quatre groupes de discussion ont été réalisés pour le cinquième cas étude.

Étude de cas numéro 1 : Sanctions internationales et image de la destination (vingt-sept entretiens semi- directifs)

Etude de cas numéro 2 : Image destination vs grandes marques (UNESCO) (vingt entretiens semi-directifs)

Étude de cas numéro 3 : Le rôle des événements socioculturels dans la reconstruction de l'image de l'Iran (vingt entretiens semi-directifs)

Étude de cas numéro 4 : Le rôle des événements socioculturels dans l'amélioration de l'image de la destination : Montpellier Fête des Lumières (vingt entretiens semi-directifs)

Étude de cas numéro 5 : Le rôle des événements et de la gamification sur l'image du lac

## **Entretiens**

Il est essentiel de souligner que les entretiens qualitatifs sont l'un des moyens les plus précis pour les approches d'études de cas exploratoires qualitatives lorsque la compréhension du sujet est restreinte (Creswell, 2007). De nombreux chercheurs (Kvale, 1998 ; J. Ritchie et al., 2014) soulignent que les entretiens sont une méthode pour engager un dialogue pour mieux comprendre un tel choix. L'approche d'entrevue a été caractérisée par Ritchie et al. (2014) comme « conversation avec un but ». Cette conversation donne au chercheur l'occasion d'avoir une discussion constructive avec les participants. Selon Bryman (2021), « il y a beaucoup plus d'intérêt pour le point de vue de l'interviewé » dans l'entretien qualitatif, et le chercheur recherche des réponses riches et détaillées.

Lorsque l'interviewé commençait à parler de quelque chose, pas sur le sujet, la flexibilité de l'entretien semi- directif permettait de s'écarter des thèmes conventionnels abordés dans le programme d'entretien (Bryman et al., 2021).

Bien que Saunders et Thornhill (2009) ne soient pas d'accord sur le fait qu'il n'y a pas de liste prédéfinie de questions dans les entretiens semi-structurés, le problème doit être expliqué en termes de ce que l'intervieweur voudrait entendre. Dans ce cas, des questions ouvertes ont été utilisées dans toutes les études de cette thèse, mais elles ont davantage servi de point de départ - les personnes interrogées devaient profiter de l'occasion pour parler librement et exprimer leurs idées et leurs croyances sur les sujets à travers des expériences et histoires – les perceptions des personnes interrogées ont guidé les entretiens. Toutes les questions qui ont fourni les principaux thèmes des conversations étaient les mêmes que celles qui ont été évaluées dans l'analyse documentaire de chaque chapitre sur l'image de la destination et les sujets connexes.

## **Groupe de discussion**

Cette thèse utilisera également le Focus group (FG) comme méthode qualitative pour sa cinquième étude de cas. La méthodologie des FG remonte aux années 1920 et visait principalement à récupérer des informations sur les préférences de produits (Smithson,

2007 ; Stewart et al., 2007).

La majorité des auteurs ont affiné cette technique entre la fin des années 1980 et les années 1990 (Kitzinger, 1995 ; D. L. Morgan, 1988 ; Palmer et al., 2012 ; Patton, 1990 ; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Cependant, il n'a cessé de gagner en popularité au cours des dernières décennies, et il a été appliqué à de nombreuses fins différentes telles que les questions de marketing (Cox et al., 1976), la sociologie (Carter et al., 2014 ; Cyr, 2016), la mobilité des transports urbains (Dell'Olio et al., 2010) et les sciences politiques (Krueger & Casey, 2009 ; D. L. Morgan, 1988 ; D. F. Thompson, 2008).

Les FG sont une pratique d'investigation qualitative basée sur une rencontre ou une série de rencontres avec un groupe d'individus choisis au hasard ou avec précision en fonction de l'objectif de l'étude. Généralement, un modérateur mène un entretien collectif d'une ou deux heures avec un groupe de participants pour une discussion approfondie sur les questions à l'étude (E. Klein et al., 2007 ; Stewart et al., 2007). De plus, l'approche FG fournit des informations sur les opinions des participants en tenant compte des expériences de vie, des attentes et des connaissances sur le sujet spécifique à débattre.

Avant la discussion, le modérateur souhaite la bienvenue aux participants et présente la portée de la recherche ou de la question à l'étude. Le modérateur examine également la manière dont les opinions/décisions sont débattues, y compris les nuances non verbales et les contenus émotionnels identifiés par les schémas vocaux, les mouvements du corps, le contact visuel et d'autres gestes physiques.

Toutes les expressions verbales et non verbales sont finalisées pour développer un profil de l'attitude du participant. De plus, pour dépasser le constat généralisé d'opinions recueillies avec des sondages à réponses limitées, la participation aux FG assure une certaine diversité entre les individus pour favoriser la discussion de groupe (E. Klein et al., 2007).

Les opinions peuvent changer pendant la phase de discussion, et le FG aide à découvrir les raisons et les circonstances du changement (N. Robinson, 1999). Par conséquent, une étape essentielle de la technique FG est la collecte de données. L'approche standard consiste à entreprendre des enregistrements audio, une transcription textuelle et une analyse de texte (Greenwood et al., 2017).



## **Fiabilité et validité de la recherche**

Lors de l'examen de la fiabilité du modèle, diverses approches supplémentaires pour l'analyse des données fournissent des résultats plus complets. Comme Jenkins (1999) l'a mentionné : "Divers tests de fiabilité, tels que le pi de Scott (Scott, 1955), sont disponibles pour mesurer la fiabilité du codage entre les codeurs individuels de l'équipe, et des techniques similaires peuvent être adaptées pour les chercheurs individuels."

La validité de l'étude joue un rôle essentiel dans la qualité et la crédibilité des méthodologies et des conceptions pour révéler la formulation du problème. La richesse des données acquises, plutôt que la taille de l'échantillon, est considérée comme la source de validité dans la recherche qualitative (Long, 2007 ; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

La validité interne concerne la manière dont les données représentent et mesurent les caractéristiques du sujet étudié (Veal, 2011), tandis que la validité externe fait référence à la mesure dans laquelle les conclusions d'une étude sont pertinentes au-delà de l'échantillon étudié (Veal, 2011). Parce que cette recherche est interprétative et utilise des méthodes de collecte de données qualitatives, les résultats sont peu susceptibles d'être valables pour l'ensemble de la population, et aucune affirmation n'est faite que les résultats peuvent être généralisés.

La mesure dans laquelle les résultats d'une étude seraient les mêmes si elle était répétée est appelée fiabilité (principalement dans la recherche qualitative) (Veal, 2011). Les gens réagiront différemment selon les environnements et les circonstances, et chaque chercheur comprendra et interprétera les réponses différemment en raison de ses connaissances, de ses valeurs et de son expérience. Compte tenu de cela, il est peu probable qu'une répétition des études fournisse les mêmes résultats. Cependant, il est nécessaire de définir en détail les méthodologies employées, de motiver et justifier les choix effectués, et de présenter une approche méthodologique transparente pour rendre chaque étude plus fiable.

## **Analyse des données**

Le rôle de l'analyse des données est d'identifier les constructions pertinentes des personnes interrogées et de dériver ces réponses dans des catégories qui peuvent être formulées et introduites à la suite de la recherche. Les quatre groupes de discussion et les quatre-vingt-sept entretiens ont été transcrits en premier, et les codes ont été soulignés dans chacune des transcriptions (séparément pour chaque étude de cas). Ensuite, dans chaque chapitre, l'étude de cas qui s'y rapporte est analysée, et une liste de constructions et quelques affirmations issues des entretiens sont apportées. Suivant la procédure de codage recommandée, le résumé des constructions est dérivé des faits saillants des transcriptions des entretiens, et les termes et expressions sont extraits et introduits dans les résultats finaux.

## **Conclusion**

Pour cette thèse, la méthode d'enquête académique a été considérée comme étant guidée par la question, les buts et les objectifs généraux de la recherche, plutôt que par la ferme conviction qu'un seul type d'enquête ou un paradigme spécifique peut produire un rapport rigoureux et scientifique ou projet de recherche. De plus, tout au long de cette thèse, les présupposés ontologiques du constructivisme reconnaissent de multiples versions des réalités ou des perceptions sur le rôle des événements et de l'innovation culturelle dans la formation de l'image de la destination. En outre, la présente étude adopte la perspective de l'interprétivisme puisque l'on cherche à comprendre le rôle des événements et de l'innovation culturelle et leur effet sur l'image de la destination.

La thèse utilise une technique exploratoire qualitative pour ses cinq études de cas afin d'atteindre son objectif et de rassembler les connaissances nécessaires pour répondre à la question de recherche. De plus, cette recherche est menée comme une étude exploratoire pour déterminer comment/si les événements et les innovations culturelles peuvent améliorer l'image de la destination ; les approches sont bien fondées dans les théories et la littérature actuelles, mais elles sont destinées à s'adapter aux changements de circonstances si de nouvelles données nécessitent des modifications. En conséquence, la méthode de collecte de données dans cette thèse consiste en des entretiens qualitatifs semi-structurés et des groupes de discussion.

Ce chapitre a commencé par une discussion sur la philosophie des sciences et a été suivi d'une méthodologie dans laquelle les objectifs de l'étude et la conception de la recherche ont été expliqués. La question centrale de cette thèse est la suivante : comment les événements et les innovations culturelles peuvent-ils fonctionner comme des outils efficaces pour aider à améliorer l'image des destinations et les rendre plus attrayantes ou tentantes pour les touristes ?

En conséquence, le choix de recherche et les méthodes de collecte de données ont été introduits. La principale force des techniques de recherche utilisées dans cette thèse est qu'elles ont permis la collecte de données par le biais de deux méthodes qualitatives différentes. Comme mentionné ci-dessus, la thèse bénéficie de cinq études de cas différentes, l'une d'entre elles le groupe de discussion et quatre autres les entretiens semi-structurés employés. De plus, dans chaque étude de cas, la méthode de recherche et les techniques d'analyse connexes sont discutées séparément. Dans l'ensemble, l'utilisation de méthodes fiables et de données de haute qualité garantira la qualité de la recherche de cette thèse.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Professor. Dominique Crozat, as this thesis, would not have been possible without his precious guidance and support. His availability, valuable advice, and friendship made this PhD an enjoyable and fruitful journey for me.

I owe my family and my wife a massive debt of gratitude. Their warm encouragement and support were the most important motivation to try harder and to move forward.

I would like to say a special thank to Dr Nicholas Wise for his recommendations and constructive criticism at all stages of my thesis. His advice has been invaluable in developing this thesis and how it was conducted.

I would also like to thank Dr Hamed Bakhshi and Dr Viktoria Czuppon Csizmadiáné, whose constant support has kept me going during the procedures of this thesis.

My thanks also go to Professor. José Antonio Donaire Benito, Professor Nadine Tournois, Dr. Sylvie Christofle, and Dr. Kelly Maguire for agreeing to participate in my thesis jury and thus honouring me with their presence.

I would also like to thank the ART-Dev team, especially Géraldine, Lalao, Guillaume, and all other members, for their help.

Last but not least, I am thankful to Borzouyeh, Bahareh, Sophia, and Hossein, who have a special place in my heart. No matter where I am and what I do, there is no single moment when I don't think of them, and I will always miss them for every moment of living here in France.

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## List of Abbreviations

AI: Artificial Intelligence

AR: Augmented Reality

DMO: Destination Management Organization

EU: European Union

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

MDA: Mechanics-Dynamics-Aesthetics

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy

UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNWTO: The United Nations World Tourism Organization

VR: Virtual Reality

WHO: World Health Organization

WHS: World Heritage Site

# Chapter 1: Introduction

---

## 1.1. Research background and study objective

The fast growth of the tourism industry during the twenty and twenty-first centuries has created significant challenges in tourism marketing for destinations. Destination image is a crucial marketing concept that plays a pivotal role in understanding vacation destination selection (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Understanding why tourists pick a specific destination from multiple options and why they observe particular holiday destination preferences, even when the offerings appear identical, is one of the most significant fields in studying tourism today (Khan et al., 1993).

Over the last few decades, tourism authorities and academics have worked hard to learn how people form, store, and interpret destination images in their minds (J. Crompton, 1979; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). According to Dolnicar and Grun (2013), individuals' destination image is the most often investigated issue in tourism research. "More study is needed to understand better how the destination image influences visitor travel behaviour," says the author (Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2011, p. 542).

Although the term "destination image" has been a significant area of researchers' study, the nature of destination image studies has been left undefined. However, several studies have illustrated the importance of destination image and its influence on tourists' behaviour and their travel behaviour mechanism for making their visiting plan (Beerli et al., 2007; Crompton, 1992; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002; Sirakaya et al., 2001; Um, 1998; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

Both positive and negative images might be connected with a destination, images that are difficult to change. With about 200 nations and over 2 million destinations, potential visitors might pick (Balakrishnan, 2008), the tourism market has become very competitive. As a result, in order to attract visitors to a certain destination, marketers and industry experts are working to develop a favourable destination image, which plays a significant role in tourists' travel decision-making and can impact their behaviour toward a particular destination.

That is the reason understanding why tourists pick a specific destination from a variety of options and why they prefer a particular destination, even when the offers appear to be identical, is one of the most significant fields in the study of tourism today (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002; Sirakaya et al., 2001; Um, 1998; Walmsley & Young, 1998). Destination marketers benefit greatly from successfully anticipating tourism destination choices (Oppermann, 1996). The tourism literature has several conceptual and empirical studies that may be used to understand better travellers' destination selection processes (J. Crompton, 1992; Mansfeld, 1992; Um & Crompton, 1990; A. Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). The literature explains that visitors' decision-making processes are influenced by rational (utilitarian) and psychological (symbolic) factors (Sirakaya et al., 2001).

Many previous studies in the field have shown that intermediaries influence the visiting intentions of potential tourists, are able to form opinions, and shape behaviours (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001), and as a result, people's visiting decisions are significantly influenced by the destination's image (Alcaniz et al., 2009; J. Chen & Hsu, 2000; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Tasci et al., 2007).

Echtner and Ritchie (1991) define the destination image as a collection of functional (utilitarian) qualities connected to tourist behaviour, such as tourism infrastructure, attractions, and tourism product pricing (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; P. Pearce, 1982). However, many other influential factors can play an important role. This Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research explores the role of events and cultural innovations (such as gamification) in improving destination image by studying their impacts as destination image can directly affect destination choice (Beerli et al., 2007; Crompton, 1992; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002; Sirakaya et al., 2001; Um, 1998; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

Events, especially the smaller ones, could be considered one of the tools that could be used in favour of destinations when competing with others. However, much of the attention has been focused on large-scale or mega-events, with little knowledge or understanding of the contributions made by their much smaller counterparts. Local cultural events, unlike mega-events, need little investment or infrastructure development (Gursoy et al., 2004), making them easily accessible to the many thousands of smaller venues looking to boost their image.

Destinations may get a range of benefits from events. However, until recently, most studies have focused on the impact of mega-events, particularly the financial impact of sporting events (Knott et al., 2015; C.-K. Lee & Taylor, 2005; Preuss, 2007; Xing & Chalip, 2006). Although there has been a rise in interest in different types of events (Bauer et al., 2008), only a few studies have looked at the impact of small-scale events, particularly cultural events (Gursoy et al., 2004).

These smaller events are often strongly related to their hosting location, and they may serve as a valuable foundation for developing destination marketing strategies (Litvin et al., 2001; Olsen, 2010; J. R. B. Ritchie, 1984), and in case they are well planned and promoted correctly, they can assist in changing tourists' perceptions of the destination, resulting in increased revenues (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2018; Y.-D. Liu, 2014).

Apart from events, cultural innovations at destinations are becoming a new buzzword at destinations; gamification is one of the trends that could help the destinations in this competition, especially when it comes to the taste of new generations (Gen Y and Z). However, as this is a new topic, few studies have been employed to analyse the result of this trend and if gamification can help destinations improve their image.

The overall goal of this thesis is to offer solid information on how destinations may improve their image and attract more tourists using creative means. Furthermore, cultural events and inventions, which are popular in many places, perform well in economics, socialization, and culture and are regarded as practical tools. As a result, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and policymakers will have more information and awareness of this field of study and evidence to support their decision-making processes. This specific field is currently under-researched and has a place within the broader study of the tourism industry and event impacts.

## 1.2. The purpose of the study

This thesis attempts to add to the theoretical and methodological literature by focusing on the following core question: How can events and cultural innovations effectively assist in destination image improvement and make them more appealing or tempting for tourists?

The central proposition of this research is:

Events (especially socio-cultural) and cultural innovations (such as gamification) are effective tools that can shape the destination image. These tools can attract tourists (especially new generations) and persuade them to extend their stay or even repeat their visit. Furthermore, they can help destinations rebuild or improve their authentic image during crises.

Research questions that relate to the literature are:

1. What are the different types of events and their role in forming a destination image?
2. Is the authenticity of hosted innovative cultural events important to destination image formation for the tourists?
  - a) What are the social and cultural impacts (direct and indirect) of innovative cultural events for participants and host communities?
  - b) What are the expectations and experiences of hosts regarding innovative cultural events?
  - c) What are the expectations and experiences of attendees?
3. What are the effects of crises on destination image?
4. What are the effective strategies for destination image recovery during and after the crisis?
5. What is the influence of the heritage site designation (UNESCO) brand upon the destination's prior image, or 'brand'?
  - a) How and if local people will accept the effect of the newly assigned brand on their own culture.
6. What are the main benefits of using innovation and gamification in destinations?
  - a) How can these tools help the competitiveness of the destinations to win over other competitors?
  - b) What is the role of innovation and gamification in forming a destination image?
7. Why is it important to distinguish different generations and their behaviour patterns? What is the role of gamification in shaping their behaviour patterns?

The research questions are answered through five subsequent empirical studies that attempt to answer all the research questions.

This study adopts a rigorous methodology and advances the understanding of How can events and cultural innovations work as effective tools to assist in destination image improvement and make them more appealing or tempting for tourists.

### 1.3. Research context, the academic and policy implications of the thesis

The study focuses on the role of events and cultural innovation in improving destination image. Many destinations are trying to improve their image, compete to attract tourists, and even persuade them to repeat their visit. However, destinations need to have very distinctive offers among the many available options to be chosen.

This thesis examines the role of crisis, hosting events (socio-cultural), innovation, and gamification on the destination image and also how this image could be different in the eyes of generations (X, Y, Z) through five different case studies in three countries; France, Hungary, and Iran.

The findings of this thesis should be of interest to both academics and decision-makers at destinations. The argument is based on current literature on destination image, event studies, and tourism. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, there are numerous areas where there are major literature gaps so that this thesis can contribute significantly to existing knowledge and understanding. In addition, the findings will be of interest to policymakers and implementers of location marketing strategies, given that few empirical studies have examined the effects that these policies can have on consumers.

### 1.4. Structure of the study

Table 1, shows the structure of this thesis (which is based on the format of the European thesis) as it is organized into ten chapters as follows, (1) introduction, (2) research methodology and design, (3) literature reviews (Destination image), (4) literature reviews (Destination image and crises) and findings from case study 1 and 2, (5) literature reviews



(Event and its typology), (6) literature reviews (The effects of events on destination image) and findings from case study 3 and 4, (7) literature reviews (Innovation and destinations), (8) literature reviews (Gamification and destinations), (9) literature reviews (Generations and tourism) and findings from case study 5 (10) conclusion and discussion.

Moreover, this thesis has benefitted from five different case studies to comprehensively discuss the destination image and analyse the factors that can affect it.

**Table 1: Structure of the thesis**

Chapters	Titles	Contents
Chapter 1	Introduction	Research background and formulation of the study objectives
Chapter 2	Research methodology and design	Developing research questions and introducing data collection and analysis methods
Chapter 3	Destination image	Review of the literature on key aspects of destination image
Chapter 4	Destination image and crises	Review of the literature on crisis and its effects on destination image Case study 1: An examination of the effect of Sanctions on destination image as a type of crisis  Case study 2: An examination of destination image vs big Brands (UNESCO) as a type of crisis
Chapter 5	Event and its typology	Review of the literature on key aspects of Event and its typology
Chapter 6	The effects of events on destination image	Review of the literature on the effects of events on destination image Case study 3: An examination of the role of socio-cultural events in rebuilding Iran's image as a destination  Case study 4: An examination of the role of socio-cultural events in improving destination Image: Montpellier Light Festival
Chapter 7	Innovation and destinations	Review of the literature on the key aspects of innovation and its effect on destination

Chapter 8	Gamification and destinations	Review of the literature on the key aspects of gamification and its effect on destination
Chapter 9	Generations and tourism	Review of the literature on the key aspects of generations and their effect on tourism and destination Case study 5: The role of events and gamification on the image of Lake Balaton through the eyes of different generations
Chapter 10	Conclusions and Discussion	Discussions of findings, study contributions, implications for future research and limitations

Chapter 1 describes the research background and formulation of the study objectives

Chapter 2 expounds on the study's methodology, explaining the identified research problems.

Chapter 3 describes the concept of the destination image used in this thesis. This starts by introducing the concept of image and the definition of destination image in tourism. It also explores different models of destination image in the tourism industry by reviewing the literature on the destination image.

Chapter 4 describes the concept of crisis and its effects on the destination image. This starts by introducing the concept of crisis by reviewing its literature. Then, the chapter explores more detail through two different case studies. For the purpose of the studies, different research problems were identified, the data were collected, analysed, and the findings were introduced.

Chapter 5 reviews the literature on key aspects of the event and its typology. In the following sections, the issues surrounding the concept were critically reviewed.

Chapter 6 describes the effects of events on destination image. This starts by introducing the effects of hosting events on destinations by reviewing its literature. Then, the chapter explores more detail through two different case studies. For the purpose of the studies, different research problems were identified, the data were collected, analysed, and the findings were introduced.

Chapter 7 reviews the literature on the key aspects of innovation and its effect on destinations. In the following sections, the issues surrounding the concept were critically reviewed.

Chapter 8 reviews the literature on the key aspects of gamification and its effect on destinations. In the following sections, the issues surrounding the concept were critically reviewed.

Chapter 9 reviews the literature on the key aspects of generations and their effect on tourism and destinations. This starts by introducing the definition of different generations by reviewing its literature. Then, the chapter explores more detail through a case study. For the purpose of the study, different research problems were identified, the data were collected, analysed, and the findings were introduced.

Finally, Chapter 10 discusses the conclusions and discussion. It identifies the limitations of the findings, provides the study's contributions, and recommends directions for future research.

## Chapter 2: Research Methodology and Design

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### Introduction

This chapter aims to take the key issues identified from the literature review (in each chapter for all the five case studies of this thesis) and translate these broad themes into a practical and achievable methodological structure to collect and analyse the data required. This chapter also discusses the methodology of all related studies of this thesis and explains how the studies' research problems are identified.

The research design, which is concerned with the research objectives and the conceptual framework, will be introduced as well.

There are five main sections. The first section discusses the philosophy of the sciences. This is followed by methodology in section two. Then, in section three, the research choice of this thesis will be discussed. After that, the chapter will continue with the reliability and validity of the research, and finally, in section five, the chapter will look at the data analysis. In the end, the chapter will be finished by introducing a conclusion.

## 2.1. Philosophy of sciences

The philosophy of science encompasses discussions regarding science's nature and conception. As a result, it is concerned with issues such as what constitutes science and how we may try to know the truth (Bunnin & Tsui-James, 2008; Godfrey-Smith, 2003; Rosenberg, 2012). Accordingly, the ways of obtaining information about the truth are also discussed. Godfrey-Smith (2003, p. 3) describes it as:

“People will often find it a useful tactic to describe work in a borderline area as ‘scientific’ or as ‘unscientific’. On the other hand, some will call a scientific field to suggest that it uses rigorous methods and delivers results we should trust”.

Several paradigms have emerged due to the debate over what constitutes scientific knowledge. However, according to Guba (1990), there is much misunderstanding regarding the term paradigm. Guba (1990, p. 17) uses the term in its broadest sense, describing it as “a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry”. In other words, paradigms represent the belief among academics that a scientific report or study must follow particular inquiry processes to arrive at justifiable truths.

As a result, there are a variety of viewpoints on what genuinely leads an academic researcher to scientific truth (Anderson & Herr, 1999; Godfrey-Smith, 2003). While Anderson and Herr (1999) use the term paradigm wars to describe academic controversies, Guba (1990) and Denzin (2010) use the term paradigm dialogue to describe the coexistence of diverse paradigms. The author of this thesis believes that Guba's (1990) and Denzin (2010)'s arguments represent the most constructive approach to academic inquiry.

According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) and Goodson and Phillmore (2004), the method of academic inquiry should be guided by the overall research question(s), aims, and objectives, rather than a firm belief that only one type of inquiry or one specific paradigm can produce a rigorous and scientific report or research project.

Research philosophy is a collection of ideas about how to approach reality and how knowledge develops that influences many elements of research, including research strategy (Saunders & Thornhill, 2009). Different philosophical methods are advised depending on the nature of the research; nonetheless, it is unusual for a research subject

to fit into one philosophical area cleanly; a contemplation on philosophical options may assist embrace the chosen direction (Saunders & Thornhill, 2009).

The research paradigm is also used to describe research philosophy. Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) proposed three components of the research paradigm or three ways to think about research philosophy: epistemology, ontology, and methodology. In order to understand the various combinations of research methods, it is vital to grasp the philosophical viewpoint of the research issues. Positivism, Interpretivism, Realism, and Critical Realism are the four main philosophical paradigms in current social, organizational, and management research (Fisher, 2010).

### *2.1.1. Ontological stance*

Ontology is concerned with issues such as what is the nature of reality. For example, Willis (2007, p. 4) explained that:

“Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality, and what there is to know about the world” and has two major approaches: Objectivism and constructionism. The core idea of objectivism is that there is a world outside of the influence of social actors. The external reality of values and beliefs guides human behaviour within a culture and subculture perspective. As a result, objectivism asserts that social actors respond to concepts and occurrences in the social environment rather than creating them. Constructionism, in contrast, is founded on the assumption that the world's conceptions and phenomena are socially produced (Willis, 2007 cited in Bryman et al., 2021).

According to constructivists, knowledge is a human construction, never certifiable as ultimately true, or Guba (1990) mentioned “there is not one reality, only multiple realities that exist in people’s mind” and "Relativism is the key to openness,". As a result, relativism is the fundamental ontological assumption (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

This implies that researchers who use a constructivist approach recognize the wide range of mental constructions among the people who contribute their thoughts to the study. As a result, while taking a relativism stance, each viewpoint will be critical in this study because there is no ultimate truth. To put it another way, reality’s nature is “constantly being established, renewed, evaluated, cancelled (...) [and] changed” (Bryman et al., 2021, p. 33); thus, the social world’s definitions and phenomena are continually

negotiated. As a result, constructivism's ontological presuppositions throughout this thesis acknowledge multiple versions of realities or perceptions about the role of events and cultural innovation in shaping the destination image.

### *2.1.2. Epistemology*

“Epistemology is concerned with ways of knowing and learning about the world and focuses on issues such as how we can learn about reality and what forms the basis of our knowledge” (Willis, 2007, p. 6). To be quick and simplifying, there are two major schools of thought within epistemology: positivism and interpretivism. Positivism is tied to objectivism's ontological stance, which posits that the presence of a reality outside of social actors allows for value-free and objective research of the social world. As a result, positivists argue that the research ethos utilized in natural sciences can and should be used in social science research. Interpretivism, in contrast, is associated with the view that human behaviour cannot be analysed in the same way as natural science objects can, implying that human behaviour must be understood rather than explained.

Thus, the interpretivist approach adopts the notion that people act based on their meanings to the environment (Bryman et al., 2021). Accordingly, “it is the job of the social scientist to gain access to people's ‘common sense thinking’ and hence to interpret their actions and the social world from their point of view” (Bryman et al., 2021, p. 30). The researcher must set aside any preconceived notions, to put it another way. Furthermore, because the world's meanings are constantly produced via the interaction of people, Blumer (1962) contends that the researcher must acquire knowledge of the world as a process. In this sense, interpretivism's epistemological tenet is linked to constructionism's ontological tenet. The current study takes the perspective of interpretivism since the role of events and cultural innovation and their effect on destination image is sought to be understood.

## *2.2. Methodology*

Guba (1990) defines methodology as which methods the researcher will employ in the data collection process. The methodology is also concerned with issues such as how the inquirer should obtain knowledge? This thesis aims to learn more about the role of events and cultural innovation and their effect on destination image. The thesis uses a qualitative

exploratory technique for its five case studies to accomplish its goal and gather the knowledge needed to answer the research question.

The researcher finds and chooses the data collecting procedures that will best assist in answering the research question during this phase. The most appropriate technique for this thesis appears to be a qualitative study because this style of study tries to capture the worldviews of individuals who build and experience the reality the researcher is attempting to understand (Saunders & Thornhill, 2009).

This is always an essential component of qualitative research, but it also raises a challenging methodological question: how much of the background should be provided by the research study? It is clear that studying the entire world and its people and cultures is impossible, but researchers also do not want to look at one piece of the puzzle in isolation.

This is where case study research comes in, as researchers use a set of approaches to investigate the phenomenon they are interested in (*in vivo* / *in life*) rather than in isolation (*in vitro* - in a glass tube). Researchers go a little further into individual lives instead of simply looking for individual research participants who match their study criteria.

The case study technique has sparked dispute in the literature as to whether it is a methodology or a method. Hay and Cope (2021, p. 82) define a method as "a mechanism to collect "data," and Yin and Campbell (2018) see case study in the same way, categorizing it alongside surveys, experiments, archive analysis, and histories as researchers' options. In contrast, Robson and McCartan (2016) consider a case study to be a strategy rather than a method like observation or interview. The current study favours Hay and Cope's (2021) interpretation, which claims that a case study is a methodology, owing to the philosophical assumption that a complete and in-depth understanding of a case is meaningful and valuable without the need to study all cases or a statistically significant sample of cases.

Usually, qualitative case studies employ a qualitative inquiry approach to have exploratory, interpretive, or descriptive questions. However, an exploratory case study technique is needed to learn more about a "complex social phenomena" (Ridder, 2012), which relates to the destination image in this thesis. The research design of this qualitative exploratory case study is further elaborated in the next part, where the choice of this approach and the methods selected are further discussed and argued.



### *2.2.1. Research objectives*

This thesis attempts to add to the literature by focusing on the following research questions:

This research asks:

**Core Question:** How can events and cultural innovations work as effective tools to assist in destination image improvement and make them more appealing or tempting for tourists?

The central proposition of this research is:

Events (especially socio-cultural) and cultural innovations (such as gamification) are effective tools that can shape the destination image. These tools can attract tourists (especially new generations) and persuade them to extend their stay or even repeat their visit. Furthermore, they can help destinations rebuild or improve their authentic image during crises.

Research questions that relate to the literature are:

1. What are the different types of events and their role in forming a destination image?
2. Is the authenticity of hosted innovative cultural events important to destination image formation for the tourists?
  - a) What are the social and cultural impacts (direct and indirect) of innovative cultural events for participants and host communities?
  - b) What are the expectations and experiences of hosts regarding innovative cultural events?
  - c) What are the expectations and experiences of attendees?
3. What are the effects of crises on destination image?
4. What are the effective strategies for destination image recovery during and after the crisis?
5. What is the influence of the heritage site designation (UNESCO or other big brands) upon the destination's prior image, or 'brand'?

- a) How and if local people will accept the effect of the newly assigned brand on their own culture.
6. What are the main benefits of using innovation and gamification in destinations?
- a) How can these tools help the competitiveness of the destinations to win over other competitors?
  - b) What is the role of innovation and gamification in forming a destination image?
7. Why is it important to distinguish different generations and their behaviour patterns? What is the role of gamification in shaping their behaviour patterns?

The first case study (chapter 4) will assess the effects of crises (Sanctions) on destination image to achieve these research objectives (numbers 3 and 4). The second case study (chapter 4) will evaluate the influence of the heritage site designation (UNESCO) brand upon the prior image, or ‘brand’, of the destination and How/if local people will accept the effect of the newly assigned brand on their own culture.

The third case study (chapter 6) will assess the role of socio-cultural events in the rebuilding destination image. The fourth case study (chapter 6) will evaluate the Role of innovative cultural Events in Improving Destination Image. Finally, the fifth case study (chapter 9) will look at the role of events and gamification on the image of Lake Balaton through the eyes of different generations (X, Y, and Z).

### *2.2.2. Research Design*

The term “research design” refers to a “plan for conducting a study” (Creswell, 2007). It explains how methodological decisions were taken to answer the research question, “which is the central intent of study” (Creswell, 2007). Accordingly, the research approach and the techniques used to collect and analyse the data required to answer the research question are all part of the research design.

The research design may be regarded as the master plan that explains how the study will be carried out. The purpose is to direct the process of data collection and analysis to respond to a specific research problem. In order to collect valid information most efficiently, it is critical for the study to consider the time required to collect data as well as the best time for collecting data. According to Walliman (2017), it is frequently more

suitable to decide on the type of analysis needed to study the research problem first and then the type of data to be collected to undertake the analysis.

It is also vital to think about the tools, procedures, and resources needed, as different research methodologies would necessitate different data gathering and analysis approaches. For example, quantitative and qualitative are the two methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2007).

In this respect, the core question has been stated as follows: How can events and cultural innovations work as effective tools to assist in destination image improvement and make them more appealing or tempting for tourists? As a result, this thesis aims to investigate the role of events and cultural innovations, particularly the new trends such as gamification or innovative events, in improving destination image. Furthermore, this thesis will consider the effect of the crisis on destination image and will also look at destination image through the eyes of the next generations. Therefore, this thesis is undertaken as a qualitative exploratory case study research to accomplish this.

It is essential to note that there is no single approach to doing qualitative research, and how a social study can be conducted is determined by the ontological and epistemological factors that will best help the researcher answer the research question (J. Ritchie et al., 2014). As previously indicated, these issues are anchored in a constructivist setting in this thesis (see above in the philosophy of science section).

It is worth mentioning two essential aspects of the qualitative methodological design that run throughout the thesis' research process. Hermeneutic and dialecticism are the two of constructivism's essential methodological presuppositions (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

The hermeneutical process, also known as the hermeneutic circle (Thouard, 2020), is a reflective movement that moves back and forth between different aspects of the study. Constructivists think that knowledge is anchored in earlier understandings of a social phenomenon and that knowledge is formed and provided as the researcher progresses through the study process.

This back and forth movement can be characterized, for example, as the ongoing rewriting of the research question and each particular section of the thesis at each step of the research. This dynamic allows the researcher to continually develop and guarantee that the theoretical framework and methodological choices are the best for assisting the

research process in answering the research question. Many changes occur due to the research process, indicating a greater understanding of the topic.

Furthermore, as Guba (1990) argued, the aim of hermeneutics is to interpret constructions accurately. According to Lincoln and Guba (2013), an interpretive explorative method of hermeneutics appears to be the most suited. It is not only about interpreting but also about attempting to discover the true meaning underlying the participants' impressions. Especially for the purpose of this thesis, during the interviews and focus group sessions, the researcher attentively and actively listened to the participants in order to genuinely grasp what they meant and felt about their point of view.

Dialectics plays a significant role in this study. It refers to many constructions concerning the role of Events and cultural innovations in improving destination image and the process of comparing and contrasting various points of view (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

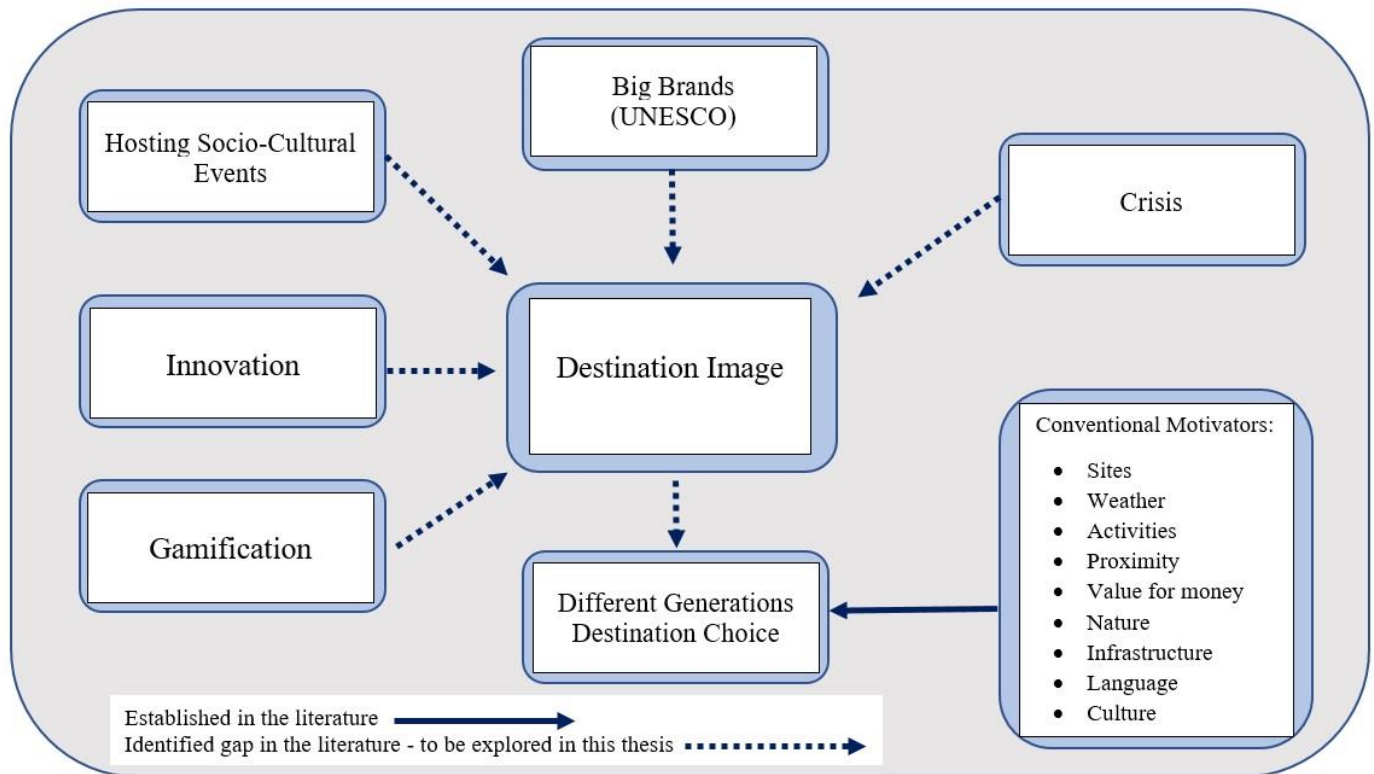
The purpose of interpretation and analysis is not just to offer descriptions of the data but also to deconstruct and reflect on the meanings. Part of the dialectical process is recognizing the data's flaws as the data will present distinct points of view of the participants. As a result, assessing the similarities and differences between the tourists' points of view is an important part of the analysis. As a result, dialectics encourage reflection on various constructions.

### *2.2.3. Conceptual Framework*

Sekaran and Bougie (2016) defined a theoretical framework as a "conceptual model of how one theorises or makes logical sense of the relationships among several factors that have been identified as important to the problem". First, these factors or variables are identified through the literature survey by reviewing relevant and updated research on the theme that the author of this thesis decided to work on. After that, the specific variables described in the literature will be identified, and it will be figured out how these are related. Then, based on each chapter summary, it is possible to build a conceptual framework for the concept of factors that affect destination image.

In each chapter, the related literature will be studied, and based on the existing gap, the mentioned factor's role will be evaluated on destination image. Considering this fact, it is not difficult to visualise the conceptual model that guided this study (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: The Conceptual framework of this thesis**



Source: Author

#### 2.2.4. Research approach

One of the most important aspects of the study design is deciding whether to use deductive or inductive reasoning. The inductive technique focuses on researching new phenomena or looking at already examined phenomena from a fresh viewpoint, whereas the deductive approach focuses on causation utilizing generic facts to arrive at a more specific conclusion rationally. In addition, an inductive technique has the benefit of being more successful with a limited sample size (Altınay & Paraskevas, 2009). In essence, the deductive and inductive thinking techniques seek to explain the truth from opposing perspectives (Walliman, 2017).

The deductive technique is regarded as relevant and acceptable given the goal of this thesis, which is to investigate the role of events and cultural innovation and their effect on destination image. Moreover, the deductive approach first addresses general assumptions, and the final output is provided with more details. On the other hand, the deductive approach does not propose new ideas; instead, it benefits from current theories

and literature, which is then tested empirically (Carson et al., 2001). As a result, this thesis (in each chapter) is backed up first by applicable theories and academic recommendations for research strategies and then by a structured methodology that describes deduction (Saunders & Thornhill, 2009),

Furthermore, the study's research methodology, on the other hand, does not lend itself to logical reasoning. Instead of offering incontrovertible evidence for truth, an inductive argument will support the conclusion (Walliman, 2017). As a result, the study was conducted using a combination of inductive and deductive methods. Overall, this research is conducted as an exploratory study to determine how/if Events and cultural innovations may improve the destination image; the approaches are well-founded in current theories and literature, but it is intended to adapt to changes in circumstances if new data necessitates modifications.

## 2.3. Research choice

The research choice is to decide whether the study needs to be conducted through the qualitative or quantitative method, according to Saunders and Thornhill (2009). Following Jenkins' (1999) suggestion, this research is carried out using qualitative techniques to find the constructs that are used by the study population regarding the destination image.

Using at least two or more independent sources of data or data collection techniques inside one research is referred to as data triangulation, according to Bryman et al. (2021). Using many methodologies is intended to increase the trust in findings, and it may also be used in qualitative research procedures. To be more specific, the research strategy used in this study is known as multi-method, which refers to the use of multiple data-gathering methodologies (Bryman et al., 2021).

### 2.3.1. *The need for a qualitative methodology*

There is typically no one ideal approach to gathering data in social science research, with the method chosen based on the nature of the research question stated and the precise

questions researchers wish to ask respondents (D. Wilson, 2006). Furthermore, as “the reliability and usefulness of research findings and their interpretation are closely linked with the nature and quality of the research methods used and often reflect the underlying research design adopted”, the research design method used has a significant impact on the research outcome (Healey & Rawlinson, 1993, p. 221).

However, research design may be thought of along an extensive-intensive axis, with each form of design posing various types of questions, employing different approaches and procedures, and defining its objectives and bounds in different ways. The primary goal of the extensive study is to develop some form of broad patterns and common qualities in a group. In the studies, standardised questionnaires and interview surveys of representative samples of the entire population are often used as descriptive and inferential statistics. Extensive research is the most common research design in positivist approaches to the social sciences. On the other hand, intensive research is often conducted through less structured and more engaging interviews, focusing on qualitative analysis.

Most of the research and studies that have been conducted on evaluating the destination image were mainly done by quantitative methods. Also, different studies employing structured methods usually measure the various common image attributes through a set of semantic differential or Likert scales (a type of psychometric response scale), thereby producing ratings on each attribute. Accordingly, many of these scales result from exploratory qualitative studies that identified the important attributes and determinants of the tourist destination image perceived by individuals (Beerli & Martín, 2004).

Quantitative research is necessary to uncover the answers to the focal who, what, when, where, how much, and how questions, whereas qualitative research is a necessary supplement when we wish to uncover the ‘whys’ underlying consumer behaviour (Denzin, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba, 1990; M. B. Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus, quantitative studies test existing knowledge, whereas qualitative research generates new theories as informants may raise unexpected issues (Powell & Watson, 2006). The researcher is familiar with these methods according to his work background.

### *2.3.2. Techniques and procedures*

Evidence implies data supporting questions or propositions, whereas data refers to information (Thomas, 2011) that can have two different sources: primary or secondary.

Primary data is obtained directly from field sources, whereas secondary data is collected through literature, audio, or video resources such as textbooks, journals, archives, yearly reports, government-published statistics, and videos (Collis & Hussey, 2014; Saunders & Thornhill, 2009).

### *2.3.3. Data collection method*

The data collection method in this thesis consists of qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus groups, as overall, eighty-seven semi-structured interviews (in the first four case studies) were carried out, and four focus groups were conducted for the fifth case study.

Case study number 1: International sanctions and destination image (twenty-seven semi-structured interviews)

Case study number 2: Destination image vs big brands (UNESCO) (twenty semi-structured interviews)

Case study number 3: The role of socio-cultural events in rebuilding Iran's image (twenty semi-structured interviews)

Case study number 4: The Role of Socio-cultural Events in Improving Destination Image: Montpellier Light Festival (twenty semi-structured interviews)

Case study number 5: The role of events and gamification on the image of Lake Balaton through the eyes of different generations (Four Focus Groups)

#### *2.3.3.1. Interviews*

It is critical to emphasize that qualitative interviews are one of the most accurate ways for qualitative exploratory case study approaches when the subject's understanding is restricted (Creswell, 2007). Many researchers (Kvale, 1998; J. Ritchie et al., 2014) emphasize that interviews are a method of engaging in a dialogue to better understand such a choice. The interview approach was characterized by Ritchie et al. (2014) as "conversation with a purpose." This conversation gives the researcher a chance to have a constructive discussion with the participants. According to Bryman (2021), "there is much greater interest in the interviewee's point of view" in qualitative interviewing, and the researcher seeks rich and detailed responses.



When the interviewee began to talk about something, not on the topic, the semi-structured interview's flexibility allowed for divergence from the conventional themes covered in the interview schedule (Bryman et al., 2021).

Although Saunders and Thornhill (2009) disagree that there is no predefined list of questions in semi-structured interviews, the issue must be explained in terms of what the interviewer would want to hear. In this case, open-ended questions were used in all the studies of this thesis, but they served more as a point of departure – the interviewees were expected to use the opportunity to speak freely and express their ideas and beliefs about the topics through personal experiences and stories – the interviewees' perceptions guided the interviews. All questions that provided the main themes of the conversations were the same that were assessed in the literature review of each chapter on destination image and the related topics.

#### *2.3.3.2. Focus group*

This thesis will also use the Focus group (FG) as a qualitative method for its fifth case study. FGs methodology dates back to the 1920s and was primarily aimed at retrieving information about product preferences (Smithson, 2007; Stewart et al., 2007).

The majority of authors refined this technique between the late 1980s and 1990s (Kitzinger, 1995; D. L. Morgan, 1988; Palmer et al., 2012; Patton, 1990; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). However, it has continued to grow in popularity in the past decades, and it has been applied to many different purposes such as marketing issues (Cox et al., 1976), sociology (Carter et al., 2014; Cyr, 2016), urban transport mobility (Dell'Olio et al., 2010) and political science (Krueger & Casey, 2009; D. L. Morgan, 1988; D. F. Thompson, 2008).

FGs are a qualitative investigation practice based on a meeting or a series of meetings with a group of individuals who are randomly or accurately selected according to the purpose of the study. Generally, a moderator conducts a one or two-hour collective interview with a group of participants for a deep discussion about the issues under consideration (E. Klein et al., 2007; Stewart et al., 2007). Moreover, the FG approach provides information about participant opinions considering life experiences, expectations and knowledge about the specific matter to debate.

Before the discussion, the moderator welcomes the participants and introduces the scope

of the research or issue under study. The moderator also examines how opinions/decisions are debated, including nonverbal nuances and emotional contents identified through voice patterns, body movements, eye contact, and other physical gestures.

All verbal and nonverbal expressions are finalised to develop a profile of the participant's attitude. In addition, to overcome the generalized statement of opinions collected with surveys with limited responses, participation in FGs ensures a certain degree of diversity among individuals to encourage group discussion (E. Klein et al., 2007).

Opinions may change during the discussion phase, and FG helps to uncover the reasons and circumstances of the change (N. Robinson, 1999). Therefore, an essential step of the FG technique is data collection. The standard approach is to undertake audio recordings, verbatim transcription and text analysis (Greenwood et al., 2017).

## 2.4. Reliability and validity of the research

When considering the model's reliability, various additional approaches for data analysis provide more comprehensive findings. As Jenkins (1999) mentioned: "Various tests for reliability, such as Scott's pi (Scott, 1955), are available to measure coding reliability between individual coders on the team, and similar techniques can be adapted for individual researchers."

The study's validity plays an essential part in the quality and credibility of the methodologies and designs to reveal the problem formulation. The richness of the data acquired, rather than the sample size, is stated to be the source of validity in qualitative research (Long, 2007; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

Internal validity is concerned with how the data represent and measure the characteristics of the topic being studied (Veal, 2011), while external validity refers to the extent to which a study's conclusions are relevant beyond the sample under investigation (Veal, 2011). Because this research is interpretative and uses qualitative data gathering methods, the findings are unlikely to be valid for the broader population, and no claim is made that the findings can be generalized.

The extent to which a study's results would be the same if it were repeated is referred to as reliability (mostly in qualitative research) (Veal, 2011). People will respond

differently depending on environments and circumstances, and each researcher will understand and interpret the answers differently because of their knowledge, values, and experience. Given this, a replication of the studies is unlikely to provide the same results. However, it is necessary to define the methodologies employed in detail, give reasons and justifications for the choices taken, and present a transparent approach to methodology to make each study more trustworthy.

## 2.5. Analysis of the data

The role of data analysis is to identify the interviewees' relevant constructs and derive these responses into categories that can be formulated and introduced as the result of the research. All the four focus groups and the eighty-seven interviews were transcribed first, and the codes were underlined in each of the transcriptions (separately for each case study). Then, in each chapter, the related case study is analysed, and a list of constructions and a few statements from the interviews are brought. Following the recommended coding procedure, the constructions' summary is derived from the highlights within the transcriptions of the interviews, and the terms and expressions are extracted and introduced in the final results.

## 2.6. Conclusion

For this thesis, the method of academic inquiry was considered as it should be guided by the overall research question, aims, and objectives, rather than a firm belief that only one type of inquiry or one specific paradigm can produce a rigorous and scientific report or research project. Moreover, throughout this thesis, constructivism's ontological presuppositions acknowledge multiple versions of realities or perceptions about the role of events and cultural innovation in shaping the destination image. Also, the current study takes the perspective of interpretivism since the role of events and cultural innovation and their effect on destination image is sought to be understood.

The thesis uses a qualitative exploratory technique for its five case studies to accomplish its goal and gather the knowledge needed to answer the research question. Moreover, this research is conducted as an exploratory study to determine how/if Events and cultural innovations may improve the destination image; the approaches are well-founded in current theories and literature, but it is intended to adapt to changes in circumstances if new data necessitates modifications. Accordingly, the data collection method in this thesis consists of qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

This chapter commenced with a discussion on the philosophy of sciences and was followed by a methodology in which the study objectives and research design were explained. The core question of this thesis is: How can events and cultural innovations work as effective tools to assist in destination image improvement and make them more appealing or tempting for tourists?

Accordingly, the research choice and the methods of data collection were introduced. The key strength of the research techniques used in this thesis is that they allowed for data collection through two different qualitative methods. As mentioned above, the thesis benefits from five different case studies, one of them the focus group and four others the semi-structured interviews employed. Furthermore, in each case study, the related research method and analysis techniques are discussed separately. Overall, using reliable methods and high-quality data will guarantee the research quality of this thesis.

# Chapter 3: Destination Image

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## Introduction

The fast growth of the tourism industry during the twenty-first century has created significant challenges in tourism marketing for destinations; however, these challenges are not new in this industry. Destination image is a crucial marketing concept that plays a pivotal role in understanding vacation destination selection (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Although the term “destination image” has been a significant area of researchers’ study, the nature of destination image studies has been left undefined. However, several studies have illustrated the importance of destination image and its influence on tourists’ behaviour and their travel behaviour mechanism for making their visiting plan (Beerli et al., 2007; Crompton, 1992; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002; Sirakaya et al., 2001; Um, 1998; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

The study of the destination image is an addition to the field of tourism that attempts to identify the images related to the tourists’ destination choice, as the image is somehow a valuable concept in understanding the destination selection process of visitors (Crompton, 1992; Hunt, 1975; Pearce, 1982; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002). In line with this, as image plays a crucial role in tourist perception of the destination, which influences tourist decision-making process and experience, a focus on the image is prominent in the marketing of destinations. Therefore, these studies focused on the role of the tourists’ perceptions of the destination and its specific image (symbolic and functional attributes or psychological and functional) in the destination choice process (Beerli et al., 2007; K. S. Chon & Olsen, 1991; Litvin et al., 2001).

This chapter will look through the literature relating to destination image and all factors related to the image. The chapter is divided into ten sections: Destination, the importance and influence of destination image, destination image concept, image and its role in shaping the destination image, components of the destination image, destination image formation process, destination personality, destination image and destination choice, measurement of the destination image and an overall conclusion.

## 3.1. Destination

Murphy (2000) defined the destination as “a place to which somebody or something is going or being sent”. Tourists will purchase this multi-attributed product based on their image concept and a choice mechanism in the tourism industry. In a more general definition, regardless of whether it is in the tourism context, this definition can simply be used to go from point X to point Y, where both points can be considered destinations. Moreover, Metelka (1986) described the destination as a geographic location where a person is travelling that can be assumed at varying levels: countries, regions, towns and other areas. Accordingly, it can be concluded that destination has a broad notion; thus, it is vital to apply an appropriate definition which is contextualized to the particular topic in the tourism industry (Medlik, 1997).

### *3.1.1. Tourism destinations*

Destinations can be considered specific geographic areas consisting of countries, regions, cities, and resorts in the tourism context. In a marketing view, it can be defined as a consumer product that will target tourists (Buhalis, 2000). Based on tourists’ educational, economic and socio-cultural backgrounds, the concept of a tourism destination can be interpreted subjectively, as travellers have different preferences and points of view. For example, for the tourists living in the United States, a destination can be within the US or in Mexico, but for those living in Europe, it can be any country or number of countries in the EU zone (Buhalis, 2000).

Accordingly, from travellers’ point of view, destinations can be beyond any geographical boundaries. However, in 2002, World Tourism Organization provided a definition of destination, which conceptualizes destinations as local entities that include cities, towns and regional areas. It defined the destination as “a physical space in which a visitor spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services, attractions and tourism resources within one day’s return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, images, and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. Local destinations incorporate various stakeholders, often including a host community and can nest and network to form larger destinations” (UNWTO, 2002). Although this definition is still valid today, it has excluded entities such as resorts, states, or countries (Lew & McKercher, 2006).

By considering destinations as a product, it may need to consist of both tangible and intangible components as Kotler and Gertner (2002) defined the product as “anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption, which includes tangible objects, services, persons, places, organization and concepts”. Buhalis (2000) defined the destination as an entity that comprises different products such as attractions, services, and an overall integrated experience for consumers. However, the definition of the destination as a product is somehow unclear in the literature as in some, it is restricted in terms of the products and services provided by that specific destination, but in others, it is limited in geographic boundaries.

This chapter brings up some of the respective priorities of the researchers for defining the destination. In (1985), Murphy considered the destination as a marketplace, while in (1988), Gunn defined it through experiencing the multiple travel services: transportation, information, accommodation, and attraction services. In his definition, Pearce (1982) considered the combination of products and services that can draw tourists’ attention. In contrast, Hu and Ritchie (1993) have defined it as “a package of tourism facilities and service, which, like any other consumer product, is composed of a number of multi-dimensional attributes”. Echtner and Ritchie (1991) have considered a complex body of components that vary in degree on a tangibility-intangibility scale or functional-psychology scale for their definition that a destination needs to consist of, whereas Leiper (1995, as cited in Buhalis, 2000) described destinations as “places towards which people travel and where they choose to stay for a while in order to experience certain features or characteristics-a perceived attraction of some sort”.

### 3.2. The importance and influence of destination image

Destination image has been considered as one of the most investigated topics in tourism studies (Cherifi et al., 2014; Fu et al., 2016; Stepchenkova & Li, 2012; Sun et al., 2013). The notion and role of image and destination image were introduced in the 1970s by Gunn (1972), Hunt (1975) and Mayo (1975) and have been of great interest to many different researchers for the last 40 years (Ahmed et al., 2006; Alcaniz et al., 2009; Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996; Assael, 1984; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Bigné et al., 2001; Calantone et al., 1989; Canada, 1987; K. Chon, 1990; Coshall, 2000; J. Crompton, 1977, 1979; Dadgostar & Isotalo, 1992; Dichter, 1985; Doswell, 1997; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993,

2003; Embacher & Buttle, 1989; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Font, 1997; Fridgen, 1987; Gartner, 1989, 1994; Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Hunt, 1971, 1975; H. Kim & Richardson, 2003; Kotler et al., 1993; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; F. Lawson & Baud-Bovy, 1977; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Markin, 1974; Milman & Pizam, 1995; Moutinho, 1987; Murphy et al., 2000; Phelps, 1986; Pritchard, 1998; Reilly, 1990; W. Reynolds, 1965; Richardson & Crompton, 1988; Santos Arrebola, 1995; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000; Um & Crompton, 1990).

Tourists are investing a tremendous amount of time and money into identifying suitable places to visit, one of the most important influencing factors, which play a key role in the decision-making process, is the previously held image (J. Crompton & Ankomah, 1993; Gartner, 1989; Goodall, 1988; Goodrich, 1978; Laws, 1995; Moutinho, 1987; M. Stabler, 1990). However, it is worth mentioning that the influence of destination image is not limited to the choice-of-destination phase but affects the tourist's behaviour at all stages (G. Ashworth & Goodall, 1988; Mansfeld, 1992). Accordingly, it will be possible to consider the destination image as a primary factor in analysing tourists' behaviour before, during, and after the visit experience (Bigné et al., 2001).

Reynolds (1965) suggested considering "image" as reputation versus identity: "Often, of course, the word 'image' is used as equivalent to reputation . . . , what people believe about a person or an institution, versus character, what the person or institution actually is." While in some other studies, the term "image" was used as a pivotal aspect of the promotional strategy concerning a tourist destination for positioning purposes.

Destinations with positive images have a high probability of succeeding than those with negative ones; however, a better image cannot guarantee more income for the destinations if other aspects do not work properly; accordingly, it is possible to consider a good image as an asset to any destination (Z. U. Ahmed, 1991; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Gallarza et al., 2002; Javalgi et al., 1992; Leisen, 2001; Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002).

Image is the fundamental marketing material for destinations to compete with each other in the tourism industry, and it will help destinations represent and position themselves to reach a sufficient degree of recognition (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Gallarza et al., 2002).

One of the most significant challenges in marketing literature is the need for an effective destination image creation and positioning strategy. The notion of "positioning" was



introduced as an offering in the minds of target market segments and how to address it appropriately (Hauelsen et al., 1983; Keon, 1983; Pathak et al., 1974; Ries & Trout, 1980; Tigert et al., 1980).

While these studies differ in their executions, all have the same root in the image and its attributes; as in experiential products like travel and tourism, consumers are involved in an ongoing search for information in order to create an image or “mental prototype” (Goodrich, 1978; Hunt, 1975; A. G. Woodside, 1982; A. G. Woodside & Jacobs, 1985).

Destination images will be shaped by the information about the attributes of destinations that are matched to the needs of one or more market segments in the tourism industry and are primarily recognized as the most relevant construct in consumer behaviour and marketing research in tourism (Alcaniz et al., 2009; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gallarza et al., 2002; J. Li et al., 2015; Nghiem-Phú, 2014; A. Rodrigues et al., 2012; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Furthermore, destination authorities and DMOs need to clearly understand their destination image from tourists’ points of view to launch successful marketing strategies (S. Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002). From some of the major studies, the importance of the destination image construct is brought in the following Table 2.

**Table 2: The importance of destination image construct to destinations**

Authors	Description	Destination Image Affects
(Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Govers & Go, 2003; W. Reynolds, 1965; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000)	The destination image affects the way tourists see and believe about destinations.	Perception
(Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Bigné et al., 2001; Govers & Go, 2003; Kotler et al., 2009; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Prayag, 2007)	The destinations are trying to create an image in the tourists' minds in order to differentiate their destinations.	Positioning
(Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Bigné et al., 2001; K. Chon, 1990; Dann, 1996; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993, 2003; Gartner, 1989; Goodrich, 1978; Govers & Go, 2003; Hunt, 1975; Kotler et al., 2009; Mayo, 1975; Milman & Pizam, 1995; O’Leary & Deegan, 2003;	Tourists’ evaluate alternative destinations based on the images to select an “ideal” one	Destination decision-making process

Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000; Um & Crompton, 1990)		
(Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gunn, 1972, 1988; V. Middleton & Clarke, 2001)	Stimulated by effective promotion, the tourists' experiences at the setting begin with anticipation images created	Anticipation
(Bigné et al., 2001; C. Chen & Tsai, 2007; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Govers et al., 2007; Govers & Go, 2003; C. Lee et al., 2005; Tasci & Gartner, 2007)	Destination image has direct and indirect effects on Tourists' purchasing behaviour	Tourists behaviour
(Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996; Buhalis, 2000; A. Woodside & Lysonski, 1989)	Destinations are competing through their images	Competitiveness
(J. Chen & Hsu, 2000; Goodrich, 1978; Oppermann, 1999)	Destination image will influence the attractiveness of a destination	Attractiveness of a destination
(Ahmed, 1991; Bigné et al., 2001; Castro et al., 2007; C. Chen & Tsai, 2007; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Y. Hu & Ritchie, 1993)	Destination image affects Tourists' behaviour after the visit	Affect post-purchase behaviour
(Alcaniz et al., 2009; Assaker et al., 2011; Bigné et al., 2001; Govers & Go, 2003; 2007; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Oppermann, 2000; Puh, 2014)	Destination image influences the evaluation tourists make of the match between the perceived image of the destination and what they have experienced	Satisfaction
(Bigné et al., 2001; Govers & Go, 2003; Kotler et al., 2009)	Destination image is an antecedent of quality	Quality

Source: Da silva de Matos (2014)

### 3.3. Destination Image Concept

The tourism industry is one of the sectors that provide an immense contribution to the economic development of countries. In the twenty-first century, more and more destinations are developed for tourism, which directly affects the number of job creation and rate of employment at the destinations (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). This industry is considered a fascinating phenomenon for both academics and practitioners. World Tourism Organization (WTO) has emphasised the importance of positive images to a destination (W.T.O, 1982) and declared that destinations depend on their image for

their success in attracting tourists in a more and more competitive ecosystem as the importance of new demographic, socioeconomic, and technological tendencies have been identified in tourism (Joppe et al., 2001).

As it is previously defined in this chapter, image is the mental structure (visual or not) that integrates the elements, values, and emotional qualities such as beliefs, ideas, experiences, recollections and the impressions that people have about a specific place (J. Crompton, 1979; Reilly, 1990) and, it is based on a series of more or less material knowledge of those people and a series of perceptions of a more emotional and compelling nature. Accordingly, a “Place image” is the result of complex processes (W. Reynolds, 1965), the sum of beliefs and impressions that people have of a place (Kotler et al., 1993) related to imagery, which is considered by MacInnis & Price (1987), as “a process in which multisensory information is represented in a gestalt form in working memory”. In particular, “the expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations, and emotional thoughts an individual or group might have of a particular place” (F. Lawson & Baud-Bovy, 1977).

Hunt (1975) was the first to demonstrate the importance of the “destination image” in increasing the number of tourists visiting destinations since it affects the individual’s subjective perception and consequent behaviour and destination choice (Chon, 1990, 1992; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; M. J. Stabler, 1988; Telisman-Kosuta, 1989, p. 198). Following his inspiring works, destination image studies have received extensive attention in the academic literature, and numerous research has been conducted on them.

Similarly to “image”, topics focusing on destination image have been further developed through different fields and human science disciplines, and the roots of it go back to multiple disciplines such as psychology (Skavronskaya et al., 2017), geography (Draper & Minca, 1997; J. Gold & Saarinen, 1995), anthropology (Selwyn, 1996), sociology (Meethan, 1996), semiotics (Sternberg, 1997), marketing (Gunn, 1972), and consumer behaviour (Prebežac & Mikulić, 2008).

In (2003), Echtner and Ritchie explained different sources of information that will build the destination image. The “flood of information” has many sources, which include first-hand information (based upon own visit and experience) and secondary information which are gained from media reporting (newspapers, magazines, television news reporting, and documentaries), promotional sources (advertising and brochures), popular

culture (motion pictures, literature) and the opinions of others (family/friends, travel agents).

Research over the past five decades has demonstrated that image is a valuable concept in understanding the destination selection process of tourists. Images will be more important than reality as it is a concept for understanding tourists' behaviour in the marketing of destinations and as each destination has an image, just like any tangible product or business. This can demonstrate the critical role of destination image in the tourist perception and the emotional bonds tourists create and share with it, and the consequent tourist experience and decision-making process, even if their perceived image does not necessarily coincide with objective reality (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gartner, 1994; Gunn, 1988; Hunt, 1975; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010).

As a result, researchers have provided their own definition of the destination based on the respective priorities; some of the most important are brought in Table 3.

**Table 3: Destination image definitions used by researchers**

Author/s	Definition of Image
Reynolds (1965)	An image is a mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions. It comes into being through a creative process in which selected impressions are elaborated, embellished and ordered.
Hunt (1971)	Impressions that a person or persons hold about a state in which they do not reside.
Markin (1974)	Our own personalized, internalized and conceptualizing understanding of what we know.
Hunt (1975)	Perceptions held by potential visitors about an area.
Lawson & Baud-Bovy (1977)	An expression of knowledge, impressions, prejudices, imaginations and emotional thoughts an individual has of a specific place.
Crompton (1977)	Organized representations of a destination in a cognitive system.
Crompton (1979)	Sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination.
Assael (1984)	Total perception of the destination is formed by processing information from various sources over time.

Dichter (1985)	The concept of image can be applied to a political candidate, a product, or a country. It describes not individual traits or qualities but the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others.
Phelps (1986)	Perceptions or impressions of a place.
Tourism Canada (1987)	How a country is perceived relative to others.
Gartner & Hunt (1987)	Impressions that a person holds about a state in which they do not reside.
Moutinho (1987)	An individual's attitude toward the destination attributes based on their knowledge and feelings.
Fridgen (1987)	A mental representation of an object or place which is not physically before the observer.
Richardson & Crompton (1988)	Perceptions of vacation attributes.
Gartner (1989)	A complex combination of various products and associated attributes.
Calantone, et al. (1989)	Perceptions of potential tourist destinations.
Embacher & Buttle (1989)	Image is comprised of the ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively of the destination under investigation. Image may comprise both cognitive and evaluative components.
Um & Crompton (1990)	The image of a place as a pleasure destination is a gestalt. It is a holistic construct that, to a greater extent, is derived from attitudes towards the destination's perceived tourism attributes.
Reilly (1990)	Not individual traits but the total impression an entity makes.
Chon (1990)	Result of the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings, expectations and impressions about a destination.
Fakeye & Crompton (1991)	Image is the mental construct developed by a potential tourist on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions.
Echtner & Ritchie (1991)	The perceptions of individual destination attributes and the holistic impression made by the destination.
Dadgostar & Isotalo (1992)	Overall impression or attitude that an individual acquires of a place.

Echtner & Ritchie (1993)	Composed of perceptions of individual attributes (such as climate, accommodation facilities, and friendliness of the people) as well as more holistic impressions (mental pictures or imagery) of the place.
Kotler et al. (1993)	The image of a place is the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person holds of it.
Gartner (1994)	Destination images are developed by three hierarchically interrelated components: cognitive, affective, and conative.
Santos Arrebola (1995)	Image is a mental representation of the attributes and benefits sought from a product.
Milman & Pizam (1995)	Visual or mental impression of a place, a product, or an experience held by the general public.
Alhemoud & Armstrong (1996)	The image of a tourism destination consists of the mental ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively regarding a destination.
Font (1997)	Set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that the public holds of the named product, and to some extent, it is part of the product.
Doswell (1997)	The image of a destination is the way in which it projects itself and the way in which it is viewed by its markets.
MacKay & Fesenmaier (1997)	A composite of various products (attractions) and attributes is woven into a total impression.
Pritchard (1998)	A visual or mental impression of a specific place.
Walmsley & Young (1998)	A common structure or schema of evaluations that can be used to differentiate between tourism destinations.
Baloglu & McCleary (1999)	An individual's mental representation of knowledge, feelings, and global impressions about a destination.
Choi et al. (1999)	People's beliefs, ideas or impressions about a place
Sussmann & Unel (1999)	The result of composite perceptions which are, in turn, dictated by attitudes to result in a positive or negative image.
Coshall (2000)	The individual's perceptions of the characteristics of destinations.
Murphy et al. (2000)	A sum of associations and pieces of information connected to a destination, which would include multiple components of the destination and personal perception.
Tapachai & Waryszak	Perceptions or impressions of a destination are held by tourists with respect to the expected benefit or consumption values.

(2000)	
Bigné et al. (2001)	The subjective interpretation of reality made by the tourist.
Kotler & Gertner (2002)	The sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places. Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place.
Echtner & Ritchie (2003)	Destination image consists of functional characteristics concerning the more tangible aspects of the destination, and psychological characteristics, concerning the more intangible aspects.
Kim & Richardson (2003)	The totality of impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations, and feelings accumulated towards a place over time.
Ahmed et al. (2006)	What do tourists think or perceive about a state as a destination, its tourism resources, its tourist services, the hospitality of its host, its social and cultural norms, and its rules and regulations, which influence their consumer behaviour.
Faullant et al. (2008)	An attitude-like construct consisting of cognitive and affective evaluations.
Bigné Alcañiz et al., (2009)	It consists of all that the destination evokes in the individual; any idea, belief, feeling or attitude that tourists associate with the place.

Source: Adapted from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), Del Bosque & Martín (2008), Echtner & Ritchie (2003), Gallarza et al.(2002)

In destination image literature, the researchers have applied different terminologies with a diverse backgrounds as the definition. Therefore, table 4 tries to categorize the previous table into five themes:

- 1- Holistic-focused definitions
- 2- Attitude-based definitions
- 3- Attribute-focused definitions
- 4- Subject-focused definitions
- 5- Destination's self-projected image definitions

**Table 04: Applied themes in destination image definitions**

Holistic-focused definitions	
Crompton (1979)	Sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination.
Dichter (1985)	Overall impression which is formed as a result of the evaluation of individual attributes which may contain both cognitive and emotional components.
Reilly (1990)	Not individual traits but the total impression an entity makes.
Chon (1990)	The set of meanings by which an object is known and through which people describe, remember and relate to it. Result of the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings, expectations and impressions about a destination.
Dadgostar & Isotalo (1992)	Overall impression or attitude that an individual acquires of a specific destination.
Kotler et al (1993)	The image of a place is the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person holds of it.
Alhemoud & Armstrong (1996)	The image of a tourism destination consists of the mental ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively regarding a destination.
MacKay & Fesenmaier (1997)	A composite of various products (attractions) and attributes are woven into a total impression.
Pritchard (1998)	A visual or mental impression of a specific place.
Sussmann & Unel (1999)	The result of composite perceptions which are, in turn, dictated by attitudes to result in a positive or negative image.
Murphy et al. (2000)	A sum of associations and pieces of information connected to a destination, which would include multiple components of the destination and personal perception.
Kotler & Gertner (2002)	The sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places. Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place.
Kim & Richardson (2003)	A totality of impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations, and feelings accumulated toward a place over time.



Attitude-based definitions	
Gartner & Hunt (1987)	Impressions that a person holds about a state in which they do not reside.
Moutinho (1987)	An individual's attitude toward the destination attributes based on their knowledge and feelings.
Um & Crompton (1990)	The image of a place as a pleasure destination is a gestalt. It is a holistic construct which, to a greater extent, is derived from attitudes towards the destination's perceived tourism attributes.
Echtner & Ritchie (1991)	The perceptions of individual destination attributes and the holistic impression made by the destination.
Echtner & Ritchie (1993)	Destination image comprises attribute, holistic, functional, psychological, common and unique components.
Gartner (1994)	Destination images are developed by three hierarchically interrelated components: cognitive, affective, and conative.
Font (1997)	Set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that the public holds of the named product, and to some extent, it is part of the product.
Baloglu & McCleary (1999)	An individual's mental representation of knowledge, feelings, and global impressions about a destination.
Coshall (2000)	The individual's perceptions of the characteristics of destinations.
Echtner & Ritchie (2003)	Destination image consists of functional characteristics, concerning the more tangible aspects of the destination, and psychological characteristics, concerning the more intangible aspects.
Ahmed et al. (2006)	What tourists think or perceive about a state as a destination, its tourism resources, its tourist services, the hospitality of its host, its social and cultural norms, and its rules and regulations which influence their consumer behaviour.
Faullant et al. (2008)	An attitude-like construct consisting of cognitive and affective evaluations.
Attribute-focused definitions	
Reynolds (1965)	An image is the mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions

	among the flood of total impressions. It comes into being through a creative process in which selected impressions are elaborated, embellished and ordered.
Lawson & Baud-Bovy (1977)	An expression of knowledge, impressions, imaginations, prejudice and emotional thoughts an individual or group has of a particular destination.
Crompton (1977)	Organized representations of a destination in a cognitive system.
Assael (1984)	Total perception of the destination that is formed by processing information from various sources over time.
Fridgen (1987)	A mental representation of an object or place which is not physically before the observer.
Gartner (1987)	A complex combination of various products and associated attributes.
Fakeye & Crompton (1991)	Image is the mental construct developed by a potential tourist on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions.
Santos Arrebola (1995)	Image is a mental representation of attributes and benefits sought from a product.
<b>Subject-focused definitions</b>	
Hunt (1971)	Impressions that a person or persons hold about a state in which they do not reside.
Markin (1974)	Our own personalized, internalized and conceptualizing understanding of what we know.
Hunt (1975)	Perceptions held by potential visitors about an area.
Embacher & Buttle (1989)	Ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively of the destination under investigation.
Milman & Pizam (1995)	Visual or mental impression of a place, a product, or an experience held by the general public.
Choi et al. (1999)	People's beliefs, ideas or impressions about a place.
Tapachai & Waryszak (2000)	Perceptions or impressions of a destination held by tourists with respect to the expected benefit or consumption values including functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional benefits of a destination.
Bigne'et al. (2001)	The subjective interpretation of reality made by the tourist.

Destination self-projected image definitions	
Phelps (1986)	Perceptions or impressions of a place.
Tourism Canada (1987)	How a country is perceived relative to others.
Richardson & Crompton (1988)	Perceptions of vacation attributes.
Calantone et al. (1989)	Perceptions of potential tourist destinations.
Doswell (1997)	The image of a destination is the way in which it projects itself, and the way in which it is viewed by its markets.
Walmsley & Young (1998)	A common structure or schema of evaluations that can be used to differentiate between tourism destinations.
Bigné Alcañiz et al., (2009)	It consists of all that the destination evokes in the individual; any idea, belief, feeling or attitude that tourists associate with the place.

Source: Adapted from Baloglu and McCleaiy (1999), Del Bosque & Martín (2008), Echtner & Ritchie (2003), Gallarza et al.(2002)

Gallarza et al. (2002) have regrouped the 65 works of different researchers who had worked on destination image between 1971 and 1999 as follow (the author has completed their work and extended the list until 2009):

1. Destination image formation process (static and dynamic)
2. Assessment and measurement of destination image
3. Influence of distance on destination image
4. Destination image change over time
5. Active and passive role of residents in the image studies
6. Destination image management policies (positioning, promotion, etc.)

Furthermore, some researchers concluded with a proposal of a theoretical model defining image in terms of four characteristics: complex, multiple, relativistic and dynamic (Gallarza et al., 2002) and three major emphases on the definition of destination image (Della Corte & Micera, 2007). The definition of the first group represents the composite structure of the image construct. In contrast, the second group considers attitudinal components such as affect and cognition to explain the image concept, and the third group

discusses image as an overall visual or mental impression of an object, place or experience (Rezende-Parker et al., 2003). Furthermore, other researchers discussed the quality of the attractions (as a product), the behaviour and attitude of the destination hosts and finally, the environment (such as weather, scenery, and facilities) as the three components of destination image (Milman & Pizam, 1995).

Accordingly, from all the above definitions, a destination image can be identified as a multi-faceted, composite construct consisting of interrelated cognitive and affective evaluation woven into an overall impression. This will prove the complexity that these studies carry out, as it deals with different people's feelings, impressions, emotions, behaviour, and decisions with different nationality, socio-cultural, educational and age group background (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Agapito et al., 2013; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2006). In Table 5, the literature review on destination image based on the covered topics from most of the researchers in the field is brought.

**Table 5: Literature Review on Destination Image**

Topics Covered	Author/s
Destination image formation process (static and dynamic)	(Alcaniz et al., 2009; G. J. Ashworth, 1991; G. Ashworth & Voogd, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Bigné et al., 2001; K. Chon, 1989, 1990, 1992; Coshall, 2000; Dann, 1996; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993, 2003; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1986, 1989, 1994; Gunn, 1972; Hunt, 1971, 1975; H. Kim & Richardson, 2003; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Oppermann, 1999; M. J. Stabler, 1988; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000)
Assessment and measurement of destination image	(Ahmed, 1991; Amor et al., 1994; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Bigné et al., 2001; Borchgrevink & Knutson, 1997; Bramwell & Rawding, 1996; Calantone et al., 1989; B. Carmichael, 1992; K. Chon, 1992; J. Crompton, 1979; J. Crompton et al., 1992; Dadgostar & Isotalo, 1996; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993; Embacher & Buttle, 1989; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1989, 1994; Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Goodrich, 1978; Gunn, 1972; Haahti & Yavas, 1983; C. Han, 1989; Hunt, 1971, 1975; King, 1994; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Lohmann & Kaim, 1999; Mazanec, 1994; Murphy et al., 2000; Oppermann, 1996; Reilly, 1990; M. J. Stabler, 1988; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000; Walmsley & Young, 1998)
Influence of distance on destination image	(Ahmed, 1991, 1996; G. Ashworth & Voogd, 1993; Borchgrevink & Knutson, 1997; J. Crompton, 1979; Dadgostar & Isotalo, 1996; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Hunt, 1971; Kotler & Gertner, 2002)
Destination image change	(Ahmed, 1991; G. Ashworth & Voogd, 1993; K. Chon, 1990; Dann, 1996; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991;

over time	Gartner, 1986; Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Murphy et al., 2000; Oppermann, 1996; Selby & Morgan, 1996; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000)
The active and passive role of residents in image studies	(Bigné et al., 2001; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Getz, 1994; King, 1994; R. Lawson et al., 1998; Lindberg & Johnson, 1997; Prentice & Hudson, 1993; C. Ryan & Montgomery, 1994; Schroeder, 1996; M. Smith & Krannich, 1998; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000; Witter, 1985)
Destination image management policies (positioning, promotion, etc.)	(Ahmed, 1991, 1996; Alford, 1998; Amor et al., 1994; G. J. Ashworth, 1991; G. Ashworth & Voogd, 1993; Baloglu, 1997; Bigné et al., 2001; Bramwell & Rawding, 1996; Calantone et al., 1989; Coshall, 2000; J. Crompton et al., 1992; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Fesenmaier & MacKay, 1996; Gartner, 1989, 1994; Getz, 1994; Goodrich, 1978; Haahti, 1986; C. Han, 1989; E. Heath, 1992; King, 1994; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Lohmann & Kaim, 1999; Murphy et al., 2000; Oppermann, 1996; Prentice & Hudson, 1993; J. Ritchie, 1993; C. Ryan & Montgomery, 1994; Schroeder, 1996; Selby & Morgan, 1996; M. Smith & Krannich, 1998; M. J. Stabler, 1988; Telisman-Kosuta, 1989)

Source: Adapted from Gallarza et al. (2002)

### 3.4. Image and its role in shaping the destination image

In several fields and disciplines, the concept of the image has developed and raised academic interest. In early studies, 'image' has been studied in different disciplines such as social and environmental psychology, philosophy, anthropology, marketing, and consumer behaviour, and it was believed that human behaviour depends on image rather than objective reality (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010)

Furthermore, as one of the first commentators, Reynolds (1965) explained that image formation as the development of a mental construct is based upon a few impressions chosen from a flood of information. 'Image' comprises the mental structures (visual or not) that integrate the elements, the values and the impressions that people have about a specific product or a place, and it is based on a series of knowledge and perceptions of both an emotional and affective nature.

Image theories resulted from the enhancement and refinement of the image concept, which suggested that the world is a psychological or distorted representation of objective reality existing in the individual's mind (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000).

In psychology, image formation is closely related to the concept of mental picturing

(which is defined as imagery), which is fulfilled by one or the human body's entire primary senses (Skavronskaya et al., 2017). According to psychologists, image is a way of processing and holding gathered data through multiple senses in the cognitive system (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Iordanova, 2015). Moreover, different positive or pleasant feelings regarding the image of a product or a place can be related to hedonic psychological views; therefore, it is possible to consider image formation as a mentally developed process with a firm root in psychology (Skavronskaya et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the crucial role of sociology, philosophy, and anthropology in conceptualizing the image as a mental construct is undeniable, as all these disciplines have proved the strong relationship between reality and individuals' perceptions (Iordanova, 2015; Prats et al., 2016). On the other hand, geographers will look at the "place image" through emotions and knowledge, as they may have a more conservative and holistic viewpoint (Jenkins, 1999).

"Product image" is a concept that has been widely used in marketing and consumer behaviour fields when it comes to individuals' perceptions of a product. Considering the place image as a product, it is not surprising that a product and a destination hold similar definitions (X. (Robert) Li, 2012; Madden et al., 2016). The way of defining the product image as the sum of impressions received from multiple sources can be seen in different studies conducted by Herzog (1963), Dichter (1985), Hampton et al. (1987) and Echtner & Ritchie (2003).

Brand image and its effect on consumer behaviour were first introduced in the 1950s. The brand image is defined as the sum of impressions that the consumer has about a brand that is established from different sources, ideas, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes (Barnes et al., 2014; Gardner and Levy, 1985 cited in Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Keller & Swaminathan, 2019; Kotler, 2017; J. Lee et al., 2014; Welch et al., 1958; Y. Zhang, 2015).

It is worth mentioning that in tourism, the construct of brand image is in line with the theories of place image. Accordingly, the big brands can positively or negatively affect the destinations. This issue will be discussed later on through a case study in the next chapter, "UNESCO's World Heritage Sites: The interplay between international and local branding for the Gonbad-e Qābus Brick Tower, Iran" (Shabani et al., 2020).

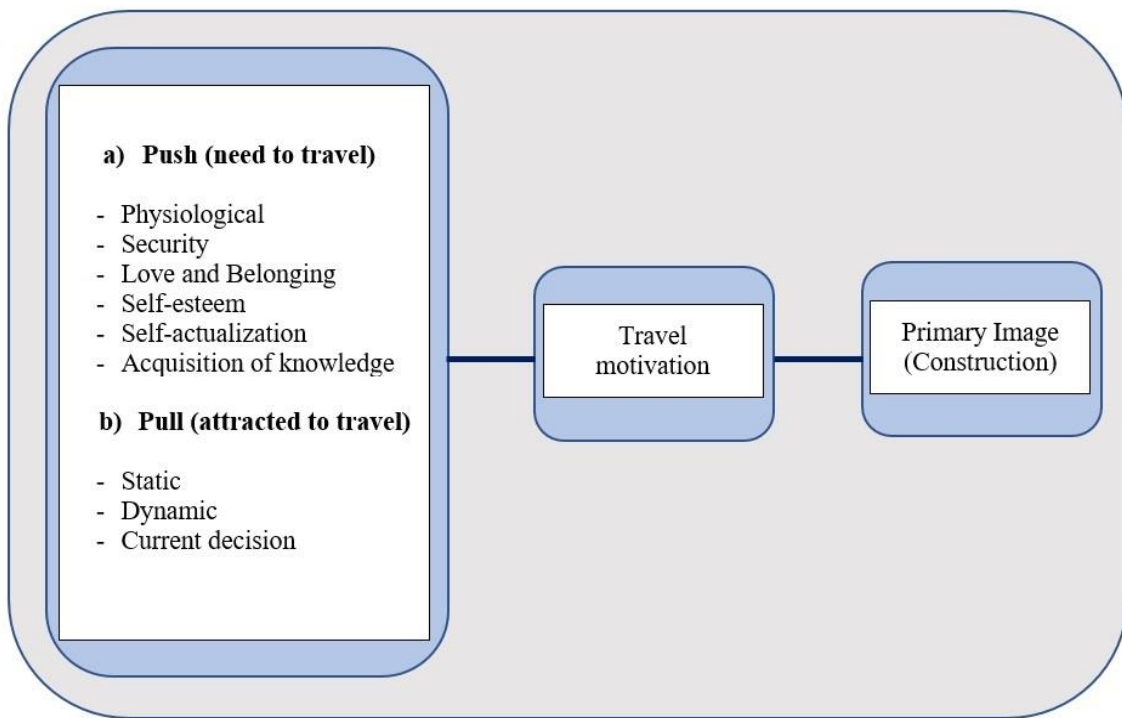
### *3.4.1. Primary versus secondary image*

There is a difference between primary and secondary images in destination image literature. The primary image will be built based on first-hand gathered information through personal observation (Figure 2). This information will help the final users (the tourists) to have a better understanding of the product (destination in our context) and will provide them with the needed data to shape an image in their minds based on their visit experience at the destination (Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Tasci & Holecek, 2007). However, the definition of the secondary image can be in contrast with the primary image, as it will be built based on second-hand data or information (Figure 3). This information can be from formal sources such as guidebooks, brochures, official websites and pages, or from informal sources such as family and friends before travelling to the destination (Phelps, 1986)

Among different typologies concerning the formation of the image, Gartner's (1994) typology, which was the elaboration of Gunn's (Gunn, 1972, 1988) works, is one of the most important ones that discuss the image is formed by organic, induced and autonomous sources of information, especially the secondary image. The secondary image will be perceived before experiencing a destination based on the different types of information that the tourists will be exposed to. On the other hand, the primary image will be more realistic as the image will be shaped based on the personal experience at the destination (Beerli & Martín, 2004).

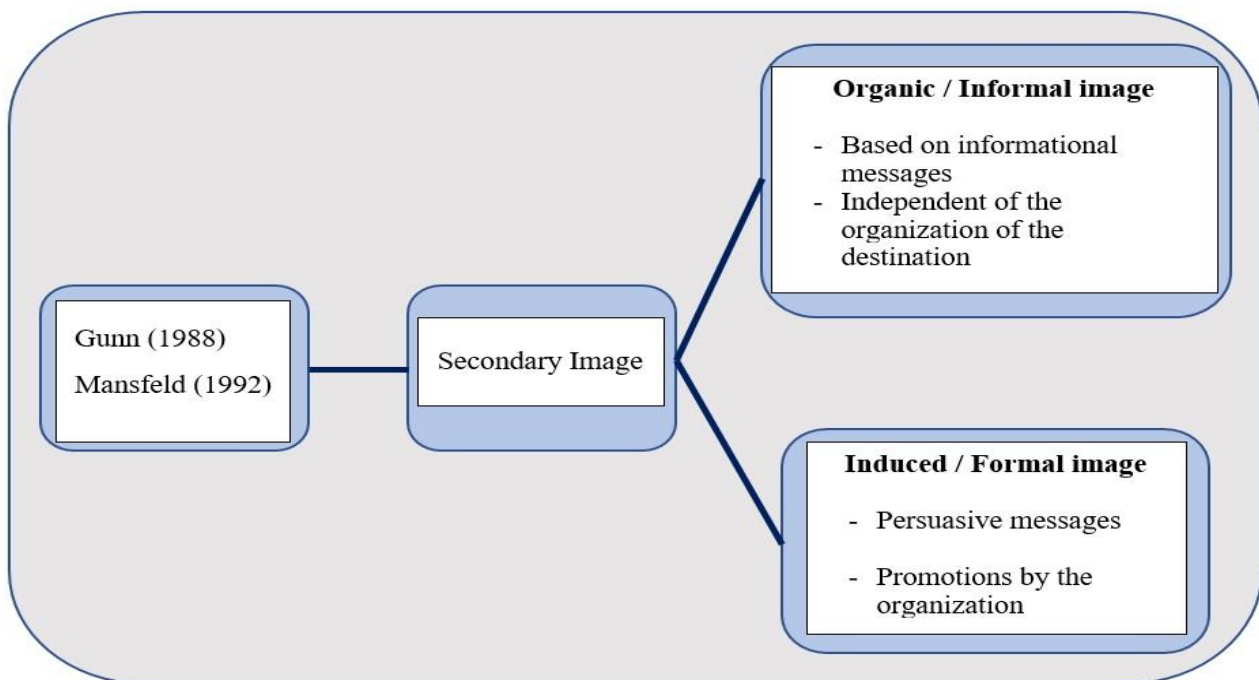
Accordingly, it might be possible to conclude; that individuals will travel to the destinations with the secondary image, but during their stay at the destination, that image will face some changes and will give its place to the primary image, which is more accurate and comprehensive and which is formed based on experiencing different activities and observations (Molina et al., 2010). Figure 4 shows the different types of images according to the type of knowledge and information.

**Figure 2: Construction of the primary image**



Source: Lubbe (1998)

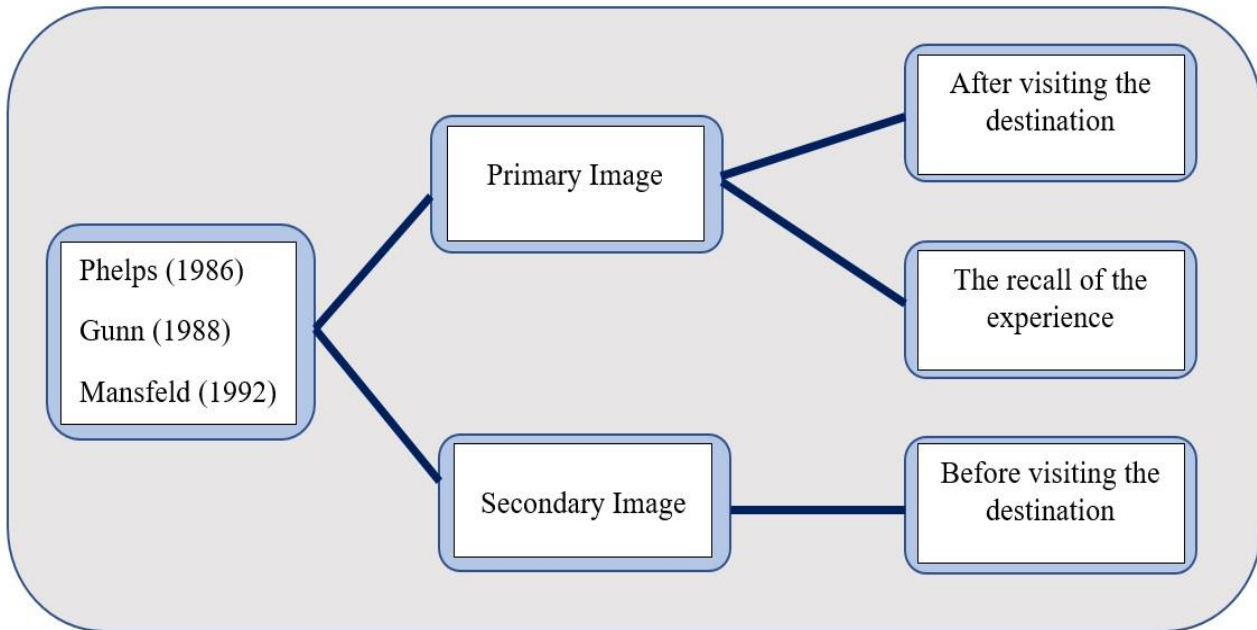
**Figure 3: Types of the secondary image**



Source: Gunn, (1988) and Mansfeld (1992)



**Figure 4: Image types according to the type of knowledge**



Source: Phelps (1986); Gunn (1988); and Mansfeld (1992)

#### *3.4.1.1. Organic information sources*

Gunn (1972, 1988, 1997) discussed that different information sources form images over time. Gunn further explained in the same research that all the knowledge that individuals have and the information they may receive from newspapers, documentaries, word-of-mouth, radio and TV news, or any non-commercial sources could be considered the organic source of information. Among the mentioned sources, word-of-mouth (especially from friends and families) can significantly influence people's impressions of destinations and is a powerful factor influencing the travel decision-making process (Gartner, 1994; Mercille, 2005).

#### *3.4.1.2. Induced information sources*

Apart from organic information sources, Gunn (1972, 1988, 1997) has also introduced induced sources. Induced sources are that specific information that is made by marketing and tourism agencies in order to target and attract tourists. These types of information sources have different forms, such as advertisements campaigns on social media, commercials on TV and print media. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the efficiency of these information sources, compared to their high cost, mainly was a big

question. Accordingly, their effectiveness largely depends on targeting the correct audiences and the investment budget that a destination can execute (Gartner, 1994).

#### *3.4.2. Pre-visit versus post-visit image*

Unlike the primary and secondary image discussions, Gallarza et al. (2002) discuss the dynamic nature of the image. According to this view of destination image research, the image does not have a static nature but changes based on different variables such as space and time. This approach considers that visitors' images vary over time, and each individual has their own image based on their unique experience. Overall, Gallarza et al. (2002) presume the uniqueness of these experiences can have the root in different types of activities, services and accommodations each individual may use. Therefore, the "at the destination" experience will help shape a new image (post-visit), which can be different from the pre-visit one.

#### *3.4.3. Attribute-based versus holistic image*

In psychology, image formation is considered a distinct way of processing and storing multisensory information in working memory. Images can include different information gathered from any or all senses - smell, taste, sight, sound and touch (MacInnis & Price, 1987). All products and services have an image with a construct made up of multiple items; the same scenario can be seen in a tourism context, the existence of a multiplicity of variables making up the identity of a destination's image. MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997) also mentioned that "destination image is a composite of various products (attractions) and attributes woven into a total impression". Accordingly, the destination can be considered a product, and the numerous variables are the components of the holistic image (Gallarza et al., 2002; T. J. Reynolds & Guttman, 1984).

In some studies, the image was considered a holistic perception of the destination, whereby individuals internally assess their perceptions based on holistic rather than functional attributes. For example, MacInnis and Price (1987) suggest that products (destinations in the tourism context) are perceived both in terms of individual attributes and holistic impressions; however, it is still unclear if it would be possible that a destination image is an output in itself or has to be based on underlying attributes (Gallarza et al., 2002).

### 3.5. Components of the destination image

Over the years, there have been many arguments regarding the dimension(s) of the destination image. For example, while Phelps (1986) considered the “cognitive” dimension as the only component of the image due to its relevance, other researchers agreed on two dimensions; “cognitive” and “affective” (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Gartner, 1994; Hanyu, 1993; C. Lin et al., 2007; Moutinho, 1987; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

Gartner (1994) has introduced another perspective that suggested not only one or two but three dimensions, in which he discussed the hierarchical relationship between the three dimensions, explaining the product preference.

The result of Gartner’s research (1994) was a model introducing three main dimensions of destination image, known as cognitive, affective and conative, which is in line with Boulding’s research (1956) about the image (Dann, 1996; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010; Tasci et al., 2007; Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

Boulding (1956) discusses that an image comprises:

- “what one knows and thinks about an object (cognitive),
- How one feels about it (affective),
- and how one acts using this information (conative)”.

According to destination image literature, image is a concept that will be shaped by the individuals’ reasoning and emotional interpretation. This means the image construct simultaneously includes cognitive and affective evaluations (Beerli & Martín, 2004).

**Cognitive:** Boulding’s (1956) description of the cognitive image in destination image context can be considered as the knowledge, ideas and tourists’ evaluation of a particular destination, while Baloglu and McCleary (1999) described it as rational or the sum of a person’s knowledge and perceptions of a set of relevant destination’s attribute. Cognitive perception is the process by which meaning is attributed to an object, event or destination that can be formed without the actual experience and objective knowledge of the destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Özdemir & Yolal, 2016).

Cognition and perceptive components of the destination image are explained and shaped by the environment people live in and are defined as a mental response that involves thinking about, paying attention to, remembering, understanding, interpreting, and evaluating, which are different in each individual due to the different values and views. Gensch (1978 as cited in Gartner, 1994) stated the cognitive interpretation of the image as “products seldom are measured or evaluated as single lump sum entities; rather, it is the attributes of the alternatives that are measured, compared, and form the basis for choice.” Thus, in case the destination attributes are perceived positively, a more favourable behaviour attitude towards the destination will be expected as well, and negatively perceived attributes account for an unfavourable behaviour attitude towards the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Özdemir & Yolal, 2016; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010; Tasci et al., 2007).

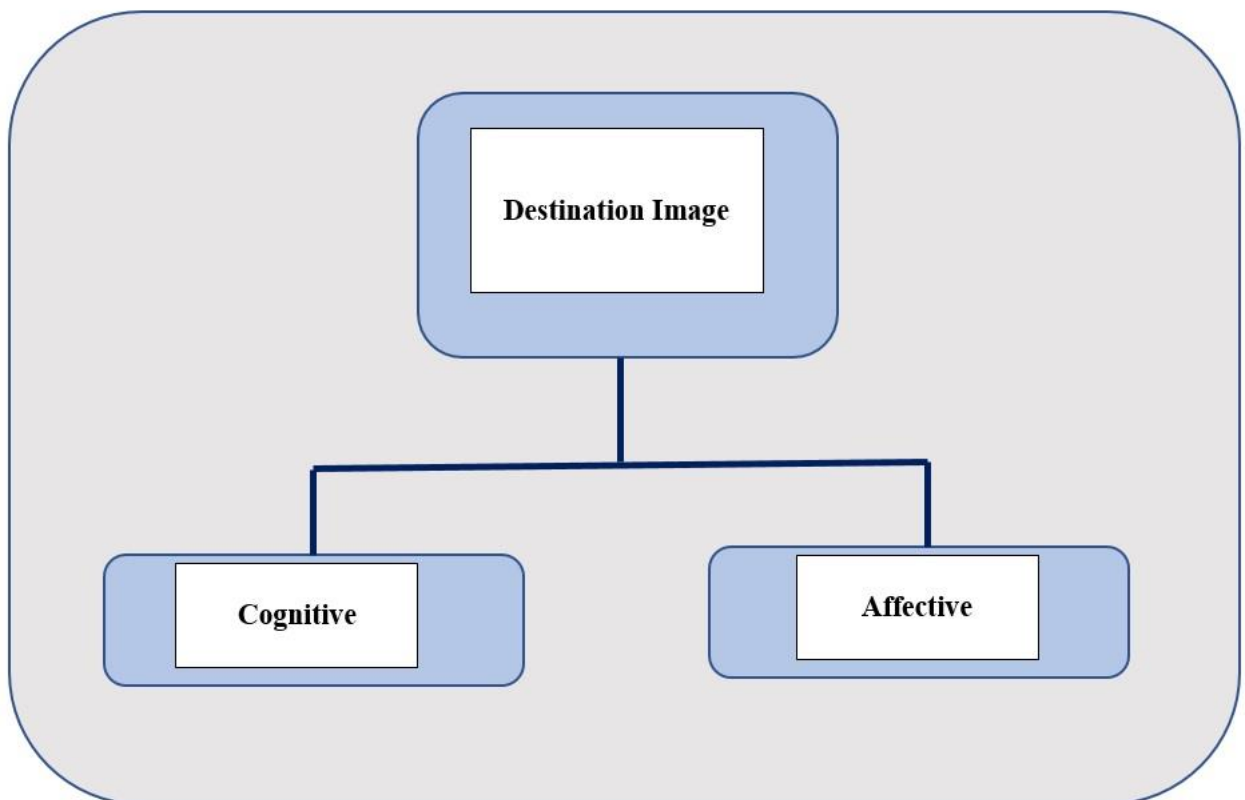
**Affective:** The affective evaluation refers to the feelings (involves both cognition and emotion) towards that place or its attachment (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). Previously until the late 1990s, the predominance of cognitive image studies can be observed in the studies; however, after that period, the affective image emerged as another determinant of destination image (Alcaniz et al., 2009). The affective component is considered vital as it reflects human feelings (either positive or negative), including mood and emotion; Yan et al. (Yan et al., 2018) stated that emotions are part of attitude and play an important role in our everyday lives. In brief, the affective component refers to how individuals feel about a destination (J. Han & Patterson, 2007), and it is the tourists’ motives and feelings which will be attached to the destination (Gartner, 1994).

It has been identified that the affective component has a significant influence on a person’s evaluation and selection of a destination, and the pivotal role of attitude theory is discussed by expanding interest in tourist behaviour, practising both cognitive and affective image measurements (Becken et al., 2016; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Fu et al., 2016; Gallarza et al., 2002; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

The researchers have agreed that an individual’s feelings towards a destination constitute an affective component of the destination, but the cognitive and affective components are interrelated; accordingly, the cognitive evaluation precedes and influences the affective appraisal during the process of the overall image formation (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Becken et al., 2016; J. S. Chen & Uysal, 2002; Hallmann et al., 2013; J.-H. Kim, 2017, p. 20; Noh & Vogt, 2013; Stylos et al., 2017). Nevertheless, Russel and Sondgrass (1978

cited in Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010) stated that in order to understand better how people evaluate environment or places, the affective image should be explored separately from cognitive image “behaviour may be influenced by the (estimated or remembered) affective quality of an environment rather than by its objective properties directly.” Figure 5 shows the two components of destination image: cognitive and affective (Assael, 1998; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Um, 1998)

**Figure 5: The two components of destination image: cognitive and affective**



Source: Baloglu & Brinberg (1997)

**Conative:** Dann (1996) described the conative component as “the action component which builds on the cognitive and affective stages”. Thus, the Conative or behavioural component is more or less related to the probability of tourists revisiting or even recommending the destination (Alcaniz et al., 2009; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Pike & Ryan, 2004). Unfortunately, this component has not been widely used nor studied; however, Tasci et al. (2007) stated that the conative component is significant in conceptualizing destination image.

The conative component is the result of cognitive and affective components, as the initial image will be developed during the cognitive stage and will be assessed during the affective stage. As a result, it is possible to consider this component and its essential role in tourists' purchase behaviour, their intention to recommend or revisit (Alcaniz et al., 2009; Bigné et al., 2001; Chi & Qu, 2008, p. 20; Del Bosque & Martín, 2008; Pike & Ryan, 2004). Gartner (1994) also stated that the conative component responds to the behavioural attitude towards the destination, as this is the point where individuals decide if they would be interested in travelling to the particular destination.

### *3.5.1. Dimensions of Destination Image*

In 1991, Echtner and Ritchie researched the aspect of destination image measurement. They have significantly contributed to developing a framework for destination image, which indicates that it consists of psychological and functional characteristics. The psychological one relates to intangible characteristics, and the functional characteristics concern a destination's tangible aspects.

By considering destinations as the products, numerous variables will be the components of their holistic image (Reynolds & Guttman, 1984 quoted by Gallarza et al., 2002). One of the problems of destination image research addressed by Jenkins (1999) is that destination images “are holistic representations of a place” and that in attempting to measure them, researchers have focused chiefly on the parts or attributes singularly. Accordingly, based on their work, it is possible to summarise the common attributes considered in destination image research, gathered in a vertical axe that goes from functional to psychological characteristics (Figure 6) (Gallarza et al., 2002). It is the same approach that Echtner and Ritchie (1991) worked on and elaborated for their destination image model.

According to the results that emerged from Echtner and Ritchie's (1991) observation of the product image research (MacInnis & Price, 1987), the decision-making process depends on individuals' perception of products (in the tourism context can be considered as destinations) as both individual attributes on the one hand and holistic impressions on the other. Moreover, they argued that, while the functional characteristics are directly observable and measurable (e.g. prices), the psychological characteristics are not the same and cannot be as easily measured (e.g. the atmosphere or friendliness of local people).

**Figure 6: Attributes used by researchers to measure destination image**

Attributes Used by Researchers to Measure Destination Image	
Functional (physical, measurable)	Functional (physical, measurable)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scenery/Natural Attractions</li> <li>Costs/Price Levels</li> <li>Climate</li> <li>Tourist Sites/Activities</li> <li>Nightlife and Entertainment</li> <li>Sports Facilities/Activities</li> <li>National Parks/Wilderness Activities</li> <li>Local Infrastructure/Transportation</li> <li>Architecture/Buildings</li> <li>Historic Sites/Museums</li> <li>Beaches</li> <li>Shopping Facilities</li> <li>Accommodation Facilities</li> <li>Cities</li> <li>Fairs, Exhibits, Festivals</li> <li>Facilities for Information and Tours</li> <li>Crowdedness</li> <li>Cleanliness</li> <li>Personal Safety</li> <li>Economic Development/Affluence</li> <li>Accessibility</li> <li>Degree of Urbanisation</li> <li>Extent of Commercialisation</li> <li>Political Stability</li> <li>Hospitality/Friendliness/Receptiveness</li> <li>Different Customs/Culture</li> <li>Different Cuisine/Food and Drink</li> <li>Restful/Relaxing</li> <li>Atmosphere (Familiar versus Exotic)</li> <li>Opportunity for Adventure</li> <li>Opportunity to Increase Knowledge</li> <li>Family or Adult Oriented</li> <li>Quality of Service</li> <li>Fame/Reputation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various Activities</li> <li>Landscape, Surroundings</li> <li>Nature</li> <li>Cultural Attractions</li> <li>Nightlife and Entertainment</li> <li>Shopping Facilities</li> <li>Information Available</li> <li>Transport</li> <li>Accommodation</li> <li>Gastronomy</li> <li>Price, Value, Cost</li> <li>Climate</li> <li>Relaxation vs Massific</li> <li>Safety</li> <li>Social Interaction</li> <li>Residents' Receptiveness</li> <li>Originality</li> <li>Service Quality</li> </ul>
Psychological (abstract)	Psychological (abstract)
Source: Echtner and Ritchie (1991)	Source: Gallarza et al. (2002)

It also explains the standard method of organising attributes along the functional/psychological line. As a result, it is possible to apply the attributes/ holistic and the functional/ psychological axis for the tourist destination image concept (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). The output of combining the two axes will be a two-dimensional model, in which the four components of a destination image are explained;

- The functional-holistic image (e.g. the mental picture of individuals of the destination's physical characteristics)
- The psychological-holistic image (e.g. the general feeling of individuals of the atmosphere at the destination)
- The functional-attribute image (e.g. relatively high prices or warm climate)
- and the psychological-attribute image (e.g. overall safety, friendly local people).

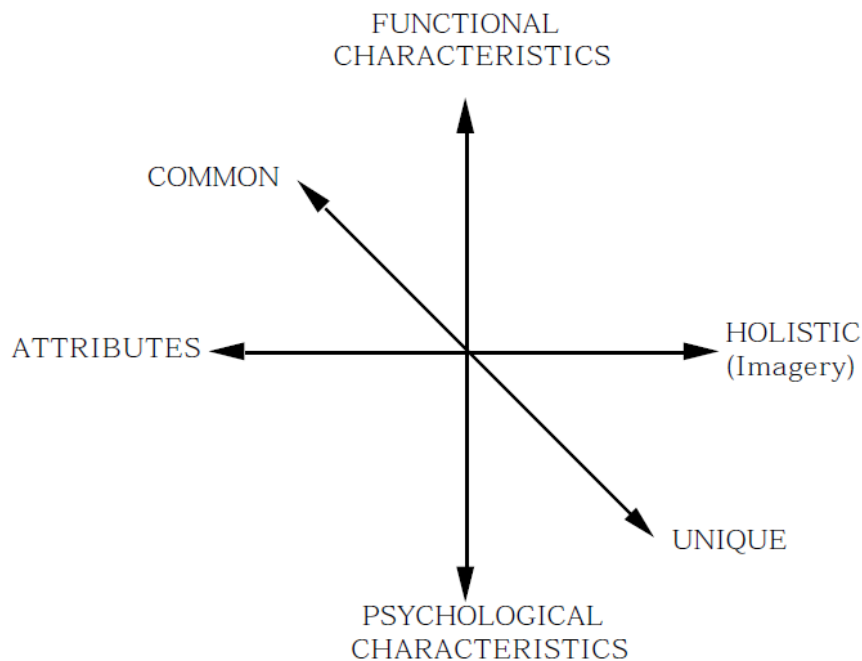
Moreover, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) have included the third axis in their conceptual framework ranging from common to unique.

Overall, the three dimensions of Echtner and Ritchie's (1991) conceptual framework will define and measure the destination image in three axes (Figure 7):

- Attributes - Holistic: the destination image is attribute-based (more tangible, e.g. related to the perception of the individuals from destination features) and has holistic components as well (more abstract, e.g. the mental imagery of a destination)
- Functional - Psychological: functional (measurable perceptions like natural scenery and accommodation) and psychological (more abstract, like atmosphere or friendliness of the local community) characteristics
- Common - Unique: this axis suggests that destination image could range from common traits to those traits based on more unique features, events, and feelings.



**Figure 7: The components of destination image**



Source: Echtner and Ritchie (1991)

This conceptual framework suggests two different components; holistic and attributes; for destination image, each comprises psychological or functional characteristics, which could again reflect common or unique features of a destination (Hunt, 1982; Rezende-Parker et al., 2003).

Thus, the third dimension implies that “images of destinations can range from those ‘common’ functional and psychological traits to those based on more unique features, events, feelings or auras”. This means the destination image is composed of somehow the common features on which different destinations can be compared and evaluated, such as the price level. Moreover, the mentioned characteristics can have functional or psychological nature. Furthermore, it is possible to consider that destination images are unique. For example, when tourists talk about Paris, the image of the Eiffel Tower and the city's romantic atmosphere (unique and intangible) might evoke immediately (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Accordingly, making a unique image can play a vital role in differentiating the destination and winning over other competitors in the mind of the tourists.

### 3.5.2. *Destination image construct proposed by Tasci et al. (2007)*

Tasci et al. (2007) have looked at destination image studies building on the work of Echtner and Ritchie (1991) by considering their model's limitations. In their studies, Tasci et al. (2007) have considered the general belief of the cognitive, affective and conative model, which is aligned with the holistic-attributive as well as the common-unique model of Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993, 2003) and have developed the interactive system of destination image components.

An interactive system of destination image components was the result of Tasci et al. (2007) research, in which, at its core, there is cognitive knowledge of common and unique attributes of the destination and consequently the affective response to those attributes. The authors have also noticed that a composite image (holistic or overall) is formed regarding the interaction between the knowledge of unique and common attributes and feelings toward them. Moreover, the affective component is a mediating factor between the cognitive and the holistic components. Therefore, considering the common and unique attributes' knowledge as a fact, providing more detail about the core would be possible to reduce the stereotype of a holistic synthesis (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1994; San Martín & Del Bosque, 2008; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2006; L. Su et al., 2016; H. Zhang et al., 2014).

According to Figure 8, the interaction between the individuals that is driven by the knowledge of common and unique attributes combined with the affective evaluation composes a holistic stereotypical or overall image, which can ease the decision-making process. Furthermore, the output of Tasci et al. (2007) research is a dynamically interactive system in which every element can be either the cause of a change or the effect of a change at any point in time, and factors cannot be comprehended in isolation. Finally, the authors have identified that the destination image is an interactive system of visualizations, opinions, intentions, feelings, and thoughts toward a destination.

**Figure 8: Interactive system of image components**



Source: Tasci et al. (2007)

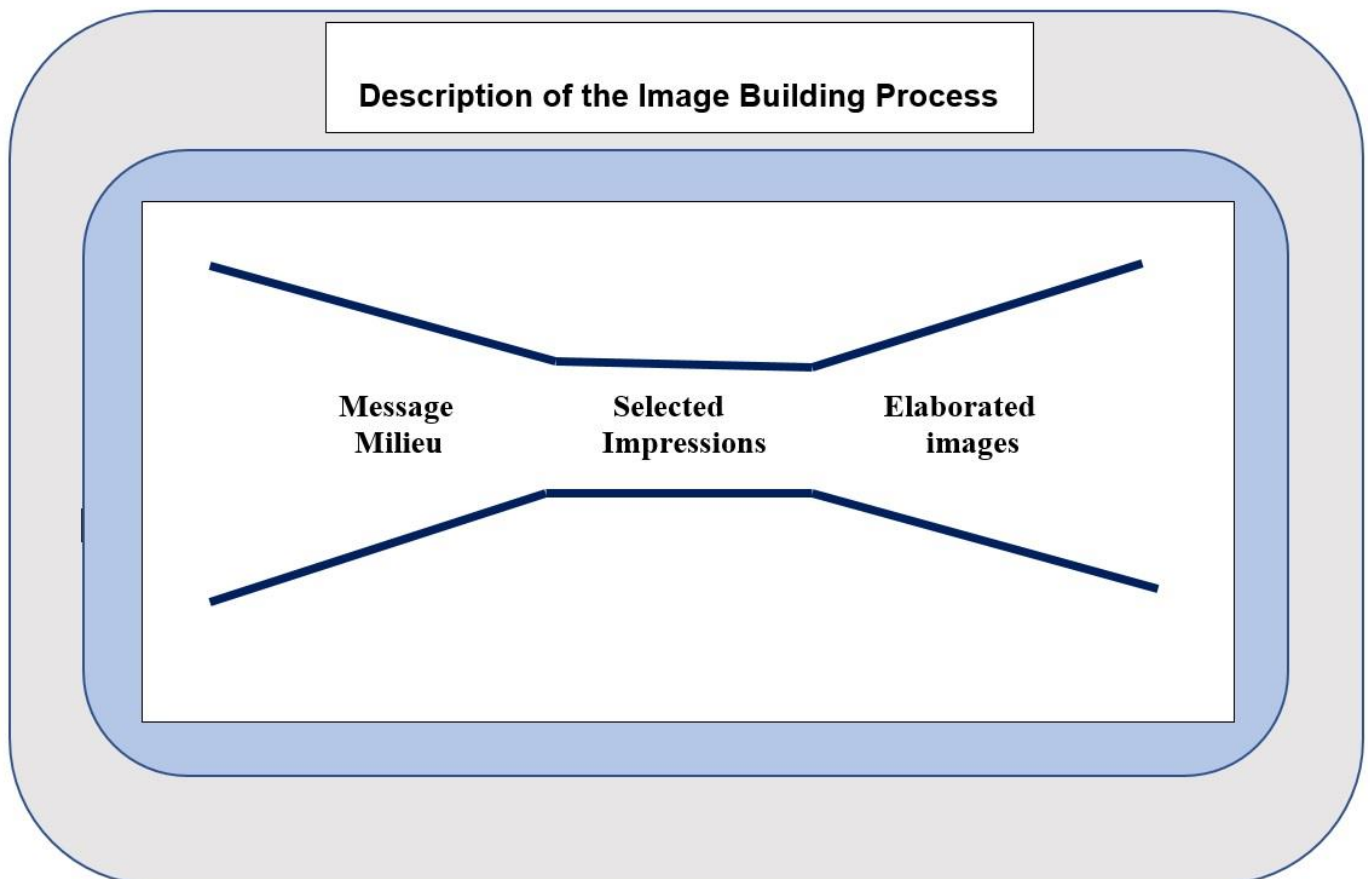
### 3.6. Destination image formation process

In order to understand the purchase behaviour and tourists' destination choice, it is essential for Tourism Authorities and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to have a better understanding of the fundamental concept of destination image and its formation, such as choosing a particular destination over others is influenced by more positive and more robust destination image (Gartner, 1994; Tham et al., 2013).

The destination image formation process results from a complex process in which tourists develop a mental construct based upon a few selected impressions among a “flood of information” (Figure 9). This information stream comes from different sources such as the Internet and social media, word of mouth (family/friends, travel agents), general media (print media, television, and movies), promotional literature (travel brochures, posters) and more importantly, the gathered information based on the actual visit of the destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; W. Reynolds, 1965; Selby & Morgan, 1996).

As a result, the perception or image of a tourist destination is built on the information processed from different sources over time. These images “become prior texts for prospective tourists, motivating interest in particular destinations and shaping conceptions of distant peoples long before they are directly encountered” (Adams, 2004; Court & Lupton, 1997; Leisen, 2001).

**Figure 9: Description of the image building process**



Source: Reynolds (1965)

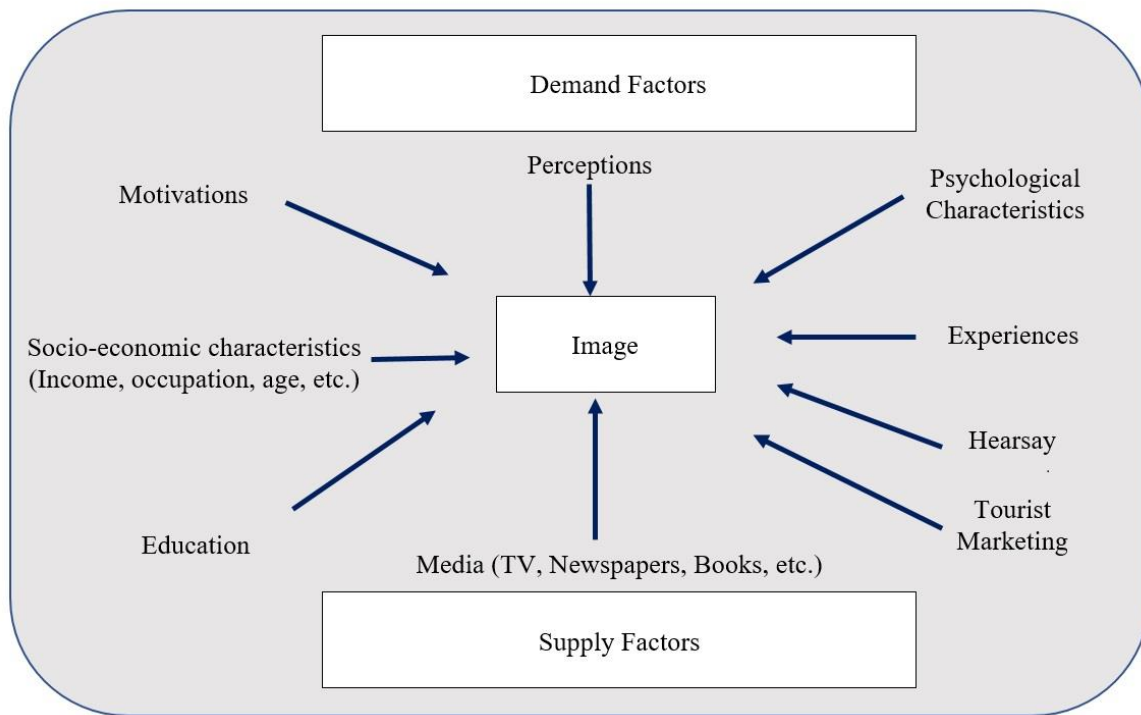
Reynolds (1965) (Figure 9) explained: “... a consumer can create [...] an amazingly detailed image of a product, and the people likely to use it [...] complete with evaluative attitudes and emotional overtones” that in some cases, the “image” is considered as same as reputation, accordingly, this reputation could be based on the facts or some beliefs. (W. Reynolds, 1965). This can play the role of a double-edged sword as positive beliefs can encourage travel to the destination, but the negative ones can dissuade the tourists from visiting that destination, and in the worst scenario, they start doing negative word of mouth.

Destination image formation usually incorporates two ends of information transmission; the destination and the receiver. MacKay and Fesenmaier's (1997) findings indicate that destination image formation is “a composite of individual inputs and marketer inputs”. In the image formation context, it is crucial to consider both the supply-side (the destination, for example, by marketing activities) and the demand-side (the receiver) components. Consequently, the projected image is not necessarily the same as the received image; however, the more similar the projected images and received images are, the more explicit message will be sent to the tourists (Figure 8)

Based on the level of exposure tourists will have with marketing efforts from the demand or supply side, the image will be shaped along with their personal values and knowledge (known as the influencing factors (Figure 10)) (Stabler, 1988). However, Doswell (1997) argued, this image building process may not work all the time and can be long and expensive for the destinations; thus, it is suggested that destinations need to project a positive image in an ongoing process.

Font (1997) also mentioned, “...The human mind needs to search for coherence and balance in the information it receives. In this process, the prospective tourist will order, rationalize and justify information from different and often conflicting sources. Information gaps will be filled by the customer, who will either embellish or denigrate the destination image according to subjective opinion, in an effort to link what is known to what is imagined.”

**Figure 10: Factors influencing the formation of consumers' (tourist) image**



Source: Stabler (1988)

### 3.6.1. The multifaceted character of destination image formation

According to Gallarza et al. (2002), the concept of destination image formation falls into two streams: static and dynamic. The static approach emphasises structural relationships between a destination's image and other constructs such as satisfaction, destination choice, and motivation. Nevertheless, in the dynamic approach, the emphasis is on the process and structure of the destination image itself. In the static approach, the interrelations between the destination image and other constructs will be measured through statistical modelling techniques, generally in behavioural studies (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010), whereas, in the dynamic approach, the destination image is considered as a continuously evolving structure (Iordanova & Styliadis, 2017).

This means the main feature of dynamical systems is time dependency and thus changing over time, accordingly; in the destination image context, the image will change gradually during time based on the findings that confirm changes throughout new information or after the travel experience to the destination (can improve or turn into negative) (Gilbert et al., 2015; Iordanova, 2015).

According to destination image literature, destination image has a significant influence, which is not limited to the choice of a destination, but it affects the tourist's behaviour at all stages, and the image will be assessed in terms of prior visitation, during visitation, and after trip evaluations (G. Ashworth & Goodall, 1988; Mansfeld, 1992). Based on that, it is possible to consider three different phases of tourist behaviour and image formation:

- Before (Priori image); the 1st phase, the decision process before travelling to the destination. It is the mental construction of an image of a destination by individuals without having a physical connection to the place.

- During (Image in Loco); the 2nd phase, the evaluation process between the experience at the destination versus the expectations met. It will be a key moment in the tourists' experience, as they will compare all their pre-visit perceptions with the realities at the destination. As a result, the new image at the destination can be better, similar (or the same), or worse than the primary image (pre-visit).

- and After (Posteriori image); the 3rd phase, after vacation experience, variables regarding the tourists' experiences and future behaviour, e.g. the decision process of revisiting and or recommending the destination to others (Matos et al., 2012; Prayag, 2008; Shabani & Tucker, 2018).

Brokaw (Brokaw, 1990) discussed that "Before image can be used to influence behaviour, it is important to understand what influences image" accordingly, the "Priori" or initial image formation stage is the most critical phase in tourists' destination selection processes (Gunn, 1972; Mercer, 1971). Furthermore, Goodall (1988) brought this discussion to attention that identifying the influential factors will help destination marketers decide which image should be promoted to which segment of the market.

While numerous researchers emphasized the importance of understanding forces that influence image development, only a few empirical studies have focused on how the image is actually formed through analysing the dynamic nature of the image (Brokaw, 1990; Burgess, 1978; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1989, 1994; C. Han, 1989; Kotler et al., 1993; Phelps, 1986; Russell & Snodgrass, 1987; Sheth & Myers, 1969; Stern & Krakover, 2010).

In Figure 11, the elements that have a dynamic influence on how the perceived destination image is formulated in the consumer's mind are shown (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). This

destination image formation model provides a basis for the detailed synthesis of the destination image paradigm, as it discusses the tourism demands specifications, tourism development strategies and tourism delivery and supply (3-TDS) gap perspective, confronting host-guest (supply-and-demand) perspectives (based on the idea of the 5-gap service quality analysis model by Baloglu & McCleary (1999), Fesenmaier & MacKay (1996), Gartner (1994), and Parasuraman et al. (1985)).

Three gaps have been identified in the Destination Image Formation Model; Govers and Go (2003) argued that the main elements from a host/guest perspective (supply versus demand) with more significant influence on the tourists' construction of destination image. These gaps can affect tourists' satisfaction and consequently might have an effect on the destination image:

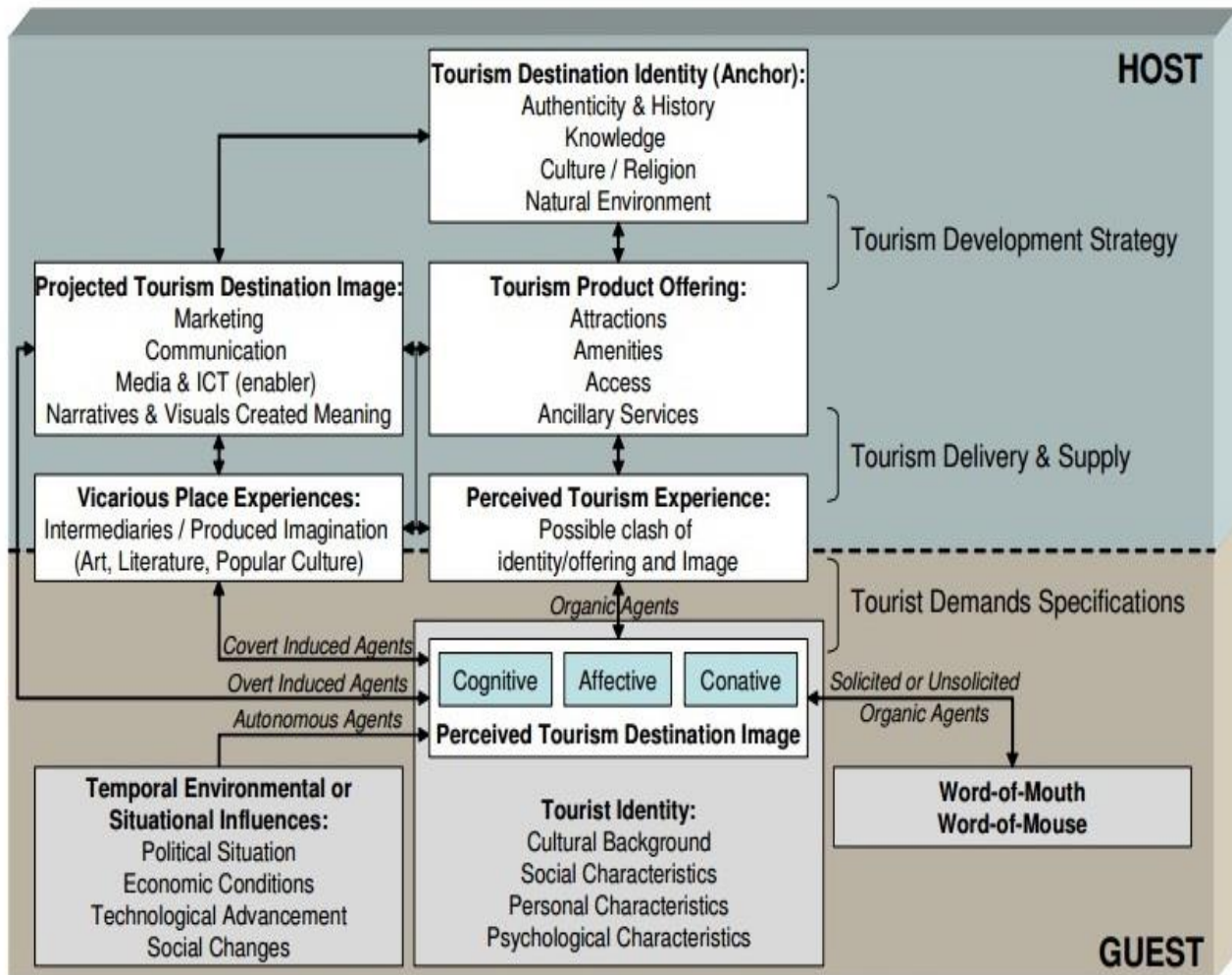
- The first gap is identified as "Tourism Development Strategy", which is about the managers facing difficulties introducing an attractive, consistent tourism product by using cultural identity as the core competitive advantage to reach the potential target markets.

The second gap was discussed as "Tourism Delivery and Supply", in which different interpretations might happen regarding the projected destination image because of tourists' cultural backgrounds. This might be the result of the different cultural backgrounds and consequent interpretations and the subjective WOM (Word-of-mouth), leading tourists' to interpret and follow "different scripts" from the one projected.

The final gap is identified as "Tourist Demand and Specifications," during which conflicts could arise because of different interpretations from the host and guests' readings of the "script" (image vs reality) (Govers & Go, 2003).



**Figure 11: The 3-gap destination image formation model**



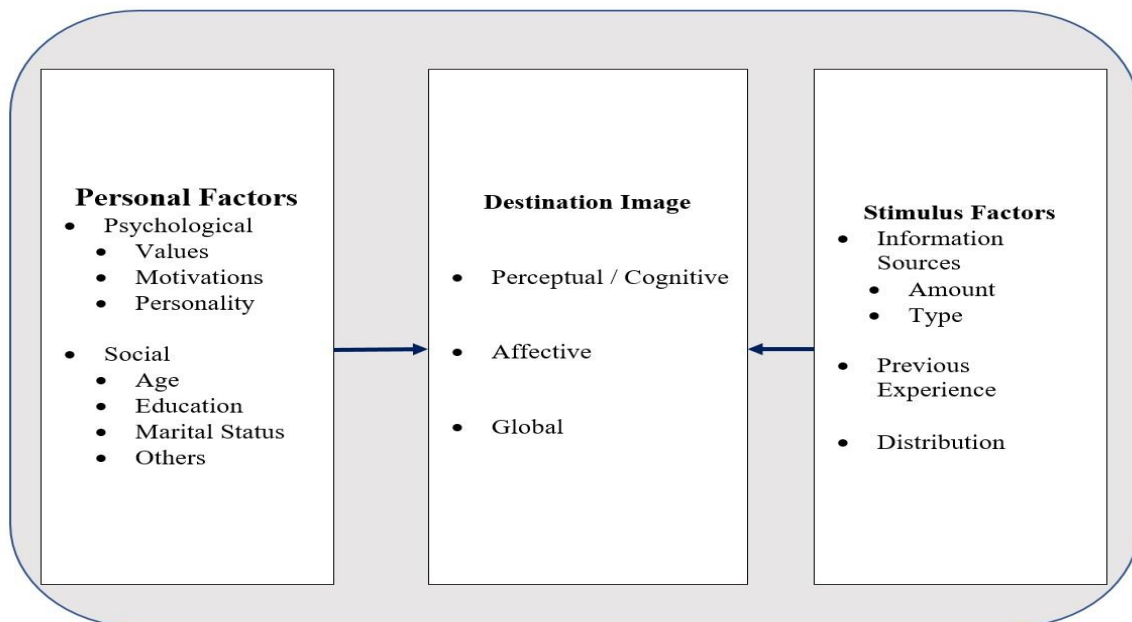
Source: Adapted from the basic idea of the 5-gap service quality analysis model by Parasuraman et al. (1985) and major contributions from Baloglu and McCleary (1999); Gartner (1994), and Fesenmaier and MacKay (1996)

### 3.6.2. Image formation agents

In the formation of an image, different factors play a role that involves both information from different sources and the person's individual characteristics (Beerli & Martín, 2004). According to Jenkins (1999), influencing factors can be placed into two groups: demand and supply factors. The demand factors have their root in psychological characteristics, socio-economic features, personal motivations, perceptions and experiences of individuals; accordingly, each person's image of a place is unique. On the other hand, supply factors have their root in education, media and marketing (Jenkins, 1999).

Figure 12 presents a general framework of destination image formation developed from previous studies regarding the image formation agent. According to Baloglu and McClary (1999), image is mainly formed by stimulus factors and personal factors, and both will contribute to developing a perception of an image of a place. Stimulus factors depend on the external stimulus and physical object, information sources and previous experience of the individuals, while personal factors are related to the characteristics of the individuals, such as psychological (for example, values, motivations or personality), and social (such as age, education, marital status). The general framework presented in Figure 12 served as a framework for developing the proposed path model in Figure 12 in Baloglu and McClary's (1999) research.

**Figure 12: A general framework of destination image formation**

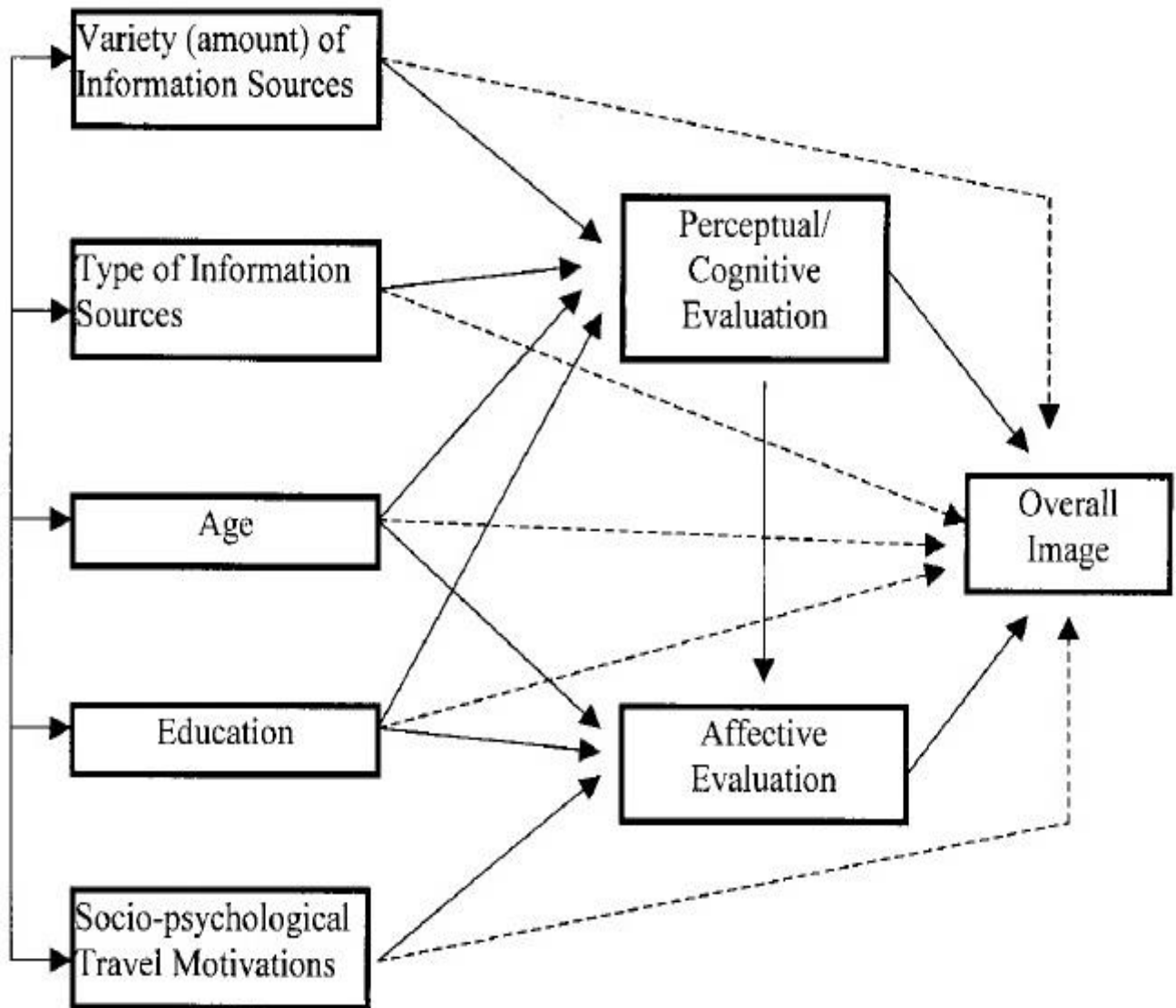


Source: Baloglu and McClary (1999)

Figure 13 is the Path Model of the Determinants of Destination Image Before Actual Visitation. The straight lines from exogenous to endogenous variables denote the paths (effects) that are hypothesized and tested, while dashed lines denote the paths (effects) that are not hypothesized but tested to examine the overall pattern of the model. Researchers from various domains agree that the image construct encompasses both cognitive and affective evaluations. Thus, image is viewed as a concept moulded by customers' rational and emotional interpretations. While cognitive evaluation relates to information or opinions about a particular destination, affective evaluation refers to feelings about that location. As a result, a cognitive assessment of objects is said to serve

as the foundation on which later affective responses are created due to the cognitive assessment. When these two assessments are combined, an overall destination image is created (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

**Figure 13: Path model of the determinants of destination image before actual visitation.**



Source: Baloglu and McCleary (1999)

### *3.6.3. Factors involved in the formation of destination images*

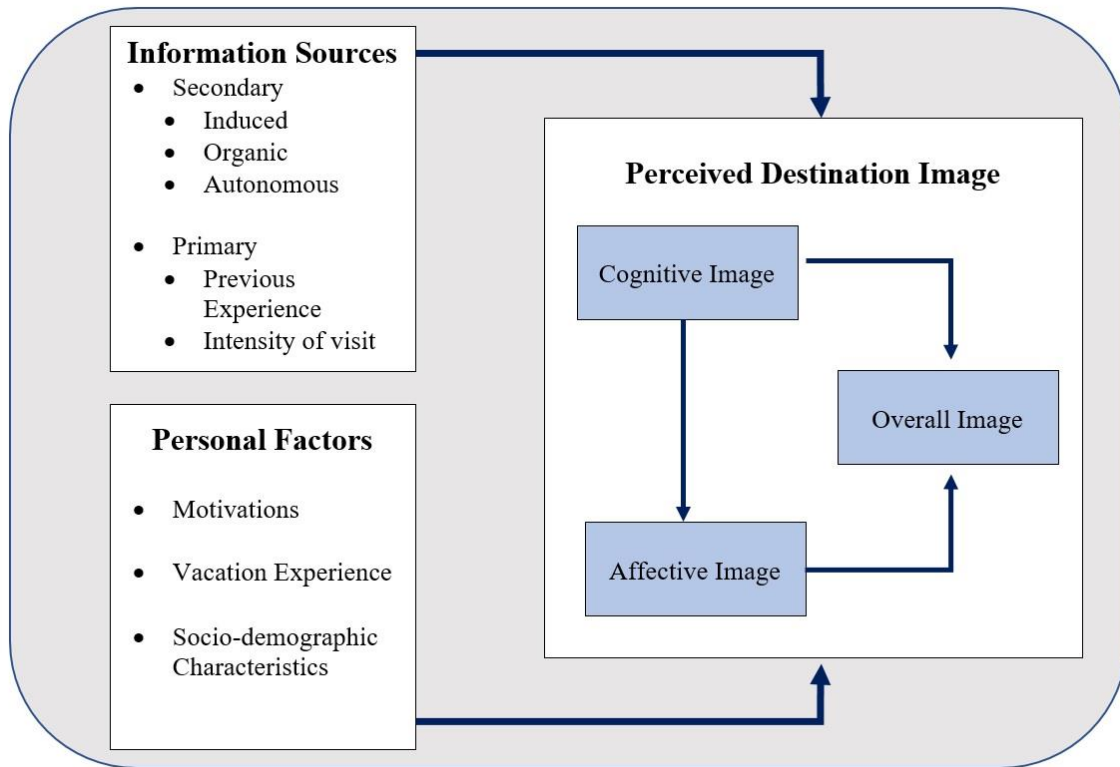
In their research, Beerli and Martin (2004) have defined and analysed the relationship between the different factors that are determinants of a destination's perceived image.

Moreover, Beerli and Martin (2004) have categorised the influencing image formation factors into two main categories; personal factors and information sources that will lead to a destination's cognitive, affective, and overall image. They described the personal factors as psychological characteristics such as individuals' needs and motives, accumulated touristic experiences, values, personality or lifestyle, as well as those of a socio-demographic nature (Stabler (1988), Figure 14, also discussed these factors), which can be considered as internal factors, along with the different information sources (primary and secondary) that have a significant influence on image formation. In their studies, Camprubi et al. (2013) argued that tourists would play the role of an agent in the process of destination image formation through their direct and spontaneous contributions to social media and forums.

Baloglu and McCleary (1999), in a study, examined the image formation process through a most comprehensible path model, and they illustrated the role of the personal and the stimulus factors. The same result can be seen in the studies of other researchers that have identified the vital role of information and other external stimuli such as advertising, news, etc. and their effects on the formation of destination image (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Jeong & Holland, 2012; S. Kim & Morrision, 2005; Lepp et al., 2011; Yüksel & Akgül, 2007).

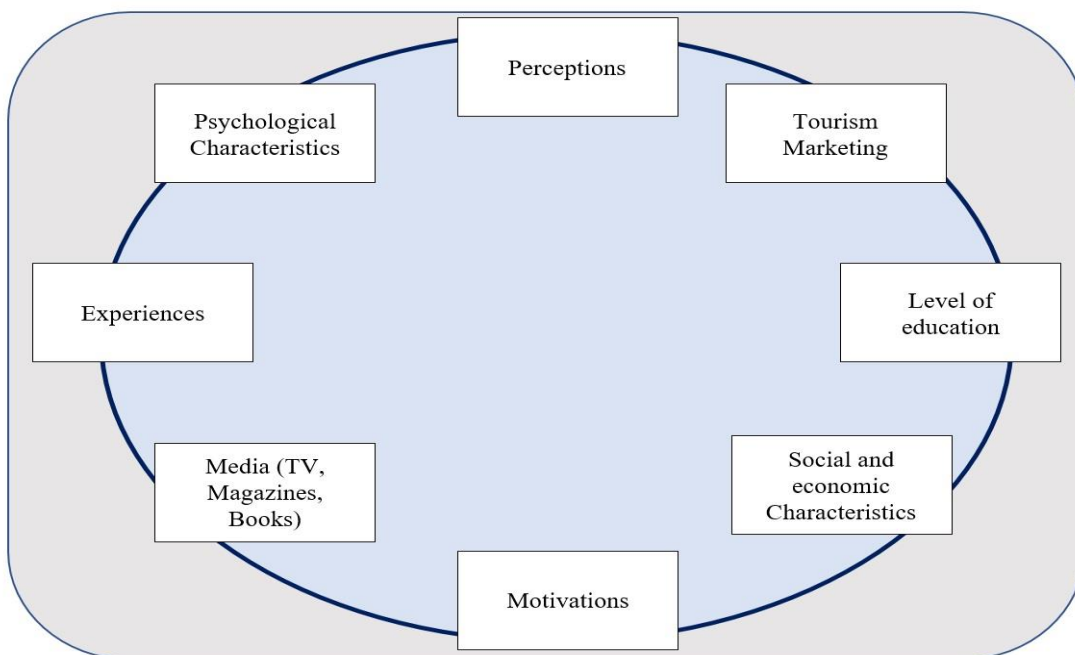
Figure 15 identifies the factors influencing the formation of the image of the destination, while Figure 14 presents a general framework of destination image formation, in which information sources (Primary and secondary) and personal factors (Motivations, vacation experience and socio-demographic characteristics) are introduced as the two aspects influencing the cognitive and affective components leading to the overall perceived image (Beerli & Martín, 2004).

**Figure 14: Model of the formation of destination image**



Source: Beerli and Martin (2004)

**Figure 15: Factors influencing the formation of the image of the destination**



Source: Stabler (1988)

It is possible to describe the destination image as the overall evaluation of the extent to which a destination is liked or disliked based on the distributed amount of information (Frías et al., 2008). In case of lack of information, shaping an image is somehow impossible or at least can be a negative one, as the critical role of information has been identified in many studies.

Gartner (1994) has introduced a framework and typology of eight image formation agents, which depends on the degree of control by the destination promoter and the level of credibility on the part of the receivers. The different agents are shortly introduced as follows:

**Overt induced I** – This category represents the traditional forms of advertising which promote a particular destination image to attract visitors; this can include television, brochures, radio, and other advertising outlets.

**Overt induced II** – This type of information will be received from tour operators and wholesalers/marketers who are not directly associated with a destination. The images portrayed by these agents are the best selective presentable images that might not be realistic since they are profit-oriented.

**Covert induced I** – the use of recognizable catalysts (such as famous actors or sportsmen/women) to communicate an image they want to project to overcome credibility issues or any endorsement from a satisfied target market.

**Covert induced II** – These are usually any published material where the target market is not aware of the involvement of the destination promoters. This can include materials written by reporters or famous writers, bloggers, social media influencers, and YouTubers in 2021, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the famous gamers who were invited to a destination by the local DMO.

**Autonomous agents** – These image formatting agents are documentaries, movies, news and reports which are independently produced and supposedly unbiased to present an image on their own terms.

**Unsolicited organic** – This information is not requested but is provided by individuals who have been to a destination and are believed to have the knowledge. This agent is most influential on people who do not have any vague images of a destination.

**Solicited organic** – This information generally comes from friends and family members regarding a destination. This type of agent can be very influential due to the perceived credibility and trustworthiness between those offering the information and the future travellers; therefore, the receivers hear precisely about what they are looking for.

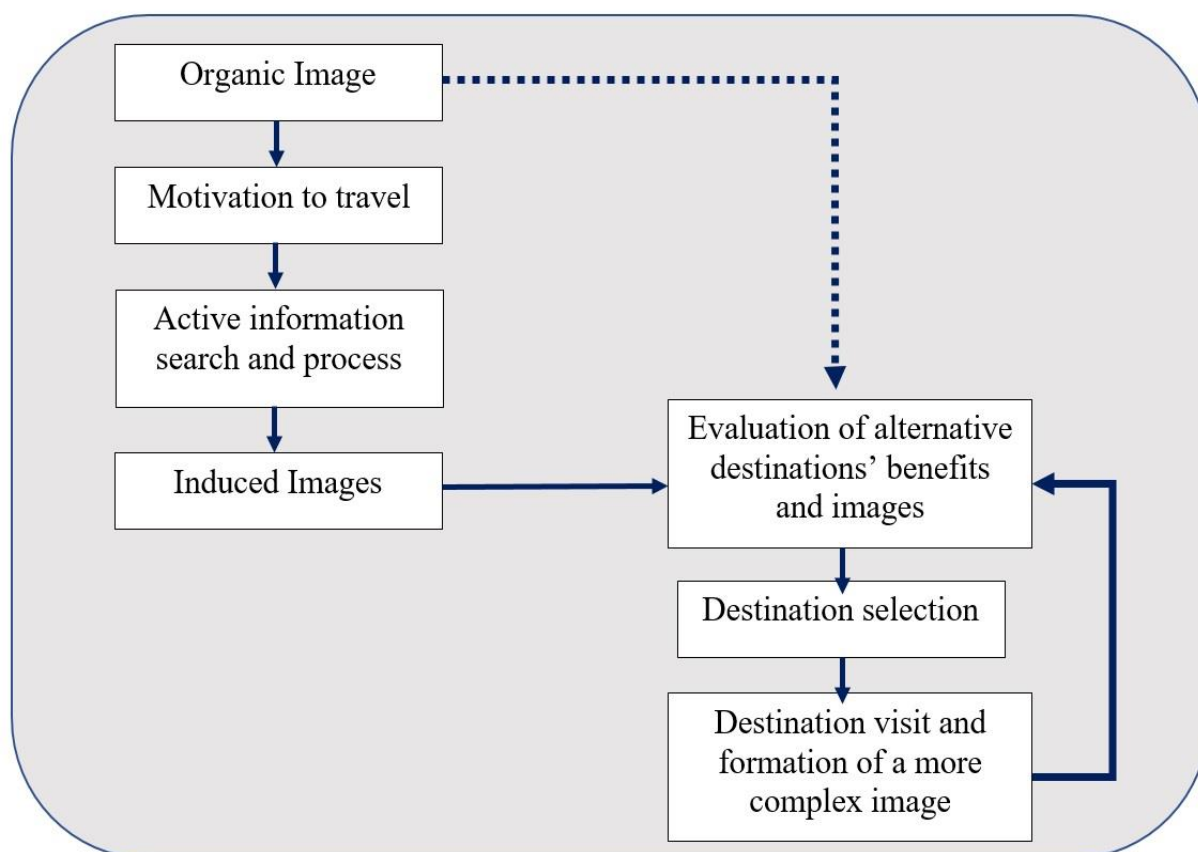
**Organic** – The individuals gather this information during a trip that holds the highest credibility rank since it is based on personal experiences.

#### *3.6.4. Stage Theory*

Destination image formation seems to be derived from much broader information sources (Kotler, 1987; WTO, 1980). One of the first researchers to discuss the matter of destination image was Gunn in the early 1970s by suggesting a concept of destination image evolution that accounts for image change from organic image to induced image. This concept is used to define destination image as a continuous process developed throughout several stages that a tourist passes that involves constant development and modification of images at different levels of travel, from seeking information, decision making, and an actual visit to after travel stages (Iordanova & Styliadis, 2017; Prats et al., 2016)

Organic and Induced are two different image development levels introduced by Gunn (1988). In brief, the organic level was discussed as which develops internally because of actual experience, motivation to travel, which leads to information search and the Induced level as which image forms because of externally received and processed information (e.g. publicity, advertisement, news reports or word of mouth), based on which the evaluation of the gathered information will happen which then leads to the decision-making process (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991) (Figure 16).

**Figure 16: Tourist's image formation process**



Source: Fakeye and Crompton (1991)

Gunn (1972), Alhemoud & Armstrong (1996), Bramwell & Rawding (1996), Court & Lupton (1997) and Young (1999), as cited in Tasci & Gartner (2007), defined that image formation agents will provide key information and will shape the mental representation of a destination for the visitors.

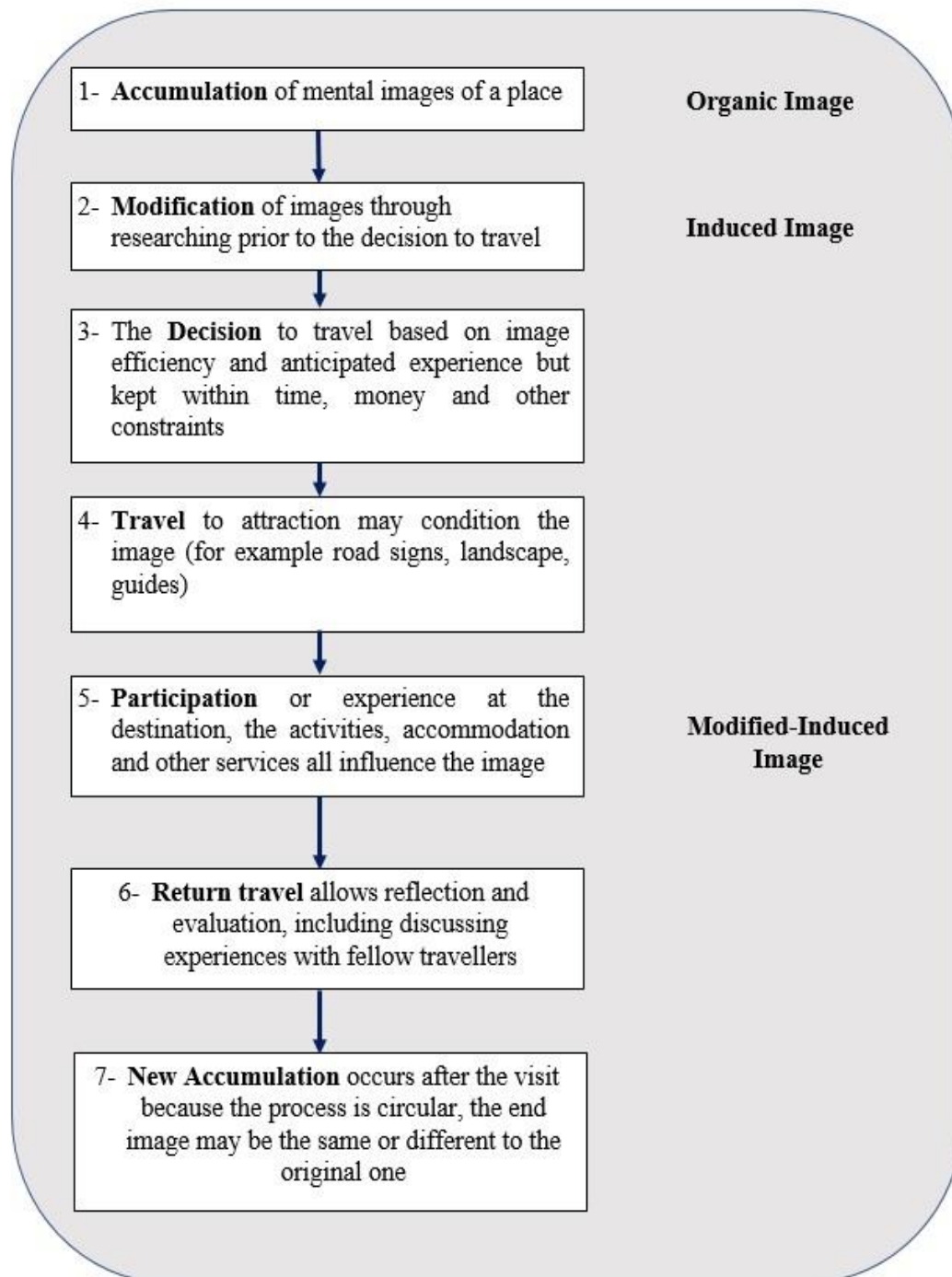
According to the theory that Gunn presented (1988), the process of image formation was identified in 7 stages: “(1) accumulating mental images of the destination (organic image); (2) modifying the initial image after more information (induced image); (3) deciding to visit the destination; (4) visiting the destination; (5) sharing the destination; (6) returning home and (7) modifying the image based on the experience”.

Phases 1, 2 and 7 can be recognized as the three states of destination image formation. In the first two phases, destination images are modified based upon secondary sources of information, whereas throughout the later phases (Phase 7), actual first-hand experience



is used to form the destination's image. Later on, Jenkins (1999) provided an apparent and comprehensible summary of the destination image formation process in which the destination image is formed during the first two phases based upon secondary sources of information, whereas the image will be modified throughout the later phases and based on the first-hand experience (Figure 17).

**Figure 17: Stage-theory of destination image formation**



Source: Jenkins (1999)

Based on the Gunn destination image model, during Phase 1, the image (organic) is based upon information assimilated from non-touristic sources, educational courses and word of mouth (the opinions of family/friends), while, in Phase 2, individuals will be exposed to the more commercial sources of information. Accordingly, it is possible that the organic image (Phase 1) will be altered based on the new information sources, so it will be called the induced image in Phase 2, but in Phase 7, the actual experience of individuals will be used to modify the destination's image of previous phases.

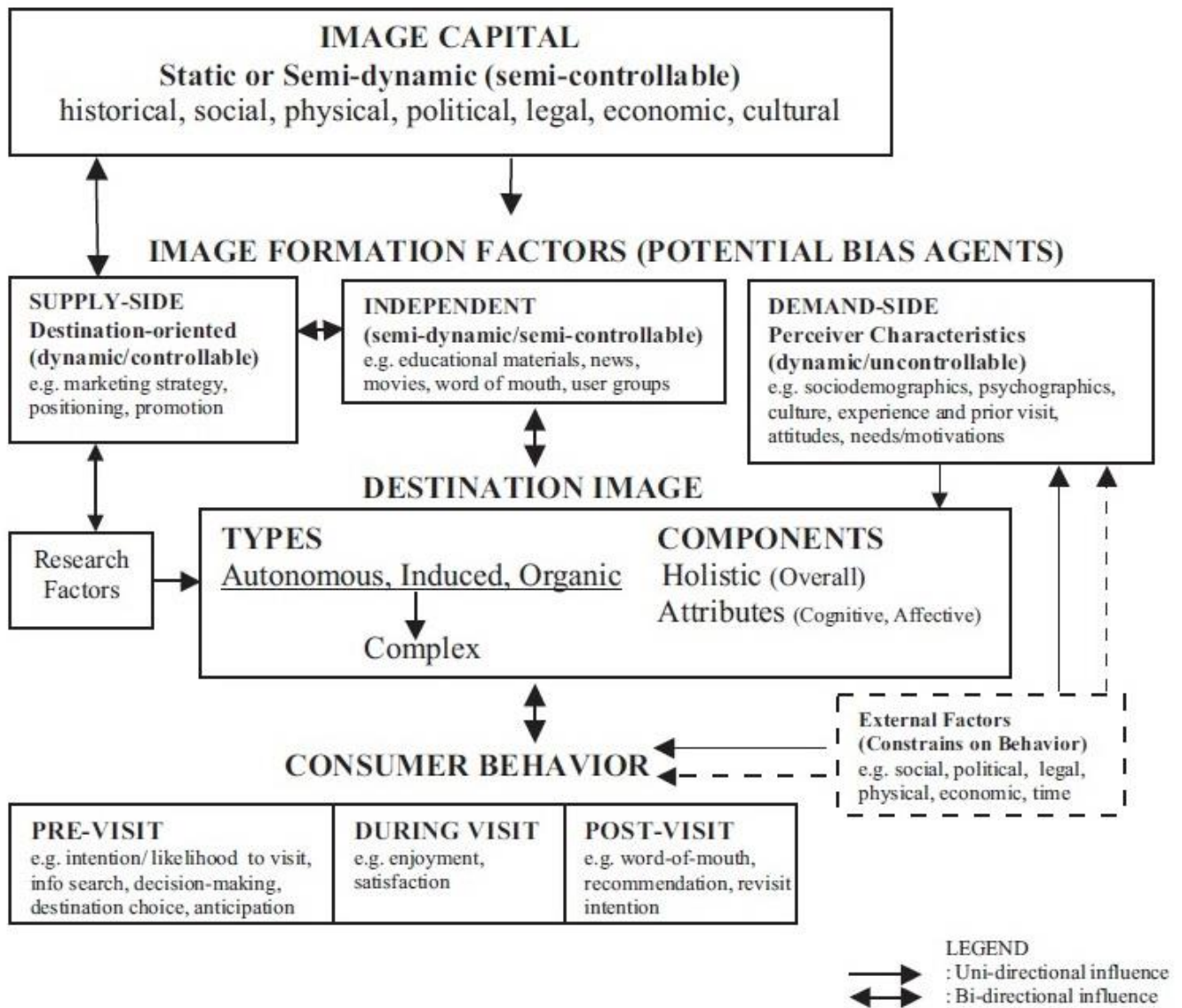
Overall, it is possible to consider that the construction of the image starts at the pre-travel stage, is modified during the visit to the destination and will be accumulated after the travel (J. Kim, 2017). This model has been applied in exploring the impact of information sources on the destination image formation process in different empirical destination image studies (Ku & Mak, 2017; Siriwardana et al., 2019).

Moreover, many studies referred to Gunn's model in investigating the changes of destination image in the mind of tourists. For example, Lee et al. (2014) discussed that tourist destination image changes throughout the different stages of the travel experience and Jenkins (1999) argued how different is the destination image in the mind of the visitors and non-visitors. Similarly, Iordanova (2015) suggested that the image of visitors, repeat visitors, and non-visitors could be different.

Based on this model, it can be concluded that destination image development will start but will not finish in the pre-visit stage, will be modified during the visit and in the post-visit stage, destination image development will keep its link with the first stage. Furthermore, in accordance with the factors such as the nature of the purchase, or the tourist's personality, stages might be different, or not all stages might take place because the degree of the involvement in each stage can be different for each individual regarding many factors such as socio-demographic and cultural background, etc.

Overall, by considering different factors and their relationship in destination image studies from both the supply and demand side, it is possible to draw a conceptual model of destination image that Tasci and Gartner (2007) have applied (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Destination image and its relationships



Source: Tasci and Gartner (2007)

### 3.7. Destination Personality

Destination personality is another approach to defining the destination image that is a new concept in the tourism field (Hosany et al., 2006). The previous method of positioning the destinations regarding their attributes makes them less distinguishable among others, and tourists might prefer one easily. As a result, applying additional traits and selling propositions such as destination personality, which is in the same way as each individual has a different set of characteristics, could contribute to differentiating destinations and

encouraging tourists to choose them (Baloglu et al., 2014; Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). This is a new method that destination marketers are applying to differentiate and position their branded destinations in a highly competitive tourism market (C. Chen & Phou, 2013).

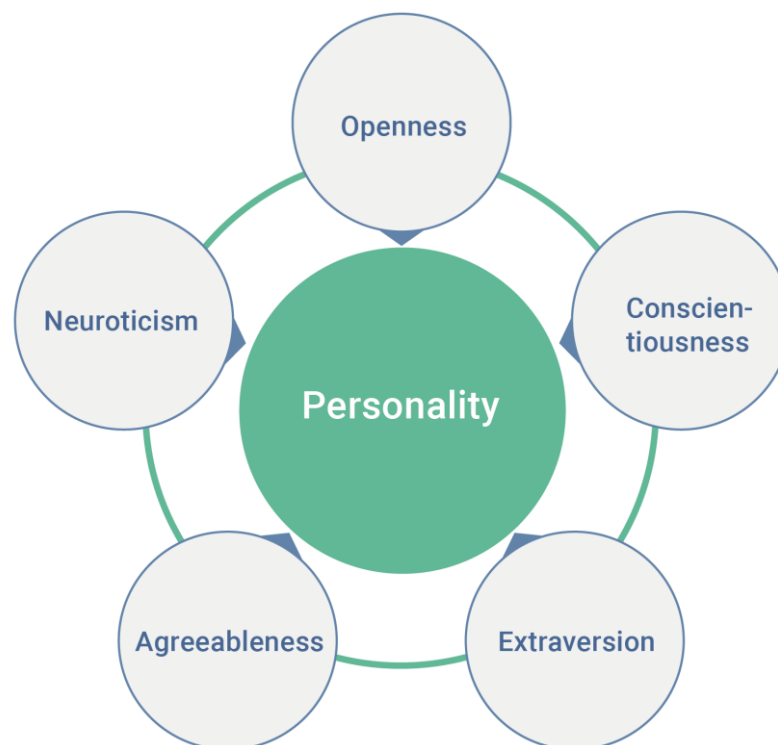
Martineau (1958) was among the first commentators who identified the brand personality and proposed that each store has its own personality and has defined it as “the way in which the store is defined in the customers’ mind, partly by its functional images and partly by psychological attributes”. He also used functional and psychological attributes as the two key expressions for consumers in describing the product image. In the literature, Plog (1974) initially applied personality in his psychometric to allocentric model; also, Chon and Olsen (1991) have used the term “personality” in their definition of the destination image as the symbolic attributes of a destination.

Aaker’s (1997) concept of brand personality, “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand”, which has a root in marketing, was adopted in Ekinci and Hosany’s (2006) works, and they described destination personality as the set of human characteristics associated with a destination image. It is the central component of brand identity and more or less contributes to the development of positive brand evaluation, brand preferences, brand trust, brand effect, and brand loyalty (Biel, 1993; Sung & Kim, 2010). As a result, destination personality is becoming a more viable metaphor for destination branding and positioning in which the consumers’ interpretation of the brand matters to destination marketers as they want to convey a special message to their target consumers (C. Chen & Phou, 2013; Geuens et al., 2009).

One of the famous models of personality traits is the standard Five Factor Model of Personality (commonly known as the Big Five), whose reliability and validity have been reasonably established (Digman, 1990). Digman (1990, 1997) demonstrated the emergence of two consistent higher-order factors and labelled them as Alpha and Beta while Alpha, incorporating Emotional Stability vs Neuroticism (that reflects comparative freedom from negative affect and behavioural or motivational withdrawal such as people’s negative emotions, anger, anxiety, or depression) (Carver et al., 2000; Costa & McCrae, 1992; R. Larsen & Ketelaar, 1991; Watson & Clark, 1992), Agreeableness vs Antagonism (that is about lower-level traits as trust, straightforwardness, people’s compatibility with other people, their concern for social harmony, kindness and generosity, entails the maintenance of stable social relationships) (Costa & McCrae, 1992;

Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997) and Conscientiousness vs Lack of direction (that consists of traits such as considering others when making decisions, self-discipline, and strive for achievement (Costa & McCrae, 1992), might be regarded as a socialization factor underlying connection in the processes through which humans maintain stability), the Beta, consisting of Extraversion vs Introversion (which is about people's interest in other people, approach behaviour, novelty/excitement seeking and willingness to participate in events) (Carver et al., 2000; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Depue & Collins, 1999; R. Lucas et al., 2000; Watson & Clark, 1992) and Openness vs Closedness to experience (reflects the recurrent need of adventure, curiosity, appreciation of art, and flexibility in considering ideas, or feelings (Digman & Inouye, 1986; Goldberg, 1992, 1993; McCrae & Costa, 1997; Tupes & Christal, 1992), that can be identified as the factor of personal growth and might be considered as different aspects of a more basic disposition).

**Figure 19: Big five model**



Source: Digman (1990)

Another famous model in personality research was introduced by Aaker (1997) which the author has suggested the Brand Personality Scale (BPS) based on the Big Five model (Figure 19), in which the personality attributes of products and brands are described, and from that date, this scale has been widely employed as a measure of product brand personality.

The Brand Personality Scale (BPS) identifies five different dimensions and fifteen facets of brand personality:

- “Sincerity (down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, and cheerful)
- Excitement (daring, spirited, imaginative, and up-to-date)
- Competence (reliable, intelligent, and successful)
- Sophistication (upper class and charming)
- and Ruggedness (outdoorsy and tough)” (Aaker, 1997).

Brand personality emerged from marketing literature and is employed in destination management as well, as it is a key factor in understanding brand preference in the mind of customers. Moreover, there is a high relationship between brand personality dimensions and brand loyalty, which means the more accepted personality of a brand (a destination in this context), the more loyal customers will be to the brand (Aaker, 1997; Freling & Forbes, 2005; L. Lin, 2010). Overall, it is possible to consider that destination personality is a crucial antecedent to influencing tourist attitudes and behaviour, such as visit intentions and recommendations.

### 3.8. Destination Image and Destination Choice

Several authors (Z. Ahmed et al., 2006; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Gartner, 1994; Lehto et al., 2004; K. MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997) stated that convincing the potential tourist and shaping their image toward a destination is a challenge for the destination marketers and the destination management organizations as this image has a root in their personal and psychological characteristics, such as age, gender, education, socio-cultural background and their motivation for travelling. Accordingly, it might be possible to conclude that tourists with different backgrounds

(e.g. culture, nationality, etc.) will have different personal preferences and perceived images of the destinations; the “different preferences and perceptions are a function of experiences (good and bad) on previous visits, degree of familiarity with the region(s), cultural background, geographic origin, and prior expectations, to name a few” (Barros & Machado, 2010; Goodrich, 1978). Although these internal factors affect the tourists’ beliefs, a clear understanding of how choices are made will help the DMOs formulate better destination marketing strategies (Ahmed et al., 2006; J. Chen & Uysal, 2002; Sirakaya et al., 2001).

In destination image literature, there is a variable explanation for the tourists’ behaviour; as Crompton (1979) and Gunn (1988) stated, the destination image is an individual and subjective perception which interacts with psychological and functional attributes, so once it is established in the tourist’s mind it will be difficult to change (Ahmed et al., 2006; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993; Gallarza et al., 2002; O’Leary & Deegan, 2003; Sirakaya et al., 2001). However, Lehto et al. (2004) identified an individual’s educational background as an essential variable regarding the tourist’s behaviour during the information search process.

Despite all the different points of view among the researchers, there is still much uniformity among tourists’ characteristics, which constitutes an important factor for the destination choice (W. Reynolds, 1965). Here are some factors that different authors agreed their effect on destination choice:

Individual related factors: These factors are different from one individual to another based on various individual items:

- Socio-demographic and Cultural background
- Personal factors (behaviour and psychological)
- Previous experience
- Sources of information

Destination related factors: These are the expectations regarding the experience at the destination:

- The cost of the holidays

- Amazing attractions
- Good nightlife and entertainment
- Beautiful natural scenery
- Personal Safety
- Friendliness and receptiveness of local people
- Comfortable Climate
- High quality tourism services
- Cleanliness and Hygiene
- Development of the local infrastructure and transportation
- Role of DMOs and Stakeholders at the destination (Aris Anuar et al., 2016; J. Crompton, 1977; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Esu & Arrey, 2009; Gómez Martín, 2005; Goodrich, 1978; D. Hall, 1996; Y. Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Laws, 1995; Lohmann & Kaim, 1999; Petrick et al., 2001; Seyidov & Adomaitienė, 2017).

Overall, it is possible to consider that the destination image dimensions or attributes can significantly affect the destination choice, the positive attitude toward a destination, and lead to destination loyalty in the next step. Moreover, all the considered variables related to the destination image could contribute to and affect tourists' destination choice behaviour.

### 3.9. Measurement of Destination Image

Through all destination image literature and research, it is possible to categorise the studies into three major groups. The first group is about studies measuring the destination image, the second group investigates the image formation process, and the third group assesses the relationship between the image and the travel behaviour (Baloglu, 2000; J. Crompton, 1992). Consequently, two approaches have been considered chiefly regarding the image construct: the first approach relates to measurements without indeed progressing on the theoretical model, whereas the second approach explains



methodological problems and deals with the operationalization of destination image assessment.

The question of how to measure the image depends on the researcher's perspective, as the conceptual definitions and understandings of image structure are varied. Nevertheless, most image studies dealing with tourism have been largely theoretical and have traditionally used attribute lists to measure some of the more functional components, so it is common to measure destination images through the Likert Type scale or the Semantic Differential Scale. Even some studies have developed a scale measuring the affective or cognitive image, as many of these scales result from exploratory studies on the important attributes and determinants of the destination image perceived by tourists (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993; Walmsley & Young, 1998).

However, most studies of the destination image focus on measuring particular attributes and highlighting the conceptualisation of the image formation process and influential factors related to it (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Gallarza & Gil Saura, 2006, p. 2; Gartner, 1994).

Echtner and Ritchie (1993) stated that a combination of structured and unstructured methodologies is necessary to measure all the components of the destination image; accordingly, they developed a system of measurement using both quantitative and qualitative methods. They established a set of scales to measure the common attribute-based components along both functional and psychological dimensions and a series of open-ended questions to capture the holistic components along both functional and psychological dimensions as well as the presence of distinctive or unique features of the destination image.

In the following Figure (20), 25 empirical destination image studies have been brought that measured the three dimensions of the attribute-based image according to Echtner and Ritchie's (1993, 2003) attribute-holistic, functional-psychological, and common-unique axis in which the most considered attributes were "Residents Receptiveness" (20 times), "Landscape and/or surroundings" (19 times), and "Cultural attractions" (18 times).

Moreover, to measure the holistic and distinct destination image elements, Echtner & Ritchie (2003) advised using open-ended questions followed by measuring the destination attributes through using an attribute scale of eight in which the destination images are rated by the tourists.

**Figure 20: The most common attributes used in destination image studies**

Authors	Attributes Studied																			
	Various activities	Landscape, surroundings	Nature	Cultural attractions	Nightlife and entertainment	Shopping facilities	Information available	Sport facilities	Transportation	Accommodation	Gastronomy	Price, value, cost	Climate	Relaxation vs Massific	Accessibility	Safety	Social interaction	Resident's receptiveness	Originality	Service Quality
	Functional										Psychological									
1. Crompton (1979)									X			X	X	X		X			X	
2. Goodrich (1982)		X		X		X		X		X	X			X					X	
3. Stemquist (1985)		X		X	X	X		X		X	X			X					X	
4. Haahiti (1986)		X	X	X	X			X				X		X	X				X	X
5. Gartner and Hunt (1987)		X	X					X		X			X						X	
6. Calantone and al. (1989)	X	X		X	X	X		X	X			X		X		X			X	
7. Gartner (1989)		X	X	X	X			X											X	
8. Embacher and Buttie (1989)	X	X		X							X	X	X		X		X			
9. Guthrie and Gale (1991)	X				X		X	X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X		X
10. Ahmed (1991)		X	X	X	X	X		X					X						X	
11. Chon (1991)		X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X			X	X			X	X
12. Fakeye and Crompton (1991)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	
13. Crompton et al. (1992)	X		X		X							X	X		X		X	X	X	
14. Carmichael (1992)	X											X			X				X	
15. Chon (1992)	X	X		X		X		X		X	X			X	X				X	X
16. Echtner and Ritchie (1993)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
17. Driscoll and al. (1994)	X	X		X	X	X						X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
18. Dadgostar and Isotalo (1995)			X	X	X	X		X		X	X			X			X			
19. Muller (1995)	X			X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
20. Eizaguire and Laka (1996)						X			X	X	X		X		X	X			X	
21. Schroeder (1996)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X			X		X	
22. Ahmed (1996)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X											X	
23. Oppermann (1996a,1996b)	X		X						X	X	X	X	X			X				X
24. Baloglu (1997)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				X		X	X	
25. Baloglu and McCleary (1999)	X		X	X				X		X	X	X	X			X			X	
Total	8	19	12	18	17	15	3	16	8	14	15	16	12	12	12	10	7	20	7	4

Source: Gallarza et al. (2002)

In the literature, image studies have been divided into qualitative research, for which the researchers use open-ended questions (Dann, 1996; MacKay & Couldwell, 2004), or focus groups (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991) and quantitative research, in which different techniques ranging from bivariate methods, simple t-tests or ANOVA, to multivariate methods such as factor analysis and path analysis have been applied, while other researchers recommended applying both qualitative and quantitative methodology (Table 6) (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; MacKay & Couldwell, 2004; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997,

2000).

**Table 6: Reviews some destination image studies in terms of the dimensions studied and the method adopted.**

Study	Dimension(s)	Method Adopted
Gartner (1989)	Cognitive	Structured: - 15 attributes - 5-point Likert scale
Reilly (1990)	Cognitive	Unstructured: - Open-ended questions
Echtner & Ritchie (1993)	Cognitive	Structured: - 34 attributes - 6-point Likert scale
Dann (1996)	Cognitive, affective, and conative	Unstructured: -Semi-structured interviews, pictorial stimuli, and tourists' own projected images
Oppermann (1996)	Cognitive	Structured - 15 attributes - 7-point Likert scale
Schroeder (1996)	Cognitive	Structured - 20 attributes - 7-point Likert scale
Baloglu (1997)	Cognitive	Structured - 27 attributes - 5-point Likert scale
Baloglu & Brinberg (1997)	Affective	Structured - 4 attributes -7-point Likert scale
Walmsley & Young (1998)	Affective	Structured - 6 attributes - 7-point Likert scale
Baloglu & McCleary (1999)	Cognitive and Affective	Structured -15 attributes using the 5-point Likert scale - 4 bipolar attributes using the 7-point semantic differential scale
Choi, Chan and Wu (1999)	Cognitive	Structured and unstructured -25 attributes using the 7-point Likert scale -open-ended questions
MacKay & Fesenmaier (2000)	Cognitive and Affective	Structured - 8 attributes - 7-point semantic differential scale
Uysal, Chen and Williams (2000)	Cognitive and Affective	Structured -48 attributes using the 5-point Likert scale
Baloglu & Mangalolu (2001)	Cognitive and Affective	Structured -14 attributes using the 5-point Likert scale -4 attributes using the 7-point semantic differential scale
Chen & Uysal (2002)	Cognitive	Structured - 26 attributes using the 5-point Likert scale

Adapted from Hosany et al. (2007)

Similar to Hosany et al. (2007), Gallarza et al. (2002) conducted a similar review of the methodology used in previous research (Figure 21 and 22); accordingly, they identified both qualitative and quantitative techniques from 1979 to 1999 in those studies.

**Figure 21: A taxonomy review of non-quantitative methods for measuring destination image**

Methodological procedure		Authors
I. Qualitative techniques	Free elicitation/Open ended questions	Reilly (1990)      Embacher & Buttle (1989) Dann (1996)      Echtner & Ritchie (1993)
	Focus groups	Amor et al (1994)      uthrie & Gale (1991) Driscoll et al (1994)      King (1994) Fakeye and Crompton (1991)
	Indepth interviews / Discussions with experts	Hahti (1986)      Selby and Morgan (1996) Bramwell and Rawding (1996) Amor et al (1994)      Fakeye and Crompton (1991)
II. Other techniques	Content Analysis	On promotional material
		On previous results
		Stabler (1988)      Fesenmaier and MacKay (1996) Crompton (1979)      Bramwell and Rawding (1996) King (1994)      Baloglu and McCleary (1999)
		Goodrich (1982)      Embacher and Buttle (1989) Reilly (1990)      Echtner and Ritchie (1993) Hahti (1986)      Fakeye and Crompton (1991)

Source: Gallarza et al. (2002)

Figure 22: A taxonomy review of procedures for measuring destination image

Statistical procedure		Data collection	Authors		
I. MULTIVARIATE METHODS	Information reduction procedures	FACTOR ANALYSIS METHODS	Principal Components Analysis	Lk 5 Lk 5 Lk 7 Lk 7 Lk 10 SD 7	Ahmed (1991; 1996) Baloglu (1997) Baloglu & McCleary (1999) Walmsley & Young (1998) Sternquist (1985) Fakeye & Crompton (1991) Muller (1995) Driscoll et al. (1994)
			Factor Analysis	Lk 7 Lk 7 SD 5 Lk 6	Crompton et al. (1992) Schroeder (1996) Opperman (1996a, 1996b) Guthrie & Gale (1991) Crompton (1979) Echtner & Ritchie (1993)
		Correspondences Analysis	Yes/No Yes/No	Calantone et al. (1989) Eizaguirre & Laka (1996)	
		Multidimensional Scaling	Lk 5 Lk 7 2nd technique Rk 12 SD 7	Gartner (1989) Goodrich (1982) Guthrie & Gale (1991) Haahti (1986) Baloglu & Brinberg (1997)	
	Grouping	Cluster analysis	2nd technique DS 5	Muller (1995) Embacher & Buttle (1989)	
	Dependence Analysis	Multiple regression	Lk 7	Dadgostar e Isotalo (1995)	
		Log-linear	2nd technique	Eizaguirre & Laka (1996)	
		Conjoint Analysis	Rk 4	Carmichael (1992)	
		Analysis of Variance (ANOVAS, MANOVAS;...)	Lk 5 Lk5 SD7 2nd technique 2nd technique 2nd technique	Chon (1992) Baloglu & McCleary (1999) Schroeder (1996) Crompton (1979) Gartner & Hunt (1987) Baloglu (1997) Fakeye & Crompton (1991) Ahmed (1991; 1996)	
	II. Bivariate methods	Correlations Analysis	2nd technique	Dadgostar e Isotalo (1995)	
T-Test and others		Lk 7 SD 5 Lk 5 2nd technique 2nd technique 2nd technique	Chon (1991) Gartner & Hunt (1987) Borchgrevink & Knutson (1997) Fakeye & Crompton (1991) Driscoll et al. (1994) Ahmed (1991) Muller (1995) Reilly (1990) Opperman (1996a, 1996b) Schroeder (1996)		

SD=Semantic differential; Lk=Likert scale; Categorical Data: Yes/No; Rk = Ranking order.

Source: Gallarza et al. (2002)

Overall, it is possible to conclude that all destination images have the root in the subjective experiences of the tourist when relating to a destination. This can be meant the destination image could be different for each individual (as people have different socio-cultural and educational backgrounds) even if the destination as the object of the image is the same. Thus, it is difficult to identify a standardized scale to measure the destination image, and researchers need to consider all the possible factors and items in order to conduct an appropriate research method. In Table 7, different destination image measurement techniques used in previous studies are brought.

**Table 7: Destination image measurement techniques used in previous studies**

Author/s	Study Design and Instruments	Analysing Method	Sample Number	Findings
Mayo (1975)	Structured: Questionnaire 85 items - 7 Point Sem. Diff. Scale	Perceptual Mapping Factor Analysis	670	The findings showed tourists' demographic (Education and Income), psychographic characteristics (Adventurous, impulsive and Action-oriented), and interests (great outdoors, not planning for their holidays, and not being opinion leaders) to be related to their interest in visiting U.S. National Parks.
Hunt (1975)	Structured: - 20 Attributes - 7 And 5 Point Sem. Diff. Scale	Chi-Square Tests	N/A	Results on the images of four rocky mountain states: Utah, Montana, Colorado, and Wyoming, revealed that TDs and states also have images.
Goodrich (1978)	Structured Questionnaire By Mail 10 Attributes - 7 Point Likert Scale	Kruskal's Multidimensional Scaling	230	Findings revealed tourists' perceived the Bahamas, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Barbados as a cluster comprised of Sun, Sea and Sand. In addition, other competing TDIs of Florida, California, Mexico, and Hawaii were described and perceived differently by tourists.
Crompton (1979)	Structured - 30 Attributes/Scales - 7 Point Sem. Diff. Scale	Content Analysis Mann Whitney U Test Kruskal-Wallis Test	617	Findings showed that the greater the geographical distance between the respondents (U.S.) and the TD (Mexico), the more favourable the TDI.
Phelps (1986)	Structured: Questionnaire 32 Attributes - The checklist of attributes	Wilcox test Discriminant Analysis	97	To measure pre-travel and post-travel images of Menorca, show resort choices not necessary, like cost or airport of departure in tourists' holiday decision-making.

Gartner (1986)	Questionnaire Structured 15 Attributes - 5 Point Likert Scale	Multidimensional Scaling Analysis	N/A	Results showed that tourists' images of Montana and Wyoming to be similar (outdoor recreation activities), and of Colorado (skiing, receptiveness of residents, historic sites) and Utah (natural resource-based) are different.
Calantone et al. (1989)	Questionnaire Structured 13 Attributes - 7 Point Likert Scale	Correspondence Analysis	363	Findings on the images of eight Pacific countries indicated that tourists from Australia and New Zealand had perceptions very similar to Americans. In addition, British and European tourists also had perceptions similar to the Americans.
Chon (1990)	Questionnaire Structured 7 Attributes - 7 Point Likert Scale	Content Analysis T-Test	204	TDIs differences between tourists who were arriving and those who were departing from Korea were found. It was also found that the post-visitors groups had a more positive image of the TD than the pre-visitors groups.
Chon (1991)	Quantitative	t-statistic	204 first-time American travellers, 240 American travellers who completed their visits	Destination image perceptions of post-visitors were more positive than the pre-visitors
Dann (1996)	Qualitative Interviews Pre Trip and On Trip, Open-Ended Questions - 4 Pictures	Content Analysis	535	Tourists' images responses to pictorial stimuli, pre and on-trip situations showed cognitive appraisal of the TD to be explored by mental comparison; the affective dimension revealed vocabulary of motive. The cognitive component of imagery is which tourists project themselves into an imagined scenario as if they had experienced it.
Baloglu	Quantitative Structured	Principal Components	330	The results indicated the existence of a



(1997)	34 Attributes - 5 Point Likert Scale	Analysis Factor Analysis Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA)		significant relationship between six image factors (adventure, nature and resort, urban entertainment, budget and value, history and culture, friendly environment, and active outdoor sport) and some of the tourists' sociodemographic variables and trip variables.
MacKay & Fesenmaier (1997)	Mixed method	Factor Analysis ANCOVA	240 survey respondents, 28 focus group participants	The visuals as the most significant predictors of destination image; individual characteristics as weaker predictors of destination image impact of familiarity on destination image
Lubbe (1998)	Qualitative	Cluster matrix	29 interviewees	Different perspectives between expatriates and Saudi nationals in constructing primary images of culture as an essential determinant of these differences
Baloglu & McCleary (1999)	Quantitative	Factor Analysis path analysis	448	Stimulus and personal factors in the formation of destination image
Baloglu (2000)	Quantitative	Factor Analysis path analysis	448	Variety and type of information sources and motivations as determinants of cognitive image Impact of cognitive image on affective image cognitive and affective image on visit intentions
Gallarza et al. (2002)	Conceptual	Conceptual	NA	Classification of the methodological and statistical procedures for destination image measurement more comprehensive conceptual model of destination image
Kim & Yoon (2003)	Quantitative	Factor Analysis Second-order factor analysis	231	Operationalization of destination image as a second-order factor through cognitive and affective images has a higher impact on the affective image than the cognitive image in the destination

				image formation
Beerli & Martín (2004)	Quantitative Structured 47 Items - 7 Point Likert Scale	Exploratory Factorial Analysis ANOVA	616	The results indicated that relationships between the perceived image and the tourists' motivations influence the affective component of the image; tourists' accumulated experience of vacation travel has a significant relationship with cognitive and affective images and the influence of the socio-demographic characteristics of image cognitive and affective assessment.
Kim & Morrision (2005)	Quantitative	Paired t-tests ANCOVA	223 tourists from Japan, 143 from Mainland China, 173 from the US	Positive image change after the visit in all three national groups impact of nationality, educational level, age and occupation on the image change
Ahmed et al. (2006)	Quantitative Structured 20 to 22-Item, 5 to 7 Point Likert Scale	Factor Analysis Exploratory Factor Analysis	518	The results indicated that Malaysian tourists' touring experiences had affected the perception of Australia's image.
Govers et al. (2007)	Qualitative Questionnaire Online Open-Ended Free-Text Form 7 Destinations 10-Point Scale	Content Analysis Perceptual Mapping	1,198	Findings revealed several significant differences in the perceived TDI of the seven case studies by the respondents.
Chen & Tsai (2007)	Quantitative Structured 20 Attributes/20 Items -5 Point Likert Scale	Principal Component Analysis Confirmatory Factor Analysis Structural Equation Modelling	393	The results showed TDI to have both direct and indirect effects on behavioural intentions. Moreover, the path "destination image-trip quality-perceived value-satisfaction - behavioural intentions" was patent.
Florek et al. (2008)	Mixed method Repeated measures longitudinal method	Content analysis Paired t-tests	New Zealand football fans who completed	Significant improvement of destination image after direct experience

			pre-and post-questionnaires (n=24),  interviewees (n=3) for pre-, during, and post-interview stages	
Correia et al. (2009)	Quantitative	Factor Analysis Correlation Analysis Cluster Analysis	100	Inter-correlation among motivations, expectations and perceptions
Agapito et al. (2010)	Quantitative Structured Open-Ended Questions 20 Attributes -5 Point Likert Scale	CHAID Analysis	379	From the tourists' and residents' perspective, the analysis of Lagos TDI showed tourists' "global destination image" were not significantly related to the intention to revisit the destination. In addition, a clear and significant relationship between the "global destination image" with the recommendation of Lagos to friends and family was found. Moreover, both tourists and residents present an intention of positive recommendations favouring Lagos as a destination.
Assaker et al. (2011)	Quantitative Structured Online Questionnaire 15 Items -7 Point Likert Scale	Structural Equation Modelling	450	Findings indicated novelty seeking and low satisfaction impacted tourists' immediate intent to return. It was also found that a positive TDI increases immediate and future intentions to return.
Choi et al. (2011)	Quantitative Structured Questionnaire - Open-Ended Questions - 5-Point Likert Scale	Regression Analysis	280	Empirical results indicated the presence of differences between visitors and non-visitors regarding their perceived TDI of Korea. It was also found that the overall image and loyalty have a statistically significant relationship. In addition,

				results show that Russians with a positive view of Korea are more likely to recommend Korea to others as a tourist destination.
Aksoy & Kiyici (2011)	Quantitative	Factor Analysis	430	The most important factors that shape the destination image: historical and cultural heritage, restful atmosphere, shopping, and food
Chen & Lin (2011)	Quantitative	Factor Analysis ANOVA, MANOVA	324	Impact of informational and experiential familiarity on destination image and behavioural intentions effectiveness of familiarity as a segmentation variable
Agapito et al. (2013)	Quantitative	Factor Analysis Structural Equation Modelling Partial Least Squares	379	Impact of the cognitive image on the affective image the direct and indirect effect of cognitive image on the conative image through effective image
Abdalla et al. (2014)	Quantitative	Structural Equation Modelling	203	Impact of Satisfaction and hedonic value on intentions to recommend
Al-Kwafi (2015)	Qualitative	(MRI experiment) t-test, Statistical Parametric Mapping Software	Four focus group	Increase in the level of brain activation at the ventromedial prefrontal cortex while assessing attractive destination images versus less attractive ones impact of attitude towards the destination on visit intentions
Akhoondnejad (2015)	Quantitative	Sign Test analysis Factor Analysis Structural Equation Modelling LISREL	298	Positive differences after the visiting Impact of the post-travel image on trip value and satisfaction trip value and satisfaction on behavioural intentions
Allameh et al. (2015)	Quantitative	Factor Analysis Structural Equation Modelling AMOS	886	Impact of destination image perceived quality and perceived value on satisfaction and revisit intentions

Alamgir & Nedelea (2016)	Quantitative	Structural Equation Modelling Partial Least Squares	202	Perceived quality, perceived cost, tourist expectation and destination image as antecedents of perceived value impact of perceived value on satisfaction
Atadil et al. (2016)	Quantitative	Factor Analysis Importance- Performance Analysis, t-test	426	Identified three factors of destination image at the importance level confirmed perceived importance and expected performance gap between Chinese and Arab samples is statistically significant
Chang et al. (2017)	Quantitative	EFA, ANOVA, multiple regression	514	Impact of: demographic variables on quality, Impact of quality on behavioural intentions
Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil (2018)	Quantitative	Binomial Logit Analysis	6964	Demonstrated the differences between determinants of horizontal and single-destination loyalty
Al-Ansi & Han (2019)	Quantitative	Factor Analysis Structural Equation Modelling AMOS	358	Impact of: halal-friendly performance on perceived value perceived value on satisfaction and destination trust satisfaction on destination trust and loyalty moderating effect of halal-friendly destination image between destination trust and loyalty
Akgün et al. (2020)	Quantitative	Factor Analysis Structural Equation Modelling Partial Least Squares	150	Cognitive image as a multidimensional construct Impact of nostalgic emotion on cognitive and affective images affective and cognitive images on behavioural intentions

Source: Author

### 3.10. Conclusion

Since the early 1970s and the beginning of research on destination images, many different definitions with various inconsistencies in the concept regarding the destination image have been introduced. Moreover, until now, there is no standard, nor the researchers have approved a common definition of the destination image as some discuss that the image is a holistic summation of all the perceptions toward a specific destination, while some others look at it from a different epistemological phenomenon such as symbolic or functional.

It is possible to consider that all those different points of view about the concept of the destination image might result from differences in the measurements of the construct and the conclusions about the psychological mechanism of the destination image.

Moreover, it seems that in different studies, researchers have dealt with the concept of the image differently from the traditional tangibility-intangibility or functional-psychology approach (Chon & Olsen, 1991; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Ko & Park, 2000, p. 20).

The multiple attributes of these factors can contribute to a destination environment and its image while, at the same time, psychological or symbolic elements of the destinations can enhance their attractiveness and improve the overall image (Murphy et al., 2000). Each destination has its own unique image; just like every tangible product or business (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010), destinations can have a weaker or stronger image compared to others.

Hunt (1971; 1975) was among the first researchers who identified the importance of having a strong and positive image attracting tourists and has demonstrated that destinations with less favourable images may never achieve their planned target and cannot convince tourists to travel there. Accordingly, destinations need to choose an accurate target market and create and transmit their favourable image to those potential tourists as destinations are mainly competing based on their perceived image in the market (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001).

After reviewing different definitions of the destination image and considering many components, attributes, dimensions and affecting factors, the author of this thesis defines the destination image as:

*The personal impressions, understandings, feelings, imaginations, desires and expectations of an individual from a specific place that is shaped based on many different information sources.*

In the author's point of view, the image has a very dynamic nature that can change instantly during the time and according to the vital role of the internet and social media in the 21st century and the mega data (fake or facts) that individuals are in exposure to, these changes can happen far faster than before. Thus, it will be possible to consider a liquid nature for the shape of the destination image in terms of transforming and changing speed. This fluid shape will change continuously in the sea of the data and will never stay the same as before. This shaping process can be unique for each individual based on demographic, socio-cultural, and many other personal factors.

Overall, tourism authorities and DMOs need to be aware of their destination's strengths and weaknesses and learn how they can shape the visitors' image and meet their expectations and the extent to which the actual tourism experience meets these expectations; the tourist satisfaction will equally happen. Thus, developing an actual positive image is necessary to achieve the expected experience with a real competitive advantage (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Bigné et al., 2001; Chon, 1990; Gartner, 1994).

## Chapter 4: Destination image and crises

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### Introduction

The tourism industry, especially international tourism demand, is vulnerable to crises or disasters (Cró & Martins, 2017). To promote its products, the tourism industry, like no other, relies on the construction of a favourable image. This is because tourism is impacted by many external factors, including political instability, economic conditions, the environment, wars, terrorism, pandemics, etc. (Okumus et al., 2005).

Although the tourism industry cannot stop crises, the stakeholders of the affected destination can make sure to have a pre, during and post-crisis plan in order to minimize its effects. Moreover, the direct effects of crises will be shown in the destination image as the image is very vulnerable, so the destinations need to be aware of how to protect their image against crises.

In order to analyse how crises affect the destination image and how tourism authorities and DMOs should react to this, a theoretical basis consisting of a classification of the term crisis, an analysis of crisis management in general and the application of crisis management within tourism, are provided.

This chapter consists of five main sections. The first section discusses the definition of crisis and different crisis types at the destination. This is followed by crisis classification and then crisis management in section two. In section three, the most recent emerged crises, COVID-19 and its effect on the destinations will be discussed. The chapter will continue by two different crises case studies. The first case study will analyse the role of sanctions on destination image (case study: Iran) and on section five the chapter will look at the negative role of big brands such as UNESCO and WHS listing in changing destination image and whether the new WHS-associated image might compete with or align with the overall image of the broader destination.



## 4.1. Destination and crises

In order to better understand what the crisis in the tourism industry and destinations are, it is essential to understand its definition and its different types. This section defines the meaning of crisis and distinguishes the terms that have been used interchangeably in the tourism context.

The meanings of crisis are ambiguous and diverse; accordingly, sometimes, there has been overlapped or used interchangeably with other vocabularies such as “disaster” (Cohen, 2011; Prideaux, 2004; Shaluf et al., 2003), “problem” (Laws & Prideaux, 2006), “incident”, “accident” (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992), and “emergency” (Quarantelli, 1988, 2000; WWF and BioRegional, 2005).

Pauchant and Mitroff (1992, p. 15) believe that a crisis is a “disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core.” While Sönmez (1998, p. 417) stated that a tourism crisis is: “any occurrence which can threaten the normal operation and conduct of tourism-related businesses; damage a tourist destination's overall reputation for safety, attractiveness and comfort by negatively affecting visitors’ perceptions of that destination; and, in turn, cause a downturn in the local travel and tourism economy and interrupt the continuity of business operations for the local travel and tourism industry by the reduction in tourist arrivals and expenditures.”

Crisis as a term was used in the medical (for the patients who are in a phase of illness) and military (for war and natural disasters) fields for the very first time (R. Heath, 1998; Jallat & Shultz, 2011; Santana, 2004).

The term crisis generally refers to undesirable events that can cause severe consequences both physically and psychologically or set of pathological phenomena manifesting suddenly and intensely, but for a limited period, and suggesting a generally decisive change, for good or bad (CNRTL, 2012). However, from the management perspective, a crisis does not always end up in tragedy. Selbst (1978 in Faulkner (2001, p. 136) defined by focusing on organizations and stakeholders and explained crisis as “any action or failure to act that interferes with an organization’s ongoing functions, the acceptable attainment of its objectives, its viability or survival, or that has a detrimental personal effect as perceived by the majority of its employees, clients or constituents.” Accordingly,

in the tourism business environment, a crisis for some businesses and destinations can be considered as an opportunity for other competitors where their businesses are not in the area affected by the crisis. Ulmer (2001) argued that this situation could provide a potential 'opportunity', 'renewal' and 'growth' for some businesses and destinations in order to generate more benefits. At the same time, it is somehow possible to argue the positive effect of the crisis on the affected businesses or destinations as they will learn and gain experience to develop a perspective for moving forward (Ulmer, 2001).

Meanwhile, other researchers, such as Faulkner (2001), consider an essential distinction between what can be termed a 'crisis' and a 'disaster' based on whether the situation is attributable to the organizations or destinations or can be described as a phenomenon originating from outside. As a result, it is possible to describe the 'crisis' as a situation "where the root cause of an event is, to some extent, self-inflicted through such problems as inept management structures and practices or a failure to adapt to change" while the definition for the disaster can be considered as "where an enterprise...is confronted with sudden, unpredictable catastrophic changes over which it has little control" (Faulkner, 2001, p. 136).

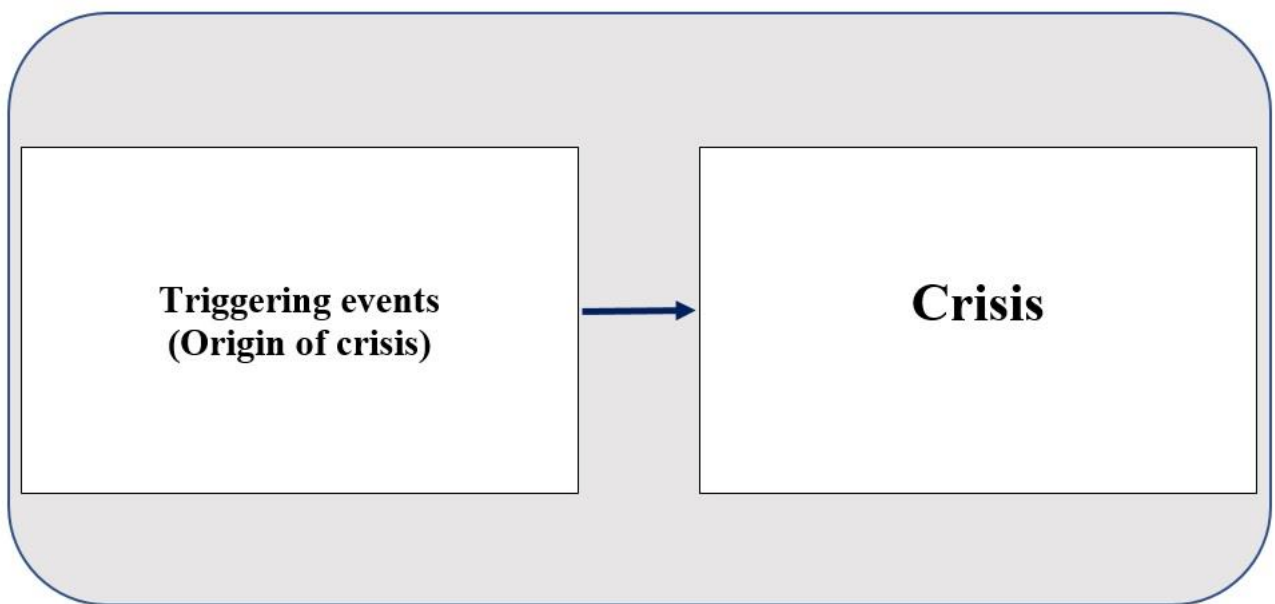
Some researchers tend to define crisis based on two approaches: an event-centred approach (Brewton, 1987; Laws & Prideaux, 2006; B. Ritchie, 2009; Santana, 2004; S. F. Sönmez & Allen, 1994) and an incubation process approach (Faulkner, 2001; Fink, 1986; Jaques, 2007; Roux-Dufort, 2007), while others define crisis based on the sources of risks for businesses and destinations and have provided a generic classification of natural and human-induced events (Faulkner, 2001; PATA, 2003; Shaluf et al., 2003; UNWTO, 2011).

For the event-centred approach researchers, the crisis is an act of God which is defined in the simplest form as an unforeseen, unplanned, unpleasant and even sometimes unmanageable event (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1993) that generates undesirable outcomes resulting in shock and fear in people (Brewton, 1987; Laws & Prideaux, 2006; B. Ritchie, 2009; Santana, 2004; S. F. Sönmez & Allen, 1994). As a result, managers who believe in this approach will handle crises in a reactive style, as they believe crises cannot be anticipated.

On the other hand, for the incubation process approach researchers, some issues may have already existed before a crisis hits a business or a destination, but they are overlooked, so

an acute crisis stage arrives (Roux-Dufort, 2007). Therefore, these academics think that crisis should be viewed as an incubation process (Figure 23) (Faulkner, 2001; Fink, 1986; Jaques, 2007; Roux-Dufort, 2007) which is perceived as “a long incubation process that suddenly manifests itself under the influence of a ‘precipitating’ event” (Roux-Dufort, 2007, p. 109). Moreover, Laws and Prideaux (2006) have introduced the “triggering event” or “the origin of crisis” as the human-driven or other forces such as natural disasters issues, which may have already existed before the crisis hits destinations.

**Figure 23: An incubation process of the crisis**



Source: Elliott (1998, p. 8)

While the threat of any such crises may generate public apprehension, it is believed that with adequate warnings, preparation and contingency plans, it might be possible to avert or effectively minimise the level of actual damage sustained. However, experience consistently demonstrates that even with all planning and in advance preparations, not all crises might be accurately forecasted or avoided (Faulkner, 2001).

Each crisis can have different consequences that can make potential tourists fear for their lives and safety, which will lead to deselecting the destination. Accordingly, the impacts and consequences of crises on destination image can be highly unpredictable and highly differential (B. W. Ritchie, 2004). One of the famous examples is the 2015 Paris terrorist

attacks, which had immediate consequences on France tourism. Another example can be the 2016 US election in which Donald Trump took the office as the president of the United States of America, which was a political crisis, but still had both direct and indirect consequences on the tourism industry. These consequences were not only for the US but also at the same time for other countries as well. Donald Trump ordered travel bans and imposed sanctions against certain countries (direct consequences). However, on the other hand, based on his “America First” slogan and not considering other countries, the international tourists stood up against his orders by not selecting the United States as their destination during his presidency (indirect consequences); this reaction became famous as the “Trump-Slump” (Frommer, 2019).

## 4.2. Tourism crisis management

In the literature, the definition of crisis is generally followed by the definition of crisis management. One of the early definitions were developed by the World Tourism Organization as: “any unexpected event that affects travellers’ confidence in a destination and interferes with its ability to continue operating normally” (Salemi & Alhammad Fawwaz, 2010, p. 60), which crisis was only perceived by concentrating on tourists’ activities as the centre of things that are driven by the mass media including television, radio, and advertisement (Tribe, 1999).

However, the tourism crisis is about the difficulties that tourists face in travelling and the challenges that destinations face in their operations and in promoting their images (Lydecker, 1986; Ross, 2006). Similarly, Beirman (2003, p. 82) emphasised that a crisis is “a situation requiring radical management action in response to events beyond the internal control of the destination, demanding urgent adaptation of marketing and operational practices to restore the confidence of employees, associated enterprises and consumers in the viability of the destination”.

In all mentioned definitions, the impact of crises on the comprehensive aspects of tourism business at the destination, which includes stakeholders such as employees, businesses, and consumers (tourists) within tourism destinations, were more or less argued. Accordingly, the management of these crises needs comprehensive knowledge and the ability to tackle the situation.

(2009)Brewton (1987, p. 13) was one of the pioneers in developing a model for crisis management for the lodging industry and defined it as: “the systematic approach to ensuring that qualitative decisions and actions are made in order to avoid or minimise the damage to hotel guests and assets.” (Brewton, 1987). Later on, this definition was adopted by other researchers in tourism crisis management for the hospitality industry, i.e. Ritchie (2009), Israeli and Reichel (2003), Israeli et al. (2011) and Tavitiyaman et al. (2008).

According to Prideaux (2004), understanding the characteristics of a crisis will help identify methods and techniques to manage the crisis. Thus, the following three issues need to be considered:

- 1- The time element of crises
- 2- Sources of crises
- 3- and a combination of these criteria.

#### *4.2.1. The time element of crises*

The definition of the time element of the crisis is about the duration and distribution of impacts over time. Accordingly, Parsons (1996) and Ritchie (2004) provide three categories of crises and differentiate their developing speed:

- a- Sudden or immediate is one that happens with little or no warning signs; therefore, it is difficult to control and does not allow destinations to prepare.
- b- Gradual or emerging is one that develops slowly and gradually occurs so that it can be predicted and provides time to plan and prepare. Accordingly, involved stakeholders at the destination can take measures.
- c- And sustained crisis (long-term crisis) is one that often lasts for weeks, months or even years.

Similarly, De Sausmarez (2004) argued that crises could be ranged based on the temporal condition of the crises:

- a- Potential crises: the threats that might occur in the future, which are neither ascertainable nor are they already existent.

- b- Latent crises: the crises that are already occurring but do not yet have a measurable negative influence.
- c- Acute crisis: the crises that their destructive effect can be clearly perceived and measured.

#### *4.2.2. Sources of crises*

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) suggested that there are two types of crises that affect destinations:

- 1- Natural crises (disasters) can be climatological (for example, flood, drought, hurricane, cyclone, wildfire) or geophysical (for example, earthquake, volcanic eruption, tsunami).
- 2- Human-induced (man-made) events can be:
  - a- Political unrests, sanctions, terrorism attacks, war, industrial actions, transport accidents, and epidemic diseases.
  - b- Technological hazards that are mechanical/systems failure and industrial and even nuclear accidents (Faulkner, 2001; PATA, 2003; Shaluf et al., 2003; UNWTO, 2011).

#### *4.2.3. Combination*

Some researchers suggest a combination of criteria to classify crisis management planning and responsive strategies, such as using two factors—the level of severity and the level of certainty of forecast (Prideaux, 2004). Prideux (2004) argued that destinations need reliable technology and knowledge to help with upcoming forecasting crises. However, with the uncertain nature of the crisis, the crisis evaluation can vary, and not all destinations will experience the same level of severity from a crisis, depending on such factors as the crisis preparation effort, crisis management resources, and view of decision-makers on the crisis.

Bumett (1998) also identified six major tasks in strategic management to handle crises (Figure 24):

- 1- Goal formulation
- 2- Environmental analysis
- 3- Strategy formulation
- 4- Strategy evaluation
- 5- Strategy implementation
- 6- Strategic control.

Primarily it was explained that the goal formulation and environmental analysis tasks must be considered to provide the strategic guideline for the decision-makers at the destination. Then, in the next step, strategies should be formulated and evaluated in order to develop strategic options for implementation. In the final step, it is essential that the decision-makers control the strategies to ensure they were implemented as planned. Moreover, other issues such as time pressure, control issues, threat level concerns and response option constraints can have the same importance in strategic crisis management (Burnett, 1998). Overall, decision-makers must formulate a comprehensive crisis management plan to protect the tourism industry at destinations before, during and after the crisis.

**Figure 24: Crisis management: strategic consideration**



Source: Bumett (1998)



Following the review of crisis literature, this chapter will look at the COVID-19 pandemic, Sanctions and destination image (Case study number 1), and the negative role of big brands such as UNESCO (Case study number 2) to shed light on the destructive effect of the crises on the destination image.

### 4.3. COVID-19 and destination image

31 December 2019, the World Health Organization's China office heard the first reports of an unknown virus causing pneumonia-like symptoms in Wuhan. By 11 January 2020, the number of confirmed cases was announced (WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, 2021; C. C. Williams & Kayaoglu, 2020). Initially, views of the relatively unknown virus suggested it was not a threat nor a public health emergency. However, 12 days later, on 23 January 2020, Wuhan residents had to adhere to strict lockdown measures with minimal mobility opportunities (M. Jian, 2020). All forms of travel and transport to/from Wuhan ceased to contain the spread of infection. The initial response that led to restrictions in Wuhan took 24 days, and people across China had to comply. This would set the context for what would follow and would result in travel/transport almost ceasing several times globally with many new regulations and limits from February 2020 to July 2021 (at the time of writing this chapter).

The COVID-19 crisis saw countries take vastly different measures to combat the spread of infection, based on a wide range of considerations, approaches, policies and strategies. For example, regarding travel and mobility during the first wave of the pandemic (Spring to early summer 2020) (Sutherland et al., 2021), some responses were precise and timely, while others were vague and delayed (with dire consequences). Countries such as China, Indonesia, and Thailand represent the former, while the United Kingdom, Italy, and the United States represent the latter during the first wave of COVID-19 (WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, 2021; C. C. Williams & Kayaoglu, 2020).

#### *4.3.1. The role of political trust<sup>1</sup>*

According to Turper and Aarts (2017), political trust is a prevalent topic of research inquiry and “an important indicator of political legitimacy” (p. 415). Political trust is more commonly explored among political science researchers, but there is a need for more interdisciplinary positions on the matter, especially when considering travel guidance and times of crisis.

Drawing particular inspiration for this proposed focus area on political trust, insight and findings from Marien and Hooghe (2011) are considered. These scholars observed links between political trust and abiding by the law, and these links are particularly important to consider if people may adhere to and support travel policies or not. This is especially important when assessing travel during a pandemic because countries are rapidly changing their laws to limit mobility. Research shows that when people have lower levels of political trust, illegal behaviour is more prominent than people who display higher levels of political trust (Marien & Hooghe, 2011).

Similar trends have been observed across various studies in the past few decades (Grimes, 2006; Lenard, 2018; Seyd, 2015; Turper & Aarts, 2017). Thus, there is a need to ask: how does political trust align with support of travel restrictions and consequently control the health crisis at the destinations? Moreover, this issue may affect the destination image. From results presented by Marien and Hooghe (2011), a hypothesis for research related to travel and tourism would suggest that populations that place a high level of political trust in their national governments would more likely abide by travel restrictions and thus not travel. In comparison, populations that do not place high trust in their national governments are more likely not to support travel restrictions and thus not abide by them.

The interdisciplinary direction of such research sets a new presence for contemporary collaborations among political scientists, law/legal scholars, and tourism researchers amid a time of global crisis, especially when travel advice and policies lack clarity and consistency. Moreover, part of the struggle to contain the spread of infection aligns with cultural differences concerning ways of socialising, contact tracing, sanitation norms/standards, and living environments. Accordingly, it is possible to consider that the combination of trust and abiding by the announced regulations, especially during the COVID-19 crisis, has led to success in controlling the pandemic that has directly

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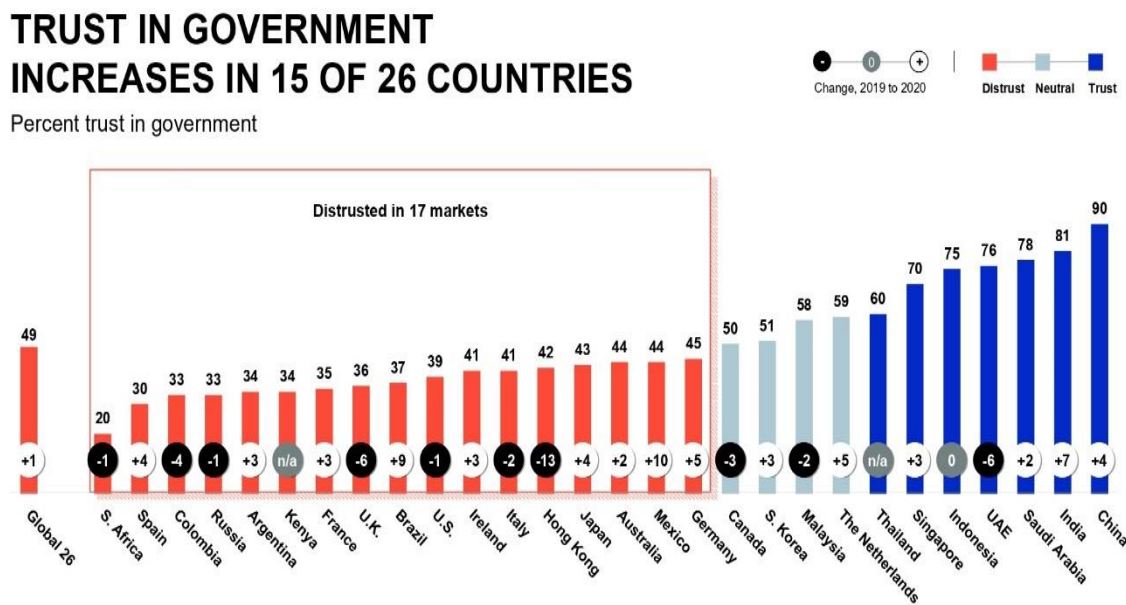
<sup>1</sup> This sub chapter has been accepted for oral presentation in the “Global developments in the Corona and Post-Corona Eras” Conference (Iran, Mar 2022).

improved the countries' image as a safe destination to travel.

To explore this topical direction of research, the Edelman Trust Barometer reports (2020; 2021) (Figure 25 and Figure 26) offer insight into levels of trust based on three categories: 1. Trust=60-100%; 2. Neutral=50-59%; and 3. Distrust=0-49%.

Considering the relationship between COVID-19 confirmed cases to population ratios based on Coronavirus, the World Health Organization provides various daily statistics for all countries and the political trust scores (i.e. trust in government) are based on 2020, and 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer reports.

**Figure 25: 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Report**

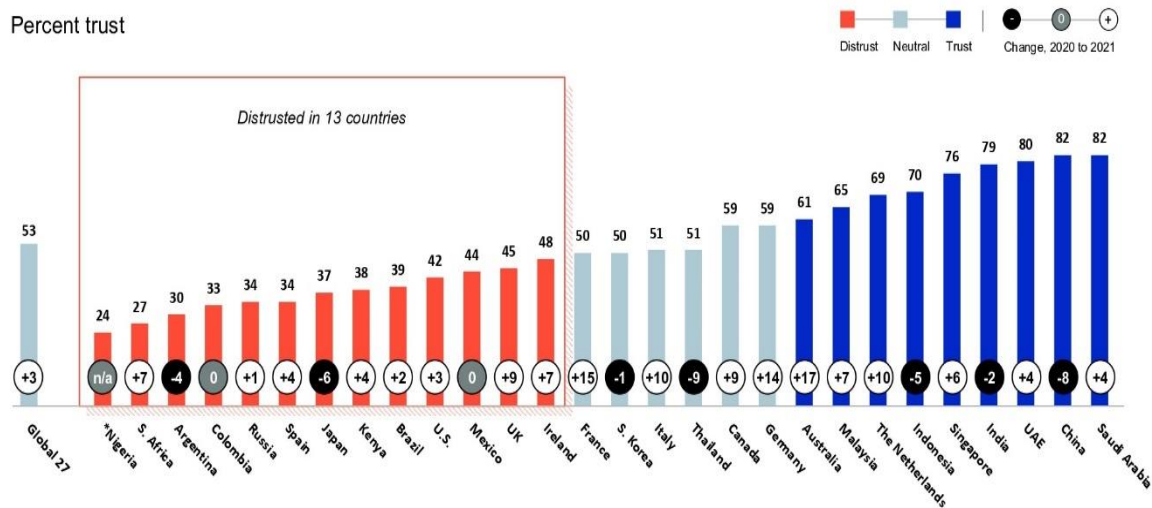


Source: Edelman Trust Barometer (2020)

Figure 26: 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer Report

## TRUST IN GOVERNMENT INCREASES IN 18 OF 27 COUNTRIES

Percent trust



Source: Edelman Trust Barometer (2021)

Considering political trust and support and adherence to travel restrictions makes it possible to distinguish a positive correlation between government trust and a country's infection rate due to a pandemic. Further, this chapter looked at one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (individualism) and found that those countries with higher (lower) trust and lower (higher) infection rates tend to be collectivist (individualist) societies ('Hofstede Insights Country Comparison', 2021).

Concerning the level of trust that populations have in their government, the rate of travel cancellation and accordingly controlling the virus spread looks pretty prosperous. This can be seen as their government have projected a very clear message from the critical situation of the country so that the people have trusted and reacted accordingly, while in some others, the confusing message caused catastrophic results.

As the start point of spreading the virus, with the highest percentage of public trust (90%), China decided to delay but created a very clear message of the crisis for the people and implemented strict quarantine rules and travel bans. Consequently, the largest annual human migration in the world was cancelled, but it became the first country to ease the quarantine rules and retake normal life gradually. Nevertheless, the number of confirmed

cases reached 84,629, with 4,645 mortality until June 2020 (Table 8).

Interestingly, the picture seems to be mixed for countries in the “Neutral Trust” zone regarding infection rates. However, the cultural dimension rate (individualism) seems to moderate the relationship between infection rate and political trust such that the infection rate is lower for countries with lower individualism. Here, compared with Malaysia (Trust: 58%, Individualism: 26) and Republic of Korea (Trust: 51%, Individualism: 18), the Netherlands (Trust: 59%, Individualism: 80), and Canada (Trust: 50%, Individualism: 80) have a much higher infection rate<sup>2</sup>(Table 8). Accordingly, it is possible to consider a positive correlation between government trust and a country's infection rate due to a pandemic.

The Republic of Korea, with a medium level of public trust (51%), learned from the neighbouring country and considered the fast and vast measures, maybe in part due to prior experience with the SARS crisis (Graham-Harrison, 2020), to limit infections.

As a result, the Republic of Korea has been effective in controlling the nation’s mortality rate not through travel bans but instead through widespread rigorous quarantine measures and mass COVID-19 testing (Dudden & Marks, 2020). Nevertheless, the result was outstanding; the number of confirmed cases reached 11,776, with 273 mortality until June 2020 (Table 8).

On the other hand, the US president spent weeks denying the severity of the health crisis, predicting it could simply disappear or was not much worse than the flu. The USA, with a low public trust rate of 39%, created a very unclear and confusing virus message. So that 60% (L. Hamel et al., 2020) of Americans took their March break travel, and as a result, the country became the most infected one with the highest mortality rate in the world. The number of confirmed cases reached 1,892,829, with 110,185 mortality until June 2020 (Table 8).

Likewise, in Italy, the late response and unclear message saw the virus rapidly spread from Lombardy (in the north of Italy) to other regions as the authorities announced they want to begin the lockdown of the region but did not realize if the people may travel to other regions immediately (Miglierini & Hazell, 2020). These two countries paid the price by seeing infection and mortality rates rise compared to the Republic of Korea.

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<sup>2</sup> This chapter also checked the death rate per population ratio and these are generally consistent with the infection rates presented here

Accordingly, it is possible to conclude that message clarity moderates the relationship between government trust and infection rates. This suggests that countries with a clear message show lower infection rates.

However, some countries, such as Australia (Case/Population ratio of 0.028%), even with a score of 90 in individualism and a low public trust rate of 44%, were controlling the spread of the virus as successful as the countries with a medium level of public trust (far better than countries with the high individualism score but close to the countries with low individualism score) by shutting down all its borders during the first wave (Table 8) (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2020; ‘Hofstede Insights Country Comparison’, 2021; WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, 2021).

**Table 8: Example countries with different categories of political trust combined with COVID-19 data until June 2020**

COVID-19 data until June 2020							
Country	Population	Total cases	Total death	Case/Population ratio	Individualism	Political trust score	
China	1,439,323,776	84,629	4,645	0.006%	20	90%	Trust
Indonesia	274,985,131	31,186	1,851	0.011%	14	75%	
Thailand	69,777,809	3,112	58	0.004%	20	60%	
Netherlands	17,130,079	47,083	5,980	0.275%	80	59%	Neutral
Malaysia	32,311,201	8,303	117	0.026%	26	58%	
Republic of Korea	51,263,639	11,776	273	0.023%	18	51%	
Canada	37,699,156	94,335	7,703	0.250%	80	50%	
Italy	60,472,892	234,801	33,846	0.388%	76	41%	Distrust
USA	330,753,490	1,892,829	110,185	0.572%	91	39%	
UK	67,840,351	262,735	38,565	0.387%	89	36%	

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer (2020), Hofstede Insights Country Comparison (2021) and WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, (2021).

This crisis and how different countries reacted to it have dramatically affected the image of destinations. For example, China's image suffered a lot as it is known as the first born place of the Coronavirus (nonetheless, up to the current time of administering this chapter (July 2021), the exact origin of the coronavirus is still unclear) (Gan & George, 2021). By dropping the number of infected cases and passing the first wave, in order to boost the virus-ravaged economies, many countries, such as EU members, have eased the regulations and have lifted the travel ban (Table 9 is an example of travel restrictions adopted by major global destinations from March until June 2020) inside the EU zone while few countries such as Australia kept on its severe travel ban and has been closing the borders (European Parliament, 2020).

**Table 9: Travel restrictions adopted by major global tourism destinations (Restriction implemented from March until June 2020)**

Country	Border Closures			Other Measures			
	Land	Sea	Air	Flight suspension	Entry or exit bans	Mandatory 14-day quarantine on arrival	visa restriction
France	Land border checks	cruise ships/passenger ships of over 100 people	Partial	Partial suspension	Except for UK/EU /Schengen area/EEA Member States	Except for UK/EU /Schengen area(excluding Spain)	✓
Spain	Partial	Partial	Partial	Except for cargo planes, ambulances, emergencies, and passengers who have special authorisation	Except for UK/EU /Schengen area/EEA Member States	✓	-
United States of America	Restrict non-essential travel	-	-	limited	Entry is suspended for non-US nationals	✓	-
China	All land border crossings between China and Russia	-	No	limited	No	✓	-
Italy	partial	partial	partial	limited	limited	✓	-

Turkey	Except cargo transport (excluding Iran and Iraq)	✓	✓	Except Cargo, government, and emergency medical flights	✓	✓	-
Mexico	Restrict non-essential travel	-	-	Flag carrier Aeromexico suspended 17 international routes and reduced flights in another 23, including a 40% reduction in its scheduled flights to Europe	-	-	-
Germany	Land border checks	-	No	limited	limited	✓	-
Thailand	✓	✓	✓	Except for military aircraft, emergency landing, technical landing without disembarkation, humanitarian medical or relief flights, repatriation flights (commercial or government)	Foreigners, except those with a work permit, diplomats or their family members	✓	-



				and cargo flights			
United Kingdom	No	No	No	limited	No	-	-

Sources: Seyfi et al. (2020)

The early lifting outcome of travel bans and easing of the COVID regulations was the second wave of Corona virus (early Autumn to December 2020) (Table 10), with a new variant of the virus (Alpha) that spread from the United Kingdom (Earliest documented samples, Sep-2020); the wave peaked again in early January 2021 and ended at the end of April 2021 (Maragakis, 2020). The new Alpha variant was more dangerous and more contagious compared to the previous virus. Accordingly, it has damaged the image of the UK as a safe destination to travel to and pushed the UK on the black list of travelling for other countries (Sutherland et al., 2021; *Tracking SARS-CoV-2 Variants*, 2021).

**Table 10: Example countries with different categories of political trust combined with COVID-19 data until December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020**

COVID-19 data until December 31 <sup>st</sup> 2020							
Country	Population	Total Confirmed Cases	Total death	Case/ Population ratio	Individualism	Political trust score	
China	1,439,323,776	96,673	4,788	0.007%	20	90%	Trust
Indonesia	274,985,131	735,124	21,944	0.267%	14	75%	
Thailand	69,777,809	6,690	61	0.010%	20	60%	
Netherlands	17,130,079	785,893	11,299	4.588%	80	59%	Neutral
Malaysia	32,311,201	110,485	463	0.339%	26	58%	
Republic of Korea	51,263,639	60,734	900	0.118%	18	51%	
Canada	37,699,156	565,506	15,378	1.492%	80	50%	
Italy	60,472,892	2,083,689	73,604	3.446%	76	41%	Distrust
USA	330,753,490	19,346,790	335,789	5.828%	91	39%	
UK	67,840,351	2,532,601	72,548	3.733%	89	36%	

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer (2020), Hofstede Insights Country Comparison (2021) and WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, (2021).

On December 8 2020, the United Kingdom became the first country in the world to start administrating its citizens with a fully trialled and tested COVID-19 vaccine, soon followed by other countries such as the United States; on December 11 2020, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued the first emergency use authorization (EUA) for a vaccine for the prevention of coronavirus (Aljazeera, 2020; FDA, 2020).

Following starting the vaccine-producing race, some countries, such as the US, Russia, China, and the UK as the major producers, have relied on this issue in order to rebuild their image as they have failed to control the Coronavirus situation during the first wave of the pandemic (Gavi, 2021; WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, 2021). At the

same time, the US and Russia took this opportunity to improve their image and somehow expand their influential geopolitical power by vaccinating tourists; thus, vaccine tourism took a new shape as a subcategory of medical tourism in 2021 (BBC, 2021; McDonagh, 2021).

Surprisingly, even until the end of July 31st 2021, the data shows more or less the same result from 2020, in which the cultural dimension rate (individualism) seems to moderate the relationship between infection rate and political trust (Table 11).

Since the beginning of 2021 and following the vaccine-producing race, 30.7% of the world population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and 16% are fully vaccinated, out of which only 1.2% of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose until the end of July 2021 (H. Ritchie et al., 2020). This unfair way of vaccine distribution has increased the mortality rate in low-income countries and has dramatically affected their image as safe destinations.

Due to this unfair way of vaccine distribution, some countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, France, Canada and Australia have gained public trust, and this factor has helped them to improve their position in Edelman Trust Barometer (2021), among them Germany (with +14 points), France (with +15 points), and Australia (with +17 points) have gained the most points (Table 12).

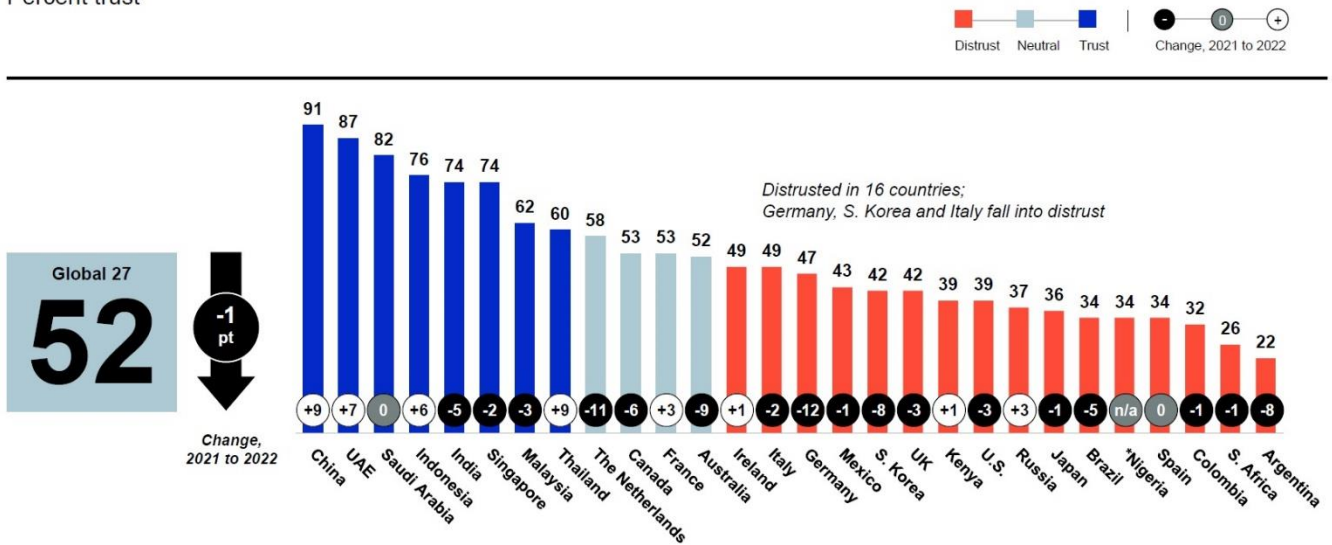
After almost 18 months of sealing the borders, Australia has gained +17 points and has jumped from the distrust category in 2020 into the trust category in 2021 (from 42% to 61%) (*Edelman Trust Barometer*, 2020; 2021). This considerable gain has improved Australia's image and has made it one of the safest destinations in the public's eyes. This is what all tourism authorises, and DMOs in Australia wish to plan for the post-COVID period. Nevertheless, with all their border sealing and benefiting from vaccine injection, the data reveals that this country, with 3% (Table 11), is among the countries with a high death rate per infected case ratio (WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, 2021).

However, it did not last long for Australia to be finally knocked down by COVID as OMICRON (the newest variant of COVID) found its way behind the sealed borders and caused a dramatic increase in the number of infected cases from 33,909 in July 2021 to 2,152,171 (Table 13) by the end of January 31st 2022 ratio (WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, 2022)

Figure 27: 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer Report

## TRUST IN GOVERNMENT FALLS IN 17 OF 27 COUNTRIES

Percent trust



Source: Edelman Trust Barometer Report (2022)

This became even worse and a heavy loss for Australia as 1.5 million COVID infections were acquired in the first three weeks of January 2022, that cost this country losing public trust and falling from 61% in 2021 to 52% in 2022 (Figure 27). Australia, which once has gained a reputation during the two years of COVID to be known as a safe destination and could convince its citizens to seal the borders strategy by not letting anyone go out or get in, now is under heavy criticism, as in a report shown by CNN news agency “Australia was a model in how to handle Covid, Now it's a mess” (Whiteman, 2022)

The fast spread of the OMICRON variant has shattered pandemic records and closed borders in various regions of the world; as governments and scientists hurried to comprehend the strain's ramifications of the virus, it replaced Delta and took over the planet in less than a month. OMICRON was a big surprise for different destinations; however, the data shows more or less the same result from 2020, in which the cultural dimension rate (individualism) seems to moderate the relationship between infection rate and political trust (Table 13 and 14).

The countries with higher (lower) trust and lower (higher) infection rates tend to be collectivist (individualist) societies (‘Hofstede Insights Country Comparison’, 2021). Nonetheless, the death per case ratio showed that even if the individualist countries have a higher rate of infection (Case/Population ratio), their death rate (Death/Case ratio) is lower than the collectivist countries. This can open up different arguments, such as the

vaccine efficiency of individualist countries or many other factors that need to be considered for future studies (Table 13 and 14).

Overall, for the post-COVID period, destinations need to be prepared for different scenarios, as the two years of COVID proved many unprepared destinations with heavy losses. Moreover, there is a significant relation between tourists' intra-pandemic perception and post-pandemic destination choice based on the new safe projected image by the destinations (J. Li et al., 2020). Previously, the role of media has been considered as one of the significant factors in convincing travellers and helping the destinations during and after the crises; however, the COVID-19 pandemic has opened up a new place for the national and international health organizations such as WHO as one of the main sources for checking the safety rate of the destinations based on different factors such as the number of confirmed infected cases, total death and vaccinated population rate.

**Table 11: Example countries with different categories of political trust combined with COVID-19 data until July 31<sup>st</sup> 2021**

COVID-19 data until July 31 <sup>st</sup> 2021											
Country	Population	Total Confirmed Cases	Total death	Case/ Population ratio	Death/ Case ratio	Individ ualism	Political trust score				
							2020	2021	Administrated Vaccine (dose)		
									1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	
<b>China</b>	1,444,216,107	120,635	5,635	0.01%	4.7%	20	90%	82%	43%	16%	Trust
<b>Indonesia</b>	276,361,783	3,409,658	94,119	1.23%	2.8%	14	75%	70%	19%	9.4%	
<b>Thailand</b>	69,950,850	597,287	4,857	0.85%	0.8%	20	60%	51%	23%	6.5%	
<b>Netherlands</b>	17,173,099	1,862,369	17,821	10.84%	1.0%	80	59%	69%	70%	56%	Neutral
<b>Malaysia</b>	32,776,194	1,095,486	8,859	3.34%	0.8%	26	58%	65%	51%	29%	
<b>Republic of Korea</b>	51,305,186	198,345	2,095	0.39%	1.1%	18	51%	50%	43%	16%	
<b>Canada</b>	38,067,903	1,429,577	26,575	3.76%	1.9%	80	50%	59%	72%	63%	Distrust
<b>Italy</b>	60,367,477	4,343,519	128,047	7.20%	2.9%	76	41%	51%	67%	56%	
<b>USA</b>	332,915,073	34,659,540	607,505	10.41%	1.8%	91	39%	42%	59%	50%	
<b>UK</b>	68,207,116	5,830,778	129,583	8.55%	2.2%	89	36%	45%	69%	59%	

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer (2021), Hofstede Insights Country Comparison (2021), Pettersson et al., (2021), H.Ritchie et al., (2020) and WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, (2021).

**Table 12: Example countries with different categories of political trust combined with COVID-19 data until July 31<sup>st</sup> 2021**

COVID-19 data until July 31 <sup>st</sup> 2021											
Country	Population	Total Confirmed Cases	Total death	Case/ Population ratio	Death/ Case ratio	Individ ualism	Political trust score				
							2020	2021	Administrated Vaccine (dose)		
									1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	
<b>Australia</b>	25,788,215	33,909	923	0.13%	2.7%	90	42%	61%	37%	19%	Trust
<b>France</b>	65,426,179	5,971,610	110,781	9.13%	1.9%	71	35%	50%	67%	51%	Neutral
<b>Germany</b>	83,900,473	3,769,165	91,658	4.49%	2.4%	67	45%	59%	62%	56%	

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer (2021), Hofstede Insights Country Comparison (2021), Pettersson et al., (2021), H.Ritchie et al., (2020) and WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, (2021).

**Table 13: Example countries with different categories of political trust combined with COVID-19 data until Jan 31<sup>st</sup> 2022**

COVID-19 data until Jan 31 <sup>st</sup> 2022											
Country	Population	Total Confirmed Cases	Total death	Case/ Population ratio	Death/ Case ratio	Individualism	Political trust score				
							2022	2021	Administrated Vaccine (dose)		
									2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	
China	1,448,219,064	138,992	5,700	0.01%	4.1%	20	91%	82%	85%	22%	Trust
Indonesia	278,218,072	4,353,370	144,320	1.56%	3.3%	14	76%	70%	45%	NA	
Thailand	70,079,501	2,440,542	22,173	3.48%	0.9%	20	60%	51%	69%	21%	
Netherlands	17,195,342	4,320,171	21,272	25.12%	0.5%	80	58%	69%	70%	47%	Neutral
Malaysia	33,042,240	2,865,984	31,965	8.67%	1.1%	26	62%	65%	79%	35%	
Republic of Korea	51,339,362	845,699	6,755	1.65%	0.8%	18	42%	50%	85%	52%	
Canada	38,277,228	3,026,874	33,647	7.91%	1.1%	80	53%	59%	79%	40%	Distrust
Italy	60,321,104	10,925,485	146,149	18.11%	1.3%	76	49%	51%	77%	56%	
USA	334,122,059	73,706,790	877,422	22.06%	1.2%	91	39%	42%	64%	26%	
UK	68,458,403	17,223,523	156,605	25.16%	0.9%	89	36%	42%	72%	55%	

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer (2021), Hofstede Insights Country Comparison (2021), Pettersson et al., (2021), H.Ritchie et al., (2020) and WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, (2022).

**Table 14. Example countries with different categories of political trust combined with COVID-19 data until Jan 31<sup>st</sup> 2022**

COVID-19 data until Jan 31 <sup>st</sup> 2022											
Country	Population	Total Confirmed Cases	Total death	Case/ Population ratio	Death/ Case ratio	Individualism	Political trust score				
							2022	2021	Administrated Vaccine (dose)		
									2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	
Australia	25,981,142	2,152,171	3,716	8.28%	0.2%	90	52%	61%	78%	31%	Trust
France	65,503,882	18,560,716	127,792	28.34%	0.7%	71	53%	50%	76%	48%	Neutral
Germany	84,212,116	9,815,533	117,786	11.66%	1.2%	67	47%	59%	74%	53%	

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer (2021), Hofstede Insights Country Comparison (2021), Pettersson et al., (2021), H.Ritchie et al., (2020) and WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, (2022).

#### 4.4. International sanctions and destination image (Case study number 1)

This case study is now under review to be published as a paper administered by Bardia Shabani, Dr Naser Pourazad and Professor Roberta Crouch.

Understanding contributing factors to travel decisions has been an important area of research in the tourism literature for decades (Dolnicar & Ring, 2014). Essentially, investigating how travellers choose a destination and what factors most influence their decision is critical to tourism marketing and product development. Among the most researched factors are perceived risks, travel costs and travel distance (J.-Y. Wong & Yeh, 2009). Whilst much has been discovered regarding potential destinations, the intrinsic characteristics of travellers that inform the overall ‘travel goals’ they seek to remain mainly under-researched. This represents a significant gap in the current understanding of how to attract best the travel segments destinations seek to satisfy or, indeed, the nature and orientation of the important segments in local or international markets (G. Ashworth & Voogd, 1994). Whilst the literature illustrates many descriptions of traveller attributes, including the degree to which the travellers seek novelty, challenge, unexpectedness, and unique experiences (J.-Y. Wong & Yeh, 2009), such characteristics are often researched as motivators to visit eccentric attractions such as graffiti (Bird, 2009), failed attractions (Thirumaran, 2013), slums/favelas (Frisch, 2012), outmoded public transport systems (J. (Bill) Xu et al., 2018), and concentration camps (Hartmann, 2013).

An unexplored type of unconventional travel is to seek to visit countries under some form of sanctions or restrictions imposed by international organizations or nations. Iran is a potential destination in this category, and as such, it makes an interesting context to study the phenomenon. Iran’s image to the world, including travellers, has seen drastic changes over the years (Bird, 2009). Prior to the Islamic revolution in 1979, Iran was considered the power behind the ancient Persian Empire, with a rich and mysterious cultural heritage which would present an attractive and interesting destination to many travellers. After the revolution, this image was displaced with a view that the country had transformed into a country with a highly religious ideological approach to government and culture, focused on Islamic rules of law (Seyfi & Hall, 2018b).

Since 1979, the US government has imposed numerous sanctions against Iran in response



to the Iranian government's actions against US allies and areas of interest and as a preventive reaction to uncertainties surrounding the Iranian nuclear program (Oechslin, 2014; Seyfi & Hall, 2019). These include various sanctions executed over the years targeting Iran's economic, trade, scientific and military sectors (Fayazmanesh, 2003; Seyfi & Hall, 2020). While all these international sanctions have had direct and indirect impacts on the nation's tourism industry (Seyfi & Hall, 2019), the travel restrictions set by the Trump government in 2017 might have the capacity to cause the most substantial impact.

In 2017, the US put forward a specific measure affecting international travellers by announcing that those visiting Iran would face entry restrictions in the United States (Jalili, 2019) due to the heightened concerns about terrorism and travel to the US (*The White House*, 2017). These restrictions include but are not limited to ineligibility for the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Such policies have left Iran as a destination advised not to visit, notwithstanding its remarkable history, rich culture, and world-heritage sites. As a result, the overall attractiveness of the country as a destination to a conventional traveller seems complicated, mysterious, potentially dangerous and hard to shape without a first-hand experience. Additionally, the implications of choosing Iran as a destination include being prohibited from visiting the US with the possible flow-on effects to other travel visa applications for other countries sympathetic to the US position on Iran.

Under such circumstances, many travellers who consider Iran 'unconventional' and somewhat 'anti-establishment' compared to other travellers, with a visit constituting a form of 'protest vote' against the sanctions.

In fact, approximately eight million foreign travellers visited Iran between March 21, 2019 (Iranian new year) and January 2020 (Financial Tribune, 2020). The latest report by the World Travel and Tourism Council indicates that travellers from Iraq (30%), Azerbaijan (21%) and Turkey (10%) contributed the most to the inbound arrivals and overall international visitors spent about US\$3.6B when visiting Iran (World Economic Forum, 2019; World Travel and tourism council, 2020). However, a tiny portion of these travellers (less than 1%) was from European countries, even though European travellers represented more than 50% of the world's international tourism, with around 713 million travellers in 2018 (World Travel and tourism council, 2020).

Hence, this study aims to assess Iran's attractiveness as a destination under the particular circumstance of the ongoing international sanctions and the ensuing travel limitation and restrictions. In particular, the research focuses on theoretically exploring the factors driving unconventional travellers' decision to visit Iran. This is an area of research that has not been researched before despite its evident theoretical and practical implications. Accordingly, from a theoretical standpoint, this research expands the knowledge by identifying two novel concepts contributing to international travellers' decision to visit a sanctioned country such as Iran: the degree of curiosity (including dimensions such as the desire for personal validation, stimulating personal development, seeking knowledge for the fulfilment of self-actualization needs and seeking unique experience) and the degree of disapproval for existing negative connotations linked to Iran's image as a sanctioned destination (including dimensions such as disapproval of sanctions, disregard for or contempt of restrictions, disinterest in negative news and word-of-mouth 'WOM' and disagreement with tourism image of a sanctioned destination). The study also adds to the existing theoretical understanding of the pre- and during-visit destination image gap by exploring its possible impact on a sanctioned destination choice. The research also provides marketers and tourism managers with practical implications about segmentation characteristics that help with targeting potential travellers and effective positioning against competitors.

#### *4.4.1. Research background*

##### *4.4.1.1. Tourism and destination attractiveness*

In 2003 tourism was recognized as the most important economic activity globally (Vengesai, 2003). As a result, intense competition exists amongst potential tourism destinations for their share of this lucrative market. However, despite intense tourism marketing campaigns on both a country and specific destination level by competing countries worldwide, research reveals that before the COVID-19 pandemic, around 70% of all international travellers visit the ten major world destinations (countries: France, Spain, USA, China, Italy, Turkey, Mexico, Germany, Thailand and the UK (Beerli & Martín, 2004) leaving all other locations competing vigorously for the remaining 30% of travellers (N. Morgan et al., 2002).

When people evaluate destination choices to determine their attractiveness for travelling,

the literature shows that they first consider their own holiday ‘goals’ and then search amongst alternatives for travel locations that are likely to satisfy those goals (C. Lee et al., 2010). Each alternative destination choice will be comprised of ‘pros and cons’ – motivators or constraints that contribute to overall country/destination attractiveness (Agapito et al., 2013; Nicolau & Más, 2006).

Elements of destinations typically considered attractive or less attractive are based on cognitive assessments of known or expected destination attributes and affective reactions (feelings) about a place and its people. Both contribute to expectations of what the destination will offer to meet travel goals and achieve satisfaction, such as relaxation, excitement, knowledge, or adventure. As a result, the literature highlights destination elements such as good food, beautiful scenery and nature, art, historical sites, shopping, exciting places to visit, activities, cross-cultural experiences and quality accommodation are taken firmly into consideration by travellers (Y. Hu & Ritchie, 1993; D. Kim & Perdue, 2011; C. Lin et al., 2007; Tavitiyaman & Qu, 2013).

Countering motivators to visit a destination are perceived risks, both to achieving holiday goals (being disappointed by the experience) or actual risks to safety and/or health (S. Sönmez & Graefe, 1998; Tavitiyaman & Qu, 2013). Two other critical factors that are considered for all but the most wealthy and least time-constrained travellers are costs and distance to reach the potential destination. For example, suppose a holiday is going to be very expensive. In that case, naturally, goal expectations are raised, and perceived risk of disappointment (the trip may not be worth the money) travellers may also feel anxiety over the amount of money spent versus perceived satisfaction (Nicolau & Más, 2006). Distance is also considered a constraint for many travellers due to the extra time taken to reach a destination and return home and possible discomfort due to long flights and tiring and tedious travel connections (Thill & Horowitz, 1997). Moreover, weather and climate, as well as the language spoken or the perceived understanding of the level of spoken English (or another commonly spoken language in other regions such as Arabic or Spanish), are also taken into account when determining the attractiveness of a destination choice (H. Liu et al., 2018; Masiero & Qiu, 2018).

Other important factors determining destination attractiveness as a tourism choice are rooted in the travellers' characteristics (Tsiotsou & Vasioti, 2006). Understandably, demographic factors are likely to influence the types and nature of destination elements that will attract different people, such as those travelling with small children versus young

single travellers (X. Li et al., 2013). Those on a budget will also be willing to tolerate different travel conditions than those able to spend more on better quality accommodation and expeditions (Masiero & Qiu, 2018). The literature also argues different elements related to the travellers' intrinsic characteristics that a conventional traveller does not typically consider. These include risk-taking, desire for personal validation, experience-seeking, and knowledge-seeking (Martenson, 2018; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1992).

More specifically, the literature shows that some individuals are more risk-averse than others (Quintal et al., 2010), and there is a segment of the travelling population that seem to be attracted to what may be considered higher risk destinations, whilst others avoid them (Korstanje & Clayton, 2012). Hence, holiday destination choices are made according to the balance of the overall 'value' a destination provides to satisfy traveller holiday goals taking the expected limitations imposed, moderated by the type of traveller and their particular desires and constraints. Such value assessment seems straightforward for conventional destinations such as western European nations such as France and Spain, but less straightforward for destinations that are portrayed as dangerous, uncertain and risky due to economic, political or social matters in the eyes of global travellers. Among such destinations are countries under international sanctions, such as Russia, Belarus, Myanmar, Ivory Coast, Cuba, and Iran (Seyfi & Hall, 2020).

#### *4.4.1.2. Destination recovery after conflict*

Tourism is increasingly affected by forces and events in its external environment in today's interconnected world, so even small-scale crises may considerably impact a destination. Therefore, as an essential concept, the country's image has been studied from several perspectives, including tourism, international marketing, and international relations. Moreover, from the point of the international relation of view, the image of a country may also have important political and strategic considerations, even affecting European Union or NATO membership (Van Ham, 2001). Therefore, when delineating the concept of country image, it becomes necessary to draw from several disciplines and establish parallels between different aspects of this image.

In addition, a country with a generally negative image may also suffer from diplomatic conflicts between two (or more) specific countries, which may influence its citizens' attitudes and behaviour. This effect is referred to as "animosity" in the international marketing literature, which may influence the intention to buy (for example, see Bahae

& Pisani, 2009). Klein, Ettenson, and Morris (1998) define animosity as “the remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political, or economic events” that are perceived as “grievous and difficult to forgive”. Thus, consumers may refuse to buy products from a place whenever they experience animosity towards a particular country because of past or current events (Nes et al., 2012). Also, Klein, Ettenson, and Morris (1998) support this conclusion in their study regarding the animosity of Chinese consumers towards the Japanese and their products. Although Chinese consumers valued the quality of Japanese products, they preferred to buy substitutes due to their animosity towards the Japanese.

Consumer behaviour has been dramatically impacted by animosity (Nes et al., 2012), primarily through its influence on the affective image that is based on feelings and emotions (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Also, Podoshen and Hunt (2011) applied animosity to the tourism context and analysed its effect on the intention to visit a historic tourist area.

Therefore, political conflicts will significantly affect the tourism industry despite the significant natural, archaeological, and historical resources that the destination enjoys (Alvarez & Campo, 2014). In line with these arguments, political conflicts will negatively affect the image of the destination involved and the intention to visit it. This influence is expected to be greater regarding the feelings for the destination (affective image) as opposed to the beliefs concerning the place (cognitive image) (Nes et al., 2012).

Perception and Media are two key factors that are important to destination image recovery after conflict. Perceptions are not always based on first-hand experiences, but mass media can also affect them (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). Newbold, Boyd-Barrett, and Van den Bulck (2002) argued that most media researchers agree that mass media creates and reflects existing public opinion, attitudes, and perceptions. Overall, Tasci and Gartner (2007) illustrated that autonomous agents such as news media have the power to alter images quickly.

#### *4.4.1.3. Unconventional travellers, sanctions, and travel restrictions*

This study focuses on travellers visiting Iran for reasons other than receiving health care or religious pilgrimage. Such travellers choose Iran as a destination to visit despite the negative news and current travel restrictions or advice set by many countries in Europe, North America and Oceania (Financial Tribune, 2020). The literature shows that

travellers visiting sanctioned countries have different types of motives. Among these motives is confirmation of prior perception about a destination (Marchiori & Cantoni, 2015), stimulation and personal development/growth (P. Pearce & Lee, 2005), and knowledge-seeking, particularly with respect to unknown cultures for the fulfilment of self-actualization needs (Awaritefe, 2004), and seeking unique experiences (Patterson & Pegg, 2010; Wen & Huang, 2019).

This study categorises these motives as a form of curiosity. For an unconventional traveller, obtaining first-hand knowledge and experience from a less-visited destination might make that a far more attractive destination choice than the conventional offerings such as interesting sites, weather, activities, proximity, or value for money. For instance, an unconventional European traveller may find the exotic culture and peculiarity of Middle Eastern countries as ideal elements of an overseas holiday destination (Avraham, 2013; Financial Tribune, 2020) to satisfy his or her desire for validation through first-hand experiences that come at risk higher than the more conventional choices including well-liked Asian destinations such as Singapore or Thailand. Another example of unconventional travellers seeking unique experiences and fulfilling their stimulated curiosity is the Chinese cigar travellers' motivations for visiting Cuba (Wen & Huang, 2019). One may argue that factors and motivations contributing to the traveller's curiosity may vary depending on the motivation's extent or strength. Thus, this study researches the curiosity factor.

Apart from the degree of curiosity, the present study emphasises other motivational factors that contribute to an unconventional traveller's destination choice, particularly politically charged motivators impacting the perceived attractiveness of a destination. For example, countries that face international isolation due to sanctions or political estrangement are typically portrayed in the Western media as dangerous and/or unstable destinations and therefore see lower traveller arrival (Pratt & Alizadeh, 2018). In particular, among the approaches of forcible foreign policy measures, sanctions have a long history of being integral to global geopolitical matters (Kaempfer & Lowenberg, 2007; Lopez & Cortright, 1995) and are reported to have significant implications for international travel and tourism (Seyfi & Hall, 2020).

The literature has discussed the impacts of international sanctions and restricting foreign policies on Syria, Cuba, Russia, Belarus, Myanmar, Ivory Coast, and Zimbabwe (Seyfi & Hall, 2018a). However, for an unconventional traveller, particular political motivators

of personal relevance may significantly impact destination choice. For instance, a traveller's personal disregard for or disagreement with the media propaganda may contribute to a degree of disapproval of the tourism image of the said politically alienated countries formed as a result of the media propaganda. In practice, while these countries face in-bound travel restrictions as a result of global isolation (Avraham, 2014), some travellers may simply disregard the restrictions and seek alternative options to bypass their restrictions. This research categorises these motivators as the traveller's degree of disapproval.

Finally, travellers often have a Before image (Priori image) about the destination they select for travelling, depending on the level of research they conduct prior to their trip (Bui et al., 2021). As a result, the image becomes more realistic, differentiated, defined and comprehensive (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). The possible changes in these perceptions regarding the image during or after the visit are image gaps (Martín-Santana et al., 2017). It is also important to note that travellers' image of a destination is dynamic and constantly developing throughout the trip and even after the trip (W. Smith et al., 2015).

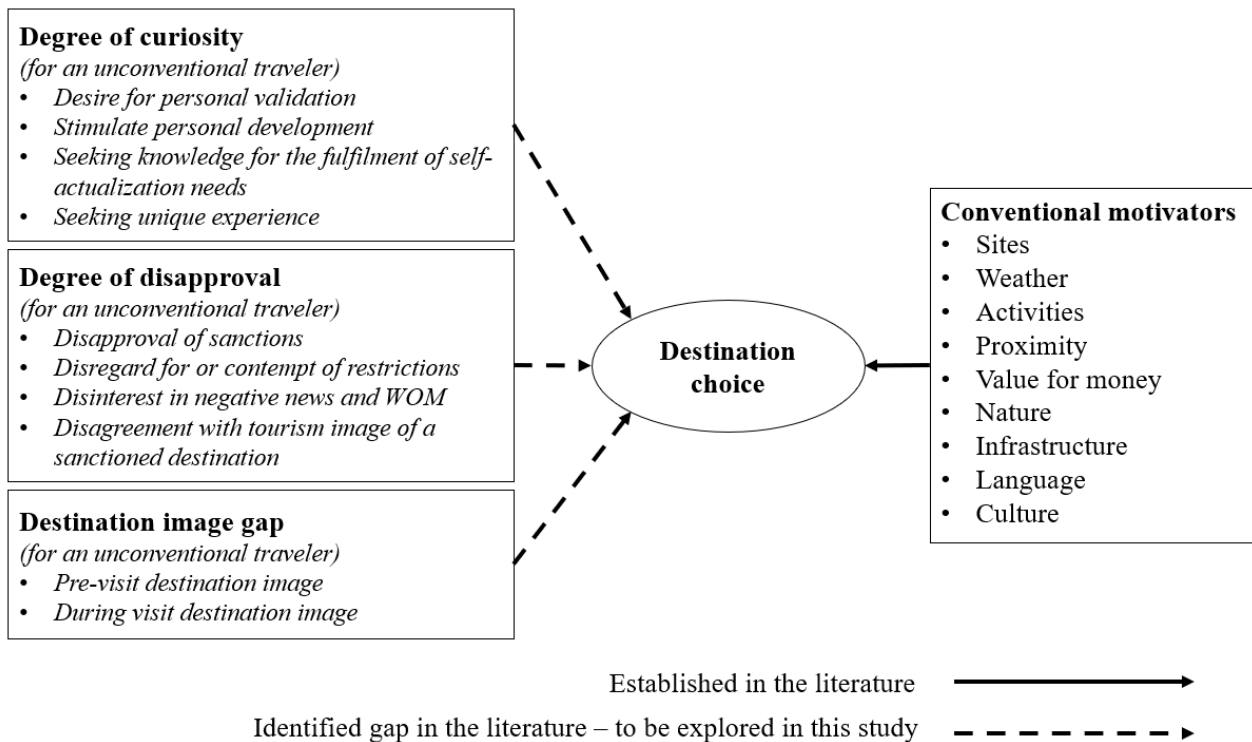
Martín-Santana et al. (2017) argued that the time spent searching for information about the destination, the level of traveller's involvement (behavioural and/or emotional), as well as the intensity of the visit (e.g., number of places of interest visited) directly impact the image gap. Furthermore, the study also showed that the more positive the image gap, the greater the degree of travel satisfaction and destination loyalty (Martín-Santana et al., 2017). Thus, the perceived image of Iran as a destination may be shaped by a series of factors, including the traveller's personal research, word of mouth from friends and family, and the news and information inertly received from mass media.

For an unconventional traveller, the said factors and the subsequent perceived image positively impact the nation's perceived attractiveness as a destination choice. Furthermore, the traveller's experiences during their trip to Iran shape their during-visit image, potentially altering the pre-visit image. Following Martín-Santana et al. (2017), the resulting gap, if positive, should positively affect Iran's attractiveness. Accordingly, this research explores the destination image gap (pre- and during-visit) as another critical factor impacting destination attractiveness.

Based on the below conceptual model conveys the overall relationships the present

research seeks to explore (Figure 28).

**Figure 28: Destination choice conceptual model**



Source: Author

#### 4.4.2. Methodology

The required primary data for the study was collected via twenty-seven semi-structured interviews conducted in April 2019 in Isfahan, Iran. Twenty interview questions were developed according to previously reviewed literature to collect detailed insights from international travellers who were visiting Iran (Appendix 1). The interviewees were selected, approached and asked if they were willing to participate in a short interview survey. Questions were designed to allow respondents to express their opinions on the current situation of Iran as a sanctioned destination and its image. The research sample must be “appropriate and comprise participants who best represent or have knowledge of the research topic”, said Elo et al. (2014). Hence, using this sample, the aim was to collect different perspectives from international travellers who are aware of the sanctions against Iran and all the consequences of travelling to this destination.

The sample was comprised of participants from eight nationalities, including France (10),



Germany (4); Italy (3); Netherlands (5); Russia (1); Slovakia (2), Spain (1), and Switzerland (1). Fourteen respondents were male, and thirteen were female. In terms of age groups, nine were aged between 21 and 30, four were between 31 and 40, eight were between 41-50 and six were aged more than 51 years old. The majority of the respondents learned about Iran from those in their circle of trust; family, friends, and colleagues, while the rest were learned from the internet, books, programs, and news on TV. Fourteen of the visitors have decided to travel to Iran individually, while the other half preferred to travel in a group.

The interviews lasted for approximately ten minutes each. The interviewees expressed a willingness and openness to participate in the research. The interviews were conducted in English and French (the responses were translated into English later on) with the interviewees asked a series of questions on subjects including their reasons for choosing Iran as a sanctioned destination, their image/perceptions of Iran before visiting, their awareness of US sanctions against travellers who want to visit Iran and changes to their image/perceptions about Iran during and after the visit.

#### *4.4.3. Data analysis*

The interviews were transcribed and then analysed using the deductive thematic analysis approach upon data collection. While thematic analysis is a generic method of identifying and portraying themes and meanings in qualitative data, deductive thematic analysis takes a top-down approach, where a predetermined codebook based on literature allows the analysis to focus on the themes identified in the codebook (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The main author conducted the interviews, which led to maintaining consistency and ensuring the validity and reliability of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In addition, an analysis of the qualitative data was conducted based on the same newly discovered themes (Prayag & Ryan, 2011). The codebook involved themes, the definition of what each theme concerns, and an explanation of how to know when the theme occurs. The codebook of this study is depicted in Table 15:

**Table 15: The codebook used in the deductive thematic analysis**

Theme	Definition	Description
<b>Conventional travel motivators</b>	Factors that contribute to the interest of a conventional traveller when selecting a tourism destination (Martenson, 2018; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1992)	These are the essential factors that contribute to the overall attractiveness of a destination, such as exciting sites, pleasant weather, exciting activities, proximity to the destination travel from, value for money, overall risk, beautiful nature, tourism infrastructure, language spoken and culture.
<b>Degree of curiosity</b>	The composite impact of a traveller's tendency to confirm their prior perception of a destination, stimulate personal development, seek knowledge to fulfil self-actualization needs, and pursue unique experiences.	A varying degree of curiosity is shaped by an unconventional traveller's self-perception about a destination, their interest in seeking knowledge and experience of different cultures, and pursuing unique experiences when considering visiting a politically alienated or restricted destination choice due to global political sanctions, such as Iran.
<b>Degree of disapproval</b>	The composite impact of a traveller's recognized degree of disapproval of the tourism image of a destination choice.	An unconventional traveller's recognized degree of personal disregard for or disagreement with the tourism image of a politically alienated or restricted destination choice due to global political sanctions, such as Iran.
<b>Destination image gap</b>	Possible changes in traveller's perception of a destination image before and during the visit (Martín-Santana et al., 2017)	Travellers' perceived image of a destination (formed through a combination of research, WOM and mass media) is prone to change upon visit (particularly when visiting for the first time) (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). This change is a gap that, if positive, could strengthen destination recommendations and future re-visits.

Source: Author

#### 4.4.4. Findings

The respondents' answers to the interview questions were analysed to determine the identified themes, as per Table 15.

##### 4.4.4.1. Theme 1. Conventional travel motivators

When exploring the respondents' answers to the interview questions, in particular regarding their reason for choosing Iran for their travel, several conventional factors as per the literature were identified. Among these, Iran's nature, people's hospitality, ancient history and rich culture were most prevalent. For example, a respondent (French, Female, 31-40 y/o) noted that 'I have heard that Iranians are kind and helpful people and also heard about its architecture and food'. A respondent (Italian, Female, 41-50 y/o) pointed out that 'Iran is a great country with a long history and the land where humanity was there

in the first place’, while another one (French, Male, 31-40 y/o) stated that ‘I heard a lot that Iranian people are hospitable, and also I have read about the rich culture and history of the country’. These are in line with previous literature highlighting such factors as essential motivators for European travellers visiting Iran (Financial Tribune, 2020) or the Middle East (Avraham, 2014).

Moreover, the respondents expressed their desire to have their own first-hand experience of Persian history, architecture, and the country’s natural beauty, which has also been highlighted by past research (Seyfi & Hall, 2018b). Nearly all respondents stated that they had heard about Iran as a ‘beautiful country’. For example, a respondent (Dutch, Male, 51+ y/o) pointed out that ‘Iran is a beautiful country with nice people and old places’, while another respondent (Italian, Female, 41-50 y/o) mentioned that ‘Iran’s great history and historical places, beautiful mosques and natural sceneries; especially in the northern part of Iran, were among the most important reasons to come and visit Iran.’

#### *4.4.4.2. Theme 2: Degree of curiosity*

In this study, the degree of curiosity reflects the combined extents to which travellers’ prior perceptions about Iran as a destination are confirmed; the travel has stimulated their personal development; the travel has offered opportunities for them to seek knowledge about Iran as a whole with its cultural differences; the destination has enabled them to appreciate unique experiences visiting a destination under international sanctions. When analysing the interview transcripts, it was evident that almost all respondents were curious to visit Iran to know more about the destination from their own perspectives simply. In fact, a combination of positive and negative news and WOM about Iran has caused a series of inequitable understandings about the destination, which further contributed to the heightened degree of curiosity. For example, many expressions used by the interviewees indicated their curiosity to see for themselves. These included positive knowledge connotations such as ‘great civilization’, ‘welcoming people’, ‘rich culture’, ‘ancient destination’ and ‘long history’, combined with precarious understandings, for instance, ‘women freedom issues’, ‘level of safety and security’, ‘women dressing codes’, and ‘dictator regime’. In the face of these existing understandings, it was evident that the respondents were curious to have their own experiences and create their own narratives. For example, a respondent (German, Male, 21-30 y/o) stated that ‘I wanted to find out why the USA called Iran a bad country and the reason of hostility against Iran ... we were curious to know about the country that we did not hear a lot in the news in a good way’.

Moreover, uncertainty and lack of knowledge about the logistics of travelling to Iran has reflected in statements such as this one (Russian, Female, 41- 50 y/o): ‘... (we had) uncertainty about getting the visa; we were afraid not to be able to go on our own because of the language barrier; also we could not figure it out what to wear’. Furthermore, when deciding on Iran as their destination, some travellers sought a unique experience, visiting a country facing International disinformation. For example, a respondent (French, Female, 21-30 y/o) stated that ‘Some of my family and friends were worried, but some who were familiar with Iran, were happy and some others were curious’. Another visitor (French, Female, 51+ y/o) expressed that ‘when I told (my family and friends) about my decision, they felt jealous that they could not join me’. Finally, there were signs of motivations for self-development and self-actualization amongst the respondents. For example, a respondent (Dutch, Female, 21-30 y/o) stated that: ‘my parents were not glad, some friends shocked but I wanted to be with my friends and enjoy historical and cultural attractions of Iran’.

#### *4.4.4.3. Theme 3: Degree of disapproval*

In this study, the degree of disapproval signifies the traveller’s realized level of personal disregard for the negative information about Iran as a destination and/or disagreement with the political restrictions instituted against Iran in line with tough sanctions against the nation. The respondents’ understanding of existing restrictions and sanctions against Iran was realised in statements such as ‘I know that the country is fighting against American sanctions’, and ‘... we were wondering why there is a huge amount of bad news, warnings, and sanctions against this country.’ In fact, all respondents, except one, indicated that they were aware of the US sanctions against Iran and all the difficulties they may face upon their visit when travelling to the US, especially the fact that they may not be eligible for the visa wavier program (U.S. Department of State, 2019). Their disagreement with these restrictions was reflected in statements such as ‘I think what the US did is awful, this is a bad government, I am against these sanctions’ (Swiss, Male, 41- 50 y/o). The respondents’ disapproval of the said restrictions varied from low (e.g., ‘I am aware of these sanctions, but Iran will not put arrival stamp in the passport so it won’t be a problem’ – French, Male, 51+ y/o), to medium (e.g., ‘I don’t care about this US sanction and I don’t want to travel to the US’- French, Female, 51+ y/o), and to high (e.g. ‘The US cannot tell me what to do and I won’t travel to the US during Trump’s presidency’ - French, Female, 31-40 y/o). In fact, some respondents felt offended by such restrictions

and saw them as an interference in their private life, resulting in a state of disapproval in which they would boycott the US in response to the imposed limitations. For example, a respondent (Italian, Female, 41-50 y/o) stated that ‘I am aware of the sanctions and I don’t want to travel to the US as long as Trump is the president’. Over and above that, it became clear that for some respondents, the decision to visit Iran was a way of protesting against or condemning the US’s decision to restrict free international travel, announcing that they would repeat their visit to express their opposition. For example, another respondent (Italian, Male, 41-50 y/o) stated, “... absolutely I will repeat my visit and encourage my friends and family to come and visit this country”. Moreover, some respondents stated that they will not only re-visit but will recommend Iran to others and encourage them to come and visit. For instance, a respondent (Dutch, Male, 41-50 y/o) noted that ‘I will definitely come back here again and, 100%, recommend others come and visit’.

#### *4.4.4.4. Theme 4: Destination image*

Destination image plays a vital role in developing travel perceptions and the consequent impact on the decision-making process (G. Ashworth & Goodall, 1988; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). In order to understand the possible pre- and during-visit gap in the travellers’ perceptions and image of Iran, the respondents were asked to explicitly describe their image of Iran pre visiting and at the time of the interview. The respondents’ image of Iran before arriving was varied but fell into two categories. In the first category, respondents had a very clear and positive perception of Iran before travelling, which was informed by WOM about the country’s culture and history. More specifically, a respondent (Spanish, Male, 21-30 y/o) noted that ‘Iran is a huge country that reminds me of the Persian Empire in history’. Other respondents stated that ‘I have heard about the great nature, weather and rich culture of Iran’ (Slovak, Male, 21-30 y/o) or ‘I was told that Iranian people are very hospitable’ (Dutch, Female, 21-30 y/o). The second group described a somewhat complicated image of Iran before visiting, based on the overall political news about Iran and the negative image portrayed in the Western media. For example, a respondent (French, Male, 31-40 y/o) told the interviewer that ‘my image was based on the political views and I didn’t know that the people are so hospitable’, whereas another respondent (French, Female, 51+ y/o) stated that ‘I didn’t have any special image, but I heard negative (views) in (the) media, so I wanted to check it myself’. A respondent (German, Female, 41-50 y/o) mentioned that ‘I heard much negative news about the low level of safety and security in Iran’, while another one (German, Male, 31-40 y/o) pointed

out that ‘we didn’t know if it is safe to travel or not and had no idea about the security in Iran’.

When analysing the possible gap pre- and during-visit, findings showed that the gap is generally either minimal for respondents with a favourable pre-visit image or positive for respondents with a neutral or negative pre-visit image. For instance, a respondent (French, Male, 51+ y/o) said that ‘my image (of Iran) is improved as I can see many different realities about Iran’, while another respondent (Slovak, Male, 21-30 y/o) noted that ‘I can admit that my image has changed as I had high expectations, but here was better than I expected’. Moreover, a respondent (Dutch, Male, 21-30 y/o) stated that ‘I would say that I have a very great image, the beauty of the country, the hospitality of the people, I have been touched by all of those’. In order to better understand travellers’ perception of Iran, the respondents were asked to describe Iran’s personality as if it was a person. The findings revealed that interviewees commonly used positive adjectives to describe Iran’s personality, including ‘a warm and kind human’, ‘friendly and hardworking human’ and ‘very welcoming and open person’. Other descriptions included ‘a handsome man’, ‘a beautiful woman who doesn't show her beauty’ and ‘a beautiful person with much potential’.

Overall, the respondents’ answers to the questions revolving around their image or perception of Iran before and after their visit indicate a positive change, particularly for travellers who had a complicated image as a result of exposure to mass media and largely negative news and WOM about Iran. This change in perception was so convincing for some respondents that they even conveyed a degree of intention to advocate for Iran as a place to visit. That is, a number of interviewees offered suggestions for Iranian authorities and businesses on how to improve the country’s image as a destination for international travellers. Specifically, respondents recommended more extensive marketing campaigns focused on European travellers, providing online information and explanation about the visa procedures, improving the tourism infrastructures such as online booking and reservation services and training the frontline workers in the industry. For instance, a respondent (French, Female, 31-40 y/o) noted that ‘I think they need to work on having the campaign to do the marketing in other countries’ or another respondent (French, Female, 21-30 y/o) mentioned that ‘providing more online information about travelling to Iran and explaining about the visa procedure can be helpful’. A respondent (German, Male, 41-50 y/o) stated that ‘people's perception in Germany is (negatively) affected by

(the German) government, that needs to be changed by doing more marketing for Iran, that is not what you experience when you come to Iran'. Finally, a respondent (French, Female, 51+ y/o) noted that 'they need to work on online infrastructures that travellers can make the online reservations.'

#### *4.4.5. Discussion and conclusion*

##### *4.4.5.1. Discussion*

This research focused on exploring the factors contributing to a traveller's decision to visit Iran, particularly in the face of a likely more negative destination image and the risk of negative implications for any future travel to destinations that have imposed, or support, sanctions against them. In particular, the study acknowledged the existing travel and service limitations, potential perceived risks, retractions and extensive sanctions against Iran as critical deterrents for inbound travel from Western countries. In view of such restrictions, the study considers the visitors travelling to Iran as 'unconventional' because it suspects that conventional motivators such as weather, proximity, tourism infrastructure, and value for money may play a diminished role. Instead, in this study, three factors were determined as the critical motivators for the unconventional traveller when deciding to visit Iran: the degree of curiosity, the degree of disapproval, and the destination image gap between what was expected and what was experienced.

Curiosity has been identified as an important factor in the decision-making process of travellers. In particular, seeking new experiences by seeing unique destinations has been identified as the dominant factor in destination choices by Western travellers visiting developing countries (Awaritefe, 2004). Based on the findings, many travellers exhibited a strong interest in exploring Iran for themselves instead of relying on existing (mostly) negative information and WOM regarding travelling to the destination. Such exploratory intentions and behaviours have been strongly linked to enhanced curiosity and novelty-seeking, as indicated in the seminal past research (T.-H. Lee & Crompton, 1992). Moreover, in line with Wen and Hunag (2019) and Li and Ryan (2018), this study also revealed that seeking unique experiences is a key push factor for international travellers' intention to visit (and revisit) sanctioned countries. The results of this study also confirmed that choosing Iran as the destination may reveal a desire to take personal action to display a degree of disapproval of the existing restrictions and sanctions imposed on

the nation by global powers, including the US. This research highlights that a traveller's disagreement with the tourism image of Iran as a politically alienated or restricted destination choice is a personal value that enhances, rather than diminishes, the attractiveness of Iran as a destination choice. The literature supports this from a broader perspective, where it is believed that travellers with strong internal values are highly motivated by intrapersonal factors, such as novelty seeking and self-development goals (M. Li & Cai, 2012).

Moreover, the study explored the role of the destination image gap as a key factor in these travellers' decision-making process when assessing Iran as their destination choice. Existing literature has frequently investigated the role of destination image in decision making (G. Ashworth & Goodall, 1988; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). However, only limited existing studies have explored the importance of image in a politically undermined destination (Bhat & Darzi, 2018). Past research also confirms that an improved destination image, i.e., a positive image gap, significantly enhances the overall attractiveness of the destination (Martín-Santana et al., 2017). Results of this study confirmed that, in general, the destination image gap for Iran is mostly positive due to the improved image upon visiting and the often complicated or even negative pre-visit image.

#### *4.4.5.2. Theoretical implications*

By exploring these motivators for an unconventional traveller when visiting Iran, this study makes several theoretical contributions to the literature. Whilst some broad studies highlighting concepts such as self-development and curiosity can motivate to visit fewer convention destinations; the tourism literature lacks empirical investigations of key factors contributing to the attractiveness of a destination choice when the destination is facing political sanctions, including future travel restrictions to other destinations countries. This study contributes to this gap in the current understanding by theorizing a research model that incorporates three factors of the degree of curiosity, degree of disapproval, and destination image gap as potential key motivators impacting the unconventional traveller's destination choice. In particular, this model expands the existing understanding of curiosity in the tourism field by exploring the varying degree of curiosity based on the following dimensions: (i) a traveller's tendency to confirm his/her prior perception about a destination, (ii) a traveller's interest in stimulating his/her personal development, by seeking knowledge for the fulfilment of self-actualization needs, and (iii) a traveller's desire to pursue unique experiences and seek first-hand



understanding. More importantly, the present study introduces the novel concept of degree of disapproval as a prevailing notion reflecting a traveller's recognized degree of personal disregard for, or disagreement with, the restrictions set against a destination such as Iran. This is a niche area of research with very limited existing theoretical understanding, in particular regarding the impact of such disapproval on the perceived attractiveness of destination choices or a theoretical basis for strategy development by managers to leverage any opportunities and further enhance the attractiveness of the destination. Hence, this exploratory work is unique as the current study is also the first empirical research to explore the possible impact of the destination image gap on a sanctioned destination choice. This adds to the existing theoretical understanding of the process of pre-visit image formation, upon-visit destination image, and the importance of image gap for a destination choice, particularly for future visits, WOM and destination loyalty.

#### *4.4.5.3. Practical implications*

European travellers represent a very small portion of millions of travellers visiting Iran each year, even though they represent more than half of global international tourism. The results show significant potential for Iran's tourism in these relatively close and highly lucrative markets. However, existing sanctions have constrained mainly the country's share of European inbound tourism due to concerns by the more traditional travellers. The findings of this study shed some light on the key factors that have the potential to help improve the country's overall attractiveness as a destination choice in the eyes of European travellers. In particular, the study revealed that tourism operators and managers could trigger the travellers' sense of curiosity and allay concerns about Iran by focusing on individual factors, including self-confirmation tendencies, increasing interest in ways to stimulate personal development, and growing curiosity about seeking knowledge and pursuing unique experiences. Managers of travel agencies in Iran and in Europe can exercise these by incorporating relevant elements in the communication message and advertising campaigns.

The study also showed that European travellers who have visited thus far are likely to exhibit varying disapproval for restrictions set by the US and other sanctioning bodies. This has implications for tourism operators in Iran when targeting the European countries and positioning Iran as a unique destination that aspires to dispel the negative views, reports and WOM by inviting those curious enough to find out for themselves to enjoy

the adventure of a personal visit – and ‘take a stand’ by their own personal actions against what they may perceive to be the unjust treatment of a country in this situation. In particular, Iranian businesses and organizations focusing on European countries for inbound travellers can leverage their potential disapproval of the US’s imposed travel restrictions as an underlying point of difference and attraction.

Moreover, in light of the findings of this study about the importance of a positive image gap in positive WOM and future re-visits, tour operators and tourism operators must have mechanisms in place to maximize the travellers’ tendency to share their experience with others in person or online, including social media. Finally, the results revealed that conventional factors such as Iran’s culture, heritage, and history still strongly contribute to the European traveller’s overall intention to travel to Iran. Thus, both Iranian and European tourism operators must leverage Iran’s major sites, including twenty-four cultural and two natural sites inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) World Heritage Site (WHS) list (UNESCO, 2021) to trigger curiosity and positive pre-visit image in the minds of European travellers. More importantly, tourism operators must focus on Iran’s value for money as a tourism destination, considering that Iran has been consistently listed among the most affordable destination to visit by The World Economic Forum (The New York Times, 2019). However, it needs to be said that novelty alone is not enough to generate strong tourism interest amongst a broader audience. Current travellers have been seen to have quite ‘low’ expectations across the range of expected tourism-related services and options. Hence, it is not surprising that they have stated their expectations were largely met or exceeded. As Iran undertakes the country's active promotion as a very attractive and viable destination choice, traveller expectations of quality accommodation, infrastructure, services, shopping, and other attractions beyond traditional offerings will rise. The challenge to Iran’s tourism industry is to ensure that they continue to surprise and satisfy.

#### *4.4.5.4. Limitations and future research*

This research has taken the first step toward expanding the current understanding of the factors that motivate an unconventional traveller to visit Iran as a destination facing political sanctions and travel restrictions. As this research was exploratory, the qualitative approach was chosen and not the quantitative in the first step in order to build the hypothesis. However, a quantitative study and large-scale empirical supporting evidence can check the hypothesis of this study. Future research can also test the research model

on other destinations facing similar challenges, such as China, Cuba, Russia and Belarus. Finally, future studies can expand the model to include other potential motivators such as empathy and self-actualization.

## 4.5. Destination image vs big brands (UNESCO) (Case study number 2)

This case study is published as a book chapter administered by Bardia Shabani, Professor Hazel Tucker and Dr Amin Nazifi

UNESCO's World Heritage Site (WHS) designation of particular sites can be beneficial for the tourism industry of the destinations and affect their images. On the other hand, sometimes UNESCO's World Heritage Site (WHS) designation can have put a shadow on the previous image of the destinations that are not in favour of the local people. The strong relationship between identities and community is discussed by Ballesteros and Ramírez (2007), who identified the main role of the symbolic community in heritage tourism development and the effect of tourism on identities. Suppose local authorities and DMOs at the destination do not consider the role of local communities in the tourism development of the sites. In that case, those communities surrounding the site may feel excluded from managing their own heritage. Accordingly, it can come to the point that UNESCO, as an international brand, takes over-representation and presentation of the site to some extent. The other challenge is to match the demands of tourism to local needs while making it sustainable and viable. As a multi-faceted industry, tourism has significant impacts on the heritage sites themselves and the entire community and environment surrounding the heritage site (Salazar, 2012).

### 4.5.1. UNESCO and destinations

In Paris, the cultural committees of UNESCO publish the lists of World Heritage Site (WHS) properties and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) elements annually. In addition, the exceptional universal values of the sites are stated. While this inscription is a reminder that all the people around the world are the owners of the sites, at the same time, it will emphasise their responsibilities toward these places or intangible elements. Thus, these designations reinforce the sites' identification, preservation, and transmission for the next generations (Saipradist & Staiff, 2008).

The main purpose of these recognitions by UNESCO is to preserve and conserve those sites for future generations; however, international recognition of these sites will lead to a significant increase in tourist numbers with positive and negative points (Breakey,

2012). Meskell (2014, p. 237) has argued that the 1972 World Heritage Convention “is not so much about protection anymore, but instead about branding, marketing, and promoting new nominations in an increasingly acquisitive heritage economy”. As a result, this trend causes a paradoxical condition; while the basic objective of UNESCO is to promote the protection and preservation of sites, some destinations are prioritizing tourist development, especially in new destinations or those little knowns that are looking to improve their image under the brand of UNESCO (Correia et al., 2009; Poria et al., 2003; M. M. Su & Wall, 2011).

The new image, which is the result of “labelling” (C.-H. Yang et al., 2010) or “branding” (D. D. J. Timothy, 2011), plays an important role in the destinations and can attract those tourists who seek heritage experiences (Abuamoud et al., 2014; Breakey, 2012; Caust & Vecco, 2017; Landorf, 2009; Poria et al., 2013; D. J. Timothy & Boyd, 2006).

UNESCO passes three conventions in order to protect man-made treasures that exist in the world;

- 1- “Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)
- 2- Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)
- 3- Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression (2005)” (UNESCO, 2003).

Article 2 of the UNESCO’s Convention regarding the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) explains, “Safeguarding’ means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, mainly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.” (UNESCO, 2003). Nevertheless, it is the same situation from the locals’ point of view or a local desire to ‘revitalize’ the heritage and make it ‘viable’ (Labadi, 2013).

In case the perception of the locals is not aligned with the goals of the UNESCO conventions, as it is mentioned in the Budapest Declaration (UNESCO, 2002) that the UNESCO assignment is to promote “an appropriate equitable balance between conservation, sustainability and development” in UNESCO sites, the conflicts can arise, and the local residents may even become against the UNESCO designation (Rao, 2014).

Furthermore, these conflicts may increase whenever the new visitor flows may seriously affect and damage the environmental and cultural integrity of the destinations if the carrying capacity of the sites is not the same as the number of visitors. Accordingly, overcrowding of sites, changes in use and appearance of buildings, commercialization of local culture and the “tourismification” of the sites will happen (Daniel, 1996; Jimura, 2019; Nicholas et al., 2009).

In destination management studies, local communities' attitudes towards tourism are a key component in identifying, measuring, and analysing the changes caused by tourism. This is the key factor for DMOs who are looking to improve the image of their destinations, and considering it will help local decision-makers in terms of planning, developing and managing the current situation based on which public could support the tourism industry (J. A. Pearce, 1980; C. Ryan & Montgomery, 1994). The first studies regarding the relationship between local community and tourism took place during the 1970s, according to which several theoretical models such as Butler's tourism area life cycle (Butler, 1980), stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) and social exchange theory (Ap, 1992) among others, have been developed by different scholars. Most of the literature regarding this issue has shown that a correct understanding and assessment of tourism development at the local communities' level is fundamental to fostering the destination image. As a result, the direct and indirect impacts affect the heritage site, the community and the destination image (Bâc, 2012; Diedrich & García-Buades, 2009; J. D. Johnson et al., 1994).

Some of the studies have proved the important role of the local community and attitudes towards tourism and big brands such as UNESCO, as both the local community and the stakeholders need to have the opportunity to express their opinions in the decision-making process (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; B. A. Carmichael et al., 1996). De Cesari (2010) has noted that because “the 1972 Convention, in fact, authorizes not only experts but also the nation-state and its representatives as the proper subjects of World Heritage”, indeed other interested parties, including local residents around the site, can not only be excluded but can even become ‘silenced in the process (ibid.)’. Moreover, Labadi (2013) argued that the content of World Heritage nominations often ‘contains the seeds to fuel controversies, conflicts and the marginalization of whole sectors of populations’. Accordingly, it will be possible to consider the important role of the interplay between the UNESCO WHS global ‘brand’ and the local identity, which the overall will be reflected as the destination image.

#### *4.5.2. Gonbad-e Qābus WHS in Iran*

As a key tourism industry stakeholder in the country, Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization has brought attention to the importance of local community engagement in cultural heritage management. Nevertheless, a lack of tourism experts, community consultation and education, and ineffective strategies and policies are major challenges for many of Iran's destinations. For example, as Donato and Lohrasbi's (2017) study of Takht-e Soleyman WHS noted, the vital role of the local community in the development process of the site and destination was neglected despite a great desire for engagement from the community. Indeed, it is widely observed that if the advantages of tourism development are perceived to outweigh its disadvantages, the community will support and value tourism development, whilst failing community expectations will lead to negative reactions towards tourism development (Gursoy et al., 2002; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015; Ye et al., 2014). Based on previous studies regarding the effects of UNESCO site designation on the destination image, Shabani et al. (2020) undertook an empirical survey in order to evaluate the interplay between an international brand and a local brand in improving the destination image.

The survey was conducted in May 2019 in Gonbad-e Qābus. This city is the second-largest city in Golestan province (in Iran), with a land area of 21 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 151,910 (Gonbad Municipality, 2018; Statistical Center of Iran, 2016). The region's history (Hyrcania in Greek or Varkāna in Old Persian Language) dates back to 600 BC. However, the city itself (reconstructed in 1934 by order of Reza Shah, the first king of the Pahlavi dynasty) takes its name from Qābus Ibn Voshmgir (Ziyarid ruler and literati, 10th - 11th Century). It is located near the ruins of the ancient city of Gorgan (also called Jorjan, the capital of the Ziyarid dynasty), which was destroyed during the Mongols' invasion in the 14th and 15th centuries (Governor of Golestan Informing Base, 2015). The study was about the role of the WHS in this city which is registered as Gonbad-e Qābus brick tower. This tower is a 53m high tomb that was built in 1006 AD and was registered as a UNESCO WHS in 2012. This tower is one of the most iconic symbols of the ancient cultural exchange between Central Asian nomads and Iran's ancient civilization and is considered an outstanding masterpiece of early Islamic brick architecture (UNESCO, 2012).

The study was administered in a 'semi-structured interview', for which twenty respondents (out of twenty-five) agreed to participate and have been interviewed (Appendix 2). All of the interviewees were open to expressing their ideas and were keen to help the

improvement of the tourism industry of the region by taking part in the study. Sixteen respondents were male, and four were female. In The participants consisted of two groups:

- a. Residents of Gonbad (10 people)
- b. Tourism experts who had a minimum of 10 years of working experience at ICHTO (Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization) of the Golestan province branch (10 Experts)

Each group had its own sub-groups:

- a) Out of 10 experts, 5 of them were managers at ICHTO, and the other 5 were ICHTO employees (archaeologists and heritage conservation specialists). The experts' interviews lasted twenty-five minutes each, on average.
- b) Also, out of ten residents, 5 of them were souvenir shop owners around the UNESCO site in the city, and the other 5 were residents of Gonbad who were interviewed on the site during their visit. The residents' interviews lasted approximately fifteen minutes each, on average.

The interviews were conducted in Persian with the interviewees asked a series of questions on subjects including the negative and positive points of Gonbad-e Qābus before and after WHS designation, the strengths, weaknesses and potential of the tourism industry of Gonbad, and their views about the impact of WHS designation on the culture, economy and overall image of the city as a destination. Interviewees were also asked about their ideas for increasing the level of awareness about the attractions of the city both nationally and internationally and their suggestions about improving the city's tourism industry. The respondents' answers to the interview questions were later translated to English and analysed for identifiable patterns regarding what was considered 'meaningful' in relation to the subject of the role of the local brand (Turkmen culture) compared to an international one (UNESCO). While the study was limited in size and scope, it nonetheless yielded insightful information.

#### *4.5.2.1. The background of the study: the tallest brick tower in the world*

In the southeast of the Caspian Sea and bordering Turkmenistan, Turkmen Sahra (which means Plain of Turkmens) is located. This region is part of Iran's Golestan Province, where the majority of Turkmen ethnic people of Iran reside. Iranian Turkmen Ethnicity



has for a long time represented a group of semi-nomadic tribes who are Sunni Muslim and have retained a fairly traditional way of life (Minorsky, 1953).

Gonbad-e Qābus brick tower is believed to be an outstanding and technologically innovative example of Islamic architecture that influenced sacred buildings in Iran, Anatolia and Central Asia. This masterpiece's structural design (ten-pointed star) is based on a geometric formula that achieved great height in load-bearing brickwork and made this hollow cylindrical tower visible from great distances in the surrounding lowlands from all directions. Thus, not only has its conical roofed form become a prototype for tomb towers and other commemorative towers in the region, but also it became an outstanding example of a commemorative tower whose design illustrates the exceptional development of mathematics and science in the Muslim world at the turn of the first millennium AD (UNESCO, 2012).

Besides the tower, the city has other attractions, such as:

- Historical: The Great Wall of Gorgan, the longest brick wall in the world (c. 200 km), was built from 420s AD to 530s AD by the Sasanid Empire (Sauer et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2017).
- Natural: Plain and wetlands (Alma Gol, Aji Gol and Ala Gol)
- Cultural: Turkmen's Culture and customs
- Sportive: Horse riding competitions (this city is the capital of horse riding in Iran)
- Religious: Shrine of Imam Yahya bin Zaid.

All these recognitions imply that, at present, the city is among one of the most attractive tourism destinations in Iran and is the best representative of Turkmen culture (which is considered the local brand for this destination). Hosting the majority of Turkmen ethnicity in Iran, this region is famous for the art and handicrafts of Turkmen. Apart from the history of Gonbad, the Turkmen ethnicity (comprising more than 60% of the population of the city) and its culture, whose carpets and horses are known globally, are among the most important attractions in this region. Turkmen clothing, which is quite different from the country's usual dress, is also another attraction of this region; people (both male and female) wear their own traditional clothes in public (Governor of Golestan Informing Base, 2015).

#### *4.5.2.2. Local opinions concerning WHS designation*

For nearly all the residents interviewed (living in Gonbad for more than 20 years and hence remembering their several visits to the sites before and after the designation), the Brick Tower was considered among the top three attractions that the city is known for, followed by the Turkmen ethnicity and handicrafts. According to the residents, prior to the Gonbad-e Qābus designation as a WHS site, it used to be an open space and a cultural centre bringing people together. However, there was not much information or signage available for tourists. Tourism officials also stated that the site was one of the main areas of gathering for celebrations, festivals and routine get-togethers. For example, one expert said: “The cultural centre of the site was the best place for the younger generation to spend their free time”. Another respondent said: “It used to be an open site that people could visit and enjoy anytime, no matter day or night”.

At the same time, respondents in both groups pointed out, in relation to the negative aspects of the site before the designation, that there was previously a lack of an appropriate conservation programme for the site, as well as an unattractive and insecure surrounding area, and a lack of a standardised informing system for tourists such as available guides or informative signs. As one expert said: “The site wasn’t introduced well, and no one even in the region knew about it; no protection and conservation program was considered for it”. Another resident said: “Nobody could control the safety and conservation of the site, and the tower itself had suffered considerable damage”.

Following the WHS listing, it is being managed more systematically, and people now need to buy tickets for entrance and the fund is used for maintenance and conservation purposes. The majority of the tourism officials interviewed believe this to be a positive development due to additional funds for research and maintenance purposes and the opportunity for enhanced image and subsequently increased tourist visitation: “A special protection team is now considered to do the studies and protecting the site, repairing the damaged part of the tower”. However, in the case of the residents, nearly all of them did not notice any significant difference, saying that “Nothing important happened, just periodic conservation plans”. Another said: “Just some informative signs on the site can be seen, but nothing major happened”.

On the other hand, residents were still pessimistic about the impacts of the WHS and stated the negative points about this designation, that the site has not benefited as expected with

other UNESCO sites in other countries. Furthermore, residents believe that there have not been any major changes following its listing. Lack of attention to the site, limited efforts in advertising this WHS nationally and internationally, as well as lack of facilities are perceived to be the main weaknesses of the site from the residents' perspective. For example, one person said: "I visited some of the UNESCO sites in other countries, and their sites are not comparable with ours as the level of information and services for tourists are far better elsewhere".

Both groups highlighted what they saw as a lack of tourism experts at a managerial level, as well as weak city planning and infrastructure, limited accommodations (there are only two hotels in the city), and an absence of tour guides. It was pointed out, for example, that: "The infrastructure is not ready for the tourists as there is no information and no suitable accommodation provided for tourists. Also, there is no expert at managerial level for tourism". There appears to be a lack of expertise on the tourism front, with most experts in the ICHTO having degrees and experience in archaeology and conservation rather than tourism. Accordingly, the lack of a clear marketing strategy in order to make the site better known outside the region is considered a major issue: "The UNESCO site is still unknown for the local people and also for the high-rank decision-makers of the region, and there are still no informative plans for them".

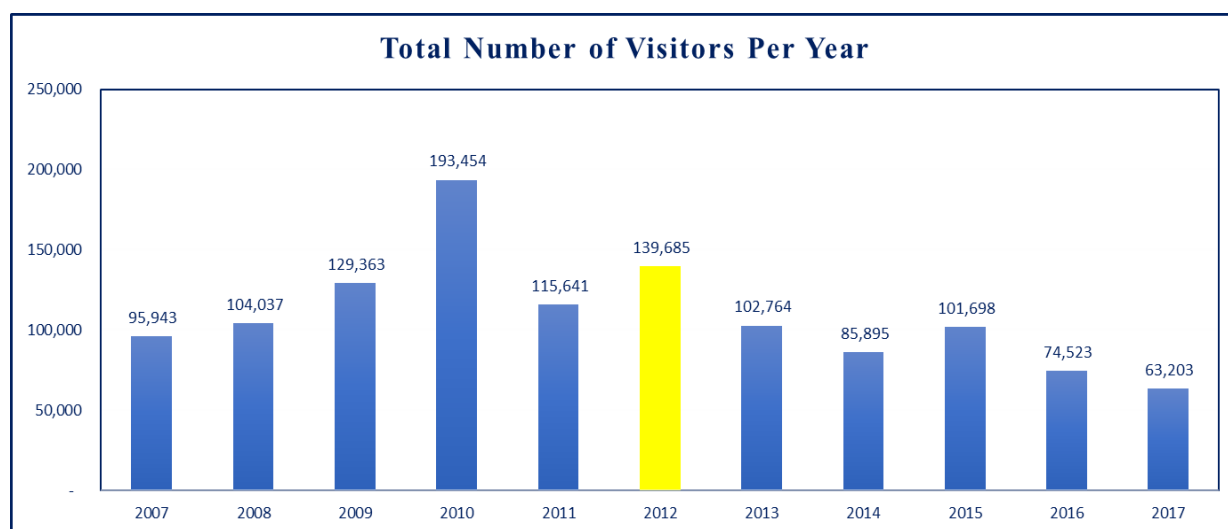
Simultaneously, the experts indicated that the WHS listing had disrupted the building development in the surrounding areas, with limited support and resolution from relevant government bodies. There is also an awareness that WHS designation has caused the tightening of regulations for residents' properties around the site: "As the site is under the control of UNESCO regulations, it has affected the neighbouring areas as the people who are living near the site are very dissatisfied because of UNESCO regulations that caused many strict limitations for constructing or renovating of their properties around it".

While the tourism experts accepted some of the neglect about the planning, as well as the issue regarding providing information and services for tourists, they also appeared to lay some of the blame for the issues regarding the site upon the fact that the local community do not consider this site as their own heritage and they have no sense of attachment to this monument as one official explained: "As the Turkmen ethnicity which is the majority of the population here, don't really believe in this site as a part of their culture and they don't have any sense of belonging to this monument". Another expert similarly commented: "The people of the city do not consider the monument as a heritage for themselves and

have no sense of belonging, and they feel they have no control for managing the monument of their town as it is now under the control of UNESCO, somehow this made them disappointed”.

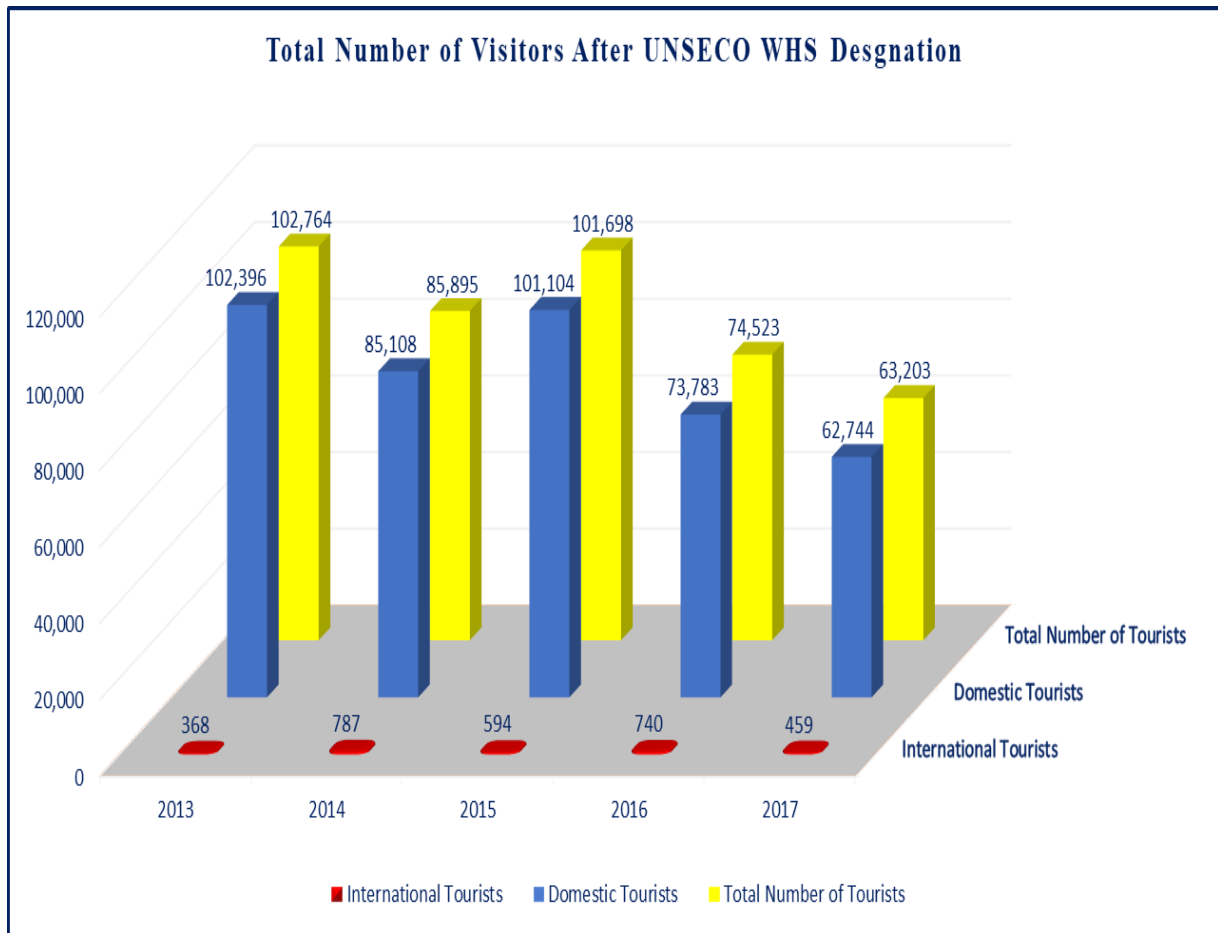
On the other hand, both residents and experts stated that even the small number of visitors drawn by the WHS listing of the tower had affected the way that people are receiving the tourists and that this socialising with outsiders is having a positive effect on the community’s culture. As one respondent stated: “It had a great impact as many tourists are visiting this city and people feel somehow proud that others are interested in their culture, and this will make them more open”. Another similarly remarked: “It made people have more confidence and look at their own culture as a gift that others may want to know about it”.

**Figure 29: Total number of Gonbad-e Qābus WHS visitors (2007-2017)**



Source: National Tourists Survey (2018)

**Figure 30: Total number of Gonbad-e Qābus WHS visitors (2013-2017)**



Source: National Tourists Survey (2018)

Despite the increase in visitor numbers after the WHS designation, it was considered to have only a limited effect on the local economy. As such, it had not made a tangible difference in the local community’s daily life. Both interviewed groups said that they had expected more benefits from WHS designation. A common response was: “Maybe a little but not too much; an increase in the number of tourists brought some financial benefits to the local people but not that much as was expected”.

In addition, both groups had the same points of view about the lack of tourism experts at the managerial level, weak city planning and infrastructure, limited accommodations (there are only two hotels in the city), and absence of tour guides. Example responses to the question about the main weaknesses of the tourism industry in Gonbad include: “lack of planning for the city’s tourism industry and the negligence of the main decision-maker of the province.” Furthermore, “Infrastructures are not ready for the tourists as there is no

information and no suitable accommodation is provided for tourists. Also, there is no expert at managerial level for tourism”.

Interestingly, the official statistics suggest a steady year-on-year decline since listing (see Figures 29 and 30), but this may be attributed to the recent sanctions and difficulty in travelling to the country. Despite this, both experts and residents suggest that there has been an increase in awareness of the city and the site both nationally and internationally since WHS designation: “Our culture and customs are now known nationally, and it had a great positive effect on other people's mind as we are Sunni and proved we are as hospitable as other ethnicities. Also, this caused many people even in Iran to know more about the site as they didn't hear about it before”. Another said: “The brand of the UNESCO has brought the name of the city to peoples' attention and I think this may provide more information about our city. Also, now the city and the Turkmen culture are more known among Iranians”. Similarly: “For sure now chosen as the UNESCO site introduced the city globally and brought the name of the city to the attention of the tourism market. So, everyone wants to know more about this unique monument and also the Turkmen ethnicity”.

In order to better understand people's emotions about the city, the respondents were asked to describe the city as if it were a human being. It is interesting to note that the majority of interviewees (both residents and experts) used negative words such as an old man, an ill/sick man, and depressed, although a few people described it as young, smart, and talented. This may be due to the fact that Gonbad, as a small city, is mainly comprised of minorities who have not received enough attention or financial incentives/investments over the past few decades, despite its great potential for development. Nevertheless, most people and experts believe that in the case of solving the tourism issues and providing the conditions for investment, the city has a great potential to become a major tourist destination due to its Turkmen cultural traditions and handicrafts, historical (e.g. the brick tower, the great wall of Gorgan and the ancient Gorgan city), natural (the wetlands around the city), religious (e.g. Yahya bin Zaid shrine) and sports attractions (e.g. the most important horse riding competition in Iran). Respondents said, for example: “This city has great potential to compete with famous cities in Iran, but it needs to have tourism experts at the managerial level to understand the problems and issues of the city. Also, the government should provide the budget to the big cities and small cities like Gonbad”. It was also believed that: “if the city improves, all will benefit and the opposite will

happen if no one pays attention to it”.

#### *4.5.3. Conclusion*

It is clear from both groups of respondents that, as long as the local people are not well informed or involved in the tourism development and policies, or when they are not supportive or ‘engaged’ with the World Heritage brand, tensions will persist between them the different brand levels. As Turkmens are among the minorities in Iran, both in terms of ethnicity and religion, they are sensitive about their own culture and do not have a strong identification with the World Heritage Site. Furthermore, the lack of tourism experts at the managerial level, an absence of comprehensive plans and marketing strategies, weak infrastructure, and insufficient budget and investment has discouraged the local community and made them believe that the WHS is nothing more than just a brand, despite the great potential of their city.

With its over 2500-year history, Iran has great potential to become one of the region’s main heritage tourism destinations. WHS designation has brought both positive and negative impacts upon local communities in Gonbad. It has brought further city exposure both nationally and internationally, but on the other hand, the lack of educational and informative programs has weakened the attachment of local communities towards this WHS. Moreover, the local community feel they have not been involved in developing their city’s WHS site, which has caused them to feel ignored and disappointed.

Based on the result of this study, both groups (residents and the tourism experts) have considered the local brand and image of their culture and city to have far more potential than the World Heritage brand. Furthermore, the officials have not been successful in capitalizing on the World Heritage listing to create a unique image of the city as a top destination in Iran. Accordingly, as for destination image, which is the most salient part of a destination brand, Turkmen culture and customs appear to be among the region's most important components of the destination image. Unfortunately, this issue exists not only for Gonbad but can be seen in many other WHSs in Iran. The majority of these sites have failed to reap the benefits of WHS listing due to the lack of a clear marketing strategy and a master plan as well as limited information and expert guide availability in these sites.

Based on this study, three main factors have failed to influence and encourage the local community in Gonbad since WHS listing. The first factor is the poor scale and pace of tourism development since WHS designation; this can be seen as a result of issues such as the lack of tourism expertise at the managerial level, the absence of comprehensive urban planning and marketing strategies and weak infrastructure. The second factor is negligence by tourism decision-makers in educating and informing the local community and encouraging them to take an active role in developing tourism. The third factor is the great patriotic sense of being a Turkmen and strong belief in their own customs and culture that prevented them from accepting anything which is not part of their own culture, including World Heritage.

#### 4.6. Chapter conclusion

The tourism industry, especially international tourism demand, is vulnerable to crises or disasters (Cró & Martins, 2017). To promote its products, the tourism industry, like no other, relies on the construction of a favourable image. This is because tourism is impacted by many external factors, including political instability, economic conditions, the environment, wars, terrorism, pandemics, etc. (Okumus et al., 2005).

Tourism appears to follow a distinct pattern. On the other hand, Crises have social as well as economic implications (wealth, profit), such as the change in tourist spending, the structure of accommodation, and the professionalisation of the tourism industry. Furthermore, each crisis brings about a change in visitor behaviours. The answers to the crises vary depending on the development of the tourism industry and the characteristics of each destination. This chapter has analysed three different types of crises and their effects on the destination image:

It discussed COVID-19 as a health crisis, international sanctions as a political crisis and confrontation of local brands vs big brands (such as UNESCO) as a socio-cultural crisis at different destinations.

It has been proved that all crises affect the destination image (apart from other effects such as social, economic, political, etc.), but the degree of this effect varies. For example, the massive effect of the COVID-19 crisis was international, which has hit all tourism sectors at different destinations. On the other hand, the effect of international sanctions



against Iran was at the national level (and its international interests) of this country, and finally, the effect of the UNESCO brand in this chapter was at the regional level.

During the post-COVID period, destinations need to be prepared for different scenarios, as the two years of this crisis have proved many unprepared destinations with heavy losses. Moreover, there is a significant relation between tourists' intra-pandemic perception and post-pandemic destination choice based on the new safe projected image by the destinations (J. Li et al., 2020). Previously, the role of media has been considered as one of the significant factors in convincing travellers and helping the destinations during and after the crises; however, the COVID-19 pandemic has opened up a new place for the national and international health organizations such as WHO as one of the main sources for checking the safety rate of the destinations based on different factors such as the number of confirmed infected cases, total death and vaccinated population rate.

Based on the result of the first case study of this chapter, the absence and essential role of media and marketing at the international level were revealed. This issue again brought to attention the critical role of crisis management through media and communication and how Iran has lost the game against the powerful western media and its image has been damaged. Moreover, in the second case study, another crisis management scenario was revealed, and it showed how the destination image could be vulnerable to mismanagement.

Crisis management is a significant challenge for destinations. Because destination image is very sensitive and this can have a long-term effect. Major crises are often the result of a crisis combined with mismanagement. So the solutions lie in a better discernment of the "crisis grounds", which, upstream of the event, prepare fertile ground for the appearance of major crises. They are also found in the in-depth management of post-crisis learning (experience feedback).

In order to regain the trust of tourists, destinations affected by a crisis must design a safe and promising image in the first step and then try to communicate (with their target market) this projected positive image through media.

# Chapter 5: Event and its typology

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## Introduction

The increased use of cultural policies aimed at fostering local economic development and supporting marketing strategies, which enjoyed a remarkable degree of political consensus at both national and local government levels in the 1980s and beyond, is reflected in the use of festivals as a method of creating new images of place (Bianchini, 1993). Events are a key factor in both the origin region (i.e. events are an important motivator of tourism) and the destination area in the context of tourism and its system (Leiper, 1990). Given the rising worldwide competition to attract tourist expenditure, events are both drivers of destination desirability and, more importantly, major marketing propositions in promoting destinations. This means events have a great potential to affect the destination image. However, failing the main goal of hosting may negatively affect the image.

Connell, Page and Meyer (2015) highlight the vital link between events as a marketing tool and the usage of events to fill the gap left in the off-peak season by a seasonal drop in tourism demand. Furthermore, it is essential to know that the financial benefits of events will affect the local economies, and destinations' infrastructures will be improved both locally and nationally. Accordingly, hosting events can play an important role in the tourism development of the destinations.

This chapter initially discusses the definition of festivals and events from a very general definition to the academic one in the literature. Afterwards, to better understand the notions, it will discuss the chronology of today's festivals and events since there is a distinct lack of clarity. It is easier to follow the terminology used here once this has been explained.

In the literature, festivals and events were used interchangeably, so this chapter will clarify the differences and consider the definitions under the umbrella of events to better discuss the typology of the events. Furthermore, based on the definitions and typology of events, the chapter will consider local events in terms of size and cultural events in terms of content as its case study for the purpose of this thesis. This chapter consists of five main sections. The first section looks through the definition of festivals and events. This is followed by a chronology of today's festivals and events. Section three discusses the

differences between planned versus unplanned events and periodic versus special events. Section four introduces the different types of events. Furthermore, in the final section, the festivals or events for this thesis are discussed. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

## 5.1. The definition of festivals and events

### 5.1.1. General definition

Human beings, during the time, have found ways to mark important events in their lives: seasonal changes in nature, the phases of the sun and moon, and the eternal cycle of birth and death. A helpful starting point when looking at definitions and terminology of an event is The Cambridge Dictionary (2022) which defines it as:

"anything which happens; result; any incidence or occurrence especially a memorable one or an activity that is planned for a special purpose and usually involves many people, for example, an organised occasion such as a meeting, convention, exhibition, trade show, conference, gala dinner, etc."

Likewise, the Chambers Dictionary (1998, p. 560) defines the event as:

"anything which happens; result; any incidence or occurrence especially a memorable one; contingency or possibility of occurrence; an item in a programme (of sports, etc.); a type of horse-riding competition, often held over three days (three-day event), consisting of three sections, i.e. dressage, cross-country riding and showjumping; fortune or fate (obs); an organised activity at a particular venue, e.g. for sales promotion, fundraising."

It can be concluded from these definitions that the term event can be defined in different ways as The Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX) Industry Glossary of terms (CIC, 2003) defines an event as :

"An organised occasion such as a meeting, convention, exhibition, special event, gala dinner, etc. An event is often composed of several different yet related functions."

However, Getz (2005, p. 16) notes a principle that can be applied to all events:

"Events are temporary, and every such event is unique stemming from the blend of management, program, setting and people."

Events have been central to our culture since ancient times, from religious and ritual gatherings to competitions. Nevertheless, countries are supporting and promoting the events as part of their strategies for economic development, nation-building, and destination marketing, as they are significant components of each region. Events are known as the engines for enhancing a cohesive and integrated social and economic system

as they play a significant role in catalysing tourism and hospitality industries (Getz & Andersson, 2010; Mallen & Adams, 2017; Susic & Dordevic, 2011).

### *5.1.2. Definition of festivals and events in tourism literature*

The significant effect and role of festivals and events at the destination have drawn the attention of commentators and academics (Atkinson & Laurier, 1998). In tourism literature, different terms are used, often interchangeably, to describe festivals and events. Unfortunately, the term “festival” is much overused and misused. Some so-called festivals are nothing more than commercial promotions or parties. According to Falassi (1987, p. 2), “festival” in social sciences means:

“a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview. Both the social function and the symbolic meaning of the festival are closely related to a series of overt values that the community recognizes as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its social identity, its historical continuity, and to its physical survival, which is ultimately what festivals celebrate.”

Furthermore, Falassi (1987, p. 2) explains festivals as a social phenomenon that could be found in all human cultures and introduces several meanings of this term in modern English:

- “A sacred or profane time of celebration, marked by special observances.
- The annual celebration of a notable person or event, or [of] the harvest of an important product.
- A cultural event is consisting of a series of performances of works in the fine arts, often devoted to a single artist or genre.
- A fair.
- Generic gaiety, conviviality, cheerfulness.”

The Canadian Government Office of Tourism (1982, cited by Hall, 1992) has made a distinction between the terms festivals and events only upon the frequency of organising

factor, as festivals are defined as a phenomenon that occurs every year, while events take place as one time only occasions. However, Tourism South Australia (1990, cited by Hall, (1992) considered the nature of public attending as the factor and has discussed that identifying a difference between festivals and events based purely on the frequency of organising factor is too simplistic and that there is a need to determine between the two categories based upon on the nature of the public attending. So that, they suggest a festival; the public is a participant in the experience, while for events, the public is the spectator of the experience.

Depending on disciplinary background, festivals have been defined and understood differently. The term “festival” can be used to cover a multitude of events and has an interdisciplinary nature, which is often anchored in a diversity of topics, such as sociology, cultural, religious and anthropology studies, and recreation and leisure studies (Jansa, 2017). Rolfe (1992, p. 1) defines it as:

“A festival was traditionally a time of celebration, relaxation and recuperation which often followed a period of hard physical labour, sowing or harvesting of crops, for example. The essential feature of these festivals was the celebration or reaffirmation of community or culture. The artistic content of such events was variable, and many had a religious or ritualistic aspect, but music, dance and drama were important features of the celebration.”

On the other hand, “Event” studies have covered event management and tourism with topics related to the economy and management; however, in the primary, such coverage has focused on larger urban events in cities (J. Wilson et al., 2017).

## 5.2. Chronology of today's festivals and events

The birth of what is known as the event industry was highlighted by Wood (1982), in which the author identified that commercialising popular celebrations required wealth for people to participate and a great choice of traditional festivities and adapting them for “vicarious consumption”. Wood (1982, p. 15) also discussed the reasons for organising the events as follows:

“In order to remove the guilty feelings attached to the pursuit of “sinful pleasure” by the

legacy of the Protestant Work Ethic, it became necessary to firstly earn the material means of acquiring a product of the entertainment industry and secondly, to ornate the rituals of mass celebration with an aura of professionalism and beneficent spectacle strong enough to dispel the appeal of popular home-spun amateur entertainment and pleasure-seeking.”

Moreover, the 1950s and 1960s were quite crucial in shaping today's known events because of different reasons:

First, during this period, the rapid increase in communities from the West Indies and South Asia was seen; consequently, the establishment of events to celebrate these cultures was not far from imagination as the famous example in the UK is the Notting Hill Carnival that was established in 1964 by the West Indian community to celebrate their ancestors' freedom from slavery (McKay, 2000). Second, the emergence of cultural festivals in the UK was during the 1950s so that McKay (2000) brought it to attention that, contrary to popular belief, cultural festivals in the UK were established in the 1950s rather than the 1960s:

“The early roots of British cultural festival in the jazz festivals run by Edward (Lord) Montagu at Beaulieu (1956–1961) and in Harold Pendelton's National Jazz Federation events at Richmond then Reading (from 1961 on) indicate the perhaps surprising extent to which the modern jazz scenes of the 1950s and early 1960s blazed the trail for the hippy festivals of the later 1960s and beyond.”

1960 to 1970 has shaped a decade of a successful music festivals in the UK as the appearance of several popular music festivals, including the Bath Blues Festival (1969), the Pilton Festival (1970, forerunner of the Glastonbury Festival), and the Isle of Wight Festival (1968, 1969, 1970) was during this era as well as one of the UK largest-ever festival with over 600 000 participants, the Isle of Wight Festival in 1970.

This trend was changed during the next decade, from 1970 to 1980, as in the case of the UK, a range of multi-purpose venues were built that were funded by local authorities, including the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) in Birmingham (1976) and the Wembley Exhibition Centre (1977) (Exhibition Liaison Committee, 1995).

The art associations started funding the community celebrations during the 1970s, as the growth in community festivals in this decade allowed professional artists to measure their skills against ordinary working people and provided a means of harnessing community

spirit by focusing attention away from social deprivation and unrest. This was aligned with the social welfare and community development policies of the government, which used the community festivals and festivities to provide a focus for society in order to rejuvenate communities and provide the basis for social and economic regeneration so that festivals had become part of the cultural landscape, and had become connected again to people's needs and lives (H. Wood, 1982).

During the 1980s and 1990s, certain seminal events set the pattern for today's events industry. The 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games demonstrated the profitability and viability of mega-events. Thanks to the media mastery of Hollywood, this mega event has introduced a new face of the event industry and has brought the Olympics to a broader audience than ever before, and demonstrated the power of a major sporting event to bring increased profile and economic benefits. The mid to late 1980s saw an expansion of teambuilding and multi-activity events that continued into the twenty-first century (Greaves, 1996).

During the 1990s, many parades, celebrations and a series of events marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Second World War in Europe. The biggest one happened in Hyde Park, London, which was attended by the Queen and members of the royal family, leaders and representatives of fifty-four countries touched by the war, and a crowd of 150,000 people (Hardman, 1995). As Allen (2000) explained in their study, the trend in local authority funding for arts festivals has continued into the twenty-first century. This is what Tim Joss, Chair of BAFA Trust, commented on their study (K. Allen, 2000) by highlighting the modern role of festivals:

“It is time for many people – in the arts, in national and local government, and elsewhere – to change their attitude to festivals. The old view that festivals are flashes in the pan contributing nothing to long-term development must go. This valuable research paints a very different picture. It makes an impressive case for arts festivals as flexible, efficient, contemporary enterprises rooted in their local communities. And thanks to their special freedom to collaborate with artists, venues, and artistic and other partners, they are proving themselves valuable catalysts for cultural, social and economic development (British Arts Festivals Association, 2001).”



### 5.3. Planned vs Unplanned Events & Periodic vs Special events

#### 5.3.1. Planned versus Unplanned Events

Surprisingly, planned events are everywhere in people’s daily lives, on social, broadcast, and print media. Famous examples are entertainment, sport and political events. On the other hand, unplanned events may get media exposure, so much so that people wonder if they really are being planned, but they are categorically different from the planned ones (See Table 16). However, the distinctions sometimes get blurry, so Event Studies must encompass both (Getz, 2007). The other unplanned events category that is entirely unpredictable and will hit the news includes accidents, natural disasters, wars, and terrorist attacks, which this chapter will not discuss.

A famous example of an unplanned event is the “Red Mile” created during the Stanley Cup in 2003 when thousands of fans wore their team’s red colours, frequenting bars along the city’s 17th Avenue, flooded onto the streets and had a party. Like planned events, this type of event requires some measures and controls as it has a specific duration and may affect the local people's lives (Getz, 2007). Because of the previously discussed reasons and the potential risks, the civic officials and authorities have announced that they would not tolerate such a spontaneous celebration in the future, and they have prevented it from occurring in 2005.

**Table 16: Planned events versus unplanned events**

	Planned events The domain of professional event designers and managers	Unplanned events The domain of surprise and spontaneity
Purpose	Goals or results are set by event producers and will be influenced by main stakeholders.	The goal is self-defined; individuals’ motives could be ambiguous, different, and even contradicting.
Programme	Designers aim to create “experiences” for visitors, participants, and spectators. They plan and organize everything in great detail.	Spontaneous activities or events that when agents start them, then they will be somehow unpredictable.

Control	Managers and other formal stakeholders, such as governments, establish controls.	There are no management procedures, merely a level of regular civic supervision; police intervention is occasionally necessary.
Accountability	Producers and managers are formally considered responsible.	Individuals can be held accountable for their activities under the law, but no corporation or legal entity is generally considered responsible.

Source: Adapted from Getz (2007)

This chapter continues its discussion of planned events related to the topic of this thesis. One of the first questions that need to be answered before setting up a planned event is its scale. As the organisers and authorities require to have an idea about the scale of the event based on which the impacts, media coverage and policy implications will be evaluated (see Table 17).

**Table 17: The scale of planned events**

	Small events	Unplanned events
The event experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainly in the private and corporate spheres of interest</li> <li>• The experience could be wholly personal or shared with a small number of people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainly in the public sphere of interest</li> <li>• Crowd dynamics can take on control</li> <li>• Through media coverage and shared beliefs, the event has the potential to affect entire communities.</li> </ul>
Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to their great number, they are significant (e.g., meetings, weddings and parties)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large events have fundamental impacts (e.g., major sports events, exhibitions)</li> </ul>

		and festivals)
Media coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The media rarely cover private events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media are interested in covering these events or created primarily as media events.</li> </ul>
Policy implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, policies are related to the events and venues only (e.g., health standards, green operations, permits required)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy decisions are required for special events only (e.g., decision to bid; infrastructure investments; feasibility studies and impact assessments commissioned)</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Getz (2007)

### 5.3.2. *Periodic versus Special events*

According to Getz (2013), periodic events are a type of planned event that occurs regularly, and they can be held in the same location or different locations each time the event is staged. Furthermore, periodic events that are bound to a particular location may have the potential to enable destinations to reach their long-term goals of increased attractiveness, image and branding (Getz et al., 2012).

Similarly, “special events” have been described as specific rituals, celebrations or performances, and presentations that are consciously planned and created to mark special occasions and/or to achieve specific social, cultural or corporate goals. Special events are important components of place branding and are ranged from national days and celebrations to unique cultural performances, major sporting fixtures, trade promotions and product launches.

According to Getz (1989, p. 125), as “a unique form of tourist attraction, ranging in scale from mega-events such as the Olympics and world’s fairs, through community festivals, to programmes of events at parks and facilities”. Also, a special event presents an “opportunity to participate in a collective experience which is distinct from everyday life”

from the participants' perspective (Getz, 1989, p. 127).

The event industry is so vast that it is somehow impossible to cover all the varieties and shades of events under a single definition. Jago and Shaw (1998, p. 28) expressed a view from a tourism context and based on their research, they have suggested six core attributes of special events.

In their research, they discussed that special events should:

1. Be of limited duration
2. Be one-off or infrequent occurrence
3. Be out of the ordinary
4. Raise the awareness, image, or profile of a region
5. Offer a social experience
6. And attract tourists or tourism development

Based on the six core attributes of special events, they defined the special events as:

“A one-time or infrequently occurring event of limited duration that provides the consumer with leisure and social opportunity beyond everyday experience. Such events, which attract, or have the potential to attract, tourists, are often held to raise the profile, image or awareness of a region” (Jago & Shaw, 1998, p. 29).

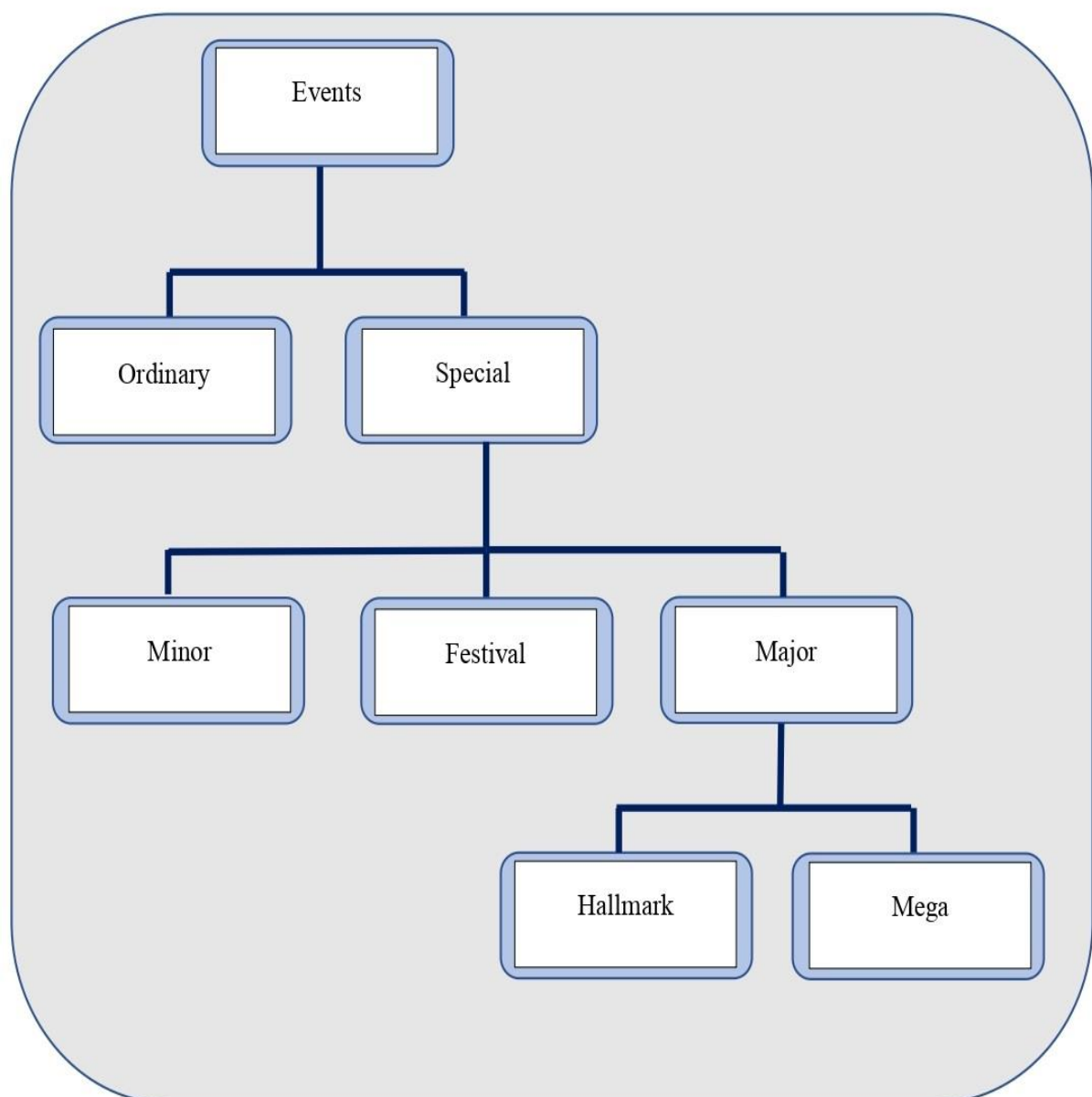
Goldblatt (2013, p. 6) has defined the special event as “a unique moment in time, celebrated with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs” by considering the human aspect of events. While Getz (2005, p. 16) discussed that special events are best defined by their context and has offered two definitions from both the event organiser and the customer's point of view:

1. “A special event is a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside regular programmes or activities of the sponsoring or organising body.
2. To the customer or guest, a special event is an opportunity for leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience.”

Uniqueness, tradition, authenticity, hospitality, quality, festive spirit, theme and

symbolism are attributes that create a sense of “specialness”. Accordingly, it is possible to conclude from the above discussion that the specialness of an event can be distinguished from the viewpoint of the practitioners or person experiencing the event, or indeed researchers or students in the field. Both Jago and Shaw (1998) and Getz et al. (2012) have sought to resolve the ambiguity by ensuring that the definitions of various event categories are consistent. Jago and Shaw (1998) have introduced an event typology based on the event-specific literature reviewed. Figure 31, overleaf illustrates how event types and categories are related.

**Figure 31: Diagrammatic Event Framework**



Source: Jago and Shaw (1998, p. 28)

The outcome of analysing 22 event-specific studies by Jago and Shaw (1998) was to figure out how different types of events were classified in order to introduce the events' typology. As a result, it is possible to explain the relationship diagram in Figure 31 as follows:

Events are either “ordinary” in the sense that they are inserted in normal times of communities (routinized) or “special” in the sense that they are unique. According to Jago and Shaw (1998, p. 25), the term “special” is employed in a tourism context, explaining that these events work as an attraction for destinations. These “special” events include minor events (small), festivals and major events (large) in which major events include hallmark events or mega-events. This typology can be helpful as it will simplify the way of categorizing the events; however, after nearly three decades, a more comprehensive typology is needed that can cover all the events in detail. Accordingly, as some argue, each event must be evaluated based on the specific impacts that it creates (Maguire & Wise, 2022).

In different event studies, some criteria and definitions were interchangeable according to Jago and Shaw (1998); for example, a special event might be labelled as a major event by one author but a festival by another. One author may define a hallmark event to be the same as a mega-event (Chalkley & Essex, 1999), while another author may define it as a special event (Getz, 1988). Getz et al. (2012) discovered that the terms are used interchangeably regarding the magnitude of impact and geographical scale, which are not the same thing.

Overall, it is possible to distinguish special events from other events through the following criteria;

- Special events are open to all the participants (public)
- Their main goal is to celebrate or display specific themes
- They only happen once or twice a year.
- The opening and closing dates are set in advance.
- The events do not own any permanent structures.
- The program is made up of one or more specific activities.

- All of the event components and activities will occur within the same community.

Special events are staged to achieve larger purposes, such as expanding the tourism seasonality at destinations and spreading visitor demand more equally within all regions at the destination in order to project a positive image.

## 5.4. Different Types of events

It is possible to categorise or group the events in many different ways; among them, *size*, *form* and *content* are considered the main ways.

### 5.4.1. *Categorising by size*

The literature concerned with events contains a variety of definitions concerned with size or category, with some different terms being used to mean the same thing. Size or scale is one of the most usual ways of characterising events based on which it is possible to consider four different categories. However, still, these definitions are not exact, and distinctions become blurred:

1. Local/community events
2. Major events
3. Hallmark events
4. Mega-events (Bowdin et al., 2012)

Following an extensive review of classifications, typologies and terminology in use within the literature and published research, both Jago and Shaw (1998) and Getz et al. (2012) have attempted to address the confusion by introducing an element of consistency to the definition of various event types. Accordingly, Jago and Shaw (1998) proposed mega-events and hallmark events as subcategories of major events, while other authors present these categories on a scale according to size and impact (Jago & Shaw, 1998).

### 5.4.2. *Local or community events*

The events targeting mainly the local audiences and are staged primarily for their social, fun, and entertainment are considered local or community events. The main

characteristics of these events are; creating the feeling of belonging and a sense of place among the local community, engendering pride and encouraging their participation by exposing them to new ideas and experiences. These are precisely the fundamental reasons the government and local authorities are looking for and will support such events as part of their community and cultural development strategies. According to Janiskee (1996, p. 404), the local or community events are:

“family-fun events that are considered ‘owned’ by a community because they use volunteer services from the host community employ public venues such as streets, parks and schools and are produced at the direction of local government agencies or non-government organizations (NGOs) such as service clubs, public safety organizations or business associations”.

Janiskee (1996) also discussed the possibility of changing from local or community events to hallmark events in case they can attract a large number of visitors to a community.

#### *5.4.2.1. Major events*

Major events are events that can attract a significant number of visitors and can bring large media coverage and economic benefits to a destination. Many top international sporting championships fit into this category, for example, Formula One Grand Prix. The UK Sport (1998, p. 4) has considered three elements as the main requirements for a major sporting event:

1. The event involves competition between teams and/or individuals representing several nations.
2. The event attracts significant public interest, nationally and internationally, through spectator attendance and media coverage.
3. The event is of international significance to the sport(s) concerned and features prominently on their international calendar.

#### *5.4.2.2. Hallmark events*

Hallmarks are those events that become so identified with the spirit of a town, city or



region and can give identity and a positive image to their host community (the classic example of a hallmark event is Carnival in Rio). These events are not only distinctive features but also symbols of quality or authenticity that are identified with the essence of those places and can bring huge tourist revenue as well as international recognition to the destinations; as Ritchie and Beliveau (1974) discussed, hallmark events can be seen as a strategic response to seasonal variations in tourist demand.

Ritchie (1984, p. 2) also defines hallmark events as:

“Major one time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the short term or long term. Such events rely for their success on uniqueness, status, or timely significance to create interest and attract attention.”

Further, Ritchie (1984, p. 2) has identified and has classified several different types of hallmarks as follows;

1. Worlds fairs/expositions
2. Unique carnivals and festivals
3. Major sports events
4. Significant cultural and religious events
5. Historical milestones
6. Classic commercial and agricultural events
7. Major political personage events

Getz's (2005, p. 16) description of hallmark comprises the ability to provide a competitive advantage for the host community:

“The events that possess such significance, in terms of tradition, attractiveness, quality or publicity, that the event provides the host venue, community or destination with a competitive advantage. Over time, the event and destination images become inextricably linked. Hallmark Events are, by definition, permanent ‘institutions’ in their communities or societies”. Moreover, hallmarks are strongly intertwined with the host community and cannot exist without them (Getz, 2008).

Overall, as it was discussed earlier, hallmarks can be considered as a strategic response to the seasonal variations in demand of the tourist industry and can provide the host

community with an opportunity to secure a place of prominence in the tourist market in the short run (C. M. Hall, 1989; J. R. B. Ritchie & Beliveau, 1974). However, they can leave behind tremendous legacies that can have a long term impact on the host community (C. Hall, 1992).

#### *5.4.2.3. Mega-events*

Mega-events refer to the largest and most significant events that are so large that they affect whole economies and will be quickly at the centre of attention of global media. These types of events are generally developed following competitive bidding between different destinations or even countries. The Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup are among the most famous ones in this category. Marris (1987), in an AIEST conference proceedings, explained that mega-events could be defined in three different ways:

1. By volume - 1 million visits
2. By money measure - Can \$500 million, DM 750 million, French F2,500 million  
(at 1987 levels)
3. In psychological terms, the event has a reputation as a 'must-see.'

While Vanhove and Witt (1987) added they should attract worldwide publicity. Roche (1994) introduced another definition to clarify the meaning of a mega-event: “mega-events (large scale leisure and tourism events such as Olympic Games and World Fairs) are short-term events with long-term consequences for the cities that stage them.” Mega-events, according to Roche, include infrastructure development, which generally leads to long-term debt, as well as long-term management and further explained the possibility of frequently creating a new or rebuilding a good image of the destinations (host cities) through national and international media. In addition, long-term effects, such as an increase in the number of tourists, could require and result in inward industrial investment. On the other hand, the integrity of mega-event construction projects is jeopardized by cost overruns and timing restrictions. For example, at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, and the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi, poorly designed mega-event infrastructures raised safety concerns (Maguire & Wise, 2022).

Hall (1997, p. 5) offers this definition:

“Mega-events such as World Fairs and Expositions, the World Soccer Cup Final, or the Olympic Games are events which are expressly targeted at the international tourism market and maybe suitably described as ‘mega’ by virtue of their size in terms of attendance, target market, level of public financial involvement, political effects, the extent of television coverage, construction of facilities, and impact on the economic and social fabric of the host community.”

However, Jago and Shaw (1998, p. 29) define mega-events simply as “A one-time major event that is generally of an international scale”.

Finally, Getz (2005, p. 18) provided another definition of these events:

“Mega-events, by way of their size or significance, are those that yield extraordinarily high levels of tourism, media coverage, prestige, or economic impact for the host community, venue or organization.” Getz (2008) also expands on this concept, claiming that mega-events are usually worldwide in scope, entail a competitive bidding process, and are generally a one-off for the destination.

#### *5.4.3. Categorising by Form or content*

Form or content is the second common way of classifying events. According to this way of classification, the events will divide into:

1. Cultural events
2. Sports events
3. Business events (Bowdin et al., 2012).

Accordingly, it is possible to define each of them shortly

- Cultural events are a universal form of events that pre-date contemporary events and have existed in all civilizations.
- Similarly, sports events have the same roots in becoming a sizable and growing event industry sector.
- And finally, business events are those generating considerable income for their host destination (i.e. Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions).

#### *5.4.3.1. Cultural events*

Cultural events can also be contenders as major events and are defined by Richards and Palmer (2010) as comprising “a series of activities, being of limited duration, recurring regularly and having a celebratory element to them”. While Ferdinand and Williams (2013, p. 202) discussed those events could be understood as a celebration of cultural heritage and identity that is “integral to all societies” or can be understood to be “themed public celebrations” (Getz, 2007, p. 27).

According to Gibson and Connell (2005, p. 210), cultural events will provide places with “spectacle” and a sense of “uniqueness”, while Hall and Sharples (2008, p. 9) define them as “a celebration of something the local community wishes to share and which involves the wider public as participants in the experience.”

These events must have cultural content, such as arts, music or food. Cultural events will take place at specific locations and times. Accordingly, a public audience needs to witness the events, and a number of stakeholders are both affected by the events and affect them in some way. The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is a good example, known as the world’s largest arts festival. This festival is an essential expression of human activity that contributes much to art and our socio-cultural life. It is also linked with tourism to push the local economy to generate business activity and income.

Some of the destinations are developing event-focused strategies so then by using the events; they can deliver their cultural strategies (e.g. Bath and North East Somerset Council) (Arts Development Service, 2004) or develop a specific events/festivals strategy (e.g. Edinburgh District Council, EventScotland, North West Development Agency). These strategies are in favour of governments and local authorities as they can achieve their socio-cultural goals at destinations, and their role has been recognized by the published National Carnival Arts Strategy (Nindi, 2005).

Overall, it is possible to consider that socio-cultural events can provide places with the means by which they can differentiate themselves from other places, have the potential to become symbols of a dynamic community, can involve the local community as well as visitors by offering pleasurable activities or experiences that are out of the daily life and encouraging community participation and strengthening community ties (Gursoy et al., 2004; M. L. Harvey et al., 1998; A. Smith, 2010).

#### 5.4.3.2. *Sports events*

Sports events, with a rich history dating back to the ancient Greek Olympics and beyond, are an important and growing part of the event industry. Their charms to attract visitors worldwide and their power to generate media coverage and economic impacts at destinations have placed them at the heart of most government event strategies and destination marketing programmes. In event literature sports mega-events can bring “psychic income” to the destination, which has been described as an “amalgam of pride, excitement, entertainment and self-actualisation reported by the host community” (Fredline et al., 2004, p. 4). It is believed that psychic income can also increase community morale (H. Gibson, 1998) or quality of life (J. Crompton, 2004).

One of the first paradigms that have been developed to explain the concept of psychic income in relation to sport mega-events impacts was suggested by Crompton (2004), which has seven dimensions:

1. Community pride results from increased community visibility: The residents’ sense of self-respect due to increased visibility nationally and internationally owing to an event (J. Crompton, 2004; H. J. Gibson et al., 2008; X. Xu, 2006).
2. Excitement quotient from visitors: The residents’ emotionally stimulated state from hosting a sports event results from both the event itself and the influx of visitors to the local community (Chalip, 2006; Christine Green, 2001).
3. Emotional involvement with a team: Local residents’ increased sense of motivation, arousal, or interest in hosting sports events (Havitz & Dimanche, 1999) is a particular component that influences their behaviour and decision-making processes (Assael, 1992; Bloch et al., 1986).
4. The tangible focus for social bonding: The tangible aspect of social bonding specifies that local events increase residents’ interactions, including friendships, sentiment, and social participation (Funk et al., 2002; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995).
5. Pride in efforts to resuscitate deteriorated areas: “. . . something is being done” increases the “. . . collective community conscience”, regardless of outcomes (J. Crompton, 2004, p. 55), based on which the community members can possess great pride due to the community’s effort to revive their community (Lipsitz, 1984; Rosentraub, 2009).

6. Civic pride from being a major league city: The individuals' positive mental reconstruction due to the enhanced image of their community as an event host city (J. Crompton, 2004; Groothuis et al., 2004; B. K. Johnson et al., 2006; B. K. Johnson & Whitehead, 2007)
7. And enhanced collective self-esteem: The way that individuals define themselves (in part) according to their membership in various social groups (R. Brown, 2000; Stets & Burke, 2000).

Overall, Sports events can facilitate joy, celebration, excitement, self-fulfilment, or aesthetic appreciation that can be brought to both the host community and participants.

#### *5.4.3.3. Business events*

Business events include exhibitions, annual general meetings, incentive travel, marketing product launches, conferences, and networking events. Another interesting trend that has received more attention since 2020 because of the COVID-19 is the virtual and hybrid events such as webinars and live streaming events that are often hosted nowadays. Although business events are the first to be cancelled in times of trouble (terrorism, pandemics, natural disasters), they bounce back very quickly and continue to grow in number. Business events are indeed severe, but they almost always base part of their appeal on social and touristic opportunities. These events are defined by various terms such as MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions/events)(Bowdin et al., 2012).

The term “The Meetings Industry” was adopted by the Joint Meetings Industry Council in 2015 to distinguish the activities from tourism and other industries (Joint Meetings Industry Council, 2005). Although many of its activities have a significant public and tourism aspect, this sector is mainly characterised by its commercial and business focus. This part will briefly explain exhibitions and conferences as the two examples of business events.

One of the fast-growing parts of business events is exhibitions. They can be defined as:

“. . . a presentation of products or services to an invited audience with the object of inducing a sale or informing the visitor. It is a form of three-dimensional advertising where, in many instances, the product can be seen, handled, assessed by demonstration and in some cases even smelt and tasted” (Exhibition Liaison Committee, 1995) or “an

event that enables buyers and sellers to meet together in a market situation” (Exhibition Audience Audits Ltd, 2005).

Exhibitions can also be classified based on the industry sector. In 2001, the Exhibition Industry Research Group (Exhibition Audience Audits Ltd, 2005) came up with a new categorization scheme that included four categories:

“Category 1: Exhibitions held in qualifying venues (a qualifying venue is one offering more than 2000 m<sup>2</sup> of continuous covered space.

Category 2: One-day public exhibitions held at qualifying venues.

Category 3: Exhibitions that are primarily outdoor held in qualifying and non-qualifying Venues (i.e. major agricultural and horticultural events attracting more than 50 000 visitors, trade/public and trade events that are held at non-qualifying primarily outdoor venues).

Category 4: Exhibitions held at non-qualifying venues (venues that offer less than 2000 m<sup>2</sup> for indoor exhibitions).”

The other type of business events are conferences that can be diverse according to the Convention Industry Committee definition in the APEX Industry Glossary (CIC, 2003):

1. “Participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact-finding, problem-solving and consultation.
2. An event used by any organization to meet and exchange views, convey a message, open a debate or give publicity to some area of opinion on a specific issue.”

Conferences do not require any kind of tradition, continuity, or regularity. Conferences are often brief in duration and have specified aims, even though time is not frequently constrained. Conferences are often smaller in size compared to congresses and can be categorized according to their primary market focus, generally as corporate or association (Business Tourism Partnership, 2005).

## 5.5. Festivals or events for the purpose of this thesis

After reviewing the festivals and events literature, it seems there are overlaps in defining a festival or an event and their subdivided categories such as special events, mega-events and hallmark events. Each of the subdivided categories includes an analysis of the spatial scope of their respective type of event, and many of them are claimed to be unique, hallmark or mega-events. However, each of the individual types of the event has some expected positive benefits based on which they have the ability to generate positive impacts such as pushing the local economy forward and improving the destination image. As a result, it is suggested that these distinctions be ignored and that the umbrella term “event” is used to cover the definitions for both events and festivals throughout this thesis.

This section of the literature study has revealed that much of the attention has been focused on large-scale or mega-events, with little knowledge or understanding of the contributions made by their much smaller counterparts. Local cultural events, unlike mega-events, need little investment or infrastructure development (Gursoy et al., 2004), making them easily accessible to the many thousands of smaller venues looking to boost their image.

Following this line of research is beneficial to both academic and practitioner audiences: academic study benefits from a deeper understanding of the contribution that such cultural events make to different destinations, and practitioners have evidence to refer to when considering hosting events in their own communities. By joining both of these points, DMOs and event organisers will have the chance to learn more about the economic, social, and cultural roles that socio-cultural events play in their destinations.

This thesis will consider local events in terms of size and cultural events in terms of content for its case studies in the next chapter as the author tries to analyse the effect of hosting such events on destination image. Smaller size events are important as if they are properly planned, they could achieve comparatively higher levels of impact (in terms of economic, social, and environmental indicators) for the hosting community. Moreover, as the community plays the role of the primary stakeholder in the organization process, it can benefit from event leveraging (Perić et al., 2016).

The use of numerous strategies by stakeholders to maximize the advantages of holding an event or festival is described as event leveraging (Chalip & McGuirly, 2007 as cited



in Perić et al., 2016). This approach allows for additional opportunities to learn from and develop strategies that will affect and focus on event benefits throughout the planning stage. On the other hand, Leveraging should not be restricted to event organizers; it should also include input from other community stakeholders that are engaged in and/or responsible for local development (Dangi & Jamal, 2016 as cited in Perić et al., 2016).

## 5.6. Conclusion

Every destination that wishes to boost its tourist appeal should prepare specific tourism development strategies. Events are one of the tools that they can rely on, but if they wish to achieve the full potential of event tourism, these plans should include and focus on strategic event planning. Events that take place at any destination should be planned and developed methodically, and they should be established as tourist attractions, catalysts for further growth, image builders, and animators of the destination. Overall, hosting events have become a significant aspect of any destination's social, cultural and economic infrastructure. For example, according to Meetings Professional International (MPI), in 2012, 1.8 million meetings and events contributed more than \$393 billion to the US GDP by creating 1.8 million jobs and accounting for \$109 billion of all business travel spending in the USA (Meetings Professional International, 2016).

Destinations embrace events as key elements in their marketing strategies and image promotion as events have become the prime manifestations of a country's social and experiential economy (Robertson et al., 2007).

It is essential that events are planned and organized so that they differ from one another, and not just copying the successful one without considering all the aspects. A well-defined event provides market recognition and an advantage over the competitors, resulting in higher visitor satisfaction and loyalty, which is critical for repeating events. The more well-known events a place has, the more appealing it is to participants. The support of sufficient accommodation facilities, intense levels of collaboration between tourism organizations, the availability of detailed information about events and follow-up activities, and, most significantly, efficient marketing efforts are the keys to their success.

This chapter has introduced the differences between the festivals and events in the

literature. Furthermore, by discussing the chronology and typology of the events, it clarified the main direction of the thesis by choosing the local events in terms of size and cultural events in terms of content for its case studies. Furthermore, as this research will go through the role of innovative socio-cultural events and their effects on destination image, it will try to find a comprehensive answer to the questions of this study. Accordingly, in the following chapter, more related issues will be analysed and will be introduced in order to provide a better explanation and fill the existing gap in the literature.

# Chapter 6: The effects of events on destination image

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## Introduction

The study of festivals and events is an important and prolific area of tourism research enquiry. Festivals and events have changed in recent decades, and interest in understanding their significance in the tourism academy has risen accordingly. The importance of events as an element of the shaping destination image is reflected in the tourism industry. By hosting events, many destinations will widen their market, attract more tourists, build their new image, promote their destinations and stimulate the creation of economic benefits (Jago et al., 2005). Furthermore, events will provide conditions for local culture, tradition and customs to be celebrated and known globally. Therefore, events are great motivators for the tourism industry in destination development plans and tourism development strategies (Hede et al., 2002).

Hosting events can play a pivotal role in demonstrating that a place is safe and friendly by replacing a problematic image (negative) with a positive one (Avraham, 2013; Beirman, 2003). Accordingly, host countries with a negative image often attempt to improve their image with aggressive advertising campaigns (S. F. Sönmez et al., 1999), adopting different models (such as the multi-step model for altering place image, etc.), using crises communication techniques, analysing marketing initiatives and media policy (Avraham, 2014).

Hosting events have different effects on destinations; this chapter discusses the political, economic, physical and environmental impacts and the investments and development opportunities that could be provided to the destinations.

Through analysing the gathered data from two different case studies, this chapter will discuss the role of events and cultural innovation in changing destination image and how these types of events (cultural) have been employed at two different destinations, and how it is essential to look at smaller size events as possible a solution for helping the destinations to improve their image.

This chapter briefly discusses the effects of events on destination images in the first section and introduces the impacts of events on destinations in the second section. The third section is about the cultural events that try to discuss in detail through a case study;

“The role of socio-cultural events in rebuilding Iran’s image”. More explanations will be brought in section four on if socio-cultural events are practical tools for destinations? Furthermore, another case study (The Role of Socio-cultural Events in Improving Destination Image: Montpellier Light Festival) will discuss this aspect. Finally, the chapter will summarise the discussions from the literature review and finish with the conclusion section.

## 6.1. The effects of events on destination image

### 6.1.1. *Place marketing*

The shift toward more entrepreneurial activities in the 1970s and 1980s, which resulted from governments' policy changes towards a more entrepreneurial approach, has generated a more competitive situation between cities and regions. Local authorities and DMOs looked for innovative ways to revive their destinations and attract more commercial investment and tourists to boost their economies (J. Gold, 1994). Marketing positive images of destinations has been widely recognised in Western Europe and North America. Thus, destinations started promoting their image and creating a positive picture in order to target potential investors and tourists. Hall and Barrett (2018, p. 28) discuss that 'place promotion is both an obvious manifestation and contributory cause of the heightened inter-urban competition associated with entrepreneurialism.'

Previously, one of the ways of promoting the destinations was through media as media were becoming more and more integrated into our everyday life via an increasing number of television channels, radio stations and newspapers. Nevertheless, by the involvement of the internet in our lives, social media has played a vital role in distributing images of the destination, how these images are produced, exposed, consumed, and what, if any, impacts these images' consumption.

According to Kariel, Rosenvall (1981) and Gold (1980), media plays an essential role as a component of how people construct destination images and cognitive maps. The example of this role will be shown when people become aware of events in their immediate environment from direct contact while learning about events that occur in other destinations, primarily through the media. However, the characteristics of audiences play an essential role in determining how people interpret the image; making sense is " a function of a complex environment, that of the personality of the family, the neighbourhood, of work, of ideology" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 182) and the variety of individual experiences and the contexts in which images are sent and received might lead to a variety of message decoding and interpretations (Radway, 1984). Overall, it is possible to consider the critical role of media in creating destination image as the media forms part of a complex cultural process in which meanings will be produced and consumed (Burgess, 1990; Burgess & Gold, 1985).

Apart from the positive impacts, media can bring into attention all the negative side of

destinations as well as “mayors, urban planners and policymakers are all concerned about their city's coverage patterns in the news media. Consequently, these decision-makers tend to accuse news people of distorting their city's images, employing definitions that focus mainly on negative effects such as crime, violence, and social problems while ignoring positive events and important developments” (Avraham, 2000, p. 363). Moreover, Avraham (2000, p. 363) notes:

“It is surprising that the [media] images of cities do not receive more attention, as they are important and have a considerable effect, along with other factors, on the ability of cities to change their position in the growing national and global competition for various resources. A city's position in this competition might be affected by its image because people will usually hesitate to invest in, move to, or visit cities covered mainly concerning crime, poverty and social disorder. The importance of a city's portrayal in the national media stems from our belief that such images affect these groups, the general public, the decision-makers on a national level and the place's inhabitants.”

Overall, the way in which the media constructs the destination image and how these images are consumed is the key determinant in the economic fortune of destinations to attract more tourists. Thus, destinations are trying to consider that factor and are willing to affect it by hosting events (Atkinson & Laurier, 1998) as events bring a competitive edge to a destination country as a source of creativity and as a means of asserting civic, regional or national identity through the quality of cultural life (Myerscough, 1988). Moreover, according to Dwyer et al. (2000), hosting the events will lead to tourists' spending, which in its turn those spendings will boost the local economy.

### *6.1.2. Culture as an approach*

The increased attention over the cultural policies aimed at fostering local economic development and supporting marketing strategies, which enjoyed a remarkable degree of political consensus at both national and local government levels in the 1980s and beyond, is reflected in the use of events as a method of creating new destination image (Bianchini, 1993).

Destinations value events because of economic growth and positive socio-cultural development potential. DMOs are supporting these events and have staged them regularly in the same place to attract more tourists to the destinations (Getz, 2008; Pasanen et al.,

2009). Events are an essential component of the marketing mix for the destinations as they can bring tourists and media coverage to destinations. This means destinations can benefit from the increase in the number of visitors and, at the same time, enjoy advertising and being at the centre of the media spotlight (Getz et al., 1998; H. Gibson, 1998).

The growing use of culture as an approach to addressing the legacy of industrial decline is notable since that reflects DMOs and government agencies' opinions about cultural events, which are destined to play an increasingly important part in regions' future development (R. Griffiths, 1995).

By understanding the importance of cultural events, politicians and policymakers have tried to benefit from this cultural phenomenon to assist in the transformation of local economies and soften the social impact of restructuring the economic base, as cultural policies were central to economic development (Ekman, 1999). These policies had a dual purpose in nature, as the events can help promote economic regeneration by increasing a region's social vitality and appeal and increasing the people's self-confidence and pride (Rolfe, 1992).

## 6.2. The impacts of events on destinations

According to Hall (1997), all events can have impacts on host communities, participants and other stakeholders who, as Getz (2007) puts it, are “impacted” by the outcomes of events that are considered as intended, desired and predicted (and, on occasion, unanticipated). Whether economic, social, cultural, political, or environmental, the predicted advantages of events are the primary driving force for ongoing support and growing popularity on a local, national, and international scale. The impacts of events are brought in Table 18.

**Table 18: The impacts of events**

Sphere of event	Positive impacts	Negative impacts
Socio-cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared experience</li> <li>• Revitalizing traditions</li> <li>• Community engagement</li> <li>• Building community pride</li> <li>• Inclusion and Validation of community groups</li> <li>• Increased community participation</li> <li>• Introducing new and challenging ideas</li> <li>• Bringing new or unusual experiences</li> <li>• Expanding cultural perspectives</li> <li>• Psychic income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community alienation</li> <li>• Forum for anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Manipulation of Community</li> <li>• Exclusion of certain groups</li> <li>• Negative community image</li> <li>• Bad behaviour</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> <li>• Social dislocation</li> <li>• Loss of amenity</li> </ul>
Physical and environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showcasing the environment</li> <li>• Providing models for best practice</li> <li>• Increasing environmental awareness</li> <li>• Infrastructure legacy</li> <li>• Improved transport and communications</li> <li>• Urban transformation and renewal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental damage</li> <li>• Pollution</li> <li>• Destruction of heritage</li> <li>• Noise disturbance</li> <li>• Traffic congestion</li> </ul>
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International prestige</li> <li>• Improved profile</li> <li>• Promotion of investment</li> <li>• Social cohesion</li> <li>• Development of administrative skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of event failure</li> <li>• Misallocation of funds</li> <li>• Lack of accountability</li> <li>• Loss of community ownership and control</li> <li>• Legitimation of ideology</li> </ul>



<p>Tourism and economic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting the destination and increasing tourist visits</li> <li>• Extended length of stay</li> <li>• Higher yield</li> <li>• Increased tax revenue</li> <li>• Business opportunities and increased business turnover lead to supplementary benefits</li> <li>• Commercial activity</li> <li>• Job creation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community resistance to tourism</li> <li>• Loss of authenticity</li> <li>• Damage to reputation</li> <li>• Exploitation</li> <li>• Leakage</li> <li>• Inflated prices</li> <li>• Opportunity costs</li> <li>• Financial management</li> <li>• Financial loss</li> <li>• Displacement</li> <li>• Employment only temporary or seasonal</li> </ul>
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Source: adapted from Hall (1989)

It is possible to count many successful examples in the event industry, such as the Winter Olympic Games in Calgary (J. R. B. Ritchie & Smith, 1991) and Beijing (N. Chen, 2012; X. (Robert) Li & Kaplanidou, 2013; Zeng et al., 2011; L. Zhang & Zhao, 2009), the world cups in South Korea (S. Kim & Morrision, 2005), and Germany (Florek & Insch, 2011).

However, the other side of the coin can be unintended consequences of events on destinations as failure to achieve the primary goals can, to a lesser or greater extent, reduce their net benefit or even be disastrous, turning positive benefits into negative publicity, political embarrassment and costly lawsuits. As a result, one of the most important tasks for DMOs and event managers is to not only discover and, to the maximum extent possible, forecast the effects of events but also to manage them such that benefits are maximized and negatives are limited so that, “on balance the overall impact of the event is positive.” (Bowdin et al., 2012, p. 37).

According to Quinn (2009, p. 487), the primary research had focused on developing

knowledge and understanding of the impacts of events: “from early on, events came overwhelmingly to be conceived as discrete entities with an ability to unidirectionally create a series of impacts, both positive and negative, on contextual environments.” However, the economic perspective took a majority of attention even when the wide variety of impacts that might be associated with events have been recognised at the beginning (Formica, 1998; Hede, 2007; Moscardo, 2007; J. R. B. Ritchie, 1984).

Thus, this trend can reflect the important economic role of events in urban, rural, regional or national development and how they can boost the destinations’ economy (Andranovich et al., 2001). In other words, the success of each event was estimated according to economic criteria such as income generation, employment generation or the attraction of inward investment (Dwyer et al., 2000) and not their potential impacts on the enhancement of the destination’s image (Richards & Wilson, 2004) or the development of community cohesion and pride (Waite, 2003).

On the other hand, events are not always promoted or staged for economic benefits; only an event can be seen as an economic ‘loss’ when its costs are covered by sponsorship or local government funding and not by the gained income from participants. Accordingly, the main outcomes would be the socio-cultural ones, such as strengthening community identity and pride (De Bres & Davis, 2001), strengthening social capital (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006), increasing local participation in community activities (J. R. B. Ritchie, 1984), revitalizing local culture and traditions, or even following the political purposes (Roche, 2000). Moreover, the impacts of events are neither discrete nor hierarchical, with some being more immediately evident than others, and some are potentially greater than expected. Two good examples of such are the annual London Marathon and the 2002 FIFA World Cup, which for the first one, the event itself had a significant economic impact in terms of the money that participants raised for charity so that the runners themselves had a sense of sports achievement and at the same time has experienced the social identity formation (Shipway & Jones, 2007). For the latter, the sense of national pride, which far outweighed the event’s economic returns, was engendered by the South Korean national team’s success at the 2002 FIFA World Cup while the country was one of the hosts (C.-K. Lee & Taylor, 2005).

### *6.2.1. Socio-cultural impacts*

Events are vital for cultural tourism and destination competitiveness as they are used globally to achieve a range of economic, social, political, and cultural objectives (Richards & Palmer, 2010). Furthermore, they enable destinations to project a vibrant and dynamic image (Getz, 2008; Prentice & Andersen, 2003; K. Roberts, 2006). Undoubtedly, that range of objectives may lead to positive or negative consequences. Thus, to be less affected by the unintended adverse outcomes, it is essential to consider all the mentioned impacts to establish the extent to which the event has made a difference to the local economy and to achieve a broader understanding of how events might support local communities.

According to Hall (1997) and Getz (2005), all events have a direct social and cultural impact on their participants and host communities, ranging from simple shared entertainment experiences such as attending a concert or sporting event to increased pride as a result of community events and national day celebrations, and even some events broaden people's cultural horizons by exposing them to new and challenging people, customs, or ideas.

Depending on the nature and scale of events, both participants and the host community will be impacted, so that when considering the social and cultural impacts of events, the theory of social capital can provide a helpful foundation. According to Getz (2007), reciprocity and trust are the central features of social capital, and they are considered as the qualities that can be found in all communities and societies so they can be developed both consciously and unconsciously. Further discussion about the social capital in relation to events is discussed in the literature (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006; Getz, 2007; Quinn & Wilks, 2013).

Quinn and Wilks (2013) applied Putnam's (2000) bridging and bonding theory of social capital in their comparative study in which bonding refers to the deepening of existing relationships among similar people while bridging refers to the forming of new relationships between different people. Thus, the findings indicated the strong bonding social capital among the groups where members already know each other, like family and friends groups, while bridging social capital was more evident among different groups not known to each other until the event. Similarly, Putnam et al. (2004) observation indicated that although bridging social capital is more important than bonding social capital for a more integrated public life in an increasingly diverse society, it is more

challenging to develop.

Burdge and Vanclay (1996, p. 59) have discussed the cultural impacts of events as those that “involve changes to the norms, values, and beliefs of individuals that guide and rationalize their cognition of themselves and their society” while having pointed out the social impacts as “all social and cultural consequences to the human population of any public or private actions that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs, and generally cope as members of society.”

In other words, as Wall and Mathieson (2006, p. 227) defined, the social impacts of events as the “changes in the quality of life” of the host communities, participants and stakeholders that arise from the holding of the event of any kind at the destination, or simply just the transformations in how people live their lives. However, the cultural impacts can be defined as shifts in the processes (values, traditions, and norms) through which individuals and host communities define themselves and their behaviour (Seaman, 2008). Thus, the socio-cultural impacts of an event can be seen in the values, attitudes, beliefs, and traditions that lead to or influence the day-to-day lives of those who are directly or indirectly involved with that event.

Gelder and Robinson (2009) have outlined that socializing is a crucial motive for both participants and the host community to take part in music and entertainment events; similarly, Morgan (2008, p. 91) concluded that “the key to a successful festival lies in creating a space where the social interactions and personal experiences of the visitors can take place”. The interactions between residents and participants (in a tourism context, host-guest interactions), the activities and developments associated with the event, and the degree of local engagement in the event all have immediate, observable, and predictable social effects when an event is hosted. These impacts are comparable to those linked with the growth of tourism in general, such as the tangible effects of traffic, crime, anti-social behaviour, and broader changes like cultural commoditization and so on. Furthermore, the importance of the social impacts of the events have been discussed in event motivation studies (J. L. Crompton & McKay, 1997; C.-K. Lee et al., 2004; McMorland & Mactaggart, 2007).

The following social benefits were found by the research undertaken to assess the impact of the 2200 funded Millennium Festival events (Jura Consultants and Gardiner & Theobald, 2001, p. 55):

- “Communities were mobilized and involved.
- There were high levels of community integration.
- Organizers and volunteers benefited from significant personal development opportunities.
- High numbers of volunteers were involved, giving significant amounts of creation of educational and recreational opportunities.
- It attracted a cross-section of the community to come and participate.
- The vast majority reported strengthening links in the local community and an increased sense of local pride.
- Provided entertainment in a friendly atmosphere.
- More likely that festivals will continue in some form in the future.”

Cultural impacts of events, or changes in an individual's or society's values, norms, beliefs, traditions, and so on, imply a more complex relationship exists between an event and all of its stakeholders, including performers/participants, visitors/spectators, organizers, and local communities, with distinctions between whom may not always be obvious. This suggests that a multi-dimensional approach, which recognizes the complex relationships between the event and all stakeholders as well as the immediate causal relationship between the event and stakeholders (the uni-dimensional perspective), may provide a more profound and richer basis for exploring the socio-cultural impacts of events. According to Picard and Robinson (2006), this multi-dimensional process – i.e., the socio-cultural transformation resulting from complex event-related social relationships – has been referred to as "remaking worlds" and includes topics such as personal, cultural, and national identity formation, ritualized transgression, and so on.

There are usually immediate, noticeable impacts of events. Positive socio-cultural impacts reflect widely claimed social goals of events, such as community togetherness, engendering community identity and pride, reviving cultural traditions, or enriching place meanings for inhabitants. While crowding, loud and noisy behaviour, traffic congestion, substance abuse, crime, and loss of amenity, as well as feelings of community manipulation/commoditization or exclusion, are examples of negative consequences that

collectively and negatively influence the life of local communities (Bowdin et al., 2012). Similarly, Bottrill et al.(2007, p. 3) discuss the responsibilities of event organisers as well: “The UK music festival industry is a pivotal cultural and creative industry, nationally and internationally; it, therefore, has the power – and the responsibility – to be a proactive leader in taking and driving climate change action. If the industry commits to becoming a climate leader, it needs to ensure, as a first step, that its own commitments are aligned with emissions reduction targets”, or Boyko (2008, p.162) in Sharpley and Stone (2012) discusses, “impacts cannot be viewed in absolute terms of good and bad... [nor]... be regarded entirely in isolation from one another. Rather, the impacts on a host community are intertwined and depend on goals and values ... within that community”.

For example, in their research, Delamere et al. (2001) offer a total of 21 social benefits split into community benefits and cultural/educational benefits, as well as 27 costs divided into the quality of life concerns and community resource concerns — a shortened form is presented in Table 19. Furthermore, Delamere et al. (2001, p. 22) suggest, “as community leaders and festival organizers become more aware of the needs and priorities of the community, they can better respond to community concerns and work together to maintain an appropriate balance between the social benefits and social costs that emanate from community festivals.”

**Table 19: Socio-cultural impacts of events**

Social Benefits	Social Costs
<p><b>Community Benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebration of community</li> <li>• Enhanced community identity</li> <li>• Enhanced community image</li> <li>• Increased community cohesion</li> <li>• Increased community well-being</li> <li>• Improved quality of community life</li> <li>• Individual pride through participation</li> <li>• Shared ideas amongst a community</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quality of Life Concerns:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased crime / vandalism</li> <li>• Unacceptable increase in vehicular/pedestrian traffic</li> <li>• Overcrowding</li> <li>• Litter / ecological damage</li> <li>• Reduced privacy</li> <li>• Disruption to normal routines</li> <li>• Unacceptable noise levels</li> <li>• Overuse of community facilities</li> </ul>

<b>Cultural / Educational Benefits:</b>	<b>Community Resource Concerns:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience with new activities</li> <li>• Participants learn new things</li> <li>• The event showcases new ideas</li> <li>• Development of cultural skills/talents</li> <li>• Exposure to new cultural experiences</li> <li>• Strengthening of community friendships</li> <li>• Lasting positive cultural impact</li> <li>• Achievement of common community goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased disagreement within the community</li> <li>• The event is ‘all work, no play.’</li> <li>• Excessive demand on community human resources</li> <li>• Highlights cultural stereotypes</li> <li>• Unequal sharing of benefits of the event</li> <li>• Weakened community identity</li> <li>• Excessive demand on community financial resources</li> <li>• Potential sense of failure within the community</li> </ul>

Source: adapted from Delamere et al. (2001)

### 6.2.2. *Media coverage*

In order to promote the destination positively, the media coverage of events has to be managed as the media will distribute the image of the event and the destination that can influence people around the world (Getz & Fairley, 2004). However, on the other hand, media coverage might influence the host community. Therefore, using events to reposition or improve the destination image might have unintended social and cultural implications.

Pearce et al. (1996) explain this issue through the “Social Representation Theory” and discuss communities and societies construct representations of events based on their experiences, social interactions, available information, and media. These representations are resistant to change and may have an impact on how people react to new events. As a result, we should anticipate seeing dominating beliefs in some societies about whether events are beneficial or harmful. However, it's possible that such sentiments aren't entirely rational. Major events, especially those with worldwide media coverage, tend to attract potentially violent protests and political rallies, according to Hall (1992). This has

obvious security issues and may deter certain groups from promoting their events.

### 6.2.3. *Physical and environmental impacts*

An event is a fantastic opportunity to highlight the distinctive aspects of the host environment. According to Hall (1989), selling the image of an event also entails promoting the destination's core features. However, the host environment can be pretty fragile, and extra caution should be exercised to protect them. Before an event is permitted to take place by the council or the government, it is necessary to complete an environmental impact assessment in advance. Even if a formal study does not seem necessary, the event planner should carefully examine the event's expected environmental impact and conducting EIAs (Environmental Impact Assessments) before and after events should be the norm at the destinations. The event planners should imply careful management planning to modify impacts and consider some essential factors such as crowd movement and management, noise pollution control, access, and parking spots. Moreover, wear and tear on the natural and physical environment, heritage preservation difficulties, and disruption of the local community are all possible major issues (Getz, 2007).

For example, the Olympic Games have an environmental strategy in place that helps destinations implement green operations and sustainable design elements. However, because of the sheer scale of mega-events, especially those that necessitate new venue construction, promises of being green and sustainable are sometimes viewed with scepticism as the provision of infrastructure is often a costly budget component, but this may result in an improved environment and facilities (Table 20).

**Table 20: Environmental outcomes**

Stressors or causal forces	Potential environmental impacts	Possible responses
Investment and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct impacts on land, wildlife and resources</li> <li>• The subsequent generation of waste and ongoing resource use</li> <li>• Urbanization process</li> <li>• Aesthetics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid sensitive areas</li> <li>• Regulate development for environmental sustainability</li> <li>• Impose full life cycle</li> </ul>



		<p>accounting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use development to clean up damaged areas</li> <li>• Impose design standards</li> </ul>
Event tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generates traffic, congestion</li> <li>• Consumes energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favour/require mass transit</li> <li>• Concentrate events</li> <li>• Stress small-scale events</li> </ul>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitor activities and crowding can be harmful to the environment directly (e.g., trampling and erosion) or indirectly (through resource consumption and waste)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require green event practices (Reduce, Re-use, Recycle)</li> <li>• Clean up after events</li> <li>• Educate visitors (social marketing for attitude and behaviour change)</li> </ul>
Land-use changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The environmental legacy of positive change or damaged ecosystems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based planning to accommodate and regulate events</li> </ul>
Individual and community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal and community-felt impacts on daily life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced pressure or support for environmental management</li> <li>• Lobbying by special interest groups</li> <li>• Multi-stakeholder inputs needed</li> </ul>
Media coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balanced coverage of environmental issues?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role in shaping public opinion and policy</li> </ul>

Source: adapted from Getz (2007).

The impact will be well controlled if the event is hosted in an appropriate purpose-built site, such as a stadium, sports field, showground, conference or exposition centre. However, if the event is hosted in a public place that is not usually used for events, such as a park, town square, or street, the impact might be considerably more significant (Getz, 2007). Many outdoor festivals and events have minimized their environmental impact by prohibiting the use of glass bottles, which can break and be trodden into the ground, and developing appropriate waste management procedures. Event planners realize that such techniques are both cost-effective and environmentally friendly and could reduce the expense of site clean-up (Bartis & Tofile, 2021).

#### *6.2.4. Investment and Development*

With various industry initiatives being launched, there is a growing concern for sustainability and awareness of the environmental implications of events. Governments are increasingly relying on public education and regulation to encourage waste recycling and limit the quantity of waste that ends up in landfills. Sustainability is a widely contested concept that has a variety of definitions in the literature. The necessity for environmental and ecological sustainability coexists with ideals of social and economic goals that satisfy human needs somewhat (Callicott & Mumford, 1997; C. C. Williams & Millington, 2004). The concept of sustainable development and sustainable tourism have gained much attention, and according to the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainable development is defined as “[...] development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN Environment Programme, 1987).

The literature recognizes three elements of sustainable tourism: economic, social, and environmental (Saarinen, 2006); however, the importance of sociocultural factors in the development of sustainability has received less attention (Hardy et al., 2002). Through the notion of "sustainable events," sustainability has now made its way into the event literature. The long-term viability of mega-events has been brought into question (C. M. Hall, 2012), with event organizers being criticized for concerns about equity and fairness, environmental integrity, local population displacement, and a lack of broad participation of local communities in decision-making processes (Bramwell, 1997).

Sustainable event management (also known as event greening) is the process of planning

an event by mainly considering its environmental impacts. According to Mair and Jago (2010), event greening is an investment in environmentally friendly facilities and procedures. In addition, metrics to assess environmental sustainability, such as the ecological footprint of events (Collins et al., 2009, 2012), which evaluates consumption and waste, have been established (Andersson et al., 2012; Andersson & Lundberg, 2013).

The physical environment and natural systems can be severely impacted by the development or building of new venues, both immediately and in the long run. As a result, making the most of available resources and venues is often wiser. In addition, event facilities should be planned to be waste-reducing, energy-efficient, and recyclable, according to a thorough life-cycle accounting process.

Although it is evident that developing greener and more sustainable infrastructure for events is a good idea, the necessity for large-scale, new venues are difficult to justify in terms of the environment. Cities that desire the new development must adopt integrative plans and explanations that appeal to a wide range of stakeholders (Getz, 2007). To address these issues, UK Sport emphasizes the need for environmental awareness in all aspects of major event bidding and staging. It states:

“Major events and the environment are inextricably linked, and without due care, events can impact adversely on the environment, directly or indirectly. However, major events also have a very positive role to play in fostering understanding of environmental issues, raising awareness and generating resources . . . Particular attention will be paid to the environmental issues raised by huge numbers of people coming together for a short period of time, with subsequent problems of safety, congestion, consumption, and waste. Areas of particular attention will include access; infrastructure; energy consumption; energy renewal; sustainability; minimizing resource requirements; the use of natural products; and innovative design and technology that reduces both operating and maintenance costs and greatly extends the lifetime of sports facilities and new event venues (UK Sport, 1998, p. 10)”.

Events may have an influence on local ecosystems, diminish important natural capital sources, and contribute to climate change-related carbon emissions (Cantelon & Letters, 2000; Jones, 2008). On the other hand, environmental externalities may be both beneficial and harmful. Major events, for example, might necessitate extensive physical reconstruction of the host city, both for athletic facilities and transportation upgrades

associated with the event.

Incorporating a waste management strategy into the overall event plan has become an increasingly wise policy for the event planner. Events that illustrate excellent waste management concepts and offer evidence for recycling will fulfil the community expectations and the health of the destination ecosystem. Not only will the environmentally conscientious event management profit financially, but he or she will also get the favour of an increasingly ecologically concerned audience. For example, with a growing concern for the environment, events such as the Brit Awards and Glastonbury are beginning to consider 'Carbon Neutral' schemes. This entails determining how much energy the event consumes and planting enough trees to absorb the carbon dioxide created (Glastonbury Festival, 2017).

Another example can be the 18-month Sustainable Exhibition Industry project in the UK that aimed to determine the amount of waste generated by the exhibition industry, identify best practices, and make suggestions for future waste reduction. The result of the project was an eight-point action plan for the industry:

1. "Measure, monitor and report
2. Raise awareness within the industry and with exhibitors, promulgate best practices and report bad practice
3. Improve environmental performance throughout the industry
4. Ensure that all areas of the industry are compliant with the Duty of Care
5. Undertake research into how to improve applied practice and promote outputs and encourage adaptation throughout the industry
6. Reduce waste to landfills with zero as the ultimate target
7. Offset carbon dioxide emissions associated with exhibitions
8. Education and training" (Midlands Environmental Business Club Limited, 2002).

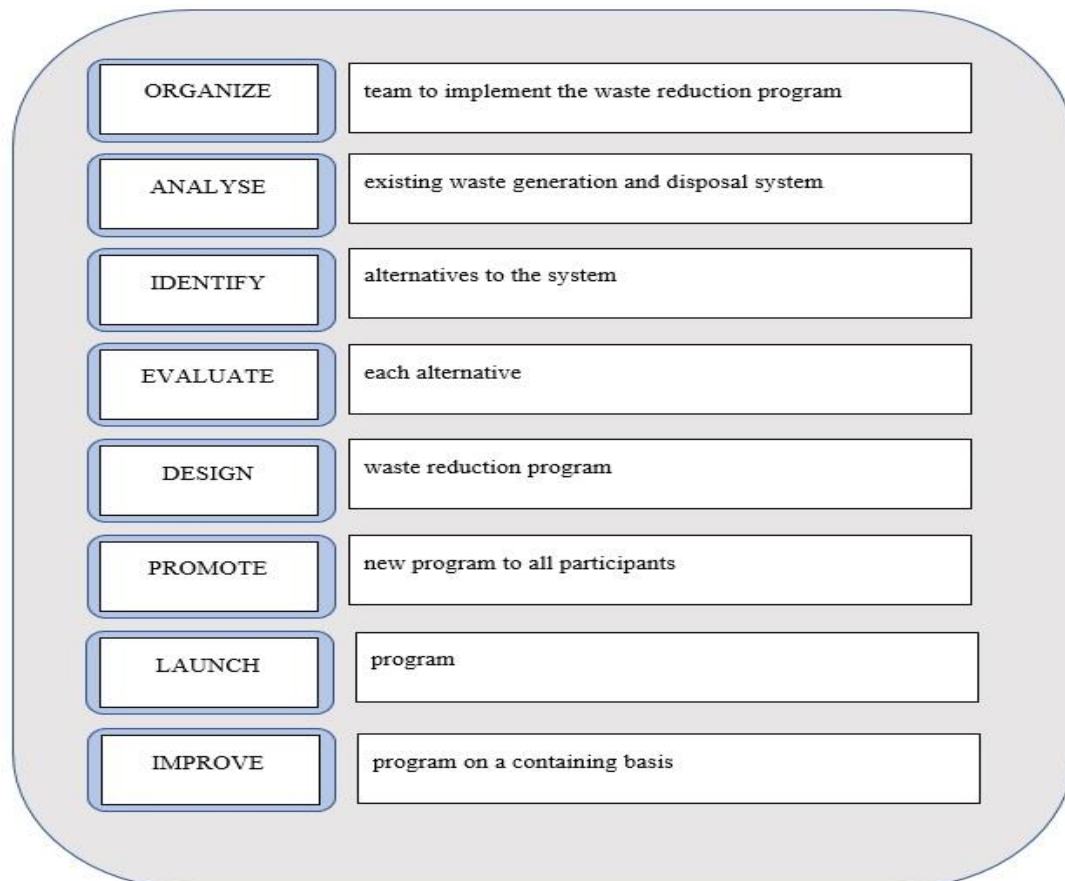
Undoubtedly, events are important not just to participants but also to the host communities, who are frequently in a better position to give accurate and realistic evaluations of environmental consequences than participants. According to Chen and Tian (2015), it is possible to divide the existing studies on event perceptions into two

different categories. Residents' perceptions of events (Cheng & Jarvis, 2010) or mega-event impacts are measured in the first category (H. J. Gibson et al., 2014; Gursoy et al., 2011; S.-B. Lee et al., 2013; Lorde et al., 2011). The second category focuses on host communities' perceptions and attitudes about events/mega-events at the same time (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; K. (Kiki) Kaplanidou et al., 2013; S. S. Kim & Petrick, 2005; X. (Robert) Li et al., 2015; Oshimi et al., 2016; Prayag et al., 2013; Zhou & Ap, 2009).

The social exchange theory (SET) has explained the perceptions and attitudes of residents according to their experiential and psychological outcomes has been explained by the social exchange theory (SET). Gursoy and Kendall (2006) discovered that locals' support for mega-events is influenced by five variables of support: community concern, community attachment, eco-centric values, perceived benefits, and perceived costs.

Olympic games are the best place for implementing environmental policy practices; based on experience gained at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, the Xerox Corporation (1998) presents an eight-step model for waste reduction and recycling at events, illustrated in Figure 32.

**Figure 32: Eight-stage process for waste reduction and recycling**



Source: Adapted from Xerox Corporation, (1998)

The London 2012 Olympic Games, intending to be the first sustainable Olympic Games, have considered different principles and associated strategies as:

- **Zero Carbon** – Minimizing building energy consumption and supplying zero/low carbon and renewable resources to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.
- **Zero Waste** – Reducing trash production and subsequently reclaiming, recycling, and recovering it by developing closed resource loops.
- **Sustainable Transport** – Reducing the demand for travel and providing viable alternatives to the use of private automobiles.
- **Local and Sustainable Materials** – Materials were chosen to provide outstanding performance in usage while minimizing the manufacturing and delivery effect. Using local resources can help support traditional solutions while also benefiting local economies.
- **Local and Sustainable Food** – Supporting the consumption of local, seasonal, and organic products while reducing animal protein consumption and packing.
- **Sustainable Water** – Managing rain and wastewater in a sustainable manner to reduce water consumption.
- **Natural Habitats and Wildlife** – Existing biodiversity is protected with opportunities taken to increase ecological value and access to nature.
- **Culture and Heritage** – Recognized and interpreted cultural heritage to contribute to future legacy and foster a sense of place and identity.
- **Equity and Fair Trade** – Make a sense of belonging. Provide facilities and services that are accessible, inclusive, and inexpensive.
- **Health and Happiness** – Promote health and wellbeing. Create long-term management and support plans. ((WWF and BioRegional, 2005, p. 4).

However, according to Prayag et al.'s (2013) analysis of the London Olympics, overall attitude (which in turn impacts support) is influenced by perceived economic and socio-cultural outcomes (both good and adverse) but not by perceived environmental impacts.

UK Sport (2002) offers further suggestions for sporting events, as well as seven stages for 'greening' events (UK Sport, 2005, p. 63). The concepts outlined in this section provide a good foundation for future major event staging. These are:

1. “Adopt a green policy
2. Carry out an ‘Environmental Scoping Review’ of venues and operations
3. Establish environmental teams
4. Define programmes and set appropriate targets
5. Implement programmes
6. Monitor implementation and adjust
7. Evaluate and publicize results programme accordingly.”

Overall, the events can have both positive and negative environmental impacts on host communities, and as Kiani and Nazari (2019) discussed in their study, sporting events lead to increased consumption, energy, the emission of greenhouse gases and also generate waste, which necessitates the need for sustainable management; however, these events have the potential to function as a catalyst for bringing attention to the natural environment, assisting in the preservation of some components of the physical environment and local heritage that might otherwise be ignored. Thus, it is possible to think of the essential role of events that can lead to urban gentrification (renewal), a stronger economy, and the opportunity to improve local residents' quality of life (Achu, 2019; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2019).

#### *6.2.5. Political impacts*

Politics and politicians play a significant role in today's event management equation. Shrewd politicians have had an eye for events that would keep the population pleased and themselves in power since the Roman emperors recognized the power of the circus to deflect criticism and shore up popularity. In addition, as Allen et al. (2019) and Arnold et al. (1989, p. 191) discussed the role of events in the political process, they left no doubt by mentioning: “Governments in power will continue to use hallmark events to punctuate the ends of their periods in office, to arouse nationalism, enthusiasm and finally, votes.

They are cheaper than wars or the preparation for them. In this regard, hallmark events do not hide political realities, they are the political reality”.

The potential of events to boost the visibility of politicians and the regions and towns they govern has been recognized by governments all over the world. They have also discovered that events may draw tourists' attention, resulting in economic benefits and job creation. As a result, governments have become key actors in bidding for, hosting, and organizing major events due to this potent combination (Bowdin et al., 2012).

Using events as a tool for city marketing and urban regeneration was initially proposed in the United States (Whitt, 1987) but has since been implemented by numerous European cities as, Birmingham and Glasgow being prominent examples (Loftman & Nevin, 1995). A further example of the instrumental usage of culture is the festivalisation of cities, during which events are used primarily for political reasons rather than for the people in any meaningful sense.

Snedcof (1985) introduces a consumerist model because of its primary focus on festival consumption as a means of attracting tourists (cultural tourism), enticing business investment by projecting a better quality of life for professional and executive employees, and securing the profitability of physical renewal projects by keeping people in town after work (in effect producing synergies between office uses, shops, restaurants, and cultural facilities in the city). This model is frequently the result of local development coalitions' business-led politics (D. Harvey, 1989; Kearns & Philo, 1993)

According to Crompton (2006), most project economic impact assessments are commissioned to justify the project profitability in consideration and have political undercurrents, overestimating the economic gains in the process. Kim and Walker (2012) make a similar argument, claiming that economic effects are often overestimated in order to justify a subsidy at the price of detrimental social consequences.

From a political perspective, events are thought to boost local economic demand, even if only temporally (Dwyer et al., 2005), by increasing tourist spending and, in some cases, employment. Event attendees' spending, both at the event and in the surrounding region, is considered advantageous, especially if this initial expenditure leads to more spending throughout the economy (Saayman & Saayman, 2006). In this way, local businesses and their employees benefit from increased income and policymakers that can benefit from increased tax revenue. Edinburgh is a famous example in the event industry, which has



built a strong international reputation as a festival city, with an extensive programme of major events, including the Edinburgh International Festival, Edinburgh Fringe, and Edinburgh's Hogmanay. However, as Hall (1989, p. 236) points out, governments' engagement in events has politicized the events landscape:

“Politics is paramount in hallmark events. It is either naïve or dualistic to pretend otherwise. Events alter the time frame in which planning occurs, and they become opportunities to do something new and better than before. In this context, events may change legitimate political priorities in the short term and political ideologies and socio-cultural reality in the longer term. Hallmark events represent the tournaments of old, fulfilling psychological and political needs by winning hosting over other locations and winning events themselves. Following a hallmark event, some places will never be the same again, physically, economically, socially and, perhaps most importantly of all, politically.”

Although it is undoubtedly beneficial to be able to analyse the many ways in which festivals have been included in more comprehensive urban regeneration initiatives, this does not mean that these models have been mutually incompatible in practice. On the contrary, places have often used a variety of approaches, demonstrating varying degrees of ingenuity and imagination in the process. The following are some of the elements that have had a role in shaping the specific pattern of initiatives pursued:

- The actual and intended position of the location in the regional and global hierarchy
- The place's recent and long-term economic and industrial restructuring expenses
- The opportunities provided by the local administration and governmental structures
- The place's underlying political culture
- The place is changing social makeup throws up the political demand and priorities

As temporary events, they can become permanent parts of a city's cultural environment if well-organized and repeated, providing long-term advantages in terms of image, tourism, and support for local cultural creation (Bianchini, 1993). Overall, it is essential to consider that events have values that extend beyond their financial aspects. Humans are social

beings, and festivities are important to the commonwealth's social framework. Social cohesion, confidence, and pride may all be fostered via events (E. H. Wood, 2006). That is where their political power and influence come from and why events will constantly reflect and interact with their political circumstances and surroundings. Thus the positive political impact of events can be summarized as “Enhanced recognition of region” and “Propagation of political values”. In contrast, the negative impacts are pointed out as “Economic exploitation of local population” and “Distortion of an event to reflect political values” (J. R. B. Ritchie & Smith, 1991).

#### 6.2.6. *Tourism, destinations and economic impacts*

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, economics is a “social science that aims to examine and describe the creation, distribution, and use of wealth.”. However, as the author of *The Economics of Recreation, Leisure, and Tourism*, Tribe (2011) explains, Economics is concerned with few resources in the context of endless demands. As a result, decisions must be taken regarding what to produce, how to make it, and how to allocate goods and services (Table 21).

**Table 21: Economics**

Economics	Nature and meanings: the event experience	Antecedents to attending events	Planning and producing events	Outcomes and the impacted	Processes and patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Macroeconomics (sometimes known as "political economy") is the study of how entire economic systems work.</li> <li>• Microeconomics: the study of consumer and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer experience and meanings</li> <li>• Perceived value for money and how it affects the event experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentives and impediments to consumption or engagement in the economy</li> <li>• Factors affecting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The event’s business model and economic feasibility</li> <li>• Demand forecasting</li> <li>• Economic development policy and how it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing economic effects and externalities</li> <li>• A cost-benefit evaluation was carried out (including their</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic trends and forces (competition, globalization)</li> </ul>

business economics (by firms or other organizations)		supply (e.g., cost of travel, alternatives)	affects the events industry	distribution)	
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Source: adapted from Getz (2007)

While tourism has a long history of being used as a tool for regional development, events and festivals are a more recent policy option. One of the most critical impacts is the tourism revenue generated by an event. Tourists will most likely spend money in the host city or region on transport, accommodation, restaurant, and services in addition to spending money at the event. As it flows through the local economy, this expenditure has the potential to have a significant influence. Thus, the economic impacts of events have attracted much scholarly attention and sparked much debate about techniques and applications. There are multiple approaches for doing an economic effect study, including cost-benefit analysis and CGE (computable general equilibrium), but the input-output model (IO) is the most widely used method due to its simplicity (Arnegger & Herz, 2016; M. J. Lee, 2006). While this was unavoidable given the politics of events and tourism, it has diverted attention away from developing research techniques and reliable indicators of social, cultural, and environmental effects (Carlsen et al., 2000) (Table 22).

**Table 22: Economic outcomes**

Stressors or causal forces	Potential economic impacts	Possible responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment and New Money</li> <li>• Construction of event venues</li> <li>• Sponsorship and grants</li> <li>• Organizational expenditure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New money flows into the area and generates income and wealth</li> <li>• Opportunity costs mean that other development actions are not taken</li> <li>• Event organizers might lose money</li> <li>• New event venues and infrastructure builds tourism and event capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived economic benefits drive event tourism policy and marketing; subsidies for event bidding and organizations are justified</li> <li>• Cost/benefit evaluation called for</li> <li>• Strategic planning for event tourism; partnerships with sponsors and between agencies of government</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflation of prices for residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and use local suppliers</li> </ul>
Activities at and surrounding events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolation or spread of economic benefits through tourist spending</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planned leveraging of event benefits involves many partners</li> </ul>
Individual and community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building for economic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The distribution of costs and benefits should be a major policy issue</li> </ul>
Media coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fair coverage of costs and benefits?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media impact on policy</li> </ul>

Source: Adopted from Getz (2007)

Events are increasingly being viewed as a growing industry capable of generating economic benefits and job creation by governments. They are also regarded as image-makers, establishing a profile for destinations, positioning them in the market, and generating a competitive marketing advantage. Other advantages such as urban revitalization, increased commerce, and industrial productivity have been studied in a separate line of economic study. These are frequently associated with major events requiring significant public and private expenditure. The economics of planning and producing events as a business venture (this is an application of microeconomics) or in the not-for-profit sector (where a combination of business and institutional/philanthropic principles are at work) is far less well explored and understood.

Event promotion is one strand of the regional economic strategy used to mitigate the negative consequences of the complicated transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy (Bowdin et al., 2012). Events are incorporated into the vocabulary of economics in this model, with the resulting measurements being used in policy analysis: investment, leverage, employment, direct and indirect income impacts, social and spatial targeting, and so on. Events are therefore included along with commercial services, tourism, and the leisure sectors as part of a narrow concept of urban regeneration focused on job creation and retention. These policies are part of a local reaction to the globalisation of capital and the political imperative to mobilize all available resources to attract and retain international investment.

An event entrepreneur or host organization's main worry is whether an event is within budget and, preferably, resulting in a surplus or profit. It is a simple question of whether the event's revenue from sponsorship, merchandising, and ticket sales surpass the event's production and promotion costs. The policymakers need to determine whether or not to spend a considerable amount of public funds on events; an accurate assessment is required. However, a wider variety of economic benefits is typical of equal or greater importance from host communities and governments (Getz, 2007).

For a long time, cities have used mega-events as an entrepreneurial tactic to stimulate urban economic redevelopment (Andranovich et al., 2001; Hiller, 2000; A. Smith & Fox, 2007). The words “event tourism” (Richards & Palmer, 2010, p. 156) and “festival tourism” are commonly used in the literature, and events can become important tourist attractions or “motivators for tourism” (Getz, 2008, p. 403; Quinn, 2010, p. 270).

Previously, much of the economic impact research has concentrated on mega-events like the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup (Maennig & Zimbalist, 2012; V. Matheson, 2006, 2009; V. A. Matheson & Baade, 2006; Porter & Fletcher, 2008; Tien et al., 2011). However, some of the researchers have shifted to study smaller events as smaller events may create less economic activity, but their results and net benefits to the local community may be more favourable (Coates & Depken, 2011; Daniels & Norman, 2003; V. Matheson, 2006; Mondello & Rishe, 2004; Seaman, 2006; Taks, 2013; Taks et al., 2011; Veltri et al., 2009; R. Wilson, 2006).

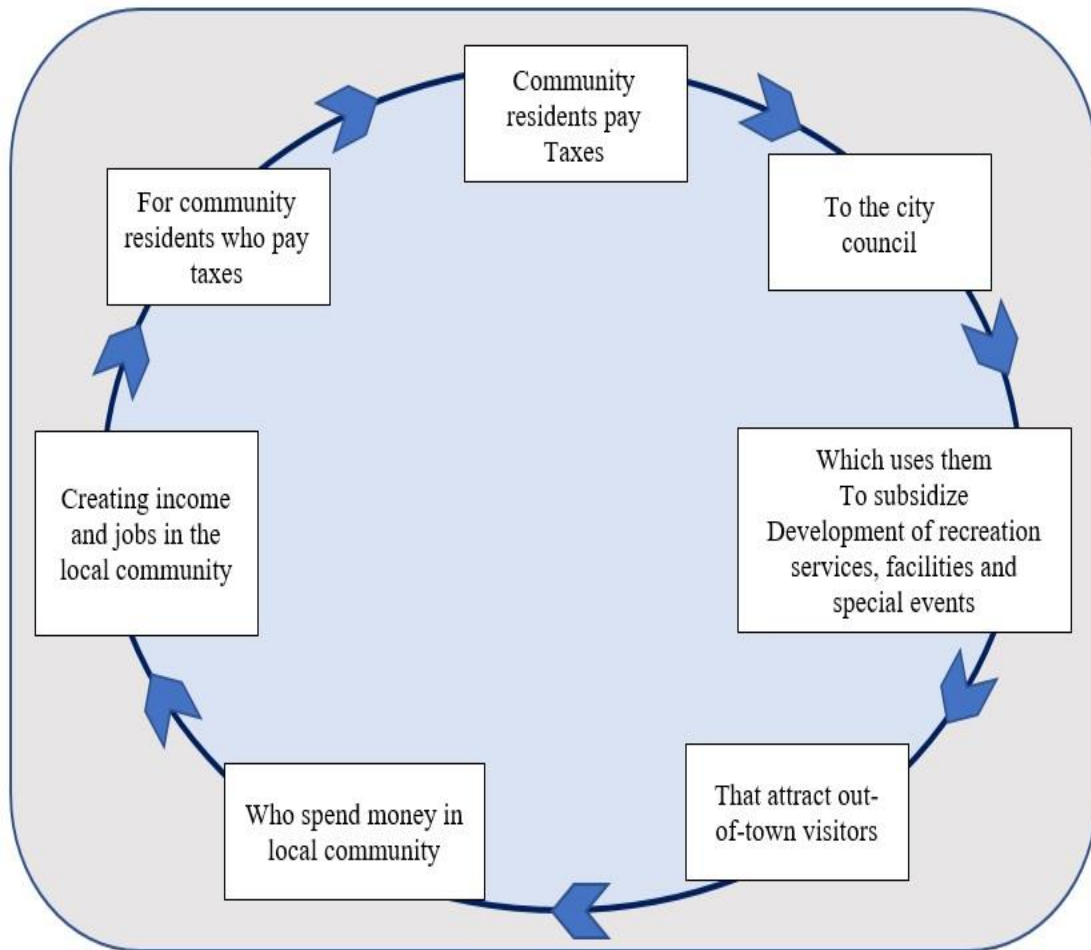
Events of various sizes can generate a variety of impacts and outcomes for host communities as they have become a strand of place marketing, with destinations competing to show off their ownership of top-notch events, museums and galleries. Consequently, the characteristics of the host destination are also crucial in measuring the economic impact; as Getz (2012, p. 45) discussed, “even small music festivals can have ‘mega’ impacts on a small town in terms of tourists, economic benefits or disruption”. Communities that host events must devote human, financial, and physical resources in order to make them a success. Volunteers play an important role in human resources to stage the event. Private and government investments are among the financial resources available. Venues, accommodation, private and public transportation, and food services are all examples of physical resources. Depending on the size of the events, large events tend to attract more visitors, and higher levels of business and government support are needed (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006; Preuss, 2009) while, smaller events, on the other

hand, tend to draw fewer attendees, accordingly less private and government sponsorship is needed (H. J. Gibson et al., 2012).

According to the general understanding, hosting a big event is still viewed as immensely beneficial since it generates new employment, brings significant financial benefits to the community and enhances the host region's economy. It is often assumed that events have the ability to produce advantages that are not clearly measured in monetary terms, such as fostering civic pride in the host community or “putting a city on the map”. Nonetheless, the economic advantages that such events are predicted to provide are the major reason for devoting public funding (Dwyer et al., 2005).

Additional expenditure that is directly related to an event is referred to as an economic impact. Economic impact evaluations are most commonly used to persuade stakeholders, sponsors, governments, and event organizers that spend public and private funds on major events (Davies et al., 2011). Furthermore, Saayman et al. (2005) emphasize components that determine economic impact, such as the extent of tourist spending and duration of stay. The underlying situation of producing economic impact by investing public money in events and/or infrastructures with an economic aim, according to Crompton et al. (2001), may be characterized by a series of acts presented in Figure 30.

**Figure 33: Basic principle for undertaking economic impact studies**



Source: Adapted from Crompton et al. (2001)

In the first step, residents actively 'finance' their hometown's city council by paying taxes. The city council then allocates a portion of these funds to building a facility or organising an event. The facility or event attracts tourists and spectators from all over the world and other cities. Visitors then spend money in the host city before, during and after the event. The cycle is completed when this 'fresh' money provides income and jobs for the citizens of the host community (Figure 33). Residents that provide funds to the community are rewarded with more jobs and increased household income due to their contribution (J. L. Crompton et al., 2001).

Festivals in a city are packaged and repackaged depending on the target audience to become an incentive for a possible investor, property developer, potential visitors, or potential inhabitants. Festival policies have become a significant component of physical regeneration strategies in many Western European cities as a result, with a vibrant,

cosmopolitan cultural life increasingly being seen as a crucial ingredient of city marketing and internationalization strategies designed to attract mobile international capital and specialized personnel, particularly in the high-tech industrial and advanced services sectors. However, Destinations, on the other hand, have not all followed the same route in terms of using event-based initiatives to help communities rebrand themselves and find new financial objectives distinction. Thus, it has been claimed that a variety of models may be found (R. Griffiths, 1993), each reflecting various political objectives and spatial emphases.

#### *6.2.7. Investment and New Money*

When events could prove profitable and bring new money into a region via investment, grants, sponsorship, and tourism, it will be possible to consider the economic benefits. The event serves as a catalyst for speeding infrastructural or venue investments that would otherwise be required. Also, the 'investment' might have a long-term advantage in terms of generating new tourism revenue by hosting events that would not have happened otherwise.

It is argued that a city will benefit from facilities that were built because of the event, as it would not have otherwise made economic sense only if they were totally paid for by external entities, such as the government or sponsors (capital and future running expenses). Therefore, residents should determine if they genuinely need or want to pay for them or not. Furthermore, if a higher level of government pays, one city will benefit at the expense of the others. Accordingly, the central government must demonstrate that the “investment” in the specific destination is in the best interests of the entire country.

Similarly, Mega-events, according to Chalkley and Essex (1999, p. 369), provide a “fast track” method of achieving urban regeneration since they can give the motivation to mobilize embryonic or longer-term development plans. The Munich Olympic Games, staged in 1972, are cited as an example in Chalkley and Essex's arguments. The sports complex and Olympic Village were built on the site of an abandoned World War II runway that had previously been utilized as a garbage dump. The property had a 15-20 year construction plan, but the reconstruction was finished in just five years once the Olympic Games were granted. The other example of the “fast track” is the London 2012 Olympic Games, for which the city council supported regeneration in East London,



particularly Newham, which was the third most destitute of all London Boroughs (Newman, 2007), as well as other parts of the UK, notably Weymouth. Many job opportunities were created during this large infrastructure project's building and operating phases.

Overall, it is possible to argue that investing in building new tourism infrastructure because of the events can leave a legacy of new hotels, transportation, and other amenities that could help tourists, resulting in future tax advantages. By taking part in the events, tourists may extend their stay because of events and may tend to visit other attractions as a consequence of effective tourism promotion. In addition to the tourism created during the event, events may draw media attention and publicity, raising the profile of the host town or city and resulting in increased tourism image and visitation in the long run.

### 6.3. Cultural Events

An event is a spatial-temporal experience that may be categorised in a variety of ways depending on its size, shape, and content (Getz, 1997, 2008). Destinations may get a range of benefits from events. However, until recently, most studies have focused on the impact of mega-events, particularly the financial impact of sporting events (Knott et al., 2015; C.-K. Lee & Taylor, 2005; Preuss, 2007; Xing & Chalip, 2006). Although there has been a rise in interest in different types of events (Bauer et al., 2008), only a few studies have looked at the impact of small-scale events, particularly cultural events (Gursoy et al., 2004). These smaller events are often strongly related to their hosting location, and they may serve as a valuable foundation for developing destination marketing strategies (Litvin et al., 2001; Olsen, 2010; J. R. B. Ritchie, 1984), and in case they are well planned and promoted correctly, they can assist in changing tourists' perceptions of the destination, resulting in increased revenues (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2018; Y.-D. Liu, 2014).

Events are believed to have a significant impact on the image of a destination. Erfurt and Johnsen (2003) produced a series of instances that reveal the extent to which a destination's image changes following an event. Hosting an event does not necessarily address the underlying issues with the destination's image, but it may assist in making specific improvements, extending the destination's image, and establishing local and

international identity (Waite, 2001). The concept of arranging major events to attract opinion leaders and journalists in order to promote the destination's image is straightforward and effective.

Events are believed to be an excellent way to attract tourists to a destination that they may not otherwise consider visiting. Therefore, many destinations host or produce cultural events to gain good media attention (Beriatos & Gospodini, 2004). As we all know, the media may play a key role in "spreading rumours" around events. For a limited, concentrated period, its attention is focused on a particular destination, allowing the host destination to promote certain images that may be utilized to repair a poor image, generate positive news, and change media attention from a negative to a favourable image of the destination (Avraham & Ketter, 2012).

Events improve possibilities to generate social capital, according to Arcodia and Whitford (2006). Moreover, they discovered that events have an important social function; however, this varies depending on local culture and society. According to Richards et al. (2013), Events act as a catalyst for the formation and re-formation of collective identities and relationships with place. This suggests that festivals and events might influence behaviour by being out of the ordinary; a point made by Gibson (2007, p. 212) in his work on music festivals, who stated that festivals give "an alternative space" for various sorts of social interaction.

Special events play a significant role in the growth of tourism destinations. A unique event draws visitors to a location at a particular time and promotes economic growth in the area (S. Kim & Jun, 2016; Lu et al., 2020; M. Thompson, 2020). Cultural events, for example, strengthen national emotions, transmit local cultural identity, and so provide tourists with real experiences (I. A. Wong et al., 2020; Zou et al., 2021). Hosting special events is a method for enhancing destination branding (Ezeuduji, 2015; Van Niekerk, 2017), changing destination image (Deng & Li, 2014), contributing to the development of destination networks (Mackellar & Nisbet, 2017), boosting destination competitiveness (Evans, 2012; Kruger & Heath, 2013), and reducing anti-tourism movements (Evans, 2012; Kruger & Heath, 2013; Seraphin et al., 2019).

Also, event attributes and quality lead to participant satisfaction, which leads to a better attitude toward the host destination (W. Lee et al., 2017; Mainolfi & Marino, 2020), and thus to increased re-attendance intentions (i.e., loyalty) (Llopis-Amorós et al., 2019).

According to Storper and Venables (2004), cultural events allow individuals to gather together and have face to face interactions. Face-to-face contact has four primary characteristics: it is an efficient means of communication, it can develop trust in relations, it provides a medium for socialization, and it gives psychological motivation. The consequence of this face-to-face encounter is defined as 'buzz' (Storper & Venables, 2004, p. 365), a phenomenon investigated by Amin and Thrift (2007, p. 151), referred to as 'cultural buzz' in their work studying how culture and economy are interrelated. They believed that the two cannot be considered separate and that urban economies should be considered from a 'cultural-economy' viewpoint (Amin & Thrift, 2007, p. 145).

Cultural events have the ability to become emblems of a dynamic community by motivating community engagement and establishing community relationships, bringing together groups who would not otherwise meet (Gursoy et al., 2004; D. Harvey, 1989; A. Smith, 2010). Hosting cultural events can help attract tourists and improve a destination's overall image, while some others use them as a planned strategy to promote their problematic image. One such destination is Reno (Nevada in The USA), which is challenging to compete with its more prominent and more glamorous sibling, Las Vegas. Following a steady fall in tourist numbers in Reno in the early 1990s, a group of local businesses devised a strategy to "enhance the city's self-image and give locals a reason to play downtown again" through the arts. Reno had encouraged tourists, visitors, and locals to experience "a month-long celebration of cultural variety and artistic innovation" since July 1996, when it was branded as "Artown." The Artown project, advertised under the slogan "Thirty-one days – one magnificent event," provides a month-long summer festival with around 500 events in the fields of visual, performing, and human arts.

Cities are competing for tourists as a result of globalisation. Each destination's traditions' distinct character and originality can serve as a differentiator for tourists' perceptions of events. These features may also be an effective marketing tool for managers (Herrero et al., 2006) when used as part of a larger marketing strategy that incorporates all of the authorities and organizations engaged in promoting these destinations (Pugh & Wood, 2004). Many small and medium-sized cities worldwide host events to attract tourists and encourage them to come back year after year. This is a positioning approach based on the ability of small and medium-sized cultural events to enhance awareness of local traditions in detail. As a result, destinations invest each year in marketing events to give tourists new and better experiences (Le et al., 2021; O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002).

### *6.3.1. The role of socio-cultural events in rebuilding Iran's image (Case study number 3)*

This case study is published as a book chapter administered by Bardia Shabani and Professor  
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Human rights violations, conflict, and other political events can significantly negatively affect a country's tourism image and tourist arrivals (Neumayer, 2004). Even if tourist areas are secure, tourism may decline precipitously when political conditions appear unsettled, with tourists simply choosing alternative destinations (Richter & Waugh, 1986). Countries that have a negative image in this way often attempt to improve their tourism image with advertising campaigns (S. F. Sönmez et al., 1999), adopting various models, such as a multi-step model for altering place image, adopting specific media policies and using crises communication techniques (Avraham, 2013). Hosting socio-cultural events is also part of place image strategies and can play a pivotal role in demonstrating that a place is safe, hospitable and friendly, thereby replacing a problematic/negative image with a positive one (Avraham, 2013; Beirman, 2003).

Iran has been at the centre of tourists' attention for decades because of its four-season climate, pure nature, deep heritage and cultural attractions, but new waves of tourists are planning to visit this destination after the recent uplift of UN sanctions (Pemberton & Leach, 2015; Pleitgen, 2015).

The country has been subjected to international economic sanctions for more than a decade. However, on 16 January 2016, all international sanctions (related to the country's nuclear programme) were officially lifted, which has avoided an eruption of yet another armed conflict in the region (United States Department of State, 2020)). This agreement has made the country (including) its airspace one of the safest and most secure countries in the Middle East region, where terrorist attacks have significantly increased (even in places such as Turkey, which has been one of Iran's main competitors in the tourism industry) over the past couple of years. Based on new political situations and upcoming opportunities, Iran can promote its image and attract more tourists as its rich culture and customs can play a pivotal role in hosting events.

This study discusses the role of festivals and other socio-cultural events in the rebuilding of a destination's image, or image recovery, with a specific focus on Iran. Whilst Iran offers numerous historic sites, diverse landscapes and other tourist attractions to visitors, tourism has been heavily affected by the country being subjected to international

economic sanctions for over twenty years. Beginning in 1995, these sanctions remained in place until January 2016, when all international sanctions (related to the country's nuclear programme) were officially lifted. The agreement lifting the sanctions has resulted in turning the situation around so that, in the context of the Middle East region where terrorist attacks have significantly increased in recent years, including in countries such as Turkey, which has been one of Iran's main competitors in tourism, Iran can now be considered one of the safe and secure countries of the region.

Benefiting from this new political situation, Iran has attached considerable significance to developing its tourism industry, and it has made a push to increase inbound tourism in recent years as destination image plays a crucial role in the tourist perception of the country, which then influences tourist decision-making processes and (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Iran is currently attempting to rebuild its image. In particular, attempts are being made to promote the country's rich culture and customs in order to attract international tourists. Festivals and other socio-cultural events play a unique role in the lives of communities throughout Iran. They affect both locals and visitors as they provide important activities and spending outlets for both 'host' and 'guest' communities, potentially boosting tourism development at both the destination and the regional levels (Getz, 1997).

This study discusses the role that socio-cultural events can play in redeveloping Iran's image as an international tourism destination. Firstly, the subject of destination image recovery after conflict will briefly be outlined before discussing socio-cultural events, more specifically as having a potential role in destination image recovery. The discussion will then focus on a particular festival – the Rose and Rosewater Festival in Isfahan province – to provide an empirical case study to illustrate the relationship between socio-cultural events and the rebuilding of Iran's destination image.

#### *6.3.1.1. Destination image and recovery after conflict*

'Image' comprises the mental structures (visual or not) that integrate the elements, the values and the impressions that people have about a specific place, and it is based on a series of knowledge and perceptions of both an emotional and affective nature. Accordingly, a 'place image' is the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of a place (Kotler et al., 1993). Concerning tourism, then, destination image has a significant influence not only on the choice of a destination but also on the ways in which

it affects the tourist behaviour at all stages (G. Ashworth & Goodall, 1988; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Mansfeld, 1992; Matos et al., 2012). Accordingly, Matos et al. (2012) posit three different phases of tourists' behaviour and image formation:

- Before (Priori image); the 1st phase, the decision process before travelling to the destination.
- During (Image in Loco); the 2nd phase, the evaluation process between the experience at the destination versus the expectations met.
- After (Posteriori image); the 3rd phase, after vacation experience, variables regarding the tourists' experiences and the future behaviour, e.g. the decision process of revisiting and or recommending the destination to others.

The tourism industry in destinations is susceptible and highly affected by forces and events in its external environment, meaning that even small-scale crises may have a considerable impact on a destination (C. Hall, 2010; B. W. Ritchie, 2004). Human and natural disasters can cause crises that prove challenging to the tourism industry in destinations. While natural disasters can potentially just reduce the flow of tourism (Ryu et al., 2013; S. Sönmez & Graefe, 1998), 'human' crises, such as crime, war, terrorism, and political and civil unrest, have the potential to impact tourism more profoundly, causing major negative and long-lasting marks on a destination's tourism image (C. Hall, 2010).

Diplomatic conflicts that occur between two (or more) countries may influence the attitude and behaviour of its citizens, which can affect the intention to buy and travel to that specific destination. This effect is referred to as "animosity" in the international marketing literature (for example, see Bahae & Pisani, 2009; Heslop et al., 2008). Animosity is defined by Klein et al. (1998, p. 90) as "the remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political, or economic events" that are perceived as "grievous and difficult to forgive". Whenever citizens experience animosity towards a particular country, despite the important natural, archaeological and historical resources that country enjoys, they may refuse to travel to or buy that country's products, even if the consumers value the quality of products and attractions of the destination (Alvarez & Campo, 2014; Nes et al., 2012). As consumers' image is based on feelings and emotions, animosity will affect their behaviours (Nes et al., 2012; Tavitiyaman et al., 2008; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). This phenomenon and its effect on tourists' intention to visit a

destination has been studied and analysed by Podoshen and Hunt (2011), who explain how political conflicts negatively affect the image of the country involved and the intention to visit it.

Lowery and DeFleur (1995) argue that ‘perception’ and ‘media’ are two key factors that are important to destination image recovery after conflict. More recently, research into media’s effects on destination image shows that mass media creates a new and reflects existing public opinion, attitudes and perceptions, and additionally has the power to alter images quickly (Newbold et al., 2002; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). It is possible that socio-cultural events can also boost destination image recovery since the outcomes of festivals and events are far wider-reaching than merely their economic impact.

#### *6.3.1.2. Event impacts*

Festivals and events play an important role in the lives of communities. They affect both local people and visitors as they provide important activities and spending outlets for locals and visitors (Getz, 2007). Hall (1992) has previously pointed out that all events have impacts, regardless of type, size and the hosting city, region or country. As such, events inevitably affect participants, host communities and other stakeholders; hence the impacts are considered to be positive or beneficial in cases where the events meet the intended and desired economic, social, cultural, political or environmental outcomes. Conversely, failure of predicted outcomes is considered negative impacts, such as environmental damage, pollution, increased crime rate, and disturbing the local residents’ everyday lives (Getz, 2007).

Indeed, the potential of positive desired benefits of events is the principal driver underpinning the support for and increasing popularity of festivals and other socio-cultural events on the local, national and international scale. Positive benefits are believed to occur if local residents are enthusiastic about and support the events, as their lives will directly be impacted by tourism-related activities (Weaver & Lawton, 2013). Ideally, tourism should maximize benefits and minimize negative consequences, and so a key task for event managers is to identify and predict the impacts of events in order to manage them in such a way that “on balance, the overall impact of the event is positive” (Bowdin et al., 2012)

However, events are not always promoted for the economic benefits that they might generate, and they may even be staged at an economic ‘loss’. However, the desired

benefits of the event might be overtly socio-cultural: for example, increasing local participation in community activities and revitalizing local culture and traditions (J. R. B. Ritchie, 1984), strengthening community identity and pride (De Bres & Davis, 2001), developing social capital (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006), and also events may be staged for political purposes (Roche, 2000).

Moreover, the impacts of events are neither hierarchical nor discrete. This explains all positive and negative impacts of events; some are more immediately evident than others, and some are potentially greater than the intended outcomes. This can be seen in Lee and Taylor's (2005) study, in which they explained how the South Korean national team's success at the 2002 FIFA World Cup created a sense of national pride that far outweighed the event's economic returns.

#### *6.3.1.3. Socio-cultural events in Iran*

While Iran has long been an international tourism destination because of its four-season climate, nature, heritage and cultural attractions, tourism in Iran has received a new resurgence since the recent uplift of UN sanctions (Pemberton & Leach, 2015; Pleitgen, 2015). Iran has been subjected to international economic sanctions for more than a decade, but in January 2016, all international sanctions were officially lifted. Moreover, in contrast to other previously popular tourist destinations in the Near/Middle East and Northern Africa (such as Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Tunisia), many of which have become no-go areas in recent years as a result of war or terrorism, Iran is now considered a relatively stable and safe country to visit. In 2014, Iran hosted nearly 5,000,000 foreign tourists, and it was expected that after the lifting of sanctions, within a decade, this number would rise to 20,000,000 per annum by 2025 (PressTV, 2015; World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2015) however after Donald Trump imposed new sanctions and the COVID-19 crisis happened, reaching this target by 2025 is very optimistic or nearly impossible. The prospects of the Iranian tourism industry are bright. National Geographic Traveller put Iran first in its must-see destinations for travel in 2016 (National Geographic Traveller, 2015). In 2016, Asia and the Pacific ranked as the fastest-growing region, including Iran, and enjoyed a growth rate of 9% in the number of international tourist arrivals during that year (UNWTO, 2017).

Iran is a predominantly Shiite country famous for its hospitable culture, which differs greatly from that of many of its neighbours. Hence, the Iranian Tourism Authorities aim



to offer international visitors a memorable experience of Iran. One key way they intend to do so is by hosting socio-cultural festivals that will help the country's image fill a genuine existing gap in the region's market. According to the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) (2003), festivals can have many different impacts on the lives of local communities and in relation to tourism, both positive and negative, and based on knowledge of these impacts; tourism strategies can be designed to achieve the maximum gain. Hosting socio-cultural events is a strategy the Iranian Tourism Authorities use in order to increase Iran's profile and hence to increase tourism and benefit the tourism industry in various ways. The desired purpose of hosting festivals and other socio-cultural events can thus be summarised as:

- 1- Sustainable income: It is expected that hosting festivals will provide employment to residents, who receive revenue from lodging, food and the sale of traditional handicrafts. Hence, income will change people's way of life and how they work and encourage interaction and networking within and between communities.
- 2- Improvement of local services: Iran's augmented income from festivals will improve infrastructure and transport systems. In addition to a general increase in revenue across the community, local communities' budget level will improve; this can fund projects for the community, notably within the health and education sector.
- 3- Cultural empowerment and exchange: Community participation adds considerable value to the sustainability of these festivals, change the norms, beliefs, perceptions, morals and the conduct or behaviour that might enhance the quality of life of local residents, and at the same time increase self-esteem as a result of interest shown by outsiders.
- 4- Local awareness of conservation: In Iran, local people are often heard expressing pride in their cultural heritage of the pre-Islamic era just as much as in recent times. Tourists coming from afar will give local communities a sense of the global importance of culture and customs. Awareness of the significance of such cultural resources at their doorstep, and the economic benefits from international tourism, can boost local conservation efforts.
- 5- Decision making and political awareness: Tourism decision-makers in Iran are willing to encourage local communities to participate in decision-making processes in their own region more actively. Interactions with other nations will increase the level of

political awareness of the host community and will encourage them to participate in decisions that could affect their lives, their perceptions about their safety, their fears about the future of their community, and their aspirations for their future and the future of their children.

- 6- Environmental responsibility: Educating local communities and increasing their awareness regarding the environment is part of Iran's sustainability program. In addition, residents and tourists can be prepared and informed about environmental issues, projects, and other matters through socio-cultural events.

By hosting socio-cultural events, the Iranian authorities aim to encourage international tourists to visit the country more than once to gain their place in a number of different potential markets. These festivals can also be considered a platform for creating landmarks, which often represent a less costly means of distinguishing places and regions and generating media interest. Iranian tourism authorities thus look to socio-cultural events to enhance their image. Such events can also help to add life to city streets, demonstrate a sense of hospitality towards outsiders, and provide citizens with renewed pride in their home country. This improvement of community pride has previously been referred to as the 'halo effect' (C. Hall, 1992), the 'showcase effect' (Fredline & Faulkner, 1998) and the 'feel good effect' (J. Allen et al., 2019).

Similar to some major cultural events that have arguably become 'brands', such as the Edinburgh Festival and Cannes Film Festival, Iran is investing in and attempting to create new brands of socio-cultural festivals based on previous successful models. The Rose and Rosewater Festival in Isfahan province is an example of such an event. The findings of empirical research conducted into this festival and its destination image impacts will now be described in order to present an illustrative case example of the role socio-cultural events can play in destination image rebuilding.

#### *6.3.1.4. Rose and Rosewater Festival*

Kashan is a city in Isfahan province with a land area of 4392 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 330,000. It is located 240 km south of Tehran and 220 km north of Isfahan (Map 1) (Ministry of Interior of Iran, 2015). The history of this city dates back to the 6th millennium BC (UNESCO, 2007), and Kashan became an important centre for the production of high-quality pottery and tiles between the 12th and the 14th centuries; hence "KASHI", the word for tile in modern Persian, comes from the name of this town. On

August 9th, 2007, Iran put the Historical Axis of Fin, Sialk, Kashan on its Tentative List for possible future nominations for UNESCO World Heritage Site listing, and in 2011 Fin Garden was chosen as one of the nine gardens listed as ‘Persian Gardens’ (UNESCO, 2011). Apart from its remarkable history, Kashan is famous for its natural scenery. From the eastern side, the city opens up to the central desert of Iran, which has become a popular tourism destination, in particular, Maranjab Desert and Caravanserai located near the Salt Lake, and from the western side, the city neighbours a mountainous area which is the location of major rose gardens (Ministry of Interior of Iran, 2017). Additionally, there are many reasons why tourists visit the city of Kashan itself, including ancient sites, nature, local culture and folklore, traditions, historic houses, and Persian rugs. Another key reason is a particular festival that Kashan has to offer, namely the Rose and Rosewater Festival. This festival is one of the most well-known socio-cultural events in Iran, and it has been taking place annually in this city for the last 15 years (IRIB English Radio, 2013).

The production of rose water in Iran dates back over 2,500 years, and Kashan has been the main region for producing rose water for over 800 years. Rose water in Iranian culture and cuisine is very important, and Iranians use it in nearly all of their sweets and many of their ceremonies. In Islamic culture, it is believed that the Holy Prophet Muhammad always used rose water and recommended Muslims to do likewise. Accordingly, Iranians named this flower after the Holy prophet’s name, calling it the “Muhammadi” flower in Persian. Also, the Kaaba (Muslims’ holiest site) in Mecca is washed with Kashan rose water two times a year, as the rosewater produced in this area is considered the purest rose water in the world (IRIB English Radio, 2013).

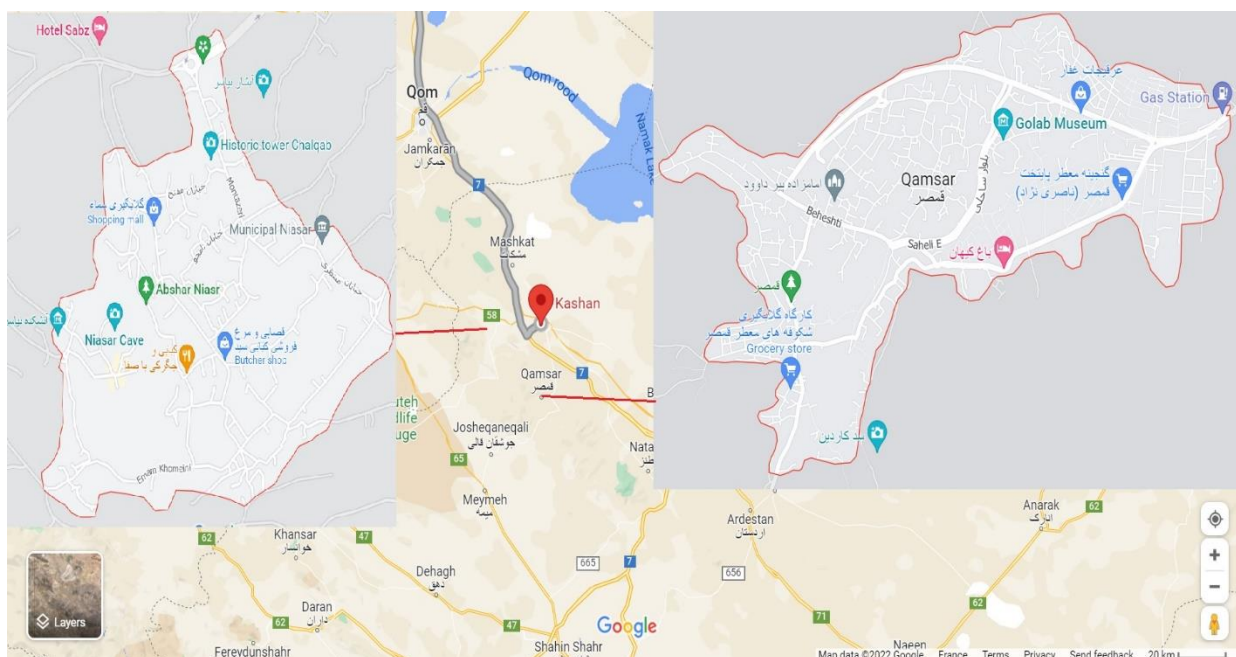
The most well-known national symbol of Kashan is the large Rose and Rosewater Festival, where visitors can learn about rosewater and other herbal drinks, as well as experience traditional dress and music. In spring, from mid-May to early June, the Rose and Rosewater Festival begins with rose flower picking (Golchini) and extraction of rose water (Golabgiri) in all of the rose gardens of Kashan (Map 2) (IRIB English Radio, 2013). This is a public festival that brings together tens of thousands of visitors from all over the country and abroad. The number of participants in the festival can reach up to one million people. Tourists are welcome to visit the gardens and observe all of the procedures related to rose water production for free, whilst they can taste many different herbal drinks with fresh rose water.

**Map 1: The Location of Kashan in Iran.**



Source: Google maps (2022)

**Map 2: Some of the festival venues.**



Source: Google maps (2022)



During the last fifteen years of hosting the festival, the increase in tourist arrivals has dramatically changed the economy of the region, as well as influenced the local culture in positive ways. That is, as well as learning the value of being hospitable and respectful towards visitors, there are renewed incentives to keep the city clean and well-presented. The local community has increasingly embraced the notion that the more welcoming they and their city are towards tourists, the more tourists will enjoy their visit, and the more likely they are to come back again and recommend others to visit. Furthermore, tourists' interest in the local culture and traditions, particularly during the festival period, has increased the level of local community awareness of their traditions and customs, thus improving community identity and pride.

According to Iran Review (2016), international visitors attending the festival invariably have their expectations surpassed, especially in relation to the local cuisine enjoyed and the hospitality culture of local residents. This suggestion that the festival might play an influential part in visitors' overall impressions of Iran as a tourism destination prompted the authors to undertake an empirical study involving an interview survey with international visitors at the festival (Photo 1).

**Photo 1: Rosewater Festival**



Source: Fars News (2022)

The survey was undertaken at the 2017 Rose and Rosewater Festival and was administered in a 'semi-structured interview' format in person by one of the authors (Shabani). Convenience sampling occurred whereby any apparently foreign visitors were approached and asked if they were willing to take part in a short interview survey. Twenty respondents out of 23 asked were interviewed overall (Appendix 3). There were nine nationalities among the 20 respondents: Belgium (2); China (2); France (6); Germany (2); Japan (1); Malaysia (1); Netherlands (4); Russia (1); Switzerland (1). Thirteen respondents were male, and seven were female. In terms of age groups, four were aged between 21 and 30, nine were between 31 and 40, five were between 41-50, and two were aged more than 51 years old. The interviews lasted for approximately ten minutes each, on average, and in general, the interviewees expressed a willingness and openness to participate in the research. The interviews were conducted in English, with the interviewees asked a series of questions on subjects, including their perceptions of Iran before visiting the country, changes to their perceptions/impressions, and how they felt that their experiences of the festival influenced their impressions of Iran. The respondents' answers to the interview questions were later analysed for identifiable patterns which were 'meaningful' regarding the subject of the relationship between festivals / socio-cultural events and destination image. While the survey was limited in size and scope, it nonetheless produced some informative results. These results were organised around the destination image process mentioned earlier in this chapter (before / prior image, during / image in loco, after / posterior image), and they will now be outlined:

#### *6.3.1.5. Before (Prior image)*

While most of the respondents said they had learned about Iran from books (guidebooks and others) and other media, approximately half of them said they had learned about Iran from friends. Correspondingly, in answer to the question about their main reasons for choosing to travel to Iran, more than a third said that friends had recommended Iran to them. This is an important point to highlight because it immediately draws links between the three 'phases' of the destination image - before, during and after. The other main reasons respondents gave for choosing to visit Iran were to experience for themselves and learn more about Iran's Persian history, culture, architecture, and also Iran's natural attractions. Many respondents said that they had heard about Iran being a beautiful

country, and a few said that they had wanted to visit Iran to experience the friendliness of the Iranian people. The majority of the visitors interviewed were travelling in a tour group, and this fact might correspond with their responses to the question of what their perception of Iran was before they visited the country. Approximately half of the respondents said that they had a negative image of Iran, and more precisely, that it was “unsafe”. However, many respondents said that friends who had visited previously had persuaded them that the negative image of Iran as portrayed in the media was erroneous. Example responses to the question of what their perception of Iran was before travelling to the country include:

“Somehow scary and not a very safe country.”

“Not very safe as you need to watch yourself constantly. Mostly bad.”

“A pretty comprehensive image. I know some media have said that Iran is not a good place, but I knew it was not true, and my friends told me Iran is a good place”.

“Mixed. I have heard Iran is not a safe country, but some told me it is a safe country. I was also told that the people are very hospitable”.

#### *6.3.1.6. During (Image in Loco)*

As suggested above, this second phase in the destination image formation process comprises the evaluation process between the experience at the destination versus the expectations met. Interestingly, all of the respondents reported having a very positive ‘image in loco’ of Iran. All of the respondents who reported having any sort of negative image before their visit said that their image had completely changed and that now they had an extremely positive image of the country. Example responses to the question of how, if at all, their perception had changed during their visit include:

“It is changed 180 degrees. Here is very safe, and everybody is happy and smiling at you all of the time, and I absolutely adore it here”.

“My image is better than before, as the people are very kind, cities are well-developed, safe and clean, and everything is organized”.

“Iran is a very nice place. I can see people are very friendly and this has changed my image. Here is very safe, and I feel safer in Iran than in France!”

Nearly all the respondents mentioned they are interested in visiting historical, cultural and archaeological attractions in Iran. Regarding the respondents' experiences at the Rose and Rosewater Festival, there were two main strands in the way they explained their enjoyment of the festival. One strand concerned the enjoyment of the "unique" and "authentic" / "traditional" focus of the festival in relation to the rose gardens and rosewater production and tastings. The other main strand concerned the enjoyment of the friendly atmosphere of the festival and the opportunity to be among 'local people'. Example responses to the question of how respondents were finding the festival include:

"Very authentic festival, it is free to enter the gardens and see all the procedure of producing rosewater + free rosewater drinks".

"Stunning view, the rose gardens are very beautiful. It is amazing that people will welcome everyone to their gardens and will ask them to join their festival and test their drinks".

"I really enjoyed the hospitality of the people, and I can see people are very happy here. Different families asked me to take pictures with them, and I feel like a celebrity here"!

"I enjoy it very much, and it is nice to be with local people".

When asked how they thought attending the festival had influenced their overall image of Iran as a tourist destination, all of the respondents expressed the idea that being at the festival primarily had allowed them to have close contact with Iranian people and to experience their friendliness and hospitality:

"I love talking to the local people and learning about their customs and culture. So at this festival, I had the chance to learn more about Iranian culture".

"Engaging with people here provided me great information about their culture and behaviour."

"The people are very warm, and I can feel that they are very happy".

"Happiness is something you can see immediately in people's faces here, children are playing around, and families are so relaxed and smiling".

"The hospitality culture of Iranians profoundly affected my point of view about this country, and I can say that they have the best hospitality culture".



“I, for myself, experienced the safety here and saw how Iranians are friendly and helpful. Their behaviour affected my previous image.”

#### *6.3.1.7. After (Posteriori image)*

In relation to the third phase, pertaining to after the vacation experience and the tourists' future behaviour in terms both of revisiting and/or recommending the destination to others, although the interviews were able only to gain future projections, rather than actual 'posteriori image', responses provided some interesting opinions relating to posteriori image. In line with the responses regarding 'image in loco', discussed above, and the point that experiencing the hospitality and friendliness of the Iranian people at the festival is such an important part of the experience for international visitors, it was this experience that respondents said would encourage them both to revisit Iran and to recommend visiting Iran to others. In response to the question of how might experiencing Iran's socio-cultural events such as the Rose and Rosewater Festival affect tourists' tendency to revisit Iran or to recommend visiting Iran to others, almost all of the responses described their seeing a direct link between experiencing such events and revisiting or recommending Iran. Examples of this direct link being drawn include:

“It can help a lot, as people will say many good things about it so friends and family members will trust and I think this will work even better than any advertisement.”

“It is very effective that people come and have this experience, and I think their firsthand experience will help them to recommend it to others”.

“These festivals are very good examples of Iranian culture, and people will learn about it. Also, the way that they are treating tourists will make me sure to come back again and tell my friends to visit too”.

“By experiencing this event, people would have a better understanding of Iran and the people, and I think they will say many good things about Iran”.

“I think tourists want to experience something new and interesting, and if they want to learn about a new culture, I say this is it. Engaging with local people in these festivals will affect tourists' image in a good way, and I think they will come back again”.

“This festival is a good way for tourists to get familiar with traditions, culture and customs (of Iran), so I think this will help the image. Tourists like to talk to the local people and

buy local products. If they like it, they will come back and will persuade other family members to go with them”.

Overall, respondents' image components identified most strongly were the designative aspects of Iranian culture, such as ‘hospitality’, ‘friendliness’ and ‘cuisine’. The appraisal-evaluative image components associated with the ‘character’ of Iran, such as ‘hospitality’, ‘security’, ‘beautiful destination’ and ‘friendliness’, scored very highly. ‘Happiness’, ‘authentic culture’ and ‘country with a great history’ also were prominent aspects of the country’s image.

To summarise, it is clear from looking at international visitors’ responses to questions regarding their before, during and after visit destination image of Iran, and more particularly, how they saw their experiences at the Rose and Rosewater Festival as influencing the three phases of destination image, that the opportunity such festivals provide to experience, firsthand, the hospitality and friendliness, as well as the culture and traditions, of Iranian people, was key. In other words, the role of this socio-cultural event, and one might assume other similar events, in influencing visitors’ image of Iran is not so much in focus, or ‘theme’, of the event itself (in this case, rose gardens and rosewater), but in the vibrant atmosphere created by the event, the opportunities for visitors to be among and to talk to local people, and the ability for Iranian people to show their hospitality to visitors within the ‘safe’ environment of the festival. Consequently, when asked whether they would recommend Iran to others and how they would describe it in their recommendation, all of the respondents included descriptions of Iran and Iranian people being “friendly”, “hospitable”, and “safe”.

#### *6.3.1.8. Conclusion*

Whilst it cannot be determined as to how the respondents participating in this interview survey would have responded to questions regarding their destination image of Iran if they had not attended the Rose and Rosewater Festival, the findings of this empirical research demonstrate a positive link between such socio-cultural events and destination image. As was learned from the interviews, the respondents’ image of Iran prior to visiting the country was mixed and included significant negative imagery regarding the ‘safety’ of Iran as a tourism destination. However, those who had dismissed the negative imagery put forward largely through mass media had done mainly so based on first-hand accounts from friends and family who had visited Iran previously. In turn, this study’s respondents

reported that, based on their own first-hand experiences, they were highly likely to recommend visiting Iran to others. Moreover, their experiences at the Rose and Rosewater Festival, during which they were able to have first-hand experiences of the friendliness and hospitality of Iranian people appears to have strengthened their positive image of the country, as well as strengthening their resolve to recommend visiting Iran to others.

In this way, the study conducted at the Rose and Rosewater Festival illustrates the ways in which festivals and other socio-cultural events can play a significant role in the rebuilding of Iran's destination image for international tourism. Indeed, not only can such events boost spending by both 'host' and 'guest' communities and increase tourism development at both the destination and regional levels, but they can also play an important role in boosting destination image. By contributing to the recovery or rebuilding of Iran's destination image, the outcomes of festivals and events are far broader than merely their economic impact. Indeed, socio-cultural events play the role of a promoter when it comes to destination and tourism development. Since the majority of events are related to local culture and entertainment, they attract the interest of tourists, especially those who are already culture-oriented in their destination choice.

Nonetheless, the research presented here illustrates different aspects of the complex process of rebuilding a country's image through socio-cultural events. While the data indicate a marked positive change in the image of Iran among international tourists who were visiting the country, and particularly when they attended socio-cultural events, the image impacts observed in Iran also underlined their complexity. The image of Iran seems to be strongly differentiated in terms of its components and in terms of the image held by different groups of visitors, and thus it is clear that we need to start talking about 'images' rather than 'image'. Accordingly, Iran's tourism policy-makers need to plan various international marketing strategies in order to attract culture and tradition lovers from different countries, as well as consider the prominent role that festivals and other socio-cultural events can play in developing the tourism industry of the country and improving Iran's image internationally.

#### 6.4. Socio-cultural events; practical tools for destinations?

In many Western cities, culture has played a key part in the regeneration and revival of

metropolitan centres over the last two decades (Bianchini, 1993; R. Griffiths, 1993; S. Miles & Paddison, 2005; Montgomery, 2003; Tallon, 2013). Culture is frequently used as a tool to boost local reputation, increase property prices, and attract new investment and employment in the face of growing competition within and across global cities (Scott, 2006). Furthermore, the way(s) inhabitants, businessmen, lawmakers, and municipal officials experience and conceive of the city has shifted. According to Stock (2007), "the recreational turn" has converted cities from industry to tourism and leisure, which now play a significant role in (re-)shaping city centres socially, physically, culturally, and economically (Judd & Fainstein, 1999; Novy & Colomb, 2016; Wise, 2015).

As a result, the perception of tourism among the DMOs and city policymakers has shifted considerably. While urban tourism was once considered a minor economic activity in the capitalist city, de-industrialization and progressive tertiarization, along with economic revaluation and cultural revalorization of historical quarters, have all played a role in transforming many city centres into arenas for consumerism, urban spectacle, and tourism: in other words, a "theatre of consumption" (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). In the case of South Europe, the present financial and economic crisis has exacerbated this tendency, which in certain cases, such as Portugal and Spain, is linked to the collapse of national (urban) production systems.

Faced with such economic issues, several city leaders in South Europe have chosen to boost tourism in their local economies as a short- and medium-term strategy to offset austerity policies enforced by regional and national governments. As a result, the city centre's touristification (G. Ashworth & Page, 2011; Gladstone & Préau, 2008; Judd & Fainstein, 1999; Knafo, 2012) provides chances for young and young-adult skilled and unskilled employees, entrepreneurs, and new kinds of leisure (Bodaar & Rath, 2005; Scott, 2006).

#### *6.4.1. Event policies*

While reviewing and discussing how numerous cities have quickly and uncritically adopted the ideas of creative experts like Richard Florida and Charles Landry, the discussions as mentioned earlier resonated with the larger corpus of work in destination and urban studies about policy mobilities and policy emulations without actually referencing them (Bunnell, 2015; Bunnell & Das, 2010; McCann, 2011; McNeill, 2009).

Several studies have looked at the circulation process and adaptation of different types of policies, such as creative city programs (Y.-S. Lee & Hwang, 2012) and the so-called Bilbao and Barcelona models (González, 2011) from this viewpoint in recent years. Despite this, there have been few attempts to use a policy mobility methodology to analyze the mobility of tourism policies and events. As a result, a more conventional serial reproduction viewpoint still dominates tourist research. This view fails to recognize the “local globalness” of urban policy transfer, which is becoming highly common (McCann, 2011, p. 120).

Policies do not go across the world unmodified, but they do go through a process of adaptation to the distinctive economic and political circumstances in which they are implemented. Importantly, this approach enables them to be effectively transferred from one city to another, as seen by the growth of events such as the White Night. Nonetheless, these tourism city policy tours imply a “further serialisation and commodification of city spaces through an international brand – touristic rather than community/cultural-based” (Evans, 2012, p. 47).

The growth of expert-managed cultural events, frequently with the assistance of worldwide networks and under a recognized brand, remains a prominent strategy pursued by both capital and smaller towns, alongside the creation of new relational forms of tourism. This demonstrates that, rather than a decline in staging and a rise in co-creation in tourism cities and their associated tourist experiences, efforts and attempts to re-stage the tourist experience and construction (usually top-down, elite-centred) of tourism cities are ongoing and persistent.

#### *6.4.2. Cities on light*

Urban lighting practices and rules have altered considerably in the past two decades. Under pressure from a variety of sources, including budget cuts (Peck, 2012), technological advancements (Meier et al., 2015), and climate-change mitigation requirements (Bulkeley et al., 2012), local governments are looking to change their lighting strategies in order to reduce their financial burden and energy consumption (Green et al., 2015). Simultaneously, there is a growing recognition in science and policy that artificial light is not entirely innocuous. As a result, new lighting regulations aimed at reducing light pollution are becoming more widespread at the municipal, regional, and even national levels. Slovenia, for example, enacted laws on the matter in 2007, and France followed suit in 2013 (Meier et al., 2015).

Lighting design, on the other hand, has taken a different course. In today's cultural economy, more dramatic use of light has arisen, and new kinds of lighting are increasingly being used to enhance the urban night-time experience (Ebbensgaard, 2015; Edensor, 2015; Edensor & Lorimer, 2015). Initially limited to temporary events, this new approach to urban design is no longer confined to controlled conditions but is rapidly impacting ordinary illumination in the contemporary city.

This has led to a significant shift in urban lighting plans' scale, scope, and policies, resulting in an expansion of the sphere of intervention and application for urban lighting. The use of light for city attractiveness, which is becoming a key issue of urban lighting schemes, has gradually equalled the conventional security objective (Van Santen, 2006). As a result, a growing number of municipalities are considering urban lighting as a viable urban development strategy (Alves et al., 2007; Meier et al., 2015). This desire stems mostly from the belief that more spectacular forms of illumination may be used to attract visitors and tourists, prompting an increasing number of towns to include the development of nocturnal tourism as one of the goals of their lighting plans and strategies (Deleuil, 2009; Giordano, 2018)

Illumination as a source of entertainment and a tourist attraction is not a new concept (Edensor & Millington, 2009; Gravari-Barbas & Jacquot, 2007). However, this trend has gained extraordinary traction during the last decade, and the usage of lights to attract visitors has spread around the globe (Zou et al., 2021). Light festivals are a good example of this phenomenon, which are defined by the installation of artistic lighting installations in public spaces and the projection of holograms on building facades; they have become a growing feature of city entertainment and tourism, resulting in spectacular, fantastic urban landscapes that attract millions of visitors each year (Alves et al., 2007; Giordano & Ong, 2017). Importantly, the phenomenal success of light festivals like those in Lyon and Eindhoven has inspired plenty of local governments to put on similar events. While Lyon's Fete des Lumieres, founded in 1999, is widely regarded as the first light festival, more than 100 light festivals are taking place throughout the world.

In tourism studies, accounts of how inventive techniques and perspectives have been replicated and transferred from one place to the next are not new (Richards & Wilson, 2004). However, serial reproduction arguments have typically defined these policy mobilities views, which tend to conceptualize policy circulation as a linear adoption of exogenous prescriptions copied by other destinations. Similarly, this chapter will take a

look at Montpellier Light Festival as a case study, which is a copy of the Lyon Light festival.

#### *6.4.2.1. The Role of Socio-cultural Events in Improving Destination Image: Montpellier Light Festival (Case study number 4)*

This case study is under review as a book chapter administered by Bardia Shabani and Assistant professor Emanuele Giordano

Festivals and other socio-cultural events play a unique role in the lives of communities. They affect both locals and visitors as they provide important activities and spending outlets for both ‘host’ and ‘guest’ communities, which boosts tourism development at the destination / regional level (Getz, 1993). On the other hand, by introducing new festivals and events in other destinations, the classic festivals’ host cities may face difficulties in terms of convincing tourists to revisit and/or extend their stay duration. Throughout history, tourism has been a phenomenon characterized by immense innovativeness. Books and articles have drawn attention to particularly distinctive individuals and enterprises, and their achievements have been analysed and assessed from all angles. Governments that depend on tourism growth can actively encourage tourism entrepreneurs to create innovations to remain competitive. The tourism market requires constant creation and supply of innovative products and services, which is important for all stakeholders at destinations.

As one of the top tourist destinations in the world, France benefits a lot from hosting socio-cultural events such as light festivals to attract more and more tourists. By hosting these festivals, the cities have found the opportunity to improve their image and benefit financially from the visitors' expenditures during the events. This study discusses the role of events in improving destination image, with a specific focus on the case-study illustration of the Light Festival in Montpellier. An empirical study involving interviews with both visitors and the citizens has been conducted for this study.

#### *6.4.2.2. Literature review*

Reynolds (1965) described the formation of the image as the development of a mental construct based upon a few impressions chosen from a flood of information as one of the first commentators. In 2003, Echtner and Ritchie explained different sources of information that will build the destination image. The “flood of information” has many

sources, which include; First-hand information (based upon own visit and experience) and secondary information which are gained from media reporting (newspapers, magazines, television news reporting, and documentaries), promotional sources (advertising and brochures), popular culture (motion pictures, literature) and the opinions of others (family/friends, travel agents).

#### *6.4.2.3. A brief definition of destination image*

Image is the mental structures (visual or not) that integrate the elements, the values and the impressions that people have about a specific place; and it is based on a series of more or less material knowledge of those people and on a series of perceptions of a more emotional and effective nature, accordingly “Place image” is the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of a place (Kotler et al., 1993).

#### *6.4.2.4. The importance and influence of destination image*

Previously held image has a great influence on the choice of a tourism destination (J. Crompton & Ankomah, 1993; Gartner, 1989; Goodall, 1988; Moutinho, 1987; M. Stabler, 1990), as the potential tourists will invest a tremendous amount of time and money in order to identify suitable palaces, and this happens because the holiday destination is considered a high involvement purchase (Goodrich, 1978; Laws, 1995). Therefore, destination image has a great influence which is not limited to the choice of a destination but it affects the tourist’s behaviour at all stages (G. Ashworth & Goodall, 1988; Mansfeld, 1992).

Accordingly, we can consider three different phases of tourist behaviour and image formation:

- Before (Priori image); the 1st phase, the decision process before travelling to the destination.
- During (Image in Loco); the 2nd phase, the evaluation process between the experience at the destination versus the expectations met.
- and After (Posteriori image); the 3rd phase, after vacation experience, variables regarding the tourists’ experiences and the future behaviour, e.g. the decision process of revisiting and or recommending the destination to others (Matos et al., 2012).

#### *6.4.2.5. Event impacts*



Festivals and events play an important role in the lives of communities. They affect both local people and visitors as they provide important activities and spending outlets for locals and visitors (Getz, 2007). The impacts of holding events on hosting communities are varied; some are economic, socio-cultural, environmental, psychological and political (Preuss & Solberg, 2007 as cited in Perić et al., 2016). Events may increase demand and draw tourists to a destination, particularly during the off-season (Connell et al., 2015; Sainaghi & Mauri, 2018).

On the supply side, they may encourage urban redevelopment interventions at the infrastructure and service levels, enhancing the destination's image and adding to inhabitants' living conditions (Getz, 2008; Getz & Page, 2016). Also, it would be possible to examine the public engagement and the impact on individuals and communities in terms of local perceptions of hosting the events (Piga & Melis, 2021). Getz and Page (2016) argue that it is beneficial to conduct research initiatives that increase our understanding of the impact of events in specific geographical contexts and dimensions.

Hall (1992) also has previously pointed out that all events have impacts, regardless of type, size and the hosting city, region or country. As such, events inevitably affect participants, host communities and other stakeholders; hence, the impacts are considered to be positive or beneficial in cases where the events meet the intended and desired economic, social, cultural, political or environmental outcomes. Conversely, failure of predicted outcomes is considered negative impacts, such as environmental damage, pollution, an increase in crime rate and disturbing the local residents' normal life (Getz, 2007).

Indeed, the potential of positive desired benefits of events is the principal driver underpinning the support for and increasing popularity of festivals and other socio-cultural events on the local, national and international scale. Positive benefits are believed to occur if local residents are enthusiastic about and support the events, as their lives will directly be impacted by tourism-related activities (Weaver & Lawton, 2013). Ideally, tourism should maximize benefits and minimize negative consequences, and so a key task for event managers is to identify and predict the impacts of events in order to manage them in such a way that “on balance, the overall impact of the event is positive” (Bowdin et al., 2012, p. 37).

However, events are not always promoted for the economic benefits that they might

generate. They may even be staged at an economic ‘loss’, but the desired benefits of the event might be overtly socio-cultural: for example, increasing local participation in community activities and revitalizing local culture and traditions (J. R. B. Ritchie, 1984; Shabani & Tucker, 2018), strengthening community identity and pride ((De Bres & Davis, 2001; Shabani et al., 2020), developing social capital (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006), and also events may be staged for political purposes (Roche, 2000).

Moreover, the impacts of events are neither hierarchical nor discrete. This explains all positive and negative impacts of events; some are more immediately evident than others, and some are potentially greater than the intended outcomes. The light festivals among the events have known the most success in the last years.

#### *6.4.2.6. Light Festival and its root*

Numerous studies have recognized that festivals and cultural events can enhance destination image and promote and stimulate tourism development (Quinn, 2005). A particular manifestation of these ‘eventful cities’ (Richards & Palmer, 2010) is the late-night cultural festivals (Evans, 2012; Jiwa et al., 2009). Local authorities have perceived these events as a valid alternative to the traditional night-time economy based on drinking and on the other as an attraction capable of extending temporally and geographically the distribution of tourism activity.

From the 17th and 18th centuries, European monarchs adopted a series of new technologies that manifested a “new desire to deploy and manipulate darkness and night” (Koslofsky, 2011, p. 276). However, in the contemporary city, the use of event forms of illumination has taken on unprecedented importance. For example, light festivals are now a fundamental part of any event. Thus, others are gradually being added to the traditional Christmas and end-of-year lights (Mallet & Burger, 2015; M. Roberts et al., 2012).

The light festivals are particular examples of the growing use of temporary illuminations for leisure and tourism purposes. Initially created by cities like Lyon, which have certain know-how in the field of lighting, these events have experienced growing success in recent years.

The origin of the Festival of Lights in Lyon dates back to the 19th century. In 1850, the city and the religious authorities decided to rebuild the chapel of Notre Dame de Fourvière. Competition is open to realise a monumental statue of the Virgin that would

crown the restored bell tower. On June 10, 1851, this competition was won by the Lyonnais sculptor Fabisch. The work was completed the following year, and the date of September 8, 1852, was chosen for its inauguration. The choice of this day is not due to chance. In the Christian liturgical calendar, it is that of the Nativity of the Virgin. It also refers to the events of September 8, 1643, when the council members of Lyon dedicated their city to the Virgin Mary to protect them from the plague. However, the program cannot be respected. In 1852, the flood of Saône River had invaded the construction sites; accordingly, the inauguration is therefore postponed to December 8, which reminds until today (Crouzet, 2017; Giordano & Ong, 2017).

Light festivals have now become a global phenomenon, with hundreds of festivals held every year on every continent. This trend, which is part of a strategy to develop the Festival of Lights as a mass tourist attraction, is motivated by the process of policy circulation that characterizes the growing competition between cities to attract tourist flows. Thus Giordano and Ong (2017) have shown how the spectacular global proliferation of light festivals in recent years is not fully understood without considering the role of international networks of experts and lighting professionals and how commercial imperatives largely prevail in many settings.

Nevertheless, even if the circulation of light festivals reflects a strategy of policy emulation, largely inspired by a few ‘best practice’ cases, these events are not replicated in a serial and unproblematic way but are selectively acknowledged and appropriated by local actors. Crucially, this adaptation process allows light festivals to be successfully transplanted from one city to another, escaping the problem traditionally related to the ‘serial reproduction’ process. Furthermore, light festivals are not standardized events but greatly diverge in size, light works, and the visitor profile (Camprubi & Coromina, 2019; Lovell & Griffin, 2019). However, existing literature has mainly focused on the impacts of light festivals organized in metropolitan cities (Camprubi & Coromina, 2019; Edensor, 2015). As such, the rest of the chapter focuses on the recently created light festival organized by the city of Montpellier to understand how this light festival contributes to improving the destination image of a medium-sized city.

#### *6.4.2.7. Methodology*

Visitors attending the festival invariably have their own perceptions and expectations. This suggests that the light festival might play an influential part in shaping an overall

image and impressions in both locals' and visitors' minds, prompting the authors to undertake an empirical study involving an interview survey with visitors (both locals and tourists) at the festival.

The survey was undertaken at the 2019 Montpellier Light Festival and was administered in a 'semi-structured interview' format in person by one of the authors (Shabani) (Appendix 4). According to previously reviewed literature, interview questions were developed to collect detailed insights from light festival visitors. Convenience sampling occurred whereby any apparent visitors were approached and asked if they were willing to participate in a short interview survey. Twenty respondents out of twenty-three were interviewed overall. Of the Twenty respondents, there were ten respondents from the "Occitanie" region, while the other ten came from different regions of France.

The interviews lasted for approximately ten minutes each, on average, and in general, the interviewees expressed a willingness and openness to participate in the research. Hence, using this sample, the aim was to collect different perspectives from both groups (local and tourists) who were taking part in the festival.

The sample was comprised of six male and fourteen female respondents in terms of age groups; five were aged between 21 and 30, four were between 31 and 40, eight were between 41-50 and three were aged more than 51 years old.

The interviews were conducted in French, with the interviewees asked a series of questions on subjects, including their perceptions of the Montpellier light festival before their visit and how they felt that during visit experiences of the festival influenced their impressions of it. The respondents' answers to the interview questions were later analysed for identifiable patterns which were 'meaningful' regarding the subject of the relationship between festivals / socio-cultural events and destination image (from both tourists' and locals' perceptions). Whilst the survey was limited in size and scope, it produced some informative results nonetheless. These results were organised around Montpellier light festival and its effect on destination image (before / prior image, during / image in loco, after / posteriori image), and they will now be outlined:

#### *6.4.2.8. Before (Priori image)*

Two majority groups of the respondents have learned about the festival from the publicities in the city (five of the respondents) and their previous visit (another five

respondents). In addition, four of the participants have heard from those in their circle of trust; family, friends, and colleagues, while the rest were learned from the festival's Social Media pages (three) and Press (three).

Correspondingly, in answer to the question about what was their perception of the festival before they took part in it, both tourists and locals had a positive image of the festival, and few had an image of other most famous light festivals; like Lyon light festival, in their mind, as this can be the same. Regarding the previous perception of taking part in the festival, a local (Female, 41-50 y/o) mentioned, "I have heard a lot about this festival which is a festival like Lyon light festival, so I think this can be a good idea for the city" or another one (Male, 51-60 y/o) said, "I took part in this festival last year, so I had a positive perception about it. So, as it was a good festival last year I decided to come again". On the other hand, a tourist (Female, 41-50 y/o) mentioned, "I already taken part in the light festival but in another city, so I have some expectations the same as the one I saw" or the other one (Female, 31- 40 y/o) added, "I was very interested in coming back and revisiting this festival, as I knew it is beautiful and different each year". Moreover, it seems tourists had more expectations of discovering something new and were awaiting surprises as they mentioned (Female, 21-30 y/o), "we did not have any special perception but expecting something new and different from the normal festivals, or just the same as Lyon festival" or another tourist (Female, 41-50 y/o) said, "I have the feeling of discovering something new as I did not know what will happen".

#### *6.4.2.9. During (Image in Loco)*

In answer to the following question, which was about their actual perception of the festival while they are experiencing it and how/if their image has changed, participants, more or less, mentioned that their perception has improved in a positive way; however, the overall perception was remained the same as the previous image, during the festival. Therefore, this phase in the festival image formation process comprises the evaluation process between the experiences at the festival versus the expectations met. Therefore, it can be considered as an important point to highlight because it immediately draws links between the previous image of the respondents about the festival and their actual experience. Accordingly, they will have the chance to evaluate their image and find out how far or if their in-festival image will match the previous image.

Example responses of locals to the question of how, if at all, their perception had changed

during their visit include:

A local female, 41-50 y/o: “yes, my image has improved in a positive way.”

A local male, 51-60 y/o: “No, my perception is still the same as before, and it did not change at all.”

On the other hand, tourists’ answers were:

A female, 31-40 y/o: “Yes, my image is changed in a positive way; I can say it is a modern and very pleasant festival.”

A male, 21-30 y/o: “My image has not very much changed, but maybe it is good to mention the scale of the festival is very different from the Lyon festival.”

With regards to the respondents’ experiences at the festival and in answer to the question, what did you like the most about this festival? There were two main strands in the way they explained their enjoyment of the festival. For both groups, tourists and locals, one strand concerned the enjoyment of the “nightlife”, “ambience and atmosphere” of the festival and the opportunity to be among the crowd. The other main strand concerned the enjoyment of the “new innovative themes” and the added value to “the city monuments” because of the festival. Example responses to the question include:

A female tourist, 21-30 y/o: “I like the ambience of the festival and how it made a link between different generations.”

A female tourist, 31-40 y/o: “The combination of sounds, lights and animations are very nice and innovative. More than that, the monuments and the music they chose are synchronized perfectly together.”

A local female, 41-50 y/o: “This festival (and its innovation) helped to bring more added value to our city monuments and will bring more attention to them.”

A local male, 51-60 y/o: “I think the festival is fantastic, there are many people in the street, and the crowds are happy, so I like the ambience.”

When we asked, what would you like to have in addition to this festival? or What additional activity would you like to have? Five of the locals answered “nothing” and “we may need some music bands only”, while the tourist expressed the idea of “timing” and “accessibility” that the festival organisers need to consider.

Example responses of locals:

A local male, 51-60 y/o: “They may need to consider music bands for the festival and think of some different activities beside it.”

A local female, 21-30 y/o: “In my point of view, nothing is needed to be added to this festival; everything is ok.”

Example answers of tourists:

A female tourist, 51-60 y/o: “I would say maybe the festival needs to be a little longer and having the festival during the weekend as coming from other destinations to Montpellier, is hard to manage during the weekdays.”

A female tourist, 31-40 y/o: “The organisers need to rethink about the accessibility of the festival and the public transportation as it is very hard to find parking and they need to increase the number of tramways or busses”.

#### *6.4.2.10. After (Posteriori image)*

In relation to the third phase, pertaining to after the festival experience and the locals and tourists’ future behaviour in terms of recommending the festival to others, and their reasoning, although the interviews were able only to gain future projections, rather than actual ‘posteriori image’, responses provided some interesting opinions relating to posteriori image. For both tourists and locals, in line with the responses regarding ‘image in loco’ discussed above, and the point that experiencing the festival is such an important part of the experience for them, it was the attractiveness and high quality of the time they spent at the festival, besides the innovative themes of the light festivals, that would encourage them to recommend the festival to others.

In response to the question of how might experiencing the Montpellier Light Festival affect other potential tourists’ tendency to recommend visiting Montpellier to others, almost all of the respondents described their seeing a direct link between experiencing such events and recommending them. Examples of this direct link for locals being drawn include:

A local male, 31-40 y/o: “I will recommend the light festival to my friends as I think this event is extraordinary and they must come and enjoy, and I think this festival will be a plus for the tourists who are coming to Montpellier just the same as it is for us.”

A local female, 31-40 y/o: “I will absolutely recommend this festival to my family members. I always tell them that this festival is very spectacular and it is worth taking part in, but I am not sure if the timing is good as it is organized only a week away from Lyon light festival, so there is a possibility that the tourists may prefer to go to Lyon.”

Tourists also answered as:

A female tourist, 31-40 y/o: “I will definitely recommend it as I think the light festival is a good way of introducing both an event and the attractions of a city. Furthermore, they provided very nice innovative themes (both music and animation) for each monument that can have a link with the history of the city.”

A male tourist, 21-30 y/o: “I want to recommend it because the festival is nice and they can have enjoyable moments, and they will be able to visit the city in a new form which is different from its normal time.”

A female tourist, 41-50 y/o: “Yes, I will do that as I think this light festival here is less crowded compared to Lyon, so people will be more relaxed and have more time to visit.”

A female tourist, 21-30 y/o: “Yes, because this will be a good chance to go out and leave behind the routine life and enjoy with the crowd, and it can be very interesting for the tourists as in Lyon it was very successful.”

For nearly all the residents interviewed, the old part of the town, Arc de Triumph and the Place de la Comedie were considered among the top three attractions that the city is known for and that tourists should visit during their stay. Correspondingly, the tourists named as well the old part of the town, Arc de Triumph, the Place de la Comedie, Fabre Museum, and La Panacée (modern art museum) among their top five preferred attractions to visit.

In answer to the question of necessary strategies that Montpellier needs to consider in order to improve its image, the majority of respondents in both groups have talked about the marketing plans and campaigns, while some mentioned the necessary actions that might be considered to improve the city’s infrastructures. Examples of these answers are:

A female tourist, 51-60 y/o: “They need to work more on the public transportation and increase the number of it during the festival time; furthermore they need to think of a solution for the parking as all of them were packed, so tourists need more information.”



A female tourist, 21-30 y/o: “Transport is very important and also the communication on social media. It is important to share the videos and photos of the festival; better communication and publicity are needed.”

A local male, 51-60 y/o: “The cleanliness of the city, especially during the festival, is very important, more than that the security of the city centre is important for the tourists and I think they need to work on having the campaign to do the marketing on social media.”

A female tourist, 21-30 y/o: “I feel that this festival is known more in the region, so I would say they need to work on it to make it a national festival.”

A female tourist, 41-50 y/o: “I don’t think if the city wants to have more tourists as in my point of view the size of the festival is ok and if they want to have more tourists, then they may become like Lyon where is supper crowded and it won’t be as pleasant as now. In my view, the size of the festival must match the size of the city; otherwise, the visitors will not enjoy it as much as they were expected.”

#### *6.4.2.11. Conclusion*

Whilst it cannot be determined how the respondents participating in this interview survey would have responded to questions regarding their destination image of Montpellier if they had not attended the Light Festival, the findings of this empirical research demonstrate a positive link between the Light Festival, as an innovative cultural event, and destination image. As was learned from the interviews, the respondents’ image of the Light Festival, prior to visiting Montpellier, was positive and included significant similar aspects to the Lyon light festival, which is a very different festival in terms of scale and vision. Those who were expecting the same festival as Lyon had faced a very smaller festival with fewer tourists.

In turn, this study’s respondents reported that, based on their own first-hand experiences, they were highly likely to recommend visiting Montpellier Light Festival to others. Moreover, their experiences at the Light Festival, during which they were able to have first-hand experiences of the very pleasant nightlife atmosphere and enjoy the new artistic themes, appears to have strengthened their positive image of the festival.

It seems that Montpellier Light Festival has targeted the local residents and visitors from the Occitanie region, first and most. As such, the light festival can be described as a local event that can also attract some tourists both nationally and internationally. Nevertheless,

this local dimension is not necessarily a negative aspect. Current debates about the proliferation of light festivals around the world have pointed out how the increasing number of light festivals all around the world can produce increasing competition to attract visitors, funds and artists. Thus, the Montpellier case illustrates how these events largely diverge in size, objectives, and popularity. While a handful of light festivals like Lyon and Eindhoven have international renown and compete to attract tourist flows worldwide, Montpellier operates on a different scale, mainly attracting local visitors and hardly competing on the same scale.

Accordingly, Montpellier's event organizers should continuously focus on attracting local and regional visitors, adapting both their actions and communication. On the other hand, any attempt to increase the size of the festival in order to improve its standing in the global hierarchy of light festivals will be probably successful. Furthermore, Montpellier DMOs need to work on some of the tourism infrastructures, such as the number of parking lots or transportation system during the festival, as it seemed insufficient from the respondents' point of view. The city of Montpellier does not possess both the know-how and the international renown associated with both the city of Lyon and its light festival. To continue to focus on the local and regional visitors seems, at the moment, the most successful strategy to ensure the continuity of the event.

As the "Light Festival" is a generic term for all the similar light festivals in France, the visitors had the perception of the Lyon festival in terms of scale and other characteristics. Accordingly, it is possible to consider that the organisers wanted to enjoy the same image but introduce the smaller size as entertainment for the local and regional visitors. Based on that, the life of this type of festival is arguable.

Accordingly, Montpellier's tourism policy-makers need to re-shape their strategies and plan various marketing strategies in order to attract more tourists, in case they have the goal to increase the size of the festival as well as considering the prominent role that light festival can play in developing the tourism industry of the city and improving its image.

## 6.5. Chapter's further discussions

Hosting events is considered a common technique among marketers and DMOs of destinations that are experiencing an immediate or long-term image problem. These

decision-makers may pick different sorts of events to assist them in their challenging task of marketing a destination that is suffering from prejudices, generalizations, and unfavourable labelling. Kaplanidou et al. (2013) considered two different structures of event-hosting impact; "hard" and "soft". Hard structures include sports and cultural infrastructure projects, performance halls, roads, bridges, parking lot buildings, and many other projects.

The soft structures are mostly intangible advantages like government improvements, favourable media coverage, recruiting opinion leaders, and improving self-image. However, without a doubt, it is possible to include the restoration of the negative image of destinations that have faced an immediate or long-term image crisis to the list of "soft" structures.

Should any destination with a bad reputation host an event? In theory, an event can apparently assist in enhancing a destination's unfavourable image, but this is not a magical formula. Local decision-makers should keep in mind that an event might have negative implications for the inhabitants, such as crowding, traffic and parking issues, and criminality. Furthermore, it is important to remember that the choice to host an event is influenced by the values that marketers want the destination to invoke, as well as how the event is managed.

The "strategic approach" (Avraham & Ketter, 2012) appears to be appropriate for deciding whether or not to host an event and how to conduct it. However, as previously said, sponsoring an event is only suggested if it supports the authentic values that the destination's marketers aim to inspire; otherwise, it is a waste of time and resources (K. Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007).

At the same time, hosting an event must be done in a quiet professional way; otherwise, the destination's reputation may be further degraded or deluded. Tanzania, for example, has welcomed US President Barack Obama. The visit received widespread worldwide publicity and helped to improve Tanzania's image, which saw a boom in tourism in 2013. However, the media reported a few days following the visit that litter and pollution had returned to the streets and beaches of Dar-es-Salaam, which had been cleaned for a visit. Such information might jeopardize the country's efforts to repair its image following the visit (Maziku, 2013).

The bottom line is that destination marketers who would like to host an event should do

it in the best possible way. Moreover, they must ensure that the events promote the destination's actual deep-rooted authentic values, not simply superficial glitter; otherwise, an event may boost the destination's image for a short time, but this may not stay long.

The following are the four key topics that emerged from this literature review: For instance, cultural events are part of a larger local economic development policy framework but have many other impacts on destinations. Second, while sponsoring (large-scale) cultural events can effectively generate economic growth, projections of possible economic activity are frequently overstated, and negative social consequences are neglected to justify hosting such an event. In the context of smaller-scale events, particularly at different destinations, little is known or understood about these difficulties. Finally, there is a focus on the bigger scale in urban academic research, whether massive urban agglomerations or large-scale event impacts, which causes academics to neglect the smaller scale. The current chapter combines all of these features, using the opportunity to generate new empirical research.

Third, hosting an event is not a magical formula and cannot change all the negative images of the destination. Finally, DMOs and the decision-makers need to have a comprehensive view of the situation in order to host an event and try to understand what kind of events will bring tourists to their destination. Is it the question of authenticity, innovation, or just copying any successful model?

## 6.6. Chapter Conclusion

Every event has impacts (T. Hall, 1997) and is following a goal, and hence intended, desired, and predicted (and, on rare occasions, unforeseen) results. This, in turn, influences host communities, participants, and other stakeholders who are "impacted" by the results of events, as Getz (2007, p. 300) puts it. Indeed, the anticipated advantages of events, whether economic, social, cultural, political, or environmental, are the primary motivator for their support and growing popularity on a local, national, and international scale.

The research of event impacts is also ignored, favouring larger-scale events, but investigating smaller-scale impacts can provide a distinct perspective. They also need far less preparation than larger-scale events and can significantly impact local communities.

Tindall (2011) argues that when economic advantages are interpreted in a relative manner, apparently, small events at destinations can be seen as economically significant. In other words, while the economic consequences of smaller cultural events may appear insignificant when compared to the economic impact of a mega-event, they make a lot more sense when seen from the perspective of a small destination. As a result, studying local socio-cultural events should not be ignored.

The findings suggest that not all events contribute to promoting a destination in its country or in the international tourism market; accordingly, local policymakers and DMOs need to carefully consider their reasons for wishing to host such events at their destinations.

A cultural event's success in one destination does not ensure that it will be successful in another. Conflicts over intended, perceived, and absolute authenticity have an impact on the quality of the experience and, as a result, on the intangible value. For example, it is possible to compare the light Festival in Lyon and the one in Montpellier, as they are at two different levels and sizes; the Lyon Festival is known internationally, but the Montpellier festival (as a copy of the Lyon festival) is still young and far from the original copy. According to this chapter's case studies, socio-cultural events can deliver a pleasurable experience, but they are unlikely to result in considerable increases in tourist expenditure at destinations. Moreover, in the first case study of this chapter, it is proved that Iran did benefit from hosting the Rosewater festival in favour of improving its image and in the second case study, the participants expressed their high level of satisfaction with an innovative socio-cultural event (in a local scale) that can encourage or justify the organising expenditure.

# Chapter 7: Innovation and destinations

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## Introduction

Following the introduction of the Creative City paradigm, many cities have considered the development of creative strategies and cultural investment in capital-intensive projects as a way to stand out in a globalized world marked by increasing inter-urban rivalry.

Culture has become an increasingly significant feature of the city's tourism experience and a strategy to acquire local identity, and this notion has also infiltrated the area of tourism. "With the collapse of local manufacturing businesses and cyclical crises in government and finance," says Zukin (1997, p. 1), "with the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crises in government and finance, culture is more and more the business of cities: the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique competitive edge." Many authors believe that the growing ineffectiveness of this policy emulation strategy is contributing to the decline in staging and the emergence of a trend toward forms of tourism based on local and embedded knowledge that may provide tourists with more authentic experiences (Maitland, 2010; Pappalepore et al., 2010; Richards & Wilson, 2006; Tan et al., 2013).

Innovation and entrepreneurship provide essential value to the advancement and quality of the tourism industry, and it is a critical factors in the success of destinations (Hjalager, 2002; Weiermair, 2006; Weiermair et al., 2007). Furthermore, tourism innovation is an opportunity to differentiate the products, especially for choosing the destinations.

This chapter will discuss the definition and types of innovation and their role in improving the tourism industry at the destinations. It consists of five sections. The chapter starts with the general need for innovation. The second section follows it, "How did it first come about?" in the third section, the theoretical framework of innovations in tourism is discussed. In the fourth section, the use of innovation at destinations is explained, and the chapter will finish with a conclusion.

## 7.1. The General need for innovation

In terms of science and study and practice in tourism, developing new products and promoting innovative services is now one of the most widely explored issues. Incentives for innovation include increased national and international competitiveness, as well as market saturation. The tourism industry necessitates new services and goods (Pechlaner et al., 2006; Weiermair, 2004). In tourism, destinations that develop and supply products for visitors, creative utilization of production variables and consumer orientation are required to create unique experiences.

As a result, many new ideas or policy improvements are promptly and consistently implied at destinations to imply innovation in tourism (Peck & Theodore, 2001). However, this 'quick policy' technique has been criticized for being unproductive in the tourism sector since the rush to differentiate has frequently resulted in adopting very innovative growth ideas. According to Richards (2014, p. 119), 'adopting forms of "fast policy" and copying ideas from other "creative cities" through "policy tourism", the result is often a form of serial reproduction, unattractive to the very tourists' cities seek to attract.'

Moreover, as many authors discussed, the growing ineffectiveness of this policy emulation strategy is contributing to a decline in staging and the emergence of a trend toward forms of tourism based on local and embedded knowledge that can provide more authentic experiences for tourists (Maitland, 2010; Pappalepore et al., 2010; Richards & Wilson, 2006; Tan et al., 2013). In this regard, Richards claims that urban tourism is shifting "towards more intangible culture and greater involvement with the destination's everyday life" (2011, p. 1255), a process that allows visitors and tourists to "escape from the serial reproduction of mass cultural tourism, offering more flexible and authentic experiences that can be co-created between host and tourist." (2011, p. 1255).

The current tourism market requires the continuous invention and supply of innovative products and services, which is critical for all key players in the industry. As a result, academics and managers should strive to establish and implement an effective innovation process in tourism destinations.

While acknowledging that tourism innovation has distinct features such as a focus on co-terminality of production and consumption, information intensity, and the complex nature

of the tourism product (C. Hall & Williams, 2020, p. 11), it is defined in terms of the generic definition of “the generation, acceptance, and implementation of new ideas, processes, products, or services” (Kanter, 1984, p. 20). “Innovation is generally characterised by everything that differs from business as usual or which represents a discontinuance of previous practice in some sense for the innovating firm,” according to Hjalager (2010, p. 2). However, Fagerberg and Mowery (2006) explain that innovation is not a new phenomenon but rather is intrinsically linked to the process of economic development through changes in society that reflect an improvement in living conditions, such as better products and services, instead of simply an economic process of wealth accumulation.

Internationalization and innovation in tourism are linked; the two pieces of literature have mostly stayed unconnected. For destinations, internationalization is very vital as they can rely on a bigger potential market. However, while internationalization is widely acknowledged as a key element and driving factor that transforms and reshapes tourism (Fayed & Fletcher, 2002; C. Johnson & Vanetti, 2005; Lanfant et al., 1995), the economic aspects have received less attention (Hjalager, 2007). Innovation theories can provide information on the forces that drive internationalization and the nature and processes of internationalization. Moreover, internationalization is an important aspect of tourism innovation, as evidenced by market circumstances, knowledge transfer, and production conditions.

The inherent mobility of tourism customers, as well as the more generalized globalization of mobility and connection, influence the uniqueness of tourism innovation. Global connectivity is one of the key drivers of innovation, mainly information availability (Mahroum et al., 2008). In a globalizing world, tourism innovation is increasingly impacted not just by the internationalization of money, managers, and entrepreneurs but also by tourists and labour. Since innovation needs information collecting and transmission, it also requires adequate resources for absorption (Zahra & George, 2002). The core components of this—structure, resources, and culture—are often equivalent in both the local and international domains.



## 7.2. How did it first come about?

The concept "innovation" incorporates terms like "renovation" and "improvement." Although classical economists of the nineteenth century (e.g., Smith, Ricardo, and Marx) prioritized the concept of technological development (technological advance), Schumpeter in 1911 (Schumpeter et al., 2002) was the first researcher to use the concept of innovation in his book titled "The Theory of Economic Development." In the literature, innovation refers to a product that is not yet known by customers and product adjustments and different qualities. Schumpeter's innovation theory is an excellent place to start (Alsos et al., 2014). According to the concept, innovation is defined as the process of finding, developing, enhancing, accepting, and commercializing new processes, products, organizational structures, and procedures (Hjalager, 2002, 2010; Nordin, 2003). Schumpeter (1934, p. 98) looked at innovation in terms of:

"(1) The introduction of a new good...or of a new quality of a good. (2) The introduction of a new method of production, .... (3) The opening of a new market,.... (4) The conquest of a new source of supply of raw materials or half-manufactured goods.... (5) The carrying out of the new organization of any industry, like the creation of a monopoly position...or the breaking up of a monopoly position."

These types of innovation are explained as:

- Product and service innovation is defined as an innovation strategy that allows modern organizations to grow, sustain, and compete by improving the features of existing goods and services and bringing them to the market in a better and different way (Hart, 1996; Johne, 1999). This form of innovation is essential for developing, differentiating, and improving the product's intended function, which may then be customized to other markets before being launched (Hjalager, 2002). Service innovation is described as a strategy applied to obtain a competitive advantage that comprises actions designed to meet the ever-changing needs of customers (Faria & Gomes, 2016). Increasing the quality of services supplied and gaining a competitive edge in existing markets underline the relevance of service innovation (Hussain et al., 2016). Service innovation is also critical for improving corporate quality and productivity, as well as generating new service designs and solutions to improve operational performance (Z. Jian & Zhou, 2015; MiYoung & HaeMoon, 1998). To preserve the enterprise's competitive edge in the market,

Tian (2016) claimed that service innovation necessitates the development of new service activities or upgrading current services to fulfil the demands of both employees and suppliers.

- **Process innovation** is defined as the emergence of new ideas to solve an issue in manufacturing procedures (Ottenbacher & Gnoth, 2005). It is also thought of as a new way of cutting expenses and enhancing productivity in a business. For example, Avermaete (2003) addresses the whole production chain to successfully provide products or services to the market and increase the quality of the product offered.
- **Market innovation** or opening of a new market (the market for which a branch of the industry was not yet represented) is a market into which the particular branch of manufacture of the country in question has not previously entered, whether or not this market has existed before. Alternatively, it can be the improvement of the mix of target markets and of the way in which these are served. It refers to new markets and the new distribution process in foreign and local markets. Destinations need to understand their markets, conduct research about them, find out about the potential customers, develop a market proposition, develop a marketing plan, launch the product, and measure their marketing success (Schumpeter, 1934).
- **Input innovation:** acquiring new supply sources of raw material or semi-finished goods. This is the conquest of a new source of supply of raw materials or half-manufactured goods, irrespective of whether this source already exists or whether it has first been created (Schumpeter, 1934).
- **Organizational innovation:** Damanpour (1989); Caroli and Van Reenen (2001); Grenan (2003); Fagerberg and Mowery (2006) describe organizational innovation as methods applied to make competitive advantage durable, to increase product quality, and to strengthen external relations activities. According to Armbruster et al. (2008), organizational innovation is not a technical process; however, the OECD (2005) considers processes in an organization's business operations to be modifying the business structure. In conclusion, organizational innovation refers to all of a company's efforts to obtain a competitive advantage (Damanpour et al., 1989; Greenan, 2003; Piva & Vivarelli, 2002). Kimberly

(1981) confined the scope of management innovation to managers and their activities. The decision-making stages of the change process were recognised as management innovation by Kimberly (1981), who stressed that the decision-making party is the managers. At the same time, management innovation is regarded as embracing everything that causes change since it strives to develop existing management practices in line with corporate goals (G. Hamel & Bren, 2007). Bernhut (2001) asserted that management innovation would help firms maintain their competitive edge in the market by breaking away from traditional management ideas. In conclusion, management innovation is a type of management that allows procedures, work structures, and strategies to focus on efficiency by integrating administrative system improvements into an inventive activity (Damanpour & Aravind, 2012; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Vaccaro et al., 2012; Walker et al., 2010). According to Lynch (2007), management innovation is a catalyst for establishing and maintaining connections with other stakeholders who surround a firm.

### 7.3. The theoretical framework of innovations in tourism

Schumpeter's economic development theory of innovation provides research grounds (1934). Dosi (1988) and Landau and Rosenberg (1986), who concentrated on applying innovations in industries and patents, synthesized earlier literary sources of innovation. Since the 1980s, the literature has focused on intellectual production innovation, whereas services with significant potential have received less attention (OECD, 2005). Empirical examinations of tourism developments focused on specific foreign authors (Hjalager, 2002). Creativity is required for innovation, and this creativity is used to develop new ideas, techniques, and inventions.

Since innovation is defined as “the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service) or process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization or external relations” (OECD, 2005, p. 46), within tourism destinations, such innovation comprises a variety of product, service, and experience offering (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Hjalager, 2010), as well as marketing and relationship-building enhancements (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Ottenbacher & Gnoth, 2005).

In tourism, the Schumpeter approach to innovation has been used frequently as Schumpeter (Schumpeter, 1934) distinguished five types of innovation: products (e.g. new hotel services or new attractions in a destination); methods of production (e.g. identifying new customer segments or improvements in tour guiding that improve the efficiency and quality of the tourist experience); sources of supply (e.g. diversifying to new niche tour operators); new markets (e.g. redirecting existing destination brands to cater for new markets); and new ways to organize the business.

However, Hall (2009) lists four categories of innovation by the OECD. Based on Schumpeter's original work, Hjalager (1997) developed the fundamental classification of innovation, which was somewhat modified by Weiermair (2004). The four basic types of innovations are product, process, organizational or management, and market innovations. According to the OECD (2005), defining distinct types of innovations can be challenging since they are frequently combined with numerous forms of innovation in one field, fostering creativity in adjacent areas.

1. Product and service innovations refer to developments that are immediately witnessed by customers and are regarded as novel to a particular company. From the customer's perspective, these elements have an impact on their purchasing decisions. Some research has looked at how the hotel sector differentiates innovation from the perspective of various services, such as food and beverage, animation, wellness, and so on. The light festivals can be considered a great example of the product innovation discussed in the previous chapter, and also gamification can be another example of service innovation at destinations.
2. Process innovations are improvements aimed at increasing efficiency and production. Technology investment is a critical component of these breakthroughs, and it is sometimes combined with reengineering organizational structures. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are critical for numerous process improvements and many research themes, according to Buhalis and Law (2008). The implementation of information and communication technology can boost the productivity of tourist businesses (ICT). With the enhancement of skills and human resource management, combining the use of ICT with other strategic and managerial factors is successful. This technology provides quicker and better preparation procedures, as well as conserving people and energy, reducing waste, providing speedier services, and increasing

flexibility.

3. Management innovation refers to innovative ways of internal collaboration organization, people management and task delegation, employee career prospects, and remuneration. The critical issue in this sector is retaining skilled employees, maintaining flexibility, and keeping costs under control. Employee satisfaction with the workplace may improve as a result of management innovation, as well as internal capabilities and knowledge. The authors (M.-L. Hu et al., 2009) underline the need to develop "team spirit" as a requirement for continued service development. Further, Gupta and Dripping (2000) identify "customer management" as a target group for management innovation. They characterize the new experience as a service in which the customer's engagement in the provision is required. In the tourism context, management innovation can also be seen at destinations. Destinations declare their actions to be creative and innovative by reaching new market groups or redirecting communication to improve the brand impression. Implementing a new marketing strategy may spark new ideas and foster new relationships between the destination and tourists. The establishment of initiatives to increase tourist loyalty is a good example. Small destinations can compete on an equal basis with larger destinations when it comes to presenting their offerings, thanks to the internet. In terms of visits, social networking has a far greater impact than traditional marketing communication. The merging of brands might also be considered a kind of marketing innovation.

Wine-producing areas are an example of how all stakeholders in the region may create a single marketing brand. Other examples of innovation in tourism are the new socio-cultural events that can bring tourists to destinations. Innovation entails rekindling relationships with media members, particularly through international journalists covering scheduled events. Cooking classes and events with well-known chefs are one example. Such events have the potential to become a region's main draw.

4. Institutional innovation refers to a new organizational structure that embodies the cooperative principle or a new organizational structure in the destination. The issue of forming corporate networks and alliances has gotten much interest from researchers. In terms of allocating quality marks, as well as inspection and promotion, company certification represents a clear institutional innovation.

## 7.4. The use of innovation in destinations

Destinations are competing for tourists and are trying to cope with ever-changing social and economic factors of market demand; thus, innovation is their only option to succeed (Hjalager, 2002; Weiermair, 2006; Weiermair et al., 2007). Such innovation relies on the flow of information via the official and informal network connections that link companies within and throughout destinations (Beckenbach et al., 2007; Ness et al., 2013; Shaw & Williams, 2009). However, firm-level factors such as heterogeneity of knowledge among enterprises (Rodan & Galunic, 2004), leadership pledges to innovation and cooperation (Zach, 2013), and the quality of connections between innovation partners.

Both company-level factors (such as professionalism) and companies' engagement in networks inside and outside destinations have been related to tourism firm innovation (Sundbo et al., 2007). Denicolai et al. (2010), for example, used cluster analysis to discover that the most dynamic and innovative firms within a destination were those that actively developed trusting relationships with other firms and leveraged the knowledge available through their informal networks. Aarstad et al. (2015) found that combining innovation strategy with uncertainty assessment leads to the construction of "shortcut" connections that improve information flow and innovation.

Accordingly, firms and other organizations in destinations co-create the destination's meaning and image (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2010); consistent innovation is critical both when competing with other businesses within the destination and when collaborating to compete with other destinations for highly mobile tourists (Hjalager, 2010). Although this requires modifying tourism products and services to enhance the visitor experience, innovation requires a higher level of knowledge and abilities than traditional tourism (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003).

The tourism industry has benefited from innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly through alternative tourism offers (e.g. eco-tourism and cultural tourism) (Bardolet & Sheldon, 2008; Cawley & Gillmor, 2008; Getz & Carlsen, 2000). Tourists are increasingly reacting to and demanding unique products and creative ideas that improve the quality of their experiences and happiness while also boosting destinations and local communities (Bardolet & Sheldon, 2008; Cawley & Gillmor, 2008; Getz & Carlsen, 2000).

Accordingly, hosting innovative events is a good motivator for both tourists and DMOs at the destination. Regular and repetitive events may not be interesting to return to twice, or sometimes better copies will emerge at rival destinations. Thus, innovative events will come in handy in terms of attracting both new and previous visitors. New tourists who sometimes are looking for uniqueness can enjoy these innovative ones, and the second group (who have already visited the destination) are curious to return and find out about the newness in the events. This is how DMOs can enjoy branding their destinations and improving their image while gaining financial benefits by hosting the events.

Innovation and entrepreneurship at the destinations, among other factors, will link tourism benefits into the local economy and encourage the development of local enterprises, resulting in creating job opportunities and more employment (Ashley & Haysom, 2006; Gurel et al., 2010). However, the practice of entrepreneurship and innovation in tourism differs significantly between developed and developing countries due to a lack of financial support for SMEs (Booyens & Rogerson, 2017). It is true that developing countries do not have the same financial potential as developed countries in terms of practising entrepreneurship and innovation, yet they can have the most innovative examples and still benefit the same.

Because of the fragmentation of a large number of stakeholders in tourism development at destinations, applying innovation at destinations is considerably more challenging than applying innovation in tourism businesses. The innovation process emphasizes their connection even further. Driving innovation in tourism destinations is one of the most important variables affecting the destination's long-term viability. The reasons for the introduction of innovations might vary. An unexpected drop in the number of tourists may push managers and decision-makers to take action and develop different tactics and strategies to address the situation. On the other hand, completing the goals might act as a catalyst for the introduction of new ideas. Product innovations, as well as management innovations, are the most common innovations in tourism destinations.

## 7.5. Conclusion

Many researchers define innovation as a collection of successful individual and organizational activities that begin with new ideas and continue until the ideas are commercialized; however, there is no comprehensive agreement on the definition of innovation in the literature (C.-J. Chen & Huang, 2009; Dosi, 1988; Gomezelj, 2016; C. Hall, 2009; Hjalager, 2002; Isik et al., 2019; Jacob et al., 2003; Novelli et al., 2006; Reddy, 2002; Rodriguez et al., 2014; Rogers, 1983; A. M. Williams & Shaw, 2011). When looking at the literature, it is clear that innovation is a critical aspect in ensuring the long-term viability of businesses and acquiring a competitive advantage, especial for destinations in the tourism industry (Bettis & Hitt, 1995; Voss, 1994).

The importance of innovation is emphasized by researchers, who point to changes in customer demands, as well as social and economic factors (Hjalager, 2015). As a result, improving destinations' innovation skills is a key priority for providing steady and durable competitiveness in a changing context of tourism (Sharif & Huang, 2010). One of the most important requirements for long-term success, development, resource expansion, and sustainability is innovation (Jimenez-Jimenez & Sanz Valle, 2011). Even if the tourism industry is not a pioneer in terms of innovation, it makes quick use of new ideas and information and adapts them to the industry (Hjalager, 2015). When studying the link between tourism and innovation, it is clear that the advances in the sectors of business (Martin, 2004; Poon, 1988) and management are significant (Jafari, 1981).

In order to better understand the connection between tourism and innovation, it is necessary to look at the structure and economic implications of the tourism industry at destinations. The government has focused its emphasis on tourism because of its economic contributions rather than its socio-cultural consequences. Accordingly, different policies were adopted for different destinations.

Tourism policy is a vital topic in research, and the function of local, national, and supranational governmental entities is becoming more well-known. For example, the state's role as coordinators, planners, lawmakers, regulators, sponsors, stimulators, promoters, and protectors is embraced by Rodrigues et al.(2014). In addition, Hjalager et al. (2008) describe public agents' more inclusive and interactive roles in innovation systems, such as combining educational resources with commercial partners, facilitating intellectual property trade, acting as "intelligent consumers," facilitating knowledge spill-



overs and so on.

Businesses that differentiate their product profiles are more successful than those that do not, but this advantage is amplified if there is subsequent human capital development, as Walsh et al. (2003) demonstrate. This issue can be the same for destinations in the tourism industry. At the destination level, governmental interventions might also include more typical risk-financing, networking, and incubation facilities for new businesses and initiatives (Decelle, 2006). The influence of public policy on tourist innovation, whether direct or indirect, intended or inadvertent, is a growing area of study interest. However, most of the literature on tourist innovation strategies is conceptual or prescriptive, with only occasional proof of its effects and efficacy.

It has long been asserted that key tourist actors have limited innovation resources. On the other hand, tourism innovation occurs in more complicated supply chains, where visitors' requirements are collected and handled by producers of physical artefacts, which will later reappear in the tourism sector as service innovations. Some cosmetics companies, for example, are extensively integrating with the wellness business, where they may influence the image and sales of perfumes, skincare products, new age musical records, and so on (H. Mair, 2005). As a result, spillover and spill-back impacts to the providing industries occur (OECD, 2005), mainly compensating for the lack of innovation capabilities in tourism and vice versa.

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing sectors, which explains why it is prominent. These assessments highlight the importance of the tourism industry in both economic and regional development. It is critical for the tourism sector and destinations to innovate to achieve long-term growth and development (Greve & Taylor, 2000). The excellent practices have been brought to attention by the successful innovative events at the destinations. Every sector requires innovation and new services to ensure growth and sustainability (Peters & Pikkemaat, 2006). Otherwise, it will cease to be a desirable industry, stagnating and resulting in an economic downturn. This condition may cause the tourism entrepreneurs, and hence the consumer, to get distracted from the market. It requires measures that foster innovation in order to preserve its competitiveness in the global tourism sector (OECD, 2010). In the following chapter, gamification will be introduced as one of the examples of innovations in the tourism industry and how this new innovation can help destinations.

## Chapter 8: Gamification and destinations

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### Introduction

Globalisation, communication, mobility, and virtuality have been highlighted as the four dominating themes in our current society and economy, and as a result, innovations in information and communication technologies (ICT) are transforming and revolutionizing our world (Buhalis & Egger, 2008). These innovations have mostly been used to advancements in mobile technology in tourism. However, not all destinations are technologically advanced to the same extent.

The development of "smart tourism destinations" is the topic of most of the existing literature on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in tourism (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015). Although this body of knowledge is still in its development, it is expanding, and a variety of new study subjects are arising. Within this body of research, for example, an emerging strand analysis the use of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) in the gamification of ICT-enabled destinations.

Gamification has been used in various industries, including education, health care, medical, and military services, as a new sort of marketing tool (Zichermann & Linder, 2010). Gamification differs from traditional business strategies and models in that it emphasizes players' pleasure of immersive experiences with the goal of increasing brand awareness and loyalty to the game through consumers' active engagement (F. Xu et al., 2013)

According to Pine and Gilmore (2013), travellers who interact actively on different levels (emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual) have a more meaningful and personal experience (Jennings et al., 2009) and based on several studies; gamification can be a new prominent trend in marketing for destinations (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Shen et al., 2020; F. Xu & Li, 2021). Through technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and human-computer interaction, gamification may enhance travellers' on-site experiences by adding fantasy and excitement, the same as experiential marketing that can stimulate tourists' curiosity (V. T. C. Middleton et al., 2009). This provides tourists with a more immersive experience and enhances user engagement, all of which may lead to the formation of positive opinions toward the destination (F. Xu & Li, 2021). As one of the good examples of innovation, gamification and its function in the tourism industry

will be introduced and also the future need for destinations to employ it will be discussed.

This chapter consists of four main sections. The first section discusses the concept of gamification. This is followed by serious games and persuasive technology in section two. In section three, “games, gamification and serious games: How do they differ?” will be discussed. The chapter will continue by discussing the Gamification trend in tourism in section four, and finally, the chapter will be finished with a conclusion.

## 8.1. The concept of gamification

While various terms like “serious games”, “game-based learning”, and “pervasive games” have been used, there is no comprehensive definition of gamification (Bogost, 2010; Kapp, 2012; Seaborn & Fels, 2015); however, the broad definition proposed by Deterding et al. (2011), which includes the use of game design in fields other than pure entertainment, is generally accepted. In that regard, Uskov and Sekar (2014) emphasize the importance of game thinking and gaming mechanisms in influencing and changing users' behaviour, experience, engagement, and efficiency as well.

While games are just entertainment, researchers suggest that gamification focuses on changing players' potential behaviour (Deterding et al., 2011; F. Xu & Li, 2021; Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011). Nonetheless, both games and gamification must be enjoyable (Azadegan & Riedel, 2012). According to Kapp (2012), games are divided into “structural” and “content” in gamification. Structural gamification does not employ stories but uses rewards to motivate players in order to complete the objectives. In contrast, content gamification does so by using stories to increase engagement, as gamification is about influencing user behaviour through game design.

As Deterding et al. (2011, p. 10) explain, “gamification involves applying elements of gamefulness, gameful interaction, and gameful design with a specific intention in mind”. Seaborn and Fels (2015, p. 16) further suggest, “gamefulness refers to the lived experience, gameful interaction refers to the objects, tools and contexts, and gameful design refers to the practice of crafting a gameful experience”. Designing a treasure hunt in a tourism destination, for example, may encourage people to explore different regions and gather points, images, memories, and experiences. However, there will likely be no victors or losers as gamification may or may not result in a fully-fledged game, and players may employ it in a variety of different ways.

### 8.1.1. *Gamification?*

Deterding et al. (2011) definition is the most frequently accepted, referring to gamification as the contextualization of game design outside of its original domain. From a systematic approach, the MDA model (Mechanics-Dynamics-Aesthetics) could well be used to explain the game design. It divides game systems into three categories: mechanics,

dynamics, and aesthetics, all of which work together to generate functional and hedonistic value in gameplay and impact the player's experience (Hunicke et al., 2004). According to Palmer et al. (2012, p. 54), gamification is about “taking the essence of games – fun, play, transparency, design and challenge – and applying it to real-world objectives rather than pure entertainment.”

Hunicke et al. (2004) mentioned game mechanics are “game tools that explain the specific components, which commonly include achievements, collections, badges, and so on.” Game dynamics link the player with the system, such as the flexibility to make decisions, progression to the next level, teamwork, or competition with other players. Serious games frequently contain competitions against other players as part of the gaming experience, whilst often focusing on the individual experience. Game dynamics work together to create a meaningful game experience, or in other words, aesthetics (Werbach & Hunter, 2012).

Feelings (fantasy, sensation), emotions, and fun are all examples of aesthetic responses from the player. The MDA contributes to a variety of relevant gaming experiences. Players' perceptions of gameplay are impacted by game dynamics, which game mechanics influence. From another perspective, game designers may construct game dynamics using a collection of well-developed game mechanics, resulting in unique gaming experiences for players.

By employing game mechanics outside of the usual gaming context, Zichermann and Cunningham (2011) claim that gamification develops a brand, engages people and changes their behaviour or knowledge. According to Deterding et al. (2011, p. 10), “gamification involves applying elements of gamefulness, gameful interaction, and gameful design with a specific intention in mind”. Designing a treasure hunt at destinations was a good example that was discussed previously.

Gamification is considered as the process of applying games to achieve a certain goal, such as users' engagement and influencing their behaviour (Deterding et al., 2011; Xi & Hamari, 2019). Therefore, it has been regarded as a viable tourist marketing strategy that engages customers in promoting tourism destinations. Tourists play serious games to learn about the areas they visit and to have a memorable experience while having fun (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Bulencea et al., 2015; Elmi et al., 2018; F. Xu et al., 2017). Furthermore, gamification can provide significant potential benefits for brand awareness

and loyalty to the destinations (F. Xu et al., 2017).

Gamification demands the development of funwares, which are game mechanics used to drive desired user behaviours and build customer loyalty. Game mechanics are rule-based systems/simulations that enable and encourage a user to explore and learn the properties of their space by generating intrinsic (i.e. motivation that comes from within) and extrinsic (i.e. motivation that is motivated to do something because of the expected outcome) motivational affordances (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Hamari et al., 2014).

It is possible to group all the examples of game mechanics into three different categories:

- 1- Behavioural (e.g. discovery/exploration, ownership, community collaboration, lottery, virality, status, story/theme);
- 2- Feedback (e.g. bonuses, countdown, reward schedules);
- 3- And progress (e.g. achievements/badges, levels, redeemable or social points, progress bar, challenge) (Yee, 2007).

## 8.2. Serious Games and Persuasive Technology

Through the notion of “co-creation,” technology improves tourism experiences as persuasive technology is becoming more common in our daily lives (Bogost, 2010; Fan et al., 2015; Neuhofer et al., 2013; Shuib et al., 2015). In addition, serious games and the use of game elements have recently attracted attention from a variety of disciplines, including education, health, and tourism, resulting in their adoption in non-gaming contexts (Shen et al., 2020; F. Xu et al., 2017).

Game elements include game dynamics, mechanics, and components (Seaborn & Fels, 2015; Werbach & Hunter, 2012). Zichermann and Cunningham (2011) offered a set of game elements such as presents, collection, achievement, teamwork, feedback, and so on; however, other scholars, on the other hand, have argued whether these elements are crucial (Robertson, 2010). According to some academics, achievements, avatars, badges, leader boards, levels, points, teamwork, unlocking, and virtual goods are all frequent gaming elements (Robertson, 2010; F. Xu et al., 2017).

Serious games such as video games have a set of cognitive design qualities and persuasive

technology. They alter user behaviour and transmit knowledge rather than just offering enjoyment like traditional games (Ghanbari et al., 2015). In the last decade, serious games have been widely employed in training, medical applications, and recreational activities (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2008). According to Xu et al. (2015), Serious games might collect data on customers by evaluating their behaviour patterns, mental processes, priorities, and interests. In addition, serious games often employ gaming technology and approaches to engage users on a deeper level and enhance their performance. Boyle et al. (2012), after reviewing 143 publications on games and serious games, assert that serious games generally link to knowledge and skill development and contribute to more remarkable performance.

### *8.2.1. Games*

Voluntary involvement, definite rules, multiple parties, possible conflicts, and frequently uneven results are all game features, according to Avedon and Sutton-Smith (1971). Despite the fact that numerous definitions have been used, researchers agree that games may be defined by a collection of characteristics such as voluntary play, structure, rules, unpredictable outcomes, conflict, representation, resolution, and so on (Juul, 2003; Seaborn & Fels, 2015; Tekinbas & Zimmerman, 2003). For example, competition and collaboration between different parties and players, as well as the game system itself, are all examples of conflict (F. Xu et al., 2013), while winning, losing, or scoring against the game's goals or other players are all examples of uncertain outcomes (Crawford, 1997) by considering the limits and directions of the games that are introduced as the rules (Huizinga, 1998).

Some games feature a chance aspect, with a random value deciding the next step in the process, while others are driven by player desire, knowledge, skill, or teamwork. Players are encouraged to achieve more significant goals, earn points against each other, and obtain either material or non-material rewards, such as induction into a hall of fame, in gaming, which may be quite addictive (McGonigal, 2011).

### 8.2.2. *Gaming motivations*

In gamification, motivation is essential and extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are known as the common gaming motives. Intrinsic motivations are frequently linked to inherent satisfaction as well as the desire to learn or achieve self-actualization (S. L. Brown, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 1985). In contrast, extrinsic motives relate to external rewards such as material (e.g. financial) or psychological (e.g. praise) rewards (L. V. Brown, 2007). Rewards are an essential component of the gaming mechanism. In-game rewards, such as points, badges, leaderboards, unlocking options, virtual gifts, and so on, are examples of internal rewards. However, external rewards are tied to the actual world, such as real gifts and chances to win money or a lottery (Deterding et al., 2011). Thus, it is vital to combine external and internal rewards in order to boost a player's engagement (Zichermann, 2011).

According to Seaborn and Fels (2015), if a game relies largely on external benefits, players may ignore their gaming experiences and enjoyment; moreover, players will stop playing the game once the external rewards end. As a result, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are essential (Crawford, 1997; F. Xu et al., 2013). Based on the research findings, players' primary motivation for playing games is pure entertainment, such as enjoyment, passing the time, and so on. Xu et al. (2016), however, on the other hand, uncover different motives for tourist players, claiming that purposive information seeking and socializing are considered as major reasons. Overall, it is possible to mention that gaming experiences are frequently associated with happiness, enjoyment, immersion, and flow (Aebli, 2019; Ermi & Mäyrä, 2005).

### 8.3. **Games, gamification and serious games: How do they differ?**

The goal of the play is different in gamification than it is in games, as gamification focuses on influencing players' behaviour, their engagement with the environment, and co-players, who might be fellow consumers/customers or service providers, in order to achieve meaningful interactions and engagement, as well as the opportunity to collect points or gaining rewards. On the other hand, games put more emphasis on fun and enjoyment (Seaborn & Fels, 2015).

This can make distinguishing between the concepts of “games” and “gamification” even more challenging. Serious games frequently aim to influence and change the user's



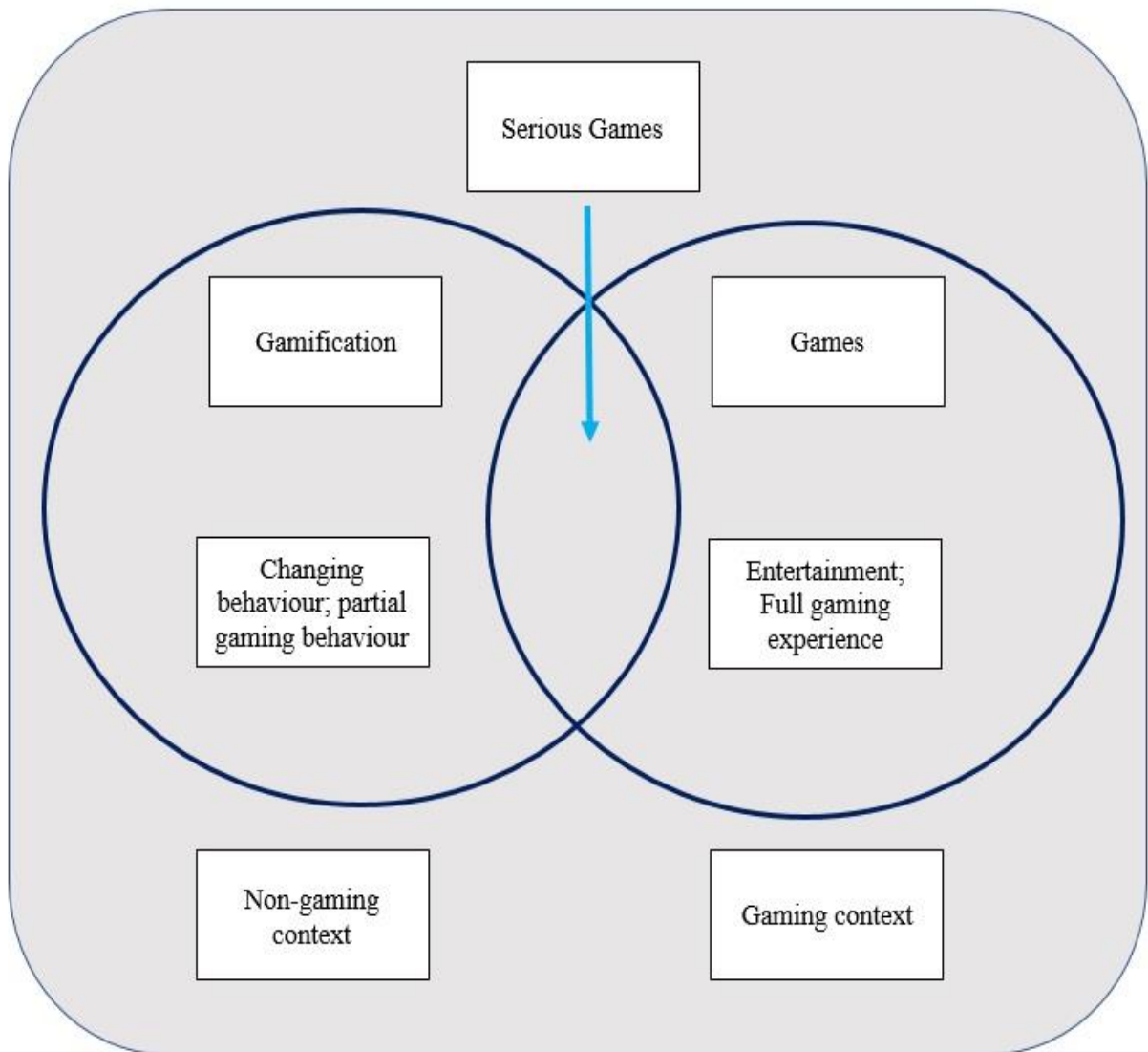
behaviour. Because reality has been inserted into the fantasy realm, researchers refer to these serious games as “alternative reality games” (McGonigal, 2011; Seaborn & Fels, 2015). More academic clarification is needed on the inconsistent use of terminology, notably on how to distinguish gamified systems from full-fledged games.

Gamefulness refers to the lived experience, gameful interaction refers to the objects, tools, and contexts, and gameful design refers to the activity of constructing a gameful experience, according to Seaborn and Fels (2015, p. 16). As a game may have multiple purposes and players may employ it in different ways, the ultimate outcome varies. Similarly, gamification is the process of encouraging and inspiring individuals to do structured actions and follow particular rules to accomplish different results (Deterding et al., 2011).

The following are the primary similarities and distinctions between serious games and gamification: They are both made for more important goals than pure enjoyment, such as educating, motivating, and/or persuading people in educational, health, tourism, and other contexts. Moreover, because both employ games (or considerable game elements) to teach and modify patterns of experience and/or behaviour, the two concepts are frequently used interchangeably (Fleming et al., 2017).

The primary distinctions are whether players use the entire game or just a few gameplay features, as well as whether or not to use it outside of a gaming context (game context, in general, is about when, where, and how people feel and which devices they use). Serious games are still games, and as a result, they offer a complete gaming experience. On the other hand, gamification is the employment of game features in non-gaming contexts (anything other than the actual game, such as school, business, school, personal improvement and etc.). Gamification may not be a full game experience, but it includes gaming aspects like a point system, in-game rewards, and quests (Fleming et al., 2017). Serious games and gamification are both intended for serious purposes, whereas games are mainly intended for pure enjoyment. Serious games are still games since they give complete gaming experiences, whereas gamification emphasizes the use of the gaming mechanism outside of the gameplay environment and hence may not deliver the whole gaming experience (see Figure 34).

**Figure 34: Games, gamification and serious games**



Source: (F. Xu & Buhalis, 2021)

### *8.3.1. Game Mechanics*

The terms games and gamification are frequently mistaken; while the primary goal of games is to entertain, gamification aims to encourage individuals to change their behaviours, develop new abilities and skills, or engage in innovation (Post, 2014). Gamification, or the use of game mechanics such as points and badges to reward users in non-game contexts, can become a core strategy for numerous businesses.

Some argue that gamification has been defined too narrowly, concentrating solely on the

motivating force of competition and achievement (Warmelink, 2013). This includes the implementation of rewards, challenges, and contests, prompting many gamification enthusiasts to implement scoring systems, badges, and leaderboards among customers (marketing efforts) or employees (human resources management), demonstrating a lack of understanding of common game characteristics (Warmelink, 2013).

Games focus on ensuring and reinforcing those sensations by including reward systems that quickly recognise players' accomplishments, such as awarding points, trophies, or objects for completing tasks. When players fail, they are supposed to experience anxiety, which is understandable to some extent but undesirable when it emerges as frustration (Dominguez et al., 2013). Through badge and reward systems (a component of gamification called “pontification”) gamification may be used to encourage behaviour (Hanus & Fox, 2015).

However, over the last decade or so, tech-savvy firms have begun to explore, adapt, and refine game mechanics in order to develop complex methods and achieve greater performance from their staff, as well as drive desirable customer behaviour (Strohmeier, 2013). A creative designer might add a variety of game mechanics into a gamified system, especially since technology has launched games beyond the console and into the hands of the public, with games like Angry Birds, Farmville Pokémon, and Words with Friends.

The five most common game mechanics are:

- 1- **Points** (often used to reward performance and compare a user's achievement to that of others for motivational purposes).
- 2- **Badges** (ranging from easy to nearly impossible to earn).
- 3- **Levels** (promote users to level up and receive bigger discounts or more benefits as they become more loyal customers).
- 4- **Leaderboards** (motivate and encourage users to become players)
- 5- **Challenges** (These can range from basic to complicated, and they frequently entail community engagement or group play)(Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011).

Game mechanics are not a solution in and of themselves. According to Strohmeier (2013), companies interested in implementing game mechanics into their business should focus on the following five principles:

- 1- Set tangible and measurable goals.
- 2- Focus on things people already like to do (reward an existing behaviour).
- 3- Measure the changes (monitor the intended behaviour before and after gamification to see if the gamification is effective).
- 4- Reward incremental progress (when people are rewarded for making little steps toward greater goals, they are more likely to keep going).
- 5- And make it social by allowing people to share their successes and badges, which gives their accomplishments more meaning and importance.

Examples of gamification mechanics applications in other industries include the Nike+ platform, Samsung, and Apple watch fitness apps that engage fitness enthusiasts to take their workouts to the next level (Kuo, 2014).

### 8.3.2. *Game Thinking*

People can be led to perform something by internal or external motivation; thus, effective gamification is based on motivation (Post, 2014). Gamification is the use of game metaphors to affect behaviour, boost motivation, and increase engagement in real-world tasks (Marczewski, 2014). Modern video games rely on advanced psychology and neurochemistry to determine what keeps players returning to the game (Post, 2014). For example, in a worker's limbic system, a well-structured recognition system based on feedback, friends, and fun may generate a Las Vegas-style ambience, activating the amygdala and conditioning the brain to pursue ever-greater acts of sales accomplishment (Strohmeier, 2013).

Wu (2011), when discussing the science and psychology of gamification, indicated that the purpose of game dynamics is to promote user-desired behaviour reliably. As a result, understanding human behaviour is required to understand game dynamics. According to Chou (2020), the “human-focused design” that is opposed to the “function-focused design” can be a critical aspect of gamification. This is because people in the system have emotions, insecurities, and reasons for preferring or not wanting to accomplish things; therefore, the human-focused design optimizes their feelings, motivations, and engagement.

The foundation of excellent gamification design is not strong game mechanics but rather fundamental motivations. Chou (2020) proposed the Octalysis gamification framework, which looked at eight-core drives for people to perform what they do. The eight-core drives are:

- 1- **Epic meaning and calling:** a fundamental desire that motivates individuals by making them feel that they are part of something greater than themselves.
- 2- **Development and accomplishment:** This core drive suggests that people are motivated because they believe they are improving, levelling up, or achieving mastery (e.g., Nike+ displays short-term achievements to the individual, such as this week's improvement on running one more extra mile than last week, indicating that the individual is improving).
- 3- **Empowerment of creativity and feedback:** This core drive looks a lot like LEGO. It provides users with the fundamental building blocks, allowing them to exercise their creativity by experimenting with different combinations and tactics, receiving feedback, and making adjustments, resulting in a very engaging experience.
- 4- **Ownership and possession:** When people believe they own something, they want to develop it, defend it, and multiply it, according to this core drive. It is a basic motivation that drives people to collect money.
- 5- **Social influence and relatedness:** This core drive is founded on social influence incentives. One of the most effective methods to influence people's behaviour, according to some, is to show them how others are doing.
- 6- **Scarcity and impatience:** This core drive is founded on the idea that people desire something merely because they cannot have it.
- 7- **Unpredictability and curiosity:** This core drive is founded on the element of surprise; because the individual has no idea what will happen next, he or she is always anticipating it. This core drive is most commonly associated with the gambling business, although it is the same core drive that motivates individuals to complete a book or watch a film.
- 8- **Loss and avoidance:** This core drive is to do something to prevent a loss. People do not want awful things to occur.

As a result, intrinsic or extrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in gaming. Players' motivation is an area where further research is needed (R. M. Ryan et al., 2006). Given that motivation is a fundamental theme in gamification and that gamified systems are used to influence behaviour for wanted and desirable activities, gamification attempts to address intrinsic motivation by employing game-design thinking to engage people in meaningful and effective activities (F. Xu et al., 2013). Accordingly, while employing game elements and game mechanics, it is crucial to know whether or not people will be encouraged to play the game.

#### 8.4. The gamification trend in tourism

According to WTM (2011), gamification will be a prominent trend in tourism, and as Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2012) discussed, it will be a significant marketing trend as well. Gamification offers businesses a wide range of applications and support functions, such as engaging consumers in experiential co-creation and educating service providers in innovative procedures and functions. According to Seaborn and Fels (2015, p. 16), gamification has its “roots in marketing endeavours” as loyalty cards, stamp books, competition and reward membership are all early loyalty management approaches in that field which are now brought to tourism. Another example is Foursquare restaurant partners that helped game players to redeem their virtual rewards like free cupcakes and beverages by supporting check-ins (T. Frey, 2012; Pasca et al., 2021).

Researchers have recognized gaming's usefulness in increasing tourism experiences. According to Xu et al. (2017), gaming can motivate visitors to visit a destination by fostering interest and encouraging discovery and socializing while having fun. Gaming may also provide challenges and achievements to players' experiences, according to Swatch and Ittermann (2017), through leaderboards, badges, level completion, collecting points, and so on. Games' narrative nature may also inspire imagination in tourism encounters as well. Moreover, games have been shown to be effective in promoting sustainable behaviour in addition to improving tourist experiences. Buettel and Brook (2016), for example, employed the augmented reality game “Ingress” to demonstrate how gaming technology may stimulate people's interest in nature and help in ecological restoration.

Gamification has previously been used for marketing, sales, and consumer engagement by a variety of tourism destinations and organizations. Accordingly, gamification may affect user experiences in the following areas: social, emotional, and creating an immersive user experience (Hsu & Chen, 2018; Y. Xu, 2011). Furthermore, gamification could be used to enhance on-site visitor experiences (e.g., Fantasy, immersion, and fun) as well as introduce a new, unique approach to promoting and raising brand awareness.

Overall, gamification helps in proper interaction through suggested tasks/missions and links to surrounding physical locations (location-based games), challenges the tourists virtually, provides instant feedback for the tourists' accomplishments, and responds to their emotions in a fun and rewarding way before, during, and after the trip.

#### *8.4.1. Gamification in tourism*

The tourism industry is being revolutionized and disrupted by information and communication technology (ICT) (Buhalis et al., 2019) but introduces chances to improve travellers' experiences at the same time (Buhalis, 2019). It delivers a range of unique interaction options by introducing tools to co-create context-dependent experiences where location and time are critical (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015; Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Pasca et al., 2021).

The majority of current research on tourism topics addresses gamification in combination with development in AR and VR. For example, using headsets to immerse the player (virtual tourist) in an experience is a common way to include VR, while for AR, quick response (QR) codes are frequently used to guide travellers to various sites of interest at destinations (Linaza et al., 2013), although AR "technology is just on the verge of being implemented in a meaningful way in the tourism industry" (D.-I. Han et al., 2014, p. 511).

According to Liu et al. (2019) and Buhalis et al. (2019), gamification is a valuable tool for the tourism industry to encourage the development of tourist interactions, human resource management, and long-term community support for tourism. Moreover, Buhalis (2019) discussed gamification as one of the technologies that will help improve consumer satisfaction and engagement in the future.

Gamification uses gaming mechanisms in a non-traditional gaming context to generate brand recognition and encourage tourist interactions, making it popular in the tourism

industry. The tourism business may benefit from a wide range of gamification applications and support services as it may lead destinations, tour operators, and hospitality businesses to have more rewarding interactions and better levels of satisfaction, resulting in enhanced brand recognition, loyalty and improving destination image (Pasca et al., 2021; F. Xu et al., 2017).

Gamification is a worldwide phenomenon that engages customers via interactive experiences (Breidbach et al., 2014). The rise in popularity of video games over the last decade, and especially during the Covid-19, has attracted a more comprehensive range of gamers, apart from their age and gender.

As Rodrigues et al. (2019) mentioned in their study, gamified websites draw the attention of new generations and increase their desire. Furthermore, as mobile technology becomes more popular, businesses are being pushed to use gamification to engage customers and improve sales (Eisingerich et al., 2019). Thus gaming, made possible by the fast growth of smart mobile devices, enables mobile gaming experiences and lively on-site communications during their visit to destinations (Gentes et al., 2010).

As a result, worldwide organizations are using gamification in their marketing efforts (C. Zhang et al., 2017) to gather customers' data via gamified applications and social media in order to understand their customers' needs preferences and to support customer value co-creation (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Eisingerich et al., 2019).

Destination management organizations (DMOs) have adopted gamification for marketing goals. For example, some DMOs in Thailand and Germany, according to Xu et al. (2017), employ gamification to promote their tourism attractions and enhance the visiting experience of museums. In addition, certain airlines also use it to build passenger loyalty by giving them Airmiles and making it possible to spend them on buying new tickets or even staying at some hotels in different destinations (Kasurinen & Knutas, 2018).

#### *8.4.2. Gamification for destination marketing*

"Gamified" apps only need to include some (but not all) of the game design components, which sets them apart from "serious games" (the design of full-fledged games for educational purposes). Although there are many definitions of gamification, all of them emphasize creating a gameful experience by combining two elements (Sigala, 2015): a



systemic component that describes how the game is constructed/designed and an experiential component that describes how people interact with the game. Overall, the goal of gamification is to effectively motivate and direct users' behaviour, as well as to increase users' engagement with "play" tasks by employing game-like techniques (e.g. scoreboards, points, and personalized fast feedback) that make people feel more ownership, flow, and purpose when engaging with the "play" tasks (J. Lee & Hammer, 2011).

Some of the destinations are looking at new technologies and marketing, particularly regarding the potential of gamification as a tool to increase their competitiveness. Tourists are aware of the additional value of products and services, and they assume that a comprehensive experience will be provided. These visitors developed a sensitivity to mass marketing and are very individualistic. As a result, destinations began to focus on forming partnerships to help develop into competitive tourism destinations (Kachniewska, 2015).

The emergence of mobile technologies, or any technology used while the user is moving, has made it possible to be online and play anywhere. These gamified applications may raise brand visibility, attract new consumers, improve visitor experiences, and increase engagement in tourism marketing (F. Xu et al., 2016). As indicated by leading companies such as Nike, Starbucks, and Amazon, their gamifying aspects of the marketing activity are rising dramatically, and gaining significant interest in their marketing practices (Berger et al., 2018; Hamari & Keronen, 2017; Mishra & Malhotra, 2021; Thorpe & Roper, 2019).

Gamification is becoming a major business all over the world, and the worldwide gamification industry was predicted to hit \$22.9 billion by 2022 (Prescient & Strategic Intelligence, 2016). This expansion can be attributed to gamification's capacity to improve or optimize customer engagement, which is the main driver of customer loyalty (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leclercq et al., 2020; Pasca et al., 2021; K. Robson et al., 2016; Y. Yang et al., 2017) and it has been regarded as a viable marketing strategy that engages customers in promoting destinations. Tourists use serious games to learn about the areas they visit while having fun (Buhalis et al., 2019; Bulencea et al., 2015; Elmi et al., 2018; F. Xu et al., 2017). Different types of gamification in tourism can be seen in Table 23.

**Table 23: Different types of gamification in tourism**

Type of games	Characteristics	Marketing purpose of the game	Targeting segments	Examples	Developers
Fully developed tourism games	Specifically developed new games for tourism destinations can be developed by DMOs and other sectors in the tourist industries, such as airlines	Brand awareness	Potential tourists	Austria Adventure Game Happy Island	Austria National Tourism Office & Austria Airlines. Irish National Tourism Board
Partially developed tourism games	Using an existing game as a platform, input tourism brand into the existing game	Brand awareness	Potential tourists	Assassin's Creed Wanzhuan Nanjing	UBIsoft Nanjing Tourism Authority
Gamified app	Gamified mobile tour app usually borrows the idea of location-based games	Enhance on-site tourists' experiences and engagement	On-site tourists	RExplore Tripadvisor Whaiwhai travel book	Regensburg Tripadvisor Whaiwhai

Source: Adapted from Xu and Li (2021, p. 117)

Early examples of gamification included loyalty cards, stamp books, and incentive memberships (Seaborn & Fels, 2015; F. Xu et al., 2016). According to Celtek (2010) and Afshar et al. (2004), gamification is a non-intrusive means of marketing and branding

compared to traditional marketing methods because brands could be introduced in games in a less aggressive approach (Schneider & Cornwell, 2005). Negrusa et al. (2015) explain that gamification may be employed as a marketing innovation in the tourism and hospitality industries.

As it is mentioned above, there are three methods to use gamification for marketing tourism destinations:

- 1- **Fully developed tourism games:** create a whole new game based on a tourism destination. These games are often created by destination management organizations (DMOs) to increase brand awareness among potential tourists, stimulate exploration of the virtual destination, and educate potential visitors about the destination's culture. In addition, these games can be used to provide knowledge about tourist destinations. Tourists may virtually visit the site and gain important information through the game; participants can also discuss their experiences with other players, reducing the uncertainty of travelling.
- 2- **Tourism games that are only partially developed:** benefiting from an existing gaming platform, tourism adverts are inserted into the game. “Wanzhuang Nanjing”, for example, takes the current “Monopoly” gaming platform and applies the local brand of tourist attractions and restaurants. In addition, some gaming companies have previously partnered with tourist organizations; for example, in the game Assassin's Creed, the historical city of London was placed in the virtual background. Similarly, Yellow Stone National Park has been included in the virtual world of “The World of Warcraft”.
- 3- **Gamified apps:** using an existing tourism app with game thinking and game mechanisms to create fun and boost visitor participation. TripAdvisor, for example, has gamified its app to include gameplay features such as checking, points, and sharing (Sigala, 2015), as tourists can get points by checking in at various locations.

Academic study on gamification in tourism practices is beginning to emerge (Correa & Kitano, 2015; Linaza et al., 2013; Negrusa et al., 2015; Shen et al., 2020; F. Xu et al., 2013). For example, Sigala (2015) examined TripAdvisor’s gamification mechanics, demonstrating that gamification may provide travellers with a dynamic travel environment. Gamification, according to researchers, can deliver a variety of visitor

experiences, although the empirical study is still missing.

#### *8.4.3. Gamification and destinations; brand awareness and brand loyalty*

Dick and Basu (1994) describe three associated aspects of a brand: cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. Brand awareness impacts customers' decision-making processes (Campon et al., 2014). According to Keller (1993), brand recognition and recall are essential parts of brand awareness. Customers' ability to recognize a brand is referred to as brand recognition, whilst their ability to produce the brand from memory is referred to as brand recall. Gamification can be an excellent tool to measure players' brand awareness and recognition.

Brand loyalty is another important factor in decision making as Oliver (1999, p. 34) defines it as “a deeply held commitment to re-buy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour.” However, in the tourism literature, behaviour attention, such as recommending or revisiting the destination (Campon et al., 2014), has often been used to measure loyalty. In addition, positive gaming experiences may assist customers in focusing on the brand in the game, recognising and appreciating the brand (Cauberghe & De Pelsmacker, 2010; Hwang & Choi, 2020; F. Xu et al., 2013). Moreover, it offers significant potential benefits for brand awareness and loyalty at destinations (Abou-Shouk & Soliman, 2021; F. Xu et al., 2017).

According to Liu et al. (2019) and Buhalis et al. (2019), gamification is a valuable tool for the tourism industry to encourage the development of tourist interactions, human resource management, and long-term community support for tourism and reshaping destination image. Buhalis (2019) also introduces gamification as one of the technologies that will enhance consumer satisfaction and engagement with the destination through different games. Furthermore, when DMOs are trying to compete with other destinations or even planning future road maps, it is essential to think about gamification as their future customers are the connected generation who are spending much time on their smartphones.

## 8.5. Conclusion

For many years, the game industry has been tremendously successful, which has encouraged designers to apply game aspects and systems to non-game reality. Points, badges, leader boards, progress bars, and other game components assist in increasing the attractiveness of services and apps by motivating users to complete certain tasks, execute desired actions, progress, and compete with others. Because it includes both hedonic and utilitarian components, gamification impacts usefulness and simplicity of use. Moreover, the entertainment components, gamified services may improve user engagement and incentive to strive toward goals, as well as make procedures more appealing, fascinating, and pleasurable.

The advantages and mechanics of gamification may be found mainly in the technology adoption literature and human-computer interface studies. The literature on technology acceptance is a rich source of information on the impact of perceived utility, ease of use, social influence, and enjoyment on new system adoption and attitudes. However, not many studies look at the same aspects in tourism and destinations when it comes to gamified services.

Gamification has progressed beyond its role as the latest buzzword, and it is now widely discussed at academic conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals (Hamari et al., 2014; D. Liu et al., 2016; Schlagenhauer & Amberg, 2015). Despite the absence of academic study on tourism gamification, there is growing academic interest in the area; however, more research needs to be done on different aspects, such as how gamification would affect travellers' decision-making and purchasing behaviour at destinations (Bulencea et al., 2015; Correa & Kitano, 2015; Negrusa et al., 2015).

Several potentials exist to build innovative gamification concepts in a destination marketing scenario. From the standpoint of relationship marketing, consumer loyalty, and engagement, it is worthwhile to investigate the marketing results of gamification on the destination and its image. Few destinations have already applied gamification and are known as successful examples of gamified apps at the destinations, for example; The Smile Land Thailand game developed by Visit Thailand (F. Xu et al., 2017); RexPlayer, developed by Regensburg, Germany (Walz & Ballagas, 2007); the Brazil Quest game developed by Brazil (Correa & Kitano, 2015); the Whaiwhai Travel Book app; a series of Discovery Hong Kong games developed by the Hong Kong Tourist Board (Stadler &

Bilgram, 2016).

According to empirical investigations, Gamification can boost user participation in a variety of circumstances. Although gamification tends to positively influence behavioural outcome measures (Buckley et al., 2017), knowing how tourists interact with technology can help DMOs understand their needs. Moreover, gender, age, experience, and personality are all aspects that can impact motivation to play gamified apps (F. Xu et al., 2016). Therefore, destinations can implement this form of marketing in order to raise brand recognition and improve the tourists' experience and participation. Also, destinations may employ gamification as a new marketing method to deliver tourism information.

Gamification can provide a solid basis for investigating the impact of perceived mobility and product features on user experience (i.e. utilitarian and hedonic features). Perceived benefits (i.e. self-benefits and social benefits), forms of perceived value (i.e. information value, experiential value, social value, and transaction value), and brand equity are all influenced by the user experience (i.e. perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand associations, and brand trust). According to research on the Edutainment topic, gamified technologies may also be used to educate about cultural heritage, improve perceptions of destinations, and increase visitor participation, to boost the experience before, during, and after the visit (Swacha & Ittermann, 2017)

Pre-visit tools can also motivate individuals to travel to destinations that are dealing with a crisis (such as post-conflict or post-disaster destinations), encouraging knowledge acquisition (Seraphin et al., 2016). Gamification on the site boosts tourist satisfaction by increasing entertainment and interaction. This gamemechanic encourages memory and sharing of the experience after the visit, as well as future visits (Skinner et al., 2018; Swacha & Ittermann, 2017).

Destinations can employ gamification to encourage people to learn about attractions in a fun way (Correa & Kitano, 2015; Ramos et al., 2016; Seraphin et al., 2019; Tsai & Lee, 2017). Furthermore, the gamified systems can lead travellers to more resources for tourism information (Correa & Kitano, 2015). Tsai and Lee (2017) show how a game enhances user involvement, raises cultural identity awareness among travellers, and promotes destination image. Overall, this innovative way of marketing can play a vital role in future competitions between destinations.

## Chapter 9: Generations and tourism

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### Introduction

Academic discussion of generations and the future has previously focused on different issues, while this perspective is informative concerning tourism-related studies. In the tourism industry, just like any other industry, market segmentation and targeting each segment properly are crucial needs that force companies and destinations to spend a tremendous amount of money and time studying them. Among the marketing research topics, focusing on generations has been becoming more and more important across the globe, as it is essential for today's managers, authorities, and decision-makers to understand their customers and engage appropriately with each generation. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the different generation cohort's characteristics (especially Gen Y and Z) and examine the role of gamification and festivals in improving destination image from different generations' perspectives (X, Y, and Z) in its case study. Moreover, understanding generational shifts in tourists' behaviour facilitates the effective prediction of future tourism trends. This chapter's case study has benefited from four Focus groups as a qualitative method. Each FG was organized for specific participants from the same cohort, X, Y and Z, and lasted 90 minutes on average with 7-10 participants.

This chapter consists of six sections. The chapter begins by looking and definitions and theories of generation studies. The following section discusses how labelling different generations and what are they about. In the third section, the chapter will look at Pre-Millennials and Millennials and if they have more similarities or differences?. Following that, Millennials and post-Millennials and their unexplored relationship will be argued. In the fifth section, the importance of next-generation travellers will be studied, and in the sixth section, the chapter's case study will be introduced. Finally, the chapter will finish by providing a conclusion.

## 9.1. Generation studies

Throughout history, tourism has been a phenomenon characterized by immense innovativeness. Books and articles have drawn attention to particularly distinctive individuals and enterprises, and their achievements have been analysed and assessed from all angles. Governments that depend on tourism growth can actively encourage tourism entrepreneurs to create innovations to remain competitive (C. Hall, 2011). The tourism market requires constant creation and supply of innovative products and services, which is essential for all stakeholders at destinations.

By considering tourists as the final user of the products in the tourism industry, and having in mind that each generation has somehow a specific taste in tourism (sometimes the same), it is possible to conclude that this market needs to classify its product based on generations' preferences.

The tourism industry is one of the sectors that provide an enormous contribution to the economic development of countries. In the twenty-first century, more and more destinations are developed for tourism, which directly affects the number of job creation and rate of employment at the destinations (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). World Tourism Organization has emphasised the importance of positive images to a destination (W.T.O, 1982) and declared that destinations depend on their image for their success in attracting tourists in a more and more competitive ecosystem as the importance of new demographic, socioeconomic, and technological improvements have been identified in the tourism industry (Joppe et al., 2001). Accordingly, destinations are trying to attract the tourists, both those who already have visited and the new ones, by employing innovative methods. Innovative socio-cultural events or using other innovative methods such as gamification may positively affect the destination image. Therefore, and the vital role of image and events have been discussed in previous chapters, it is fair to come up with a conclusion regarding the valuable role of innovation and innovative events in improving destination image.

On the other hand, there is a considerable demand for rethinking diversity and the trends in the marketing and tourism industry. Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality, Gamification, and Social Media have revolutionized these industries from top to bottom. In a word, it seems to be a two-way mechanism of action; people (especially younger



generations) transform the known society, and the digital world is changing them as well. Accordingly, improving the destination image and employing substantial attractiveness to festivals requires innovative and creative ideas that can be presented by combining innovation (gamification) and events (McCrinkle Research, 2019).

Environmental, technological, political, economic, social, and demographic are among the key external drivers of global changes. Demographic changes (especially generation) are the key external driver that the chapter will consider for further exploration as they can affect the tourism industry directly and indirectly. The direct impacts are considered more or less related to demand and the labour market, while the indirect ones are supposed to be related to jobs within the tourism industry and its services (Grimm et al., 2009; V. M. Robinson & Schänzel, 2019).

In the tourism industry, just like any other industry, market segmentation and targeting each segment properly are crucial needs that force companies and destinations to spend a tremendous amount of money and time studying them. Furthermore, among the marketing research topics, focusing on generations has been becoming more and more important across the globe, as it is essential for today's managers, authorities, and decision-makers to understand their customers and engage appropriately with each generation (Baum, 2011).

Consumers indeed have their preferences, but the same trend can be observed between those who were born and considered in the same generation. As a result, the future growth of tourism will depend on how well the industry understands the social and demographic trends influencing travellers' behaviour (Baum, 2011; Benckendorff & Pendergast, 2009). Moreover, the higher the ability to recognise and deal with changes across a wide range of effective key factors and how they interact with generations, the more successful destination will be (Dwyer et al., 2009; V. M. Robinson & Schänzel, 2019).

Accordingly, changes in demography can have a significant effect on the future tourism demand as the generations differ in values, attitudes toward working conditions and environment, leadership and behaviour. As a result, the lack of understanding among the generations regarding these differences will lead to intergenerational conflicts and detrimental effects on communication and working relationships (Becton et al., 2014; Macky et al., 2008; Yeoman et al., 2013). This will bring the importance of demographic trends to attention, as exploring demographic trends will provide the decision-makers

with important data on both the supply and demand sides (Dwyer et al., 2009; V. M. Robinson & Schänzel, 2019).

Accordingly, it seems essential to understand, who comprises the different generations, and how are they defined? Why is it important to distinguish generations from each other?

Apart from other segmentation methods, tourism studies have benefited from the use of generational analysis in different sections, such as lifelong travel patterns or the changes in the travel behaviour of tourists (Beldona et al., 2009; Huh & Park, 2010; X. Li et al., 2013; Oppermann, 1995; Pennington-Gray et al., 2002). This issue was indicated by Gardiner et al. (2014) as they argued that the future travel behaviour would differ between the generations, so there is an implied necessity for ongoing studies on each generation cohort to respond to their demands effectively.

The specific term generation can relate to all people who were born at a certain period, who pass through life experiencing changes at the same time, or can refer to a specific group of people who are at the same age in a similar social location that are experiencing similar social events and have a significant characteristic in common (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021; Mannheim, 1952). According to Károly Mannheim (1938), “The social phenomenon described by the concept of generation is actually the identity formed by connected groups and embedded in the social-historical process.” This means generations have different conceptions about relationships, contacts, conversations and learning.

Some researchers, such as McCrindle and Wolfinger (2014), have looked at the term ‘generation’ from the sociological point of view as they have emphasized the shared experience of people born in the same historical period, which refers to their technical knowledge and historical experiences. However, Attias-Donfut (1991) discusses that a generation is much more than a consumer group and similar to the notion of a “generational cohort”, its concept argues four different dimensions:

1. A genealogical and familial dimension.
2. A sociological dimension,
3. A demographical dimension,
4. And a historical dimension.

Accordingly, each generation will be affected by the social, economic, cultural and

political context in which its values have been shaped through its history (Holbrook & Schindler, 1989; Ward, 1974). Similarly, Törőcsik et al. (2014) speak about generations' experiences, which make people belong to a group with shared popular culture, economic situation, public enemies, politics, technology, world events, natural disasters and other factors that make a cohort, an age group in the sociological sense.

Howe et al. (2000) also discussed three criteria for generations during their research:

1. "Perceived membership", in which the people feel and perceive themselves as members of a group.
2. "Shared beliefs and behavioural forms" are the common beliefs and forms of behaviours, such as religion, family, careers, and political views.
3. "Shared history" is about all the historical events that happened during the members' childhood and adolescence. This is considered to influence most group members' private life significantly.

### *9.1.1. Generation theory*

Károly Mannheim (1938) explains, "The social phenomenon described by the concept of generation is actually the identity formed by connected groups and embedded in the social-historical process." In other words, the current generation, according to Mannheim (1938), is a social group in which a human being's age does not exclude them from being a group member but includes a group of people who were forced to confront the pre-existing culture when they were in their pubescent age or the early stages of adulthood, and most likely had the intention of changing it. Mannheim compares the concept of generation with class, implying that a person is born into it and only wants to leave it if their status changes.

Törőcsik et al. (2014) discuss cohort experiences, or the experiences of all generations, which influence those who belong to them to modify their approach/outlook. The concept's main objective explains that "the members of each generation are interconnected by the shared experiences of their adolescence, popular culture, economic situation, world events, natural disasters, heroes, public enemies, politics, technology, so by all those experiences that make a cohort, an age group in the sociological sense".

Generation cohorts have been studied extensively; nonetheless, there remain disagreements over the historical location of any given generation and what they should be called. However, as discussed in Mannheim's concepts of generation actuality and generation unit, there is some agreement on what generations are like (Donnison, 2007). The concept of generational cohorts, which has been applied to psychology (Rogler, 2002), tourism or other disciplines (Benckendorff & Pendergast, 2009; Gardiner et al., 2014), first had been emerged from sociology (Mannheim, 1952). However, referencing generational cohorts has become commonplace in the media nowadays as in academia and practice, and consumers' past, present, and future behaviour is analysed by grouping people based on generational cohort membership (Coupland, 1991; Salt, 2003).

In the tourism literature, generational analysis has become more popular (Beldona et al., 2009; Huh & Park, 2010; X. Li et al., 2013; Oppermann, 1995; Pennington-Gray et al., 2002); however, more expansive use of cohort analysis is needed to evaluate changes in travel behaviour, according to studies on lifelong travel trends (Oppermann, 1995). Furthermore, according to Gardiner et al. (2014), future travel behaviour will change between generations. As a result, there is an implied need for ongoing research and studies on each generation in order to respond to their needs and demands properly.

There are different opinions regarding the generation theory, despite the extensive research. These opinions discuss the historical location of any particular generation and what they need to be referred to. However, some consensus can be found on Mannheim's concepts of generation and the generation unit (Donnison, 2007). Overall, the actual generation cohort studies have focussed on mapping consumption patterns to develop effective marketing strategies for different industries, which deviates it from the theory's "ancestral roots" in sociology and psychology (Holbrook & Schindler, 1989; Rentz et al., 1983; Schewe & Noble, 2000; Schuman & Scott, 1989).

The main reason for applying the generational approach that generational theorists argued is about the high-value outcome and richer information they can have, compared to segmenting consumers using other demographic segmentation variables such as chronological age and life stage. The generational cohort analysis is an ideal lens to look through, and a practical approach of analysing that will acknowledge the subjective historical influences of time on consumer behaviour, based on which the experts will have the opportunity to forecast the future behaviour of consumers (Mannheim, 1952; Schewe & Noble, 2000).

Apart from other segmentation methods, tourism studies have benefited from the use of generational analysis in different sections, such as lifelong travel patterns or the changes in the travel behaviour of tourists (Beldona et al., 2009; Huh & Park, 2010; X. Li et al., 2013; Oppermann, 1995; Pennington-Gray et al., 2002). This issue was indicated by Gardiner et al. (2014) as they argued that the future travel behaviour would differ between the generations, so there is an implied necessity for ongoing studies on each generation cohort in order to respond to their demands effectively.

Previously, the generation's definition was “the average interval of time between the birth of parents and the birth of their offspring” (McCrindle Research, 2019). Although historically, sociologists were analysing generations based on the age grouping, and classifications defined the generation at around twenty years in span, while in the past this has served sociologists well in analysing generations, it is irrelevant today.

Generational differences in terms of tourism and travel habits are often the topic among many kinds of research. New factors can play roles in choosing the generation time span, as the time between the birth of parents and the birth of children has stretched out from two decades to more than three compared to the previous classifications. Furthermore, these cohorts are changing quickly in response to changing careers, new technologies, and study options. Accordingly, the societal values mean two decades is far too broad to contain all the people born within this time span. This will result in a move away from a biological definition toward a sociological one based on which a generation refers to a cohort of people born and shaped by a span of time which has recently contracted significantly from 20 years to 15 years (Csobanka, 2016; Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

While some might argue that 15 years is too long, still it seems an appropriate time span as if it was any shorter, it would be possible to have too many generations. This time span is long enough to encompass the natural flow of socio-cultural changes but may not be long enough to include entire cycles of cultural change years (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021; McCrindle Research, 2019).

## 9.2. Labelling different generations

Every generation since the Baby Boomers, which was named after the post-WWII baby boom situation, spans more or less about 15 years. However, academics have no common view on the year born for each generation. Instead, these generations are labelled by a more marketing approach for categorising, which is using letters (X, Y, Z etc.) (McCrinkle & Wolfinger, 2014).

### 9.2.1. *Baby Boomers*

Baby Boomers are people born between the years 1945 and 1964, a cohort that has lived through incredible changes from cultural to economic but at the same time was the source of many important other changes, as well. They are known as one of the most flexible generations who have learned to adapt in many cases. By combining their collaborative management style with high adaptability, this post-WWII generation has learned how to embrace the technology and keep itself relevant. However, they are not highly technologically savvy, nor do they generally like changes (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007; Yu & Miller, 2005).

### 9.2.2. *Generation X*

Generation X is referred to those who were born between 1965 and 1980. They are known as the perfect bridge generation who understand and usually adopt the work ethic and focus of their previous generation (The Baby Boomers), and at the same time, are close in age to their next generation (Gen Y or Millennials) and can connect somewhat with their culture, views, and attitudes (McCrinkle Research, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2018). Xers' work values emphasize personal fulfilment rather than just working hard; therefore, they are more autonomous, self-motivated, and self-sufficient (Loomis, 2000).

For the Xer, work happiness is more important than promotion as Xers value their personal lives as much as their professional lives: leisure, family, lifestyle, and other hobbies are just as essential to them as their work. Xers can accept an unwelcome or less desirable promotion if it fits their lifestyle. However, many refuse to make the sacrifices required by their employers and become "workaholics" (Loomis, 2000). Generation X has been described as knowledgeable (Wuest et al., 2008), cautious (Herbig et al., 1993),

suspicious (Heaney, 2007), untrusting (Davis et al., 2006), and cynical (Davis et al., 2006; Sirias et al., 2007).

### *9.2.3. Generation Y*

In an article published in 1993 in the American Magazine Advertising Age, the phrase "Generation Y" was first used to refer to western teens of the time. As compared to Generation X (those born between 1963 and the end of the 1970s), members of this generation were more oriented to communication, media, and the use of digital technology. In their book *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*, sociologists William Strauss and Neil Howe (1992) described Millennials as individuals born between 1984 and 2004. According to Strauss and Howe (1992), Generation Y has many characteristics of the so-called Great Generation (those born between 1901 and 1924), such as a strong sense of responsibility and attachment to the nation.

In 2004, Kathleen Shaputis (as cited in Monaco, 2018) referred to the same demographic cohort as the "Boomerang" or "Peter Pan Generation," a generation marked by a tendency to postpone the transition to adulthood by leaving their parents' homes late and delaying other defining steps such as finishing their studies, finding work, or marrying. According to Ambrosi and Rosina (2009), the phenomenon is also common in Italy, where it is mainly due to two separate but closely related factors: a lack of interest on the part of public institutions, which do not assist young people in achieving autonomy or entering the labour market, and the protective attitude of the families of origin.

This generation is famous as millennials as they were raised in the digital age, a sign of the upcoming new millennium, and were described as sociable, well educated, collaborative, and optimistic. In 2022, it is possible to consider them as the largest generation in the world population, aged 27 to 41, which represent the most significant percentage of the world's workforce (Pew Research Center, 2018; Raines, 2003).

This is the generation that has been characterized by the internet and a world that is becoming increasingly globalized. Because their parents protected them, they were trained to believe that everything was possible. As a result, they are more entrepreneurial and realistic, have a shorter attention span, and have higher expectations from themselves and others. They are more optimistic, social, open to changes, and have high expectations from themselves and others (Naumovska, 2017).

#### 9.2.4. *Generation Z*

According to the European Travel Commission report (2020), Generation Z is defined as those who were born between 1996 and 2012. This represents the individuals with the age range from 10 to 26 at the time of this study in 2022. According to several definitions, the oldest members of Generation Z were born in the mid-1990s and the youngest in the early 2010s. In general, the first generation of Gen Zers (the oldest group) was born between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s (sources such as Ipsos and Morning Consult argue for 1996 (R1) and 1997(R2), respectively), and the youngest were born between 2010 and 2012 (European Travel Commission, 2020). Moreover, they have been called “postmillennial”, “centennials”, “pivotal”, or “digital natives”, among other tags (Budac, 2015; Southgate, 2017). They are referred to as Generation Z or iGeneration as this generation is accustomed to a sophisticated media and technology environment as a normal condition.

The most recent generation, post-Millennials or Generation Z, was studied by Strauss and Howe (1992), who noted that the distinction between them and Millennials is not that different. What makes post-Millennials unique is that they are digital natives (Prensky, 2001), the true champions of the "new mobilities paradigm", a generation defined by great mobility of people and things (Dolot, 2018; Sheller & Urry, 2006).

The use of modern technology, which they have been exposed to since childhood, has had a significant impact on the lives of post-Millennials (Combi, 2015; Pandit, 2015; Thomas, 2011). According to certain research, they are also distinguished by an unparalleled awareness and determination as consumers and their familiarity with digital technology; thus, they will be the most active participants in the tourist business in the 2020s (Koulopoulos & Keldsen, 2016).

The wide age spectrum makes it difficult to make broad generalizations about Gen Z, especially when data collection and observations on young people are challenging to obtain because of data protection reasons. To address this, Trend Hunter company has divided Gen Z into two age groups: Gen Z Tribe (the older segment) and Gen Z Alpha (the younger segment) (as cited in Just-drinks, 2019). Similarly, Dickinson (2019), for example, separated Gen Zers into “Big Zers” (1995-2002) and “Little Zers” (2003-2010). However, this chapter’s case study mainly focuses on Gen Y and on that group of Gen Z who are above 18 years, as this is the most engaged consumer group (compared to those who are under 18 in this cohort) and the most likely to make independent travel decisions.



More general characteristics of different generations after WWII have been brought in the following table (24):

**Table 24: Characteristics of generations.**

Generations	General Characteristics
Baby Boomers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were born after the WWII</li> <li>• Motto: “war never again.”</li> <li>• Several social changes: equality in women’s rights, Vietnam War</li> <li>• Increasing consumption</li> <li>• Competitions and idealism</li> <li>• The first time they meet PCs as adults</li> <li>• PC is not the primary way of communication</li> </ul>
Gen X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were born at the end of the 60s, beginning of the 70s</li> <li>• The number of divorces and economic uncertainty are increasing</li> <li>• Age of Disco and hip-hop culture</li> <li>• Age of TV and videogames</li> <li>• Start of individualism</li> <li>• They met PC when they were young</li> <li>• Witnesses of the development of information technology and then information society</li> <li>• They use the internet more or less</li> </ul>
Gen Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were born in the 80s and 90s</li> <li>• Increasing number of conflicts</li> <li>• The spread of digital technology: e-mail, SMS</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimism, they are not afraid of the technology</li> <li>• Loyal to brands</li> <li>• They met the internet when they were children</li> <li>• Dependent on media</li> <li>• First digital citizens</li> <li>• Social relationships are doubled: they have virtual and real ones</li> <li>• They are interested in cultural contents</li> <li>• They accept their parents' values</li> <li>• They like social activities</li> <li>• They prefer visuals and audios instead of texts</li> <li>• They want to achieve their aims as soon as possible and often want to fulfil their wishes</li> <li>• They prefer games to hard work</li> </ul>
Gen Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were born around the millennium</li> <li>• They do not know the world without the internet</li> <li>• They use the internet and social networks</li> <li>• “Global connectivity”, flexibility, being smart, tolerant of different cultures</li> <li>• Social network sites are the main platform for communication</li> <li>• Information consumers and providers</li> <li>• Very good device skills</li> <li>• Thousands of online contacts</li> <li>• Multitasking (blogging, listening to music, writing</li> </ul>

	<p>emails)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quicker decision making</li> <li>• They are not stuck in a place</li> <li>• They learn, make friends, and have fun differently</li> <li>• There is no legal sensitivity to downloading changing files</li> <li>• Emotional incompetency</li> </ul>
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Source: Nagy & Székely (2012)

### 9.3. Pre-Millennials and millennials: more similarities or differences?

According to Yeoman (2008), future customers will be better educated and more knowledgeable than many previous generations. As a result, they will have higher expectations for the quality of tourism experiences as travel will give them an escape from a life that is becoming increasingly demanding and stressful (Yeoman, 2012). In addition, longer life expectancy and improved health and wealth in retirement will increase travel options, particularly among the older populations of wealthy countries (Becken, 2012).

Furthermore, technological advancements have resulted in cheaper, quicker, and more efficient transportation, as well as new travel distribution and booking methods that were impossible a generation ago (Butler, 1980; Leigh et al., 2012). As a result, tourism firms face a significant problem adapting to this new style of engaging with customers (Gretzel et al., 2006).

Moreover, as a consequence of the feminist movement after World War II, more women are working outside the home and pursuing professions, resulting in an equal requirement for men and women to take a vacation to recover from work responsibilities (White, 2005). This shift, along with the commercialization and commodification of tourism during the last 50 years, has resulted in the creation of "mass tourism" as well as more sophisticated holiday alternatives that go beyond the pre-war "sun and sand" experiences. More specialized, hedonistic tourism experiences, such as wellness spas, green tourism

resorts, and volunteer tourism experiences, are accessible (Cole & Razak, 2009; Wilkinson, 2009).

Clearly, an increasing number of consumers have the leisure and financial means to travel, and they will devote a greater portion of their discretionary income to travel (Chambers, 2009). Several authors have emphasized the need to recognize changes in market demographics and consumer behaviour to capitalize on this expansion because of these trends in tourist offers and consumer spending (Formica & Kothari, 2007; Gretzel et al., 2006).

For example, changes in the family structure, such as the distribution of couples with children, young couples without children, and single parents, will significantly impact Generation Y tourism demand in the future (Glover & Prideaux, 2008). Similarly, the "experience economy" was significant for Baby Boomers, who were healthier and more prosperous than previous generations of retirees, and have looked for more adventurous and unique types of travel as a result (Patterson & Pegg, 2010).

Each cohort's shared experiences of "coming of age"—growing from youth to adulthood—during a certain socio-historical timeframe function as an initial input into the shared formative referents (Gardiner et al., 2014), resulting in a generational mentality that can stay with members for whole life (Arsenault, 2004).

The formative experiences of each generation shape the informational referents, such as mass media and interpersonal communication, as well as the normative referents, such as other people's points of view on travel behaviour. For example, word of mouth influences Generation X and Baby Boomer travel decisions making more than mass media (Fall, 2004). On the other hand, anecdotal data shows that the media strongly influences Generation Y consumer behaviour since this cohort grew up surrounded by media and technology (Wuest et al., 2008) and now spends a significant amount of time on the Internet (Bennett et al., 2003).

Generation X members grew up at a time of economic decline and uncertainty about the future (Davis et al., 2006; Heaney, 2007; Herbig et al., 1993). As a result, they are cautious and savvy customers. For members of this generation, who are ambitious and motivated to succeed in their career (Herbig et al., 1993), a decent lifestyle and having fun is important as well; as a result, travel allows them to attain the work-life balance they seek (Schiffman et al., 2010).

On the other hand, Generation Y members are accustomed to abundance (Sullivan & Heitmeyer, 2008), having grown up in a capitalist era (Norum, 2009). Thus, Generation Y members are consumption-oriented and inclined to spend freely (Knight & Young Kim, 2007; Wuest et al., 2008), seeking novel, unique, and personalized consumer (travel) experiences (Kumar & Lim, 2008) that give them credibility among peers and an image of "coolness". The consumer behaviour studies on generational cohorts suggest that when travelling, the cohorts would have divergent value expectations (Morton, 2002; Norum, 2009).

Generation Y is described as conspicuous consumers (Schiffman et al., 2010), who place a high emphasis on peer relations (Kumar & Lim, 2008; Morton, 2002), and place a high value on the social self (Morton, 2002; Stevens et al., 2005; Taylor & Cosenza, 2002). Similarly, Generation X consumers have been labelled as brand conscious (Herbig et al., 1993), implying that the opinions of others influence their travel decisions. In contrast, studies indicate that Baby Boomers are more self-centred and that as they become older, they would seek out self-fulfilling vacation experiences (Cleaver & Muller, 2002; Patterson & Pegg, 2010).

#### 9.4. Millennials and post-Millennials: an unexplored relationship

According to recent research, Millennials and post-Millennials are accustomed to dealing with new technology on a regular basis, particularly the internet (Palfrey & Gasser, 2010; Veen, 2006). As a result, the virtual community, of which social networks and platforms for exchanging reviews, opinions, and information are the most prominent part, plays a major role. According to Rheingold (2000, p. 5), "Virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationship in cyberspace".

Post-Millennials nearly entirely use the internet to get more information for purchasing decisions and making their bookings as they ask their internet contacts or use their social media groups' opinions. Personal experiences are frequently shared on social media platforms, and they primarily interact using instant messaging and chat software; thus, almost all of the devices used are smart (Mobiles and tablets). On the other hand,

millennials use laptops or personal computers in addition to their mobile devices (Combi, 2015).

Furthermore, they combine the use of the internet with more traditional communication means to collect information and make purchase decisions (such as telephone or magazines). While they rely extensively on internet information, face-to-face communication still significantly influences their decisions. For example, they are more likely to trust information from friends or family members than from websites. In contrast to millennials, post-millennials are more independent, less focused, better multi-taskers, entrepreneurs, more internationally minded, and have greater expectations (Monaco, 2018; Pandit, 2015).

The life of post-millennials is deeply influenced by the use of new technologies, to which they have been socialized since childhood (Combi, 2015; Elliott, 1998; Haddouche & Salomone, 2018; Pandit, 2015). Along with their familiarity with digital technologies, they are also characterized by an unprecedented awareness and determination as consumers (Koulopoulos & Keldsen, 2016). Based on that, in the 2020s, they will be the most active players in the tourism market, and the travel activities of this younger generation will shape the tourism industry.

Members of both generations use the internet to prepare ahead of time, check specialized review websites to get information on hotels or restaurants and adjust their plans if negative feedback is received. While Millennials read online reviews, they are less likely to write their own; post-Millennials, on the other hand, are more eager to leave evaluations and take a proactive role, contributing to a broader communication cycle. They are, in a way, becoming a part of the tourism industry, providing information that is generally seen as more trustworthy than that offered by tour operators or sellers of products and services (Monaco, 2018).

## 9.5. The importance of next-generation travellers

The rising trend in the travel industry toward collaborative consumption is something that both millennials and post-millennials share. It is an economic and social activity in which social players share goods, resources, and services via online transactions (Hamari et al., 2016). The increased connection provided by online social media platforms “allows

people to share access to products and services among each other” (Morais et al., 2016).

Tourist experiences may now be customized thanks to new technologies. Young travellers, including millennials and post-millennials, see modern tourism as a social and cultural event that promotes socializing and identity development, giving their holiday selections new meaning. Accordingly, with a rising interest in innovative tourist practices and niche offers, vacations are prepared according to their preferences and expectations (Monaco, 2018). Although the concept of tourism is still strongly associated with physical travel, younger visitors emphasize the importance of new media in providing "imaginative" experiences as virtual travels would link people, places, and cultures (Castells, 2009).

The youngest cohorts of global tourists are sometimes disregarded by DMOs, destination authorities and tourism suppliers since they are assumed to be modest spenders. Nevertheless, they play an important role in shaping consumer demand and are acting as a change agent in destinations. According to a study conducted by the World Tourism Organization (2011), young people are increasingly considering travel as an important part of their lives rather than merely a quick vacation from reality, a trend that began with Millennial-aged tourists. Youth travel has several advantages for both destinations and individual travellers on a large scale:

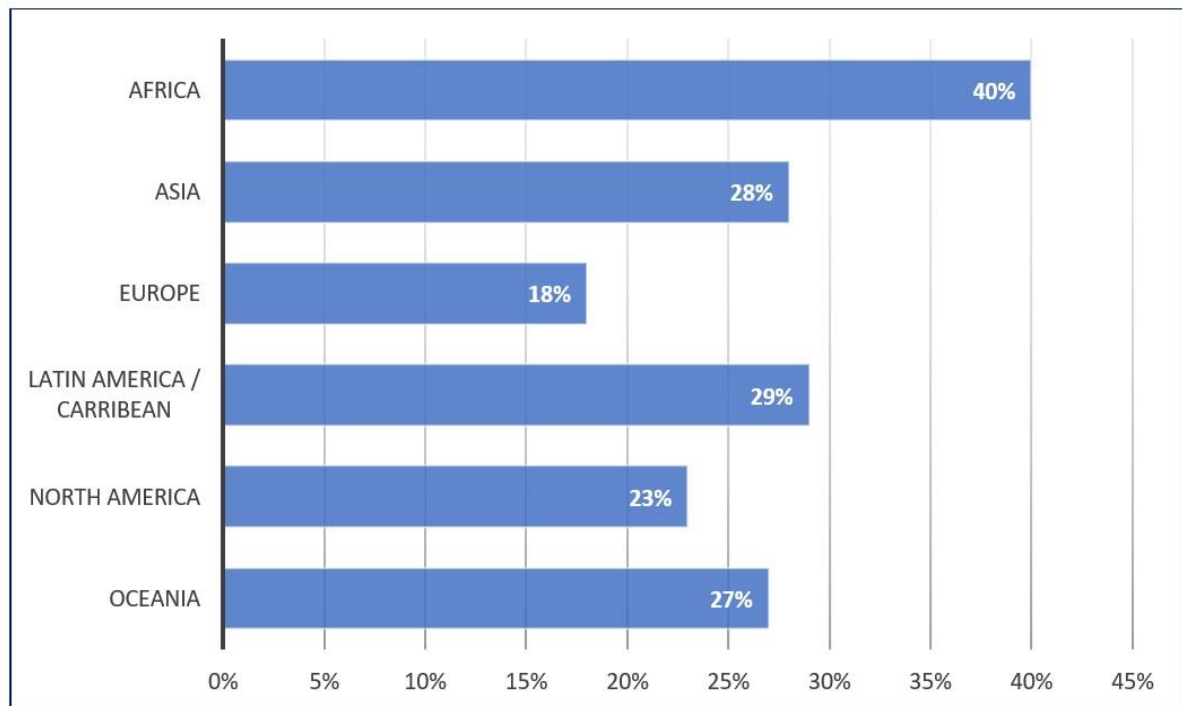
- Young travellers are at the cutting edge of adopting new technologies
- Young travellers are more likely to return and provide the destination with greater value over time.
- Young travellers gain cultural experience and advantages from their travels and contribute to the destinations they visit
- Young travellers are the great explorers who discover new destinations (World Tourism Organization, 2011)

Accordingly, Gen Z, as the generation that has embraced technologies and new innovations and is most willing to explore and think outside the box, is expected to play a crucial role in pushing destinations toward innovation and adapting new technologies (World Tourism Organization, 2011).

### 9.5.1. Generation Z and the future travel demand

Generation Z is seen as an important group in the tourism and travel industries (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018), as they have a substantial effect on family holidays choice since their parents like to consult them before arranging trips. Another factor is their desire for experiences rather than possessions, which drives them to travel in quest of "fun experiences." Moreover, they are open-minded, bucket-list oriented, and seek out off-the-beaten-path destinations (Expedia Group, 2017). Bloomberg forecasted (2018) that Gen Z will overtake Millennials as the world's most populous generation. Furthermore, as seen in (Figures 35 and 36), some of the world's most populated countries are also among the youngest. Thus, as the world's youngest populations grow, become more affluent, and begin to travel, the existing demographic structure of the world's population is estimated to experience considerable shifts in consumer travel demand. Outbound travel from Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, for example, is predicted to expand significantly as Gen Z reaches adulthood.

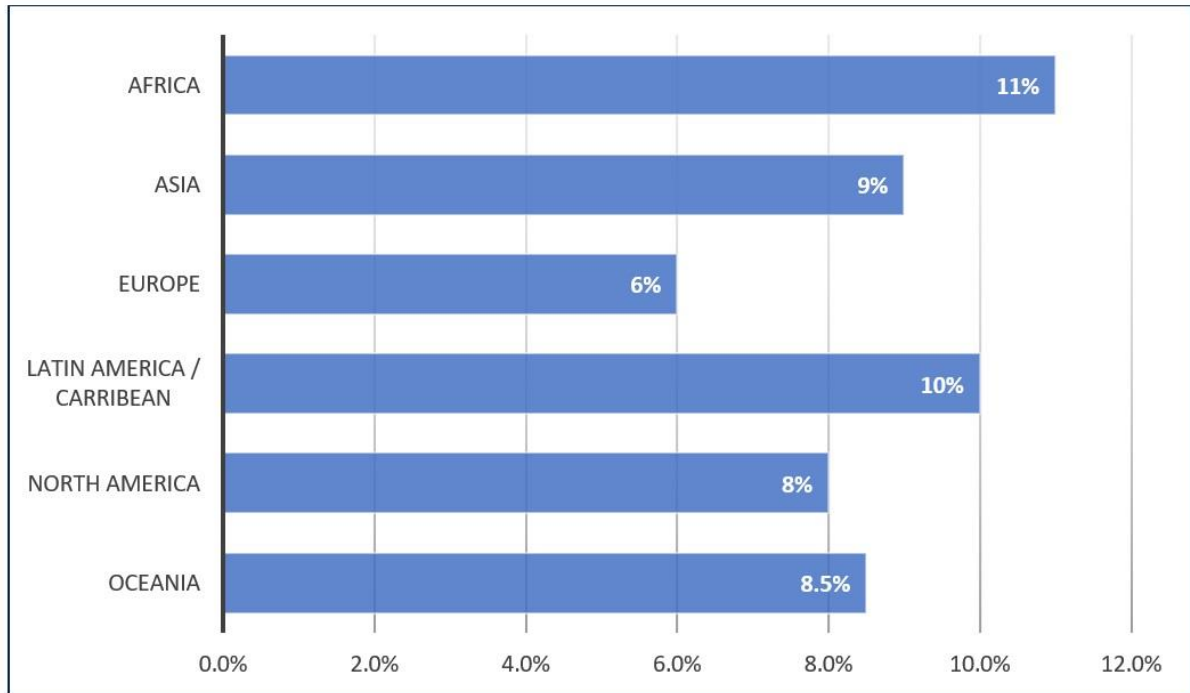
**Figure 35: Gen Z's share of the world population until 2020 (age 7-24) in the different world regions**



Source: United Nations (2020)



**Figure 36: Gen Z's (age18-23) share of the world population until 2020 in the different world regions**



Source: United Nations (2020)

Understanding Gen Z travellers, as well as their concerns and motivations, is essential to predicting how tourist demand will change in the future and how this will affect tourism in Europe and throughout the world as they are likely to seek out remote destinations and participate in a variety of events and activities. In addition, Globetrender (2017) says that Generation Z individuals are frugal travellers who often begin their journeys without a set destination in mind. As a result, this chapter's case study focuses not only on Gen Y and Gen Z's tourism, event, and their tastes for using innovation at the destination but also on how these views may impact the destination image and the future of the global travel industry as a whole.

### *9.5.2. Comparing Generation Z to previous generations*

Due to the widespread use of the internet, the homogenization of global commerce, and the global consumers' tastes in fast-moving goods such as music, fashion, and technology, many people question whether age is an accurate indicator of generational values and consumer preferences. Meanwhile, it may be claimed that global connectivity and

interaction between different age groups, which has the effect of causing successive generations to share similar habits and interests, could shape human behaviour even more strongly than socioeconomic differences (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

The web's function is a complex process involving expectations, planning, anticipating the tourist experience, and sharing memories and comments. Accordingly, young visitors have become key players in the tourism sector due to Web 2.0. The Internet is rapidly being employed, particularly by post-millennials, to receive and create information and materials, such as memories, reports, reviews, opinions, descriptions, and stories. Accordingly, DMOs and tourism stakeholders at the destination need to pay more attention to online content providing that may cause two effects:

- 1- It encourages tourism sector players to provide more information,
- 2- It allows consumers to check the accuracy of that information by comparing it to other sources (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

It appears that, in the future, DMOs and tourism stakeholders will need to work more strategically and transparently to ensure the quality and authenticity of the information that they generate. In addition, it is becoming increasingly important for hotels, restaurateurs, and retailers to communicate honestly and consider what is written about them on non-official communication channels like review sites and social media as opinions and assessments should serve as a stepping stone for corrective measures and creativity.

Furthermore, younger generations are becoming increasingly accustomed to receiving information in real-time. As a result, DMOs and tourism stakeholders should connect with consumers using instant messaging platforms (such as WhatsApp, Instagram, or Snapchat) to activate a smart and push communication system. These will increasingly replace webpages, newsletters, and other unidirectional information channels as the primary communication tools of the future (European Travel Commission, 2020).

Another important point is that a new generation was born into the digital era, with more international travel; thus, they may transform tourism and destinations. Accordingly, mass tourism may no longer be profitable for destinations in the face of new demands for other types of tourism (Stanciulescu et al., 2011). The consequence is that destinations reliant on mass tourism, characterized by an ageing population, would find it increasingly

difficult to profit in an environment characterized by a new and more modern type of tourism, which includes young and youthful travellers. This projected demographic shift is a significant event that may bring opportunities and challenges for tourism and destination development (Bernini & Cracolici, 2015). Consequently, it is critical to do generation-based research that identifies diverse groups of customers and their specific demands and preferences (Chhetri et al., 2014). Table 25, illustrates how consumer values and behaviour could be compared across four generations:

**Table 25: Contextual background for successive generations**

	Baby boomer 1940-59	Gen X 1960-79	Gen Y 1980-94	Gen Z 1995-2010
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-war</li> <li>• Cold war</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political transition</li> <li>• Capitalism and meritocracy dominate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Globalization</li> <li>• Economic stability</li> <li>• Emergence of internet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility and multiple realities</li> <li>• Social networks</li> <li>• Digital natives</li> </ul>
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idealism</li> <li>• Revolutionary</li> <li>• Collectivist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materialistic</li> <li>• Competitive</li> <li>• Individualistic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Globalist</li> <li>• Questioning</li> <li>• Oriented to self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undefined ID</li> <li>• “Communaholic”</li> <li>• “Dialoguer”</li> <li>• Realistic</li> </ul>
Consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideology</li> <li>• Vinyl and movies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Status</li> <li>• Brands and cars</li> <li>• Luxury articles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• Festivals and travel</li> <li>• Flagships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniqueness</li> <li>• Unlimited</li> <li>• Ethical</li> </ul>

Source: Francis & Hoefel (2018)

Generations are shaped by the circumstances in which they develop, as it is illustrated in table 25 While Baby Boomers grew up in the post-World War II era of fast economic

expansion, and Millennials arose as globalisation accelerated, Generation Z was born on the border of two millennia. As the youngest generation (in the tourism industry), it now symbolizes the modern world's zeitgeist. Gen Zs are frequently compared to Millennials in order to gain a better understanding of their uniqueness as both generations arose during the era of the internet. While older Millennials grew up as the one prior to the Internet's rapid emergence (from the mid-90s onwards), Gen Zers were born during a period when online commerce and using social media and smartphones were already well-established (from around 2005 onwards). As a result, unlike previous generations, Gen Zers may really be described as "digital natives," having never lived without access to the internet (Combi, 2015; European Travel Commission, 2020; Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Rapid technological advancement, globalisation, the 2008 financial crises, terrorism, and global warming issues have played a significant part in shaping Gen Zers' attitudes and beliefs since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Seemiller and Grace (2018) argued that Generation Z has never known a world without war and terrorism, and as such, they are looking for safety and financial security. This hyper-connected cohort grew up in an era of remarkable awareness about human behaviour, personal health, emerging new technologies, humankind's footprint and its responsibility to the environment (Turner, 2015).

According to recent findings, less technologically advanced destinations can benefit from using modern concepts and practices to meet the expectations of this new generation of tourists who are seeking rich digital and gamified tourism experiences (Skinner et al., 2018). They are considered to be highly educated, creative and innovative and able to multi-task in an increasingly changing environment (Corbisiero & Ruspini, 2018).

Accordingly, when Millennials were commonly referred to as the "Me-Generation" because of their individualistic attitude on life, many have noticed that Gen Zers are more interested in collective action. Gen Z appears to have embraced activism and progressive views, expressing a more profound interest in issues such as diversity, environmentalism, and personal empowerment than its older counterparts, whether through online forums or on the streets. As a result, Gen Zers will progressively exercise a more substantial effect on global consumer culture and current events as they get older, helping to shape the agenda for decades to come (Corbisiero & Ruspini, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2018).

#### *9.5.4. Generation Z: Travel and Technology*

The emergence of the internet is degrading the mass tourism paradigm, according to the study of Monaco (2018) in Italian Generations Y and Z. The findings of that study are consistent with other studies that show that today there are a variety of tourist behaviours that are becoming increasingly independent of class membership. Tourists are more informed than in the past, and they are better able to recognize when some tourist attractions are not authentic. They are more aware and self-assured, and they regard the tourist experience as a valuable tool in forming their identities (J. Larsen & Urry, 2016).

Furthermore, Monaco's (2018) findings suggest that younger generations have different social demands that "holidays" are intended to meet. However, even if these features remain, vacations are no longer viewed exclusively as a break from the daily routine or as a time to relax. Instead, they are becoming more widely considered a tool for culture, exploration, and identity creation; thus, this trend can be attributed to various factors, including the vast amount of information available on the internet.

The desire to extend online users' horizons and experience is fuelled by news and information found on sites and shared with connections via chat and social media. Web 2.0 is a source of shared, user-created content that anyone can access with a few clicks based on their expectations and interests, resulting in an increase in the "strength of weak ties", as outlined by Granovetter (1973). These relationships do not have a dominant stake in an individual's social network, but they play an important part in intermediation and achieving their goals for visitors looking to broaden their horizons outside their circle of acquaintances (Turner, 2015).

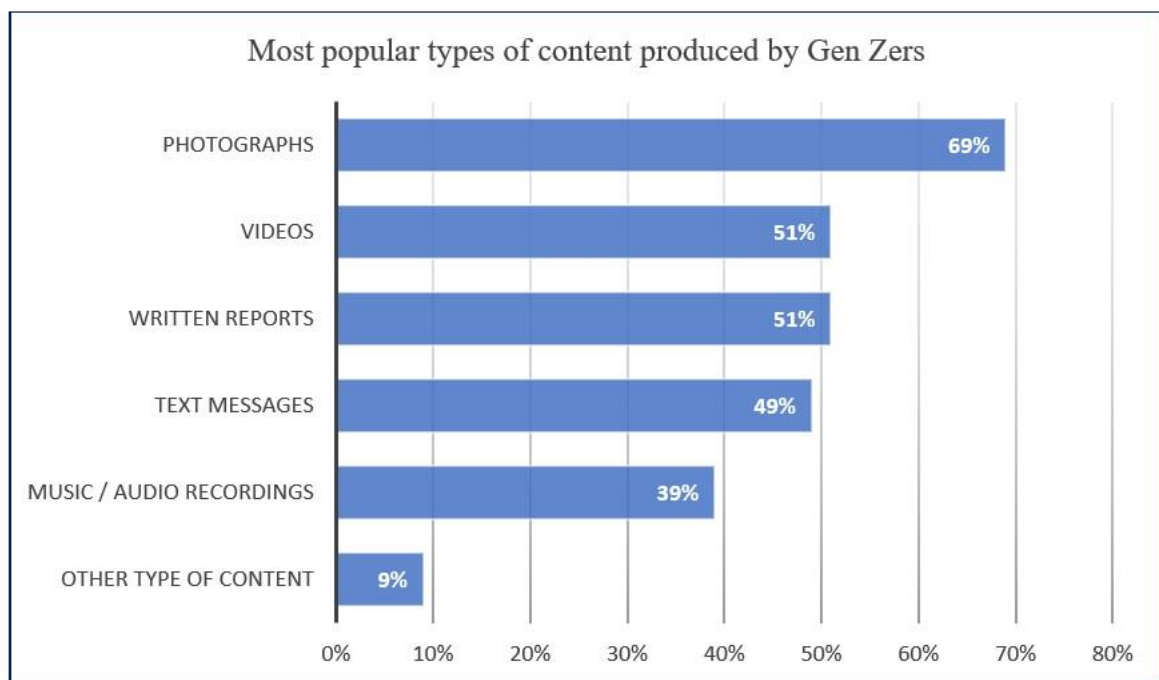
As previously stated in this chapter, Gen Zs can be called the first generation of digital natives, indicating that they have grown up with technology. According to Moussavi and Mander's (2019) study across 45 countries, 64% of Gen Zers are "constantly online," and 57% feel more anxious without their phone than without their wallet. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that this generation spends the most time on their phones every day: 4 hours and 15 minutes on average.

This might also be explained by Millennials' early adoption of mobile devices; many of them initially encountered the Internet through a desktop computer and a poor dial-up connection. However, Gen Zers grew up in a smartphone market and have benefited from significantly quicker and less expensive internet connections, anytime and anywhere.

Considering this in mind, it is also worth mentioning that the fast growth of streaming and instant communication through applications and social media transformed Gen Z into the generation that prefers to socialize online rather than in person (Corbisiero & Ruspini, 2018; Moussavi & Mander, 2019; Turner, 2015).

While this phenomenon has formed a generation skilled at using technology, others have noted that a lack of real-world interactions has resulted in the development of mental health disorders like depression and anxiety; concerns that travel may either calm or intensify (Corbisiero & Ruspini, 2018; Moussavi & Mander, 2019; Turner, 2015). When it comes to purchasing behaviour, photos and videos are the most influential tools for both Millennials and Gen Z. Thus, social media platforms have a significant impact on their purchasing behaviour for these two cohorts; Instagram and Pinterest are becoming the most popular platform to find their next vacation location (Laughlin Constable Co, 2018). However, for developing travel-related content, Gen Z strongly prefers images over all other types of content (Figure 37) (Hickory, 2017; Laughlin Constable Co, 2018).

**Figure 37: Content produced by Gen Zers**



**Source:** Hickory (2017)

Gen Z's aspirations have been expanded well beyond the typical context of their place of living or home country due to a mix of constant connectivity, and frequent cultural and travel inspiration on their social media feeds, as 42% of Gen Zers have chosen a trip based

on social media. Moreover, in the same research conducted by Adobe Inc (2019), Gen Zers mentioned that they were always connected via their smartphone during their journey. Their expectations for highly personalized services, as well as the ability to make last-minute modifications or upgrades, have risen as they have become accustomed to making travel reservations in real-time.

Based on the European Travel Commission (2020) research, the following part summarizes the behaviour trend for the four Gen Z outbound markets (China, Germany, the UK and the US) that are researched in depth. The quantitative research consisted of online consumer surveys carried out between 700 respondents from each of the four focus markets: China, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States between December 2019 and January 2020. Although the data cannot be directly compared since separate surveys capture different market features, they help develop a picture of the main issues highlighted among Gen Z customers in the travel industry (Table 26).

**Table 26: Socio-economic characteristics for Gen Zs in four countries**

Country	Gen Z Characteristics
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 96% of Chinese Gen Zers believe social media influences their travel decisions more than any other generation.</li> <li>• Gen Zers prefer products and services that provide value and reflect real life. Brands must demonstrate their values and build a business strategy based on sustainability and equality to earn their respect and loyalty.</li> <li>• This group values secondary criteria such as curation, style, convenience, and range.</li> <li>• More than 11% of Gen Z respondents in China strongly agree that they "would rather spend money on experiences than products," compared to 6–7% of prior generations.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 42% of German Gen Zers are "always active" and use their smartphones continuously.</li> <li>• With 69 % and 65%, YouTube and Instagram are the most popular</li> </ul>

Germany	<p>social media platforms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60% of Gen Zs find social media advertising unpleasant, and just 25% view ads on social media when relevant.</li> <li>• The most crucial parts of a trip are food and drinks.</li> <li>• They value sports, entertainment, and German language skills when travelling.</li> </ul>
United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16% of UK Gen Zs are lonely every day, whereas 32% are lonely once a week. One of their top three worries is mental health.</li> <li>• Gen Zers in higher education in the United Kingdom were particularly concerned about the difficulty of getting a job and gaining work experience after graduation.</li> <li>• Friends (78 %) and family (76 %) have the most significant effect on British Gen Zers (89 %).</li> <li>• The fact that Gen Z is the UK's most ethnically diverse generation appears to have an impact on British Gen Zers' attitudes, which are overwhelmingly supportive of policies and concepts promoting diversity and equality. Furthermore, 58 % of Gen Zers in the United Kingdom think contributing more to society is essential.</li> <li>• This Tech –addicted generation understands using advanced technology in its daily life and spends nearly half of its time online. Two-thirds of Gen Zers in the United Kingdom say they multitask on multiple devices.</li> </ul>
United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generation Z is the most ethnically and racially diverse generation in the history of the United States.</li> <li>• 42% of Gen Zers in the United States say they interact with their phones more than they do with humans.</li> <li>• They have high expectations for their future career path; 75% see a feeling of purpose as more important than a high salary in their ideal employment.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media is used by 49% of Gen Zs in order to gain their daily news (the majority through YouTube).</li> <li>• They seek individualized experiences, not only in terms of their purchasing habits but also in terms of their professional lives.</li> <li>• Diversity is important to them in many ways, not only in terms of race and gender but also in terms of personal identity and sexual orientation.</li> <li>• They are more likely to book a flight (37 %) after receiving a personalized notification.</li> <li>• Gen Zers are the generation most willing to accept the sharing economy (62 %).</li> </ul>
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Source: European Travel Commission (2020)

Authenticity and, in particular, exploring new types of food and drink are important to Gen Zers as they do care about trying locally produced food and drink and learning about local culture. This might be because Gen Z is the most varied generation in terms of ethnicity and values, and it is a generation that welcomes other cultures and is curious about what makes a destination unique (Combi, 2015; European Travel Commission, 2020). Urban culture, local lifestyles, food, customs, and local heritage are all factors that can make the place identity. As a result, it is no surprise that Gen Zers are enthusiastic about activities that correspond with their interests as they are known as the explorers of cultural identity and culture enthusiasts with a particular interest in significant events that mark the world's and/or their personal history (European Travel Commission, 2020).

## 9.6. The role of events and gamification on the image of Lake Balaton through the eyes of different generations (Case study number 5)

Lake Balaton is Hungary's oldest and most well-known vacation spot (and the second most important tourist destination after Budapest). It is situated in the country's western region. Lake Balaton is one of Europe's largest freshwater lakes, and it is a significant tourist destination for Hungary, which does not access the sea. It is 76 kilometres long, up to 14 kilometres wide, and covers 673 square kilometres, which is rather a shallow lake, measuring between four to twelve meters in the deepest part. The lake's shallowness draws tourists to its warm waters, but the lake's shallowness and lack of depth make its ecology vulnerable to pollution, especially in the summer (Puczko & Ratz, 2000).

The growth of tourism in the area began in the 1840s. However, after WWI, the importance of Lake Balaton as a vacation destination grew, and the region's infrastructure, accommodation, and entertainment facilities built up at a rapid pace. Following the devastation caused by WWII, social tourism – state-funded, organized vacations – began to emerge in nationalized accommodation. However, today, the region's tourism is highly seasonal (most visitors arrive in 6–8 weeks during the summer) and has a mass tourism nature (Puczko & Ratz, 2000).

This case study aims to look at the role of events and gamification on the image of Lake Balaton through the eyes of different generations (X, Y and Z). Based on the previous chapters' literature and in order to achieve the study goal, four focus groups were conducted between three different generations. The result has proved the important role of events and gamification on the destination image.

### 9.6.1. Methodology

This study is exploratory since it looks at a new and developing field. Its goal is to evaluate the role of events gamification on the image of Lake Balaton as a famous destination in Hungary through the eyes of different generations X, Y and Z. As the combination of tourism, generation, and gamification (for this study, gamification is considered as a type of innovation) is a new field, it has to be researched thoroughly; hence qualitative research methodologies are used. Focus groups are commonly

employed in the social sciences and applied research (Puchta & Potter, 2004).

FGs methodology dates back to the 1920s and was primarily aimed at retrieving information about product preferences (J. H. Frey & Fontana, 1991). The majority of authors refined this technique between the late 1980s and 1990s (Kitzinger, 1995; D. L. Morgan, 1988; Patton, 1990; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). However, it has continued to grow in popularity in the past decades, and it has been applied to many different purposes such as marketing issues (Cox et al., 1976), sociology (Carter et al., 2014; Cyr, 2016), urban transport mobility (Dell'Olio et al., 2010) and political science (Krueger & Casey, 2009; D. L. Morgan, 1988; D. F. Thompson, 2008).

Focus groups are a qualitative research approach that emphasizes group conversations and interactions, as well as sharing and comparing personal experiences among members (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The strategy is typically used to discover fresh insights into issues that are not well known.

This study aims to explore the opinion of three different generations (X, Y and Z) about the impact of events and gamification on destination image based on their experiences. Thus, based on the explorative nature of this study, the focus group is employed as a suitable method.

As this study is exploratory on the newly emerging area of gamification, generation in literature and sample representation as part of the population is not a major concern. The method explores the dimensions and creates constructs rather than measuring variables and representation. Four different focus groups have been conducted, 1 with generation X, 1 with generation Y and 2 with generation Z.

As Students are huge fans of video games, three different student sample was chosen for this study; however, the fourth sample was chosen from the university professors of three different departments of marketing, business, and tourism, as they were experts in this study's field who were considered as the representative of generation X. Both students and professors, were from different nationalities.

Following are the criteria for choosing the samples from the students:

- 1- Students are sophisticated users of technology and early adopters of technology (D. Williams et al., 2008). According to Nelson (2006), university students are more likely than innovators or early adopters of new information technologies than the

general population.

- 2- According to Griffiths et al. (2004), two-thirds of game players are under the age of 31, and 29% are current university students. Moreover, many game researchers consider students as the main game players.
- 3- Students are huge fans of video games. Game researchers frequently employ student samples (Eglesz et al., 2005; K. Lucas & Sherry, 2004).
- 4- Because today's students (especially Gen Z) will be important in tomorrow's tourism market, knowing their viewpoints will likely provide some insight into the types of marketing offers and messaging that will be required to attract them in the future, which is very beneficial for the destinations (F. Xu et al., 2009).

This study is about Lake Balaton (Hungary) and was carried out at the University of Pannonia, Hungary. It covers undergraduate students (Gen Z), postgraduate students (Gen Y), and university professors (Gen X). Participants were the volunteers who were eager to participate in the study and informed in advance, and gave a positive answer to the university announcement. Overall, 29 participants showed up; 15 Gen Z, 7 Gen Y, and 7 Gen X (Table 27).

Four focus groups were conducted, each lasting 1:30 hours on average. To minimize any disruption, each focus group was held in a quiet meeting room at the university, and in each group, the author of this thesis played the moderator's role and documented all interactions, including nonverbal communication.

At the beginning of each focus group, the moderator explained the purpose of the study and asked the participants to express their ideas freely as they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their answers (Creswell, 2007). Each focus group was recorded (using a digital voice recorder), transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). During the focus groups, the moderator explained and clarified the definition and examples of gamification and Generations X, Y, and Z (if necessary). The interaction among the respondents in the groups revealed that they assisted one another in generating a fruitful conversation, and no major disagreements were noticed in the discussion.

**Table 27: Profile of participants**

Participants	FG 1	FG 2	FG 3	FG 4
	Undergraduate Students	Undergraduate Students	Postgraduate Students	University Professors
	Gen Z	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X
Female	5	5	6	4
Male	3	2	1	3

The interview questions were categorised into five sections (Appendix 5). The first section started with questions about how the participants think of the tourism industry in the Lake Balaton region. It was followed by the second section, which was about the existing and potential events and their advantages/disadvantages in that region. In the third section, the questions were asked about Lake Balaton's destination personality and image. In the fourth section, questions were about gamification and its effects on the destination competitiveness and also tourists' behaviour. Furthermore, in the final section, the respondents were asked about the characteristics and behaviour of Gen Z and Gen Y as the main tourism target market of the future.

#### 9.6.2. *Results and discussion*

To start the Focus groups, each group was asked about the tourism industry of the Lake Balaton region and if the DMOs are aware of its importance. All the respondents in the four FGs agreed that the tourism industry in this region is seasonal and somehow stuck at a certain level and not developed:

“...the tourism is somehow developed, but it is now stuck. They used their resources like the lake as the main tourist attraction, and that is all. It is the second year that I am living here; there is nothing new to offer to tourists” (FG1)

“The lake is the main attraction. It’s a seasonal thing, yeah, I think. We can say that mostly German-speaking people are coming during the tourism season...tourism is developed but stock at the same stage.”(FG2)

“...for me actually, some problems just come to my mind like seasonality, like sometimes quality is not always there as it should be. But it's getting better, and there's, I think, some development which actually happens around the lake in the last 15 years. However, it struggles to develop from a certain level.”(FG4)

Regarding that, the respondents in all four groups mentioned that the DMOs are perfectly aware of the importance of the tourism industry for the region, but they do nothing about the problems and the disadvantages:

“...we have good and bad DMOs at the same time as they are from different parts of the countries. So they are aware of the value of the lake, but they do not know how to use it. We need to have more stakeholders here. It depends on their activities and necessities.”(FG2)

“...I think yes because we don't have other places like Lake Balaton in Hungary. So they absolutely know the importance, but they try to make smaller collaborations.”(FG3)

“...Given the fact that the relatives of some of those authorities are rapidly buying a lot of land along the lake, I think they are aware of the importance. But I don't know if they are interested in the tourism industry. As they do not really care or they don't put a lot of effort into that.”(FG4)

In terms of advantages and disadvantages of Lake Balaton as a destination compared to other similar destinations, again all groups agreed that the lake region has unique features such as good temperature, low price, different types of activity and beautiful sceneries:

“...each side of the lake has its own advantages and people can do different activities around it. Also, it is very affordable to travel there.”(FG1)

“...it has a form of history attached to it as it is significant and connected to the people here, so I would say that is the main advantage of here. We don't have a seaside, so if people with family want to travel within the country, they will choose Lake Balaton.”(FG2)

“...Well, I would say for example, the price, if we compare this region to the lakes that are in Switzerland or Austria, it is far lower, and I think the lake is really famous in Eastern Europe.”(FG3)

“It's unique compared to seaside destinations that mostly European or other nationalities prefer to go to. The water temperature is good, and it has sweet water.” (FG4)

Regarding the disadvantages, all groups agreed on problems with the English language, poor infrastructure, and services:

“The English speakers are not many, so this is a huge problem for tourists. Not all the region around the lake is developed. Many problems in the infrastructures as well.”(FG2)

“...I think there are infrastructural problems, like the route around the lake, and expensive food but bad services...”(FG3)

“...low quality and horrible services. The frontline staffs are horrible, so sometimes it's a shame for me because I think to the foreigners, it is not a good experience to stay there.”(FG4)

All groups mentioned the possibility of different types of tourism around the lake region as the development around the lake was not homogeneous; accordingly, they mentioned each region needs to be considered separately with different types of tourism:

“...maybe fishing competition can be a good tourist activity as there are many fishermen around this area. Also, it is possible to consider spa tourism as we have some thermal bath around the lake...” (FG2)

“Tourist flow is quite unbalanced at the lake region, so many highlighted destinations are there. However, there are many small villages that have great potential to grow and have many authentic things to offer to tourists.”(FG3)

Interestingly, all the groups considered the music festival their best-experienced event and the first event that came to their mind. While generation X (FG4) was the only group that named having fun the top positive point of their experience, both Gen Z and Y considered socializing and being part of the crowd as the positive point of the events they took part in.

“...it is international so I can meet many people with different nationality backgrounds.” (FG1)

“...the experience of the festival and to be with all other people at the same time in the same place was fantastic...”(FG2)

“I would say it was a music festival in Japan. It's always with the traditional Japanese dance, so people gather in a small town and it received around 2 million people in those five days, it feels fantastic to be part of the crowd.”(FG3)

“The Street Music Festival, one in the spring, which is for free. I think it's a very good

idea because lots of music can be found in the city and you can have fun and drinking.”  
(FG4)

In answer to the advantages and disadvantages of existing events in the Balaton area, all the three generations talked about the international ambience of the event, and a time to meet new people as advantages of the existing events and disadvantages; they mentioned that there are not enough English information, mismanagement, and overcrowded events.

“...I was thinking of the Jazz festival, and it was perfect that they were singing English music. However, the adverts were not in English, not enough information for international tourists.”(FG1)

“...there are music and good food in the city all the time. The fact I mentioned it was massively overcrowded. Accommodation opportunities are very limited, and the Transportation is in a very, very awful.” (FG3)

“During the music festival, many people come and have the opportunity for socializing, but because of the mismanagement, it became very crowded. Parking is also a very big problem.”(FG4)

The image of Lake Balaton as a destination was the same between all the generations of this study as they mentioned a water activity-based image such as “Sailing boats”, “water sport”, and “swimming”. However, when they were asked what image the tourists may have about this destination, they were answered “relaxing spot”, “a fun place for a nice vacation”, and “cheap place” from tourists’ point of view.

Lake Balaton as a destination has a human personality of a “funny but mature person” in the mind of nearly all respondents, and they mentioned the destination image would be improved through:

“...always a calm, mature man who will listen to you carefully, sometimes is funny but won’t tell joke all the time. Like someone you will feel secure” (FG2)

“...For me, it's like that middle-aged woman who is divorced and just want to have fun.”  
(FG3)

“...Funny middle-aged lady who has three children. Or I think it's a grandma who brings everyone all together.” (FG4)



The participants believed that DMOs should have a specific plan for different regions around the lake and also need to work on the brand through online marketing. Furthermore, they need to consider other local stakeholders and work together.

“...building the brand and telling what is this destination famous for, more facilities need to be constructed, trying new types of tourism” (FG2)

“It is only possible with collaboration between the tourism associations and DMOs as they look at each other as rivals for the moment. Moreover, to have better online promotional marketing, especially on social media in Instagram and every other.”(FG3)

“...Actually, a kind of localisation plan would be really important, so here that shouldn't just be built like in a normal style framework. Moreover, the regions around the lake are not homogeneous places. So they require different strategies for different types of tourism. Overall they need to use flexible strategies and differentiate them for each region.” (FG4)

Gamification is the process of employing games to achieve a certain goal, such as engaging people and influencing their behaviour and is widely known as the use of game-play mechanics for non-game applications (Deterding et al., 2011; Xi & Hamari, 2019). All the respondents had the same idea over the definition of gamification and have used at least one gamified app during the last 24 jour “ Yesterday”, “2 hours ago”.

“...when you try to do the basic activities but this time in a more entertaining way.”(FG2)

“It's an application of the game elements into a non-game problem or something and also the design techniques from the games to make the learning process more practicable.”(FG3)

“...We would use games in training people for job interviews. Let's say work to play. We use gamification in tracing the influence of norms, professional norms on employees' behaviour.” (FG4)

All the groups mentioned that using a gamified app will make the experience more fun, motivating the users to continue if they receive some points and rewards. Nevertheless, when it comes to gamification and gamified apps, the tech-savvy generations show stronger passion regarding how they would feel when using them. Fun can be a core factor in using gamified apps, which aligns with Zichermann and Linder's (2010) belief that

pleasure may be an influential marketing factor. It also emphasizes the importance of having fun in virtual experimental marketing (V. T. C. Middleton et al., 2009).

“...gamified apps are fun and addictive, you don’t wanna put them away.”(FG1)

“...Using the gamified app at the destination makes it more fun. I’m always enthusiastic about it. For example, playing geocaching was really fun because we were able to go to Random places that we would not have seen if it wasn't for that, and usually, they had something fun around” (FG3)

However, Gen X mentioned the fun factor is good, but sometimes it is too much; collecting points or rewards cannot always be a motivation for them to use gamified apps:

“Well, when you are thinking about being tempted to receive more rewards, but sometimes it is too much. For example, in east Asian countries, they want to sell everything through these tricks. So it will be annoying. I know they will keep the data of the consumers, so I won’t use gamification only to collect points for fun, I need to know about the advantages, and it must be something useful.” (FG4)

Destinations compete for tourists and are trying to cope with ever-changing social and economic factors of market demand; thus, innovation is their only option to succeed (Hjalager, 2002; Weiermair, 2006; Weiermair et al., 2007). Gamification can boost user participation in a variety of circumstances. Although gamification tends to positively influence behavioural outcome measures (Buckley et al., 2017), knowing how tourists interact with technology can help DMOs understand their needs. Moreover, gender, age, experience, and personality are all aspects that can impact motivation to play gamified apps (F. Xu et al., 2016).

Moreover, gaming can add absolute fun to the travel experience since it animates the journey and allows players to interact with the destination. This might be a more effective approach to displaying and animating various aspects of the destination or even in an event. All the groups agree that gamification can help the competitiveness of the destinations and can affect the attractiveness of the event:

“...if you gain something in the event, you will remember it forever. Gamification in festivals can provide the feeling that the DMOs are more caring about the tourist and they are always welcome there.”(FG1)

“... I think it has to do something with the attractiveness. Some destinations have these games available mostly for the younger generation. But people will see what the app has to offer, and maybe they will be more careful about using it or not. However, it can attract more people if, for example, during the festival, you will buy a certain quantity of something and you will put it on the application somehow and then you will get a discount or maybe to have something for free.” (FG3)

“...It will increase the level of competitiveness compared to other destinations if you are the first one to offer something special. For example, offering packages that will reduce the overall price. It makes the participants loyal and makes the experience more fun so they may become the frequent visitors.” (FG4)

Gaming also involves aspects like challenge and achievement, which FG2 acknowledged. For example, a game could involve a task like seeing a certain number of attractions in a certain amount of time or finding a series of related monuments. Tourists may collect points, badges, or other rewards as a way to recognize success. The difficulty level can vary, and the challenge should reward the player's accomplishment. Traditional game dimensions of challenge and achievement, according to comments, apply here as well but are not as popular as other dimensions such as fun. Intrinsic incentives include challenge and achievement, and competitiveness, contribute to the game's flow and are important motives in conventional gaming (Deci & Ryan, 1985; K. Lucas & Sherry, 2004; R. M. Ryan et al., 2006; Yee, 2007).

“...with gamification, you can make the festivals more challenging (the respondent expressed it with a lot of enthusiasm) and suggest more activities to the visitors. Everyone wants to win, so they will go and take part to win and come back again.” (FG2)

Getting to know individuals who may also wish to visit the destination or locals who live there is socializing. This might help with co-creating tourism products with other travellers or locals. One of the groups (FG3) mentioned it as a way to socialize with potential tourists. This type of socializing may result in exchanging ideas, perhaps meeting at the destination, travelling with new people, and sharing costs. However, it is possible to meet local people through gamification, which in this case, the socializing will result in learning more about the destination and the local community, as socializing is considered as an important dimension of tourist motivation by many researchers (Beard & Ragheb, 1983; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2011).

“...geocaching games usually have something fun around as we went to an attraction and we met other people, and all of us went around together. So it was like a very good way to create a purpose of meeting other people.”(FG3)

Destinations can employ gamification to encourage people to learn about attractions in a fun way (Correa & Kitano, 2015; Ramos et al., 2016; Seraphin et al., 2019; Tsai & Lee, 2017). Furthermore, the gamified systems can lead travellers to more resources for tourism information (Correa & Kitano, 2015). Tsai and Lee (2017) show how a game enhances user involvement, raises cultural identity awareness among travellers, and promotes destination image. Overall, this innovative way of marketing can persuade tourists to extend their stay or even repeat their visit. The result of this study aligns with the literature as all groups believed that gamification could persuade tourists to extend their visit and come back again.

“...the DMOs can provide some promotional tickets that participants can win (in the gamified apps) the ticket for the museums and other places, for example. Or they can create a space to show all the activities that tourists want to try and make the visitors come again or come up with new ideas that other destinations do not have.” (FG1)

“...providing the tourist with various types of activities that tourist cannot finish them in one visit or providing tickets for the next season so that tourists can collect points and at the end can win a ticket for the next year event...”(FG2)

“They could if they show them that there are more things to do than they expected. And if they find out there are new places to go, then they may extend their stay because they want to see more.” (FG3)

“For example, offering extra nights for staying certain nights. Or free tickets to visit some other attractions. I think it's possible if the tourists can get something extra, but if they come back next time and face the same game and the same reward, they won't be satisfied. So in the app, I think you need to offer something new, and you have to always continuously improve it as tourists are nowadays so demanding, and they want more.” (FG4)

Authenticity, innovation and entrepreneurship provide essential value to the advancement and quality of the tourism industry, and it is a critical factor in the success of destinations (Hjalager, 2002; Weiermair, 2006; Weiermair et al., 2007). Furthermore, tourism

innovation is an opportunity to differentiate the products, especially for choosing destinations.

According to Richards (2011, p. 1255), urban tourism is shifting “towards more intangible culture and greater involvement with the destination's everyday life”, a process that allows visitors and tourists to “escape from the serial reproduction of mass cultural tourism, offering more flexible and authentic experiences that can be co-created between host and tourist.” (2011, p. 1255).

The respondents in all the four groups have insisted on the importance of the authenticity at the destinations and the innovation level of the gamified apps and considered it as crucial aspects:

“...it is completely important as I myself do care to have a special thing for only that destination. The uniqueness must be just there not anywhere else. The authenticity won't let you get bored.”(FG1)

“...if it is authentic, for sure it will be more attractive, but if it is not, then that can be a problem as people may not like copies.”(FG2)

“...I think yes, as a final user, it is really important to me, knowing that the application is authentic. As I am looking forward to being at the same steps as the characters in the game and to be at the same location that was in the game.”(FG3)

“...Sure, yeah, just like the visitors of events as they prefer to have something authentic. This authenticity and innovation can affect the visitors as they don't want to see the copies from famous destinations again and again.”(FG4)

The Gen Z groups believed that Lake Balaton's actual and future target market was Gen Z and Y; however, the other two-generation groups (Y and X) thought differently.

“I would say they want millennial and gen Z., but if I want to talk about the prices, sometimes it shows that they don't want us (Gen Z).”(FG2)

“Probably the older millennials or Gen X with children and also the pensioners, for example, can find good places for themselves, like good resorts or very calm places. But it seems they don't have any plan for the next generations.”(FG3)

“Fortunately, the Balaton area has something for all the generations. But it depends; if the

DMOs do great, then that trend can continue and can target the next generations, but if they don't, no generation will be interested in.” (FG4)

Following the study's topic in the groups, the discussion went towards the characteristics of different generations, especially Gen Z and Gen Y as the future generations of the tourism market. First, the participants expressed their ideas about Gen Y and the types of tourism they may prefer. For example, Gen Z groups believed that this cohort has very different tastes and preferences compared to theirs:

“...they went through something that we (Gen Z) will never try. They might want to try and explore more, as many new things were created during their generations...they want to try peaceful tourism, more stable with some activities but not every day.”(FG1)

“They love to be around young people, more open to try new things. More open to exploring themselves. Providing more opportunities for themselves. I think they want to visit the places they weren't able to visit when they were very young or something when they were younger, saw them on TV and thought that they will never go there.”(FG2)

Gen Y group saw themselves somehow similar to the definition that the Gen Z groups provided:

“...We don't like that much technology, I mean, because in our time it just started the boom of the Internet and we were like kids when the mobiles came in, so we did not use it every day. We prefer more outdoor activities like hiking and being in nature or reading a book rather than using the phone all the time. Travelling to many different countries and discovering the world and new things” (FG3)

However, the Gen X group had a slightly different idea from this cohort:

“... Not buying a house but renting, they love immigrating, they only stay 2-3 years in the same job. They are lovely and have very appealing characters. They prefer to go to extravagant destinations, and they prefer to travel with family and friends.”(FG4)

Discussing the characteristics and the tourism taste of Gen Zs, the FG1 and FG2 saw themselves as tech-savvy and living in the moment, and they believed it as a positive characteristic, and so did believe the Gen Y group:

“...we look at everything as taking for granted but not from bad views. We need to entertain this generation as they were born in the middle of technology like super new

laptops. We want to be realistic and prefer a live experience” (FG1)

“...wild, young and free. They always want to have fun. This generation never thinks twice they want to do something, so they will just do it. If I (Gen Z) can't get it now, then I don't want it. It is fast-paced like if my network is very slow, I don't want it, change it immediately... We prefer beneficial tourism. We are looking for the impacts, so we prefer to do something that can impact the world in a good way.”(FG2)

“Their life is attached to the Phones and their tablets, and they don't really go out. They play video games. They are always connected. And they do weird things. But I think they are more flexible, especially to changes... Well, considering all the problems right now, probably they prefer more eco-friendly tourism as they do care more about ethics. For example, I've seen many baby boomers who don't care if they take a picture with a hunted tiger but the Gen Zs are like no, that's animal cruelty and we should not support these practices. More importantly, they want the type of tourism that has Wi-Fi all the time, without internet, they will die” (FG3)

However, the Gen X group had a pessimistic point of view regarding Gen Z's characteristics:

“They don't take responsibility for anything. Most of them are selfish. I think they seem really self-confident, but they are definitely not, and a lot of time they feel lost because of all the big data and a lot of information which they have to deal with them as it's a process in all their lives. And they don't know how to get out..... They don't want traditional tourism, I think, but they still like lakes or the sea, but maybe their behaviour is going to be a little bit different, and their motivations are going to be a little bit different as they want to have fun with the experience and more importantly they want to be spontaneous and not have a plan in advance”(FG4)

Gen Y groups described their taste in events as more cultural; this was the same belief among other groups as well:

“They want music, wine and gastronomy. Let's say cultural festivals” (FG2)

“...Quality festivals, well organized, with famous people. Different type of music festival compared to the Gen Z. Maybe art festival because they like mixed things” (FG4)

Similar to Gen Y, all the groups believed that cultural event “music festival” is among

their first preference types of events, but the Gen Y group added “Video game festival” as the other preference of this cohort.

“...Music festival, they are international generation. They can meet with all different types of music through the Internet, but they don't want to find any traditional things as they want new things all the time.”(FG4)

To compare the level of desire in using gamification or gamified apps between the Gen Z and Gen Y cohort, all groups agreed that Gen Zs have a higher tendency to use them.

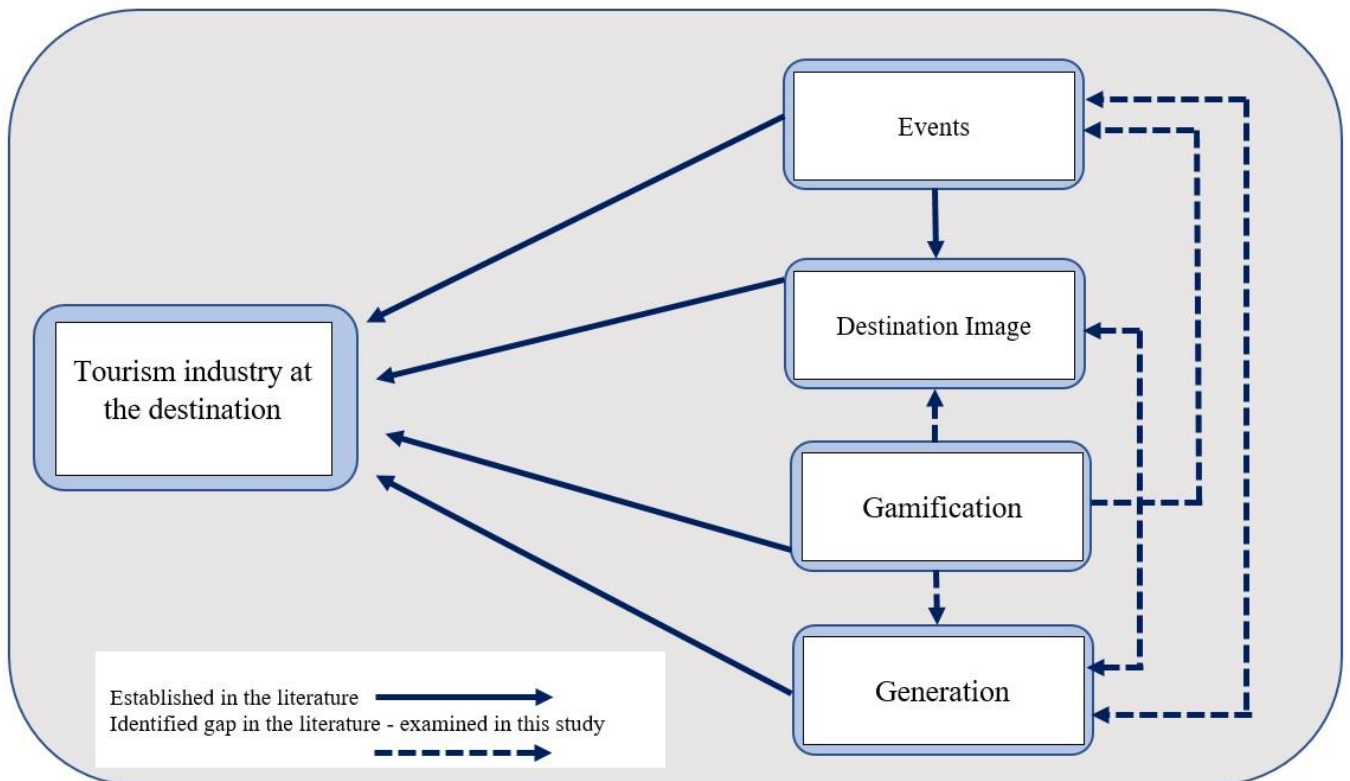
“...millennials are not brave enough to use it a lot. They will use it less than Gen Z, but not that much. We (Gen Z) will use it the most. I think we use it, and we don't even understand that we're using it. It comes naturally.”(FG2)

“...Gen Zs will use it a lot more than they already do, and It depends on the reward. If the reward is appropriate for their behaviour, I think they will use it; I think they will use it more than Gen Y as they can learn how to use the tools and apps very fast.” (FG4)

Overall based on the result of this case study, it is possible to propose the following conceptual model (Figure 38). This conceptual model concludes that events, destination image, generations, and gamification are the factors that can affect the tourism industry at the destination. Meanwhile, gamification directly affects destination image, generations, and events. Meanwhile, it is possible to consider that generations can affect events and destination image and at the same time be affected by them. And finally, events can affect destination image while receiving effects from generations and gamification.



**Figure 38: Conceptual model of case study number 5**



Source: Author

### 9.6.3. Funding

This case study has been supported by the European Union and Hungary and co-financed by the European Social Fund through the project EFOP-3.6.2-16-2017-00017, titled "Sustainable, intelligent and inclusive regional and city models".

## 9.7. Conclusion

We are at the beginning of a period of visitor experience expansion and democratization. While travel was once reserved for the upper classes, especially in the west, with the growth of low-cost travel and collaborative forms of consumption, tourism is now available to all segments of society. In this setting, younger generations are taking advantage of the potential of new digital technologies and communication to promote, develop, and interpret certain meaning pathways. The growth of the information society has a significant impact on visitor demand, directing it toward mobility and autonomy, a significant phenomenon for tourism sociology that will become even more important in the future.

New generations consider travel as a tool that can improve their lives and shape their identities. Young visitors are keen to encounter new worlds; they want to learn about diverse cultures that meet their own preferences. They are becoming more accustomed to planning their vacations on their own and have high expectations.

The new generation's taste is increasingly related to digital media discoveries, which are no longer restricted by physical and temporal limits or traditional socialization processes. Users may now access information from all around the world thanks to digital media. As a result, a wide range of previously undiscovered sites and visitor experiences may get attention with the internet, fostering genuine global competition in tourism.

As a result, globalization and localization appear to be complementary and integrated processes that allow tourists to appreciate local characteristics on a global scale. Furthermore, the internet facilitates interactions between subcultures and the discovery of social and cultural groups other than one's own, allowing social membership borders to be more fluid. These cultural trends encourage new tourist behaviours, which reinforce the trends.

As one of the world's largest and most widespread businesses, the travel and tourism industry is as vulnerable as any other to the forces of change at work in the rapidly evolving information and communication technologies (ICT) world (Buhalis, 2000; Buhalis & Law, 2008). Destinations all around the world are putting more money into learning how to use information and communication technology in destination management and marketing. Gamification is one of the most promising ICT technologies,

with applications in entertainment, education (interpretation), and co-creation of tourism experiences, among others.

This chapter promoted the need to study future generation behaviour and gamified apps at destinations for DMOs to obtain relevant information about tourists and their point of view regarding their preferences and the role of gamification and events in improving destination image. Gamification can increase tourists' interest in a destination by providing unique experiences and knowledge that would otherwise be unavailable, resulting in a more personalized visit.

Accordingly, it is pretty important to consider the role of generations, as it was discussed in the case study of this chapter which has highlighted the important role of future generations (Y and Z) and has discussed in detail why destinations need to adapt to their future strategies and planning based on their needs, in case they are willing to stay in the competition. Moreover, this case study sheds light on the crucial role of gamification in the competitiveness level of the destinations. It discussed how gamification can affect the tourists' on-site visit experience and how it may affect their future decision making regarding a revisit.

It has been proved that these generations (Y and Z) are tech-savvy and highly connected, with new demands and expectations that sometimes can be far different from the previous generations. Accordingly, in-depth studies are needed to understand better their behaviour and the trends they are following. Apart from being known as tech-friendly generations, this thesis showed that they care a lot about the environment and sustainability (especially Gen Z); thus, the destinations and companies that are not considering this issue will soon get out of their list. Nevertheless, on the other hand, they are ready to choose unknown environmental friendly destinations over the famous environment polluting destinations, as their thoughts and actions are pretty aligned.

# Chapter 10: Conclusion

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## Introduction

The main aims of this chapter are to interpret the main findings, to introduce them in conclusion, to discuss their contributions to knowledge, and finally, to provide limitations and directions for future research. This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the study's key findings to answer the research questions and place them in the context of the previous literature. The second section outlines the conclusion and the research findings. Following that, the study's contributions to knowledge will be discussed. The fourth section will describe the limitations of the thesis, and the last section gives recommendations for future research.

## 10.1. Summary of the summaries

This thesis has provided a better understanding of how events and cultural innovations (such as gamification) can improve the destination image and how they can be considered an effective tool in confronting various crises. Moreover, the technology taste of future generations is well discussed as the potential customer of the tourism market.

This section focuses on answering the core question: How can events and cultural innovations effectively assist in destination image improvement and make them more appealing or tempting for tourists? The central proposition of this research is:

Events (especially socio-cultural) and cultural innovations (such as gamification) are effective tools to shape the destination image. These tools can attract tourists (especially new generations) and persuade them to extend their stay or even repeat their visit. Furthermore, they can help destinations rebuild or improve their authentic image during crises.

Research questions that relate to the literature are:

1. What are the different types of events and their role in forming a destination image?
2. Is the authenticity of hosted innovative cultural events important to destination image formation for the tourists?
  - a) What are the social and cultural impacts (direct and indirect) of innovative cultural events for participants and host communities?
  - b) What are the expectations and experiences of hosts regarding innovative cultural events?
  - c) What are the expectations and experiences of attendees?
3. What are the effects of crises on destination image?
4. What are the effective strategies for destination image recovery during and after the crises?
5. What is the influence of the heritage site designation (UNESCO) brand upon the destination's prior image, or 'brand'?

- a) How and if local people will accept the effect of the newly assigned brand on their own culture.
6. What are the main benefits of using innovation and gamification in destinations?
    - a) How can these tools help the competitiveness of the destinations to win over other competitors?
    - b) What is the role of innovation and gamification in forming a destination image?
  7. Why is it important to distinguish different generations and their behaviour patterns? What is the role of gamification in shaping their behaviour patterns?

By Considering the research questions, this thesis has identified that most of the research has contributed to the effect of mega-events, and less attention has been paid to the small-size and cultural events. Accordingly, their role in improving the destination image was not well studied compared to the mega-events. Moreover, by considering the important role that socio-cultural events could play, this thesis brought to attention that the level of authenticity and innovation need to be considered as important as other factors as tourists are into authentic and innovative products and events; so that these issues will affect their image over a destination.

Also, it is worth mentioning that events and cultural innovations can play a significant role in confronting different types of crises that destinations may face in the future and can play an influential role during the recovery period.

In the end, this thesis has explained the role of gamification as a type of innovation for destinations and how they can benefit in favour of their image. Moreover, as the main future tourist market will be generations Y and Z, a comprehensive discussion has been applied to show the importance of this factor and how much these generations are into new technologies and what are their needs and behaviour patterns.

Following the provision of theoretical backgrounds of each concept, the present research adopted five complementary studies to achieve this goal. Findings concerning these research questions are accordingly discussed here. This section is divided into eight parts to explain the findings of this thesis.

### *10.1.1. Profile of Respondents*

#### *10.1.1.1. Case study number 1*

The required primary data for the study was collected via twenty-seven semi-structured interviews conducted in April 2019 in Isfahan, Iran. According to previously reviewed literature, twenty interview questions were developed to collect detailed insights from international travellers visiting Iran. The interviewees were conveniently selected, approached and asked if they could participate in a short interview survey.

The sample was comprised of participants from eight nationalities, including France (10), Germany (4); Italy (3); Netherlands (5); Russia (1); Slovakia (2), Spain (1), and Switzerland (1). Fourteen respondents were male, and thirteen were female. In terms of age groups, nine were aged between 21 and 30, four were between 31 and 40, eight were between 41-50 and six were aged more than 51 years old. The majority of the respondents learned about Iran from those in their circle of trust; family, friends, and colleagues, while the rest were learned from the internet, books, programs, and news on TV. Fourteen of the visitors have decided to travel to Iran individually, while the other half preferred to travel in a group.

#### *10.1.1.2. Case study number 2*

The survey was conducted in May 2019 in Gonbad-e Qābus, Iran. The study was administered in a 'semi-structured interview', for which twenty respondents (out of twenty-five) agreed to participate and were interviewed. All of the interviewees were open to expressing their ideas and were keen to help the improvement of the tourism industry of the region by taking part in the study. Sixteen respondents were male, and four were female. In The participants consisted of two groups:

- a. Residents of Gonbad (10 people)
- b. Tourism experts who had a minimum of 10 years of working experience at ICHTO (Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization) of Golestan province branch (10 Experts)

Each group had its own sub-groups as:

- a) Out of 10 experts, 5 were managers at ICHTO, and the other 5 were ICHTO employees (archaeologists and heritage conservation specialists).

b) Also, out of ten residents, 5 were souvenir shop owners around the UNESCO site in the city, and the other 5 were residents of Gonbad-e Qābus who were interviewed on the site during their visit.

#### *10.1.1.3. Case study number 3*

The survey was undertaken at the 2017 Rose and Rosewater Festival and was administered in a 'semi-structured interview' format. Convenience sampling occurred whereby any foreign visitors were approached and asked if they were willing to participate in a short interview survey. Twenty respondents out of 23 asked were interviewed overall. There were nine nationalities among the 20 respondents: Belgium (2); China (2); France (6); Germany (2); Japan (1); Malaysia (1); Netherlands (4); Russia (1); Switzerland (1). Thirteen respondents were male, and seven were female. In terms of age groups, four were aged between 21 and 30, nine were between 31 and 40, five were between 41-50, and two were aged more than 51 years old.

#### *10.1.1.4. Case study number 4*

The survey was undertaken at the 2019 Montpellier Light Festival and was administered in a 'semi-structured interview' format. According to previously reviewed literature, interview questions were developed to collect detailed insights from light festival visitors. Convenience sampling occurred whereby any apparent visitors were approached and asked if they were willing to participate in a short interview survey. Twenty respondents out of twenty-three were interviewed overall. Of the Twenty respondents, there were ten respondents from the Occitanie region, while the other ten came from different regions of France.

The sample was comprised of six male and fourteen female respondents in terms of age groups; five were aged between 21 and 30, four were between 31 and 40, eight were between 41-50 and three were aged more than 51 years old.

#### *10.1.1.5. Case study number 5*

This study was undertaken in 2020 in Veszprem, Hungary. The study used the Focus group (4 FGs) as a qualitative method. Out of four, three of them were with the participation of students, and one was with the presence of tourism, marketing, and business professors who are considered as academic experts in this research. Two FGs were conducted with Gen Z, one with Gen Y and one with Gen X. The participants were



the volunteers who were eager to take part in the study based on the previous notice. The sample was comprised of nine male and twenty female respondents.

### *10.1.2. Destination image*

Since the early 1970s and the beginning of this research on destination images, many different definitions with various inconsistencies in the concept regarding the destination image have been introduced. Moreover, until now, there is no standard, nor the researchers have approved a common definition of the destination image as some discuss that the image is a holistic summation of all the perceptions toward a specific destination, while some others look at it from a different epistemological phenomenon such as symbolic or functional.

It is possible to consider that all those different points of view about the concept of the destination image might result from differences in the measurements of the construct and the conclusions about the psychological mechanism of the destination image.

Moreover, it seems that in different studies, researchers have dealt with the concept of the image differently from the traditional tangibility-intangibility or functional-psychology approach (Chon & Olsen, 1991; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Ko & Park, 2000, p. 20).

The multiple attributes of these factors can contribute to a destination environment and its image while, at the same time, psychological or symbolic elements of the destinations can enhance their attractiveness and improve the overall image (Murphy et al., 2000). Each destination has its own unique image; just like every tangible product or business (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010), destinations can have a weaker or stronger image compared to others.

Hunt (1971, 1975) was among the first researchers who identified the importance of having a strong and positive image attracting tourists and has demonstrated that destinations with less favourable images may never achieve their planned target and cannot convince tourists to travel there. Accordingly, destinations need to choose an accurate target market to create and transmit their favourable image to those potential tourists as destinations are mainly competing based on their perceived image in the market (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001).

After reviewing different definitions of the destination image and considering many

components, attributes, dimensions and affecting factors, the author of this thesis defines the destination image as:

*The personal impressions, understandings, feelings, imaginations, desires and expectations of an individual from a specific place that is shaped based on many different information sources. Besides the previous influential factors, it is worth considering the vital role of events, cultural innovations (gamification) and new technologies in shaping the image of tourists after 2020.*

In the author's point of view, the image has a very dynamic nature that can change instantly during time and according to the vital role of the internet and social media in the 21st century and the mega data (fake or facts) that individuals are in exposure to, these changes can happen far faster than before. Thus, it will be possible to consider a liquid nature for the shape of the destination image in terms of transforming and changing speed. This fluid shape will change continuously in the sea of the data and will never stay the same as before. This shaping process can be unique for each individual based on demographic, socio-cultural, and many other personal factors.

Overall, tourism authorities and DMOs need to be aware of their destination's strengths and weaknesses and learn how they can shape the visitors' image and meet their expectations as the extent to which the actual tourism experience meets these expectations; the tourist satisfaction will equally happen. Thus, developing an actual positive image is necessary to achieve the expected experience with a real competitive advantage (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Bigné et al., 2001; Chon, 1990; Gartner, 1994).

### *10.1.3. Destination image and crises*

#### *10.1.3.1. Covid-19, political trust and destination image*

31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) first reported the presence of an unknown virus causing pneumonia-like symptoms in Wuhan (WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard, 2020; Williams & Kayaoglu, 2020). Initially, views of the relatively unknown virus suggested it was not a threat nor a public health emergency. However, over the past two years, the COVID-19 has become the most critical issue globally that has been taking many lives and damaging the global economy. The countries took vastly different measures to combat the spread of infection based on many

considerations, approaches, policies and strategies; some were precise and timely, while others were vague and delayed (with dire consequences).

To explore this issue, one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (individualism/collectivism), the Edelman Trust Barometer and the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases to population ratios from WHO had been considered. Trust Barometer offers insight into levels of trust based on three categories: 1. Trust=60-100%; 2. Neutral=50-59%; and 3. Distrust=0-49%. Considering the relationship between COVID-19 confirmed cases to population ratios based on Coronavirus, WHO provides various daily statistics for all countries, and the political trust scores (i.e. trust in government) are based on the 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer report.

By considering Hofstede's cultural dimension, countries with higher (lower) trust and lower (higher) infection rates tend to be collectivist (individualist) societies. Moreover, the examples appear mixed for neutral trust countries considering infection rates. However, the cultural dimension rate seems to moderate the relationship between infection rate and political trust such that the infection rate is lower for countries with lower individualism.

Concerning the level of trust that populations have in their government, the rate of respecting the COVID restrictions is proven that controlling the virus spread was successful or not. Governments that projected a very clear message from the country's critical situation saw people trusted and reacted accordingly, while in other countries, confusing messages caused catastrophic results.

Taking numerous factors into consideration (i.e. vigorous large-scale testing or strict lockdowns and other means of controlling), evaluating the level of success in controlling the spread of COVID-19, preliminary results suggest countries with high political trust, lower rates of individualism, and those governments that disseminate clear messages, citizens will more likely support the COVID restrictions, and hence, the spread of the virus and its significant negative health implications may be better contained.

Overall, for the post-COVID period, destinations need to be prepared for different scenarios, as the two years of COVID proved many unprepared destinations with heavy losses. Moreover, there is a significant relation between tourists' intra-pandemic perception and post-pandemic destination choice based on the new safe projected image by the destinations (J. Li et al., 2020). Previously, the role of media has been considered

as one of the significant factors in convincing travellers and helping the destinations during and after the crises; however, the COVID-19 pandemic has opened up a new place for the national and international health organizations such as WHO as one of the main sources for checking the safety rate of the destinations based on different factors such as the number of confirmed infected cases, total death and vaccinated population rate.

#### *10.1.3.2. International Sanctions and destination image (Case study number 1)*

This research focused on exploring the factors contributing to a traveller's decision to visit Iran, particularly in the face of a likely more negative destination image and the risk of negative implications for any future travel to destinations that have imposed, or support, sanctions against them. In particular, the study acknowledged the existing travel and service limitations, potential perceived risks, retractions and extensive sanctions against Iran as critical deterrents for inbound travel from Western countries. However, given such restrictions, the study considers the visitors travelling to Iran as 'unconventional' because it suspects that conventional motivators such as weather, proximity, tourism infrastructure, and value for money may play a diminished role. Instead, in this study, three factors were determined as the critical motivators for the unconventional traveller when deciding to visit Iran: the degree of curiosity, the degree of disapproval, and the destination image gap between what was expected and what was experienced.

Curiosity has been identified as an important factor in travellers' decision-making process. In particular, seeking new experiences by seeing unique destinations has been identified as the dominant factor in destination choices by Western travellers visiting developing countries (Awaritefe, 2004). Based on the findings, many travellers exhibited a strong interest in exploring Iran for themselves instead of relying on existing (mostly) negative information and WOM regarding travelling to the destination. Such exploratory intentions and behaviours have been strongly linked to enhanced curiosity and novelty-seeking, as indicated in the seminal past research (T.-H. Lee & Crompton, 1992). Moreover, in line with Wen and Hunag (2019) and Li and Ryan (2018), this study also revealed that seeking unique experiences is a key push factor for international travellers' intention to visit (and revisit) sanctioned countries. The results of this study also confirmed that during the presidency of Donald Trump, choosing Iran as the destination (besides all its historical, cultural and natural attractions) may reveal a desire to take personal action as a means of displaying a degree of disapproval of the existing

restrictions and sanctions imposed on the nation by global powers, including the US. This research highlights that a traveller's disagreement with the tourism image of Iran as a politically alienated or restricted destination choice is a personal value that enhances, rather than diminishes, the attractiveness of Iran as a destination choice. The literature supports this from a broader perspective, where it is believed that travellers with strong internal values are highly motivated by intrapersonal factors, such as novelty seeking and self-development goals (M. Li & Cai, 2012).

Moreover, the study explored the role of the destination image gap as a key factor in these travellers' decision-making process when assessing Iran as their destination choice. Existing literature has frequently investigated the role of destination image in decision making (G. Ashworth & Goodall, 1988; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). However, only limited existing studies have explored the importance of image in a politically undermined destination (Bhat & Darzi, 2018). Past research also confirms that an improved destination image, i.e., a positive image gap, significantly enhances the overall attractiveness of the destination (Martín-Santana et al., 2017). Results of this study confirmed that, in general, the destination image gap for Iran is mostly positive due to the improved image upon visiting and the often complicated or even negative pre-visit image.

#### *10.1.3.3. Destination image vs big brands (UNESCO) (Case study number 2)*

It is clear from both groups of respondents that, as long as the local people are not well informed or involved in the tourism development and policies, or when they are not supportive or 'engaged' with the World Heritage brand, tensions will persist between them the different brand levels. As Turkmens are among the minorities in Iran, both in terms of ethnicity and religion, they are sensitive about their own culture and do not have a strong identification with the World Heritage Site. Furthermore, the lack of tourism experts at the managerial level, an absence of comprehensive plans and marketing strategies, weak infrastructure, and insufficient budget and investment have discouraged the local community and made them believe that the WHS is nothing more than just a brand, despite the great potential of their city.

With its over 2500-year history, Iran has great potential to become one of the region's main heritage tourism destinations. WHS designation has brought both positive and negative impacts upon local communities in Gonbad. It has brought further city exposure both nationally and internationally, but on the other hand, the lack of educational and

informative programs has weakened the attachment of local communities towards this WHS. Moreover, the local community feel they have not been involved in developing their city's WHS site, which has caused them to feel ignored and disappointed.

Based on the result of this study, both groups (residents and the tourism experts) have considered the local brand and image of their culture and city to have far more potential than the World Heritage brand. Furthermore, the officials have not been successful in capitalizing on the World Heritage listing to create a unique image of the city as a top destination in Iran. Accordingly, as for destination image, which is the most salient part of a destination brand, Turkmen culture and customs appear to be among the region's most important components of the destination image. Unfortunately, this issue exists not only for Gonbad but also in many other WHSs in Iran. The majority of these sites have failed to reap the benefits of WHS listing due to the lack of a clear marketing strategy and a master plan as well as limited information and expert guide availability on these sites.

Based on this study, three main factors have failed to influence and encourage the local community in Gonbad since WHS listing. The first factor is the poor scale and pace of tourism development since WHS designation; this can be seen as a result of issues such as the lack of tourism expertise at the managerial level, the absence of comprehensive urban planning and marketing strategies and weak infrastructure. The second factor is negligence by tourism decision-makers in educating and informing the local community and encouraging them to take an active role in developing tourism. The third factor is the great patriotic sense of being a Turkmen and strong belief in their own customs and culture that prevented them from accepting anything which is not part of their own culture, including World Heritage.

#### *10.1.4. Event and its typology*

Every destination that wishes to boost its tourist appeal should prepare specific tourism development strategies. Events are one of the tools that they can rely on, but if they wish to achieve the full potential of event tourism, these plans should include and focus on strategic event planning. Events that take place at any destination should be planned and developed methodically, and they should be established as tourist attractions, catalysts for further growth, image builders, and animators of the destination. Overall, hosting events have become a significant aspect of any destination's social, cultural and economic infrastructure. For example, according to Meetings Professional International (MPI), in 2012, 1.8 million meetings and events contributed more than \$393 billion to the US GDP

by creating 1.8 million jobs and accounting for \$109 billion of all business travel spending in the USA (Meetings Professional International, 2016).

Destinations embrace events as key elements in their marketing strategies and image promotion as events have become the prime manifestations of a country's social and experiential economy (Robertson et al., 2007).

Events must be planned and organized so that they differ from one another, and not just copying the successful one without considering all the aspects. A well-defined event provides market recognition and an advantage over the competitors, resulting in higher visitor satisfaction and loyalty, which is critical for repeating events. The more well-known events a place has, the more appealing it is to participants. The support of sufficient accommodation facilities, intense levels of collaboration between tourism organizations, the availability of detailed information about events and follow-up activities, and, most significantly, efficient marketing efforts are the keys to their success.

#### *10.1.5. The effects of events on destination image*

##### *10.1.5.1. The role of socio-cultural events in rebuilding Iran's image (Case study number 3)*

Whilst it cannot be determined as to how the respondents participating in this interview survey would have responded to questions regarding their destination image of Iran if they had not attended the Rose and Rosewater Festival, the findings of this empirical research demonstrate a positive link between such socio-cultural events and destination image. As was learned from the interviews, the respondents' image of Iran prior to visiting the country was mixed and included significant negative imagery regarding the 'safety' of Iran as a tourism destination. However, those who had dismissed the negative imagery put forward mainly through mass media had done mainly so based on first-hand accounts from friends and family who had visited Iran previously. In turn, this study's respondents reported that, based on their own first-hand experiences, they were highly likely to recommend visiting Iran to others. Moreover, their experiences at the Rose and Rosewater Festival, during which they were able to have first-hand experiences of the friendliness and hospitality of the Iranian people, appear to have strengthened their positive image of the country and strengthened their resolve to recommend visiting Iran to others.

In this way, the study conducted at the Rose and Rosewater Festival illustrates how festivals and other socio-cultural events can play a significant role in rebuilding Iran's destination image for international tourism. Indeed, not only can such events boost spending by both 'host' and 'guest' communities and increase tourism development at both the destination and regional levels, but they can also play an important role in boosting destination image. By contributing to the recovery or rebuilding of Iran's destination image, the outcomes of festivals and events are far broader than merely their economic impact. Indeed, socio-cultural events play the role of a promoter in destination and tourism development. Moreover, since most events are related to local culture and entertainment, they attract the interest of tourists, especially those who are already culture-oriented in their destination choice.

Nonetheless, the research presented here illustrates different aspects of rebuilding a country's image through socio-cultural events. While the data indicate a marked positive change in the image of Iran among international tourists who were visiting the country, particularly when they attended socio-cultural events, the image impacts observed in Iran also underlined their complexity. The image of Iran seems to be strongly differentiated in terms of its components and in terms of the image held by different groups of visitors, and thus it is clear that we need to start talking about 'images' rather than an 'image'. Accordingly, Iran's tourism policy-makers need to plan various international marketing strategies in order to attract culture and tradition lovers from different countries, as well as consider the prominent role that festivals and other socio-cultural events can play in developing the tourism industry of the country and improving Iran's image internationally.

#### *10.1.5.2. The Role of Socio-cultural Events in Improving Destination Image: Montpellier Light Festival (Case study number 4)*

Whilst it cannot be determined as to how the respondents participating in this interview survey would have responded to questions regarding their destination image of Montpellier if they had not attended the Light Festival, the findings of this empirical research demonstrate a positive link between the Light Festival, as an innovative cultural event, and destination image. As was learned from the interviews, the respondents' image of the Light Festival, prior to visiting Montpellier, was positive and included significant similar aspects to the Lyon light festival, which is a very different festival in terms of scale and vision. Those who were expecting the same festival as Lyon had faced a very



smaller festival with fewer tourists.

In turn, this study's respondents reported that, based on their own first-hand experiences, they were highly likely to recommend visiting Montpellier Light Festival to others. Moreover, their experiences at the Light Festival, during which they were able to have first-hand experiences of the very pleasant nightlife atmosphere and enjoy the new artistic themes, appears to have strengthened their positive image of the festival.

It seems that Montpellier Light Festival has targeted the local residents and visitors from the Occitanie region, first and most. As such, the light festival can be described as a local event that can also attract some tourists both nationally and internationally. Nevertheless, this local dimension is not necessarily a negative aspect. Current debates about the proliferation of light festivals worldwide have pointed out how the increasing number of light festivals all around the world can produce increasing competition to attract visitors, funds and artists. Thus, the Montpellier case illustrates how these events largely diverge in size, objectives, and popularity. While a handful of light festivals like Lyon and Eindhoven have international renown and compete to attract tourist flows worldwide, Montpellier operates on a different scale, mainly attracting local visitors and hardly competing on the same scale.

Accordingly, Montpellier's event organizers should continuously focus on attracting local and regional visitors, adapting both their actions and communication. On the other hand, any attempt to increase the size of the festival in order to improve its standing in the global hierarchy of light festivals will be probably successful. Furthermore, Montpellier DMOs need to work on some of the tourism infrastructures, such as the number of parking lots or transportation system during the festival, as it seemed insufficient from the respondents' point of view. The city of Montpellier does not possess both the know-how and the international renown associated with both the city of Lyon and its light festival. To continue to focus on the local and regional visitors seems to be the most successful strategy to ensure the continuity of the event.

As the "Light Festival" is a generic term for all the similar light festivals in France, the visitors had the perception of the Lyon festival in terms of scale and other characteristics. Accordingly, it is possible to consider that the organisers wanted to enjoy the same image but introduce the smaller size as entertainment for the local and regional visitors. Based on that, the life of this type of festival is arguable.

Accordingly, Montpellier's tourism policy-makers need to re-shape their strategies and plan various marketing strategies in order to attract more tourists, in case they have the goal to increase the size of the festival as well as considering the prominent role that light festival can play in developing the tourism industry of the city and improving its image.

#### *10.1.6. Innovation and destinations*

Many researchers define innovation as a collection of successful individual and organizational activities that begin with new ideas and continue until the ideas are commercialized; however, there is no comprehensive agreement on the definition of innovation in the literature (C.-J. Chen & Huang, 2009; Dosi, 1988; Gomezelj, 2016; C. Hall, 2009; Hjalager, 2002; Isik et al., 2019; Jacob et al., 2003; Novelli et al., 2006; Reddy, 2002; Rodriguez et al., 2014; Rogers, 1983; A. M. Williams & Shaw, 2011). When looking at the literature, it is clear that innovation is a critical aspect in ensuring the long-term viability of businesses and acquiring a competitive advantage, especial for destinations in the tourism industry (Bettis & Hitt, 1995; Voss, 1994).

The importance of innovation is emphasized by researchers, who point to changes in customer demands and social and economic factors (Hjalager, 2015). As a result, improving destinations' innovation skills is a key priority for providing steady and durable competitiveness in a changing context of tourism (Sharif & Huang, 2010). One of the most important requirements for long-term success, development, resource expansion, and sustainability is innovation (Jimenez-Jimenez & Sanz Valle, 2011). Even if the tourism industry is not a pioneer in terms of innovation, it makes quick use of new ideas and information and adapts them to the industry (Hjalager, 2015). When studying the link between tourism and innovation, it is clear that the advances in the sectors of business (Martin, 2004; Poon, 1988) and management are significant (Jafari, 1981).

In order to better understand the connection between tourism and innovation, it is necessary to look at the structure and economic implications of the tourism industry at destinations. The government has focused its emphasis on tourism because of its economic contributions rather than its socio-cultural consequences. Accordingly, different policies were adopted for different destinations.

Tourism policy is a vital topic in research, and the function of local, national, and supranational governmental entities is becoming more well-known. For example, the

state's role as coordinators, planners, lawmakers, regulators, sponsors, stimulators, promoters, and protectors is embraced by Rodrigues et al.(2014). In addition, Hjalager et al. (2008) describe public agents' more inclusive and interactive roles in innovation systems, such as combining educational resources with commercial partners, facilitating intellectual property trade, acting as "intelligent consumers," facilitating knowledge spill-overs and so on.

Businesses that differentiate their product profiles are more successful than those that do not, but this advantage is amplified if there is subsequent human capital development, as Walsh et al. (2003) demonstrate. This issue can be the same for destinations in the tourism industry.

At the destination level, governmental interventions might also include more typical risk-financing, networking, and incubation facilities for new businesses and initiatives (Decelle, 2006). The influence of public policy on tourist innovation, whether direct or indirect, intended or inadvertent, is a growing area of study interest. However, most of the literature on tourist innovation strategies is conceptual or prescriptive, with only occasional proof of its effects and efficacy.

It has long been asserted that key tourist actors have limited innovation resources. On the other hand, tourism innovation occurs in more complicated supply chains, where visitors' requirements are collected and handled by producers of physical artefacts, which will later reappear in the tourism sector as service innovations. Some cosmetics companies, for example, are extensively integrating with the wellness business, where they may influence the image and sales of perfumes, skincare products, new age musical records, and so on (H. Mair, 2005). As a result, spillover and spill-back impacts to the providing industries occur (OECD, 2005), mainly compensating for the lack of innovation capabilities in tourism and vice versa.

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing sectors, which explains why it is prominent. These assessments highlight the importance of the tourism industry in both economic and regional development. It is critical for the tourism sector and destinations to innovate to achieve long-term growth and development (Greve & Taylor, 2000). The excellent practices have been brought to attention by the successful innovative events at the destinations. Every sector requires innovation and new services to ensure growth and sustainability (Peters & Pikkemaat, 2006). Otherwise, it will cease to be a desirable

industry, stagnating and resulting in an economic downturn. This condition may cause the tourism entrepreneurs, and hence the consumer, to get distracted from the market. It requires measures that foster innovation in order to preserve its competitiveness in the global tourism sector (OECD, 2010).

#### *10.1.7. Gamification and destinations*

For many years, the game industry has been tremendously successful, encouraging designers to apply game aspects and systems to non-game reality. Points, badges, leader boards, progress bars, and other game components assist in increasing the attractiveness of services and apps by motivating users to complete specific tasks, execute desired actions, progress, and compete with others. Because it includes both hedonic and utilitarian components, gamification impacts usefulness and simplicity of use. Moreover, the entertainment components gamified services may improve user engagement and incentive to strive toward goals and make procedures more appealing, fascinating, and pleasurable.

The advantages and mechanics of gamification may be found mainly in the technology adoption literature and human-computer interface studies. The literature on technology acceptance is a rich source of information on the impact of perceived utility, ease of use, social influence, and enjoyment on new system adoption and attitudes. However, there are not many studies that look at the same aspects in tourism and destinations when it comes to gamified services.

Gamification has progressed beyond its role as the latest buzzword, and it is now widely discussed at academic conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals (Hamari et al., 2014; D. Liu et al., 2016; Schlagenhauser & Amberg, 2015). Despite the few academic studies on tourism gamification, there is growing academic interest in the area; however, more thesis and research need to be done on different aspects, such as how gamification would affect travellers' decision-making and purchasing behaviour at destinations (Bulencea et al., 2015; Correa & Kitano, 2015; Negrusa et al., 2015).

Several potentials exist to build innovative gamification concepts in a destination marketing scenario. From the standpoint of relationship marketing, consumer loyalty, and engagement, it is worthwhile to investigate the marketing results of gamification on the destination and its image. Few destinations have already applied gamification and are

known as successful examples of gamified apps at the destinations; however, this topic is still young in the tourism industry, and more research needs to be conducted in order to evaluate the level of effectiveness of gamification in attracting tourists and improving the destination image.

According to empirical investigations, Gamification can boost user participation in various circumstances. Although gamification tends to positively influence behavioural outcome measures (Buckley et al., 2017), knowing how tourists interact with technology can help DMOs understand their needs. Moreover, gender, age, experience, and personality are all aspects that can impact motivation to play gamified apps (F. Xu et al., 2016). Therefore, destinations can implement this form of marketing in order to raise brand recognition and improve the tourists' experience and participation. Also, destinations may employ gamification as a new marketing method to deliver tourism information.

Gamification can provide a solid basis for investigating the impact of perceived mobility and product features on user experience (i.e. utilitarian and hedonic features). Perceived benefits (i.e. self-benefits and social benefits), forms of perceived value (i.e. information value, experiential value, social value, and transaction value), and brand equity are all influenced by the user experience (i.e. perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand associations, and brand trust). According to research on the Edutainment topic, gamified technologies may also be used to educate about cultural heritage, improve perceptions of destinations, and increase visitor participation, to boost the experience before, during, and after the visit (Swacha & Ittermann, 2017)

Pre-visit tools can also motivate individuals to travel to destinations dealing with a crisis (such as post-conflict or post-disaster destinations), encouraging knowledge acquisition (Seraphin et al., 2016). Gamification on the site boosts tourist satisfaction by increasing entertainment and interaction. This gamemechanic encourages memory and sharing of the experience after the visit and future visits (Skinner et al., 2018; Swacha & Ittermann, 2017).

Destinations can employ gamification to encourage people to learn about attractions in a fun way (Correa & Kitano, 2015; Ramos et al., 2016; Seraphin et al., 2019; Tsai & Lee, 2017). Furthermore, the gamified systems can lead travellers to more resources for tourism information (Correa & Kitano, 2015). Tsai and Lee (2017) show how a game

enhances user involvement, raises cultural identity awareness among travellers, and promotes destination image. Overall, this innovative way of marketing can play a vital role in future competitions between destinations.

#### *10.1.8. Generations and tourism*

We are at the beginning of a period of visitor experience expansion and democratization. While travel was once reserved for the upper classes (and maybe with a specific age range), especially in the west, tourism is now available to a larger segment of society with the growth of low-cost travel and collaborative forms of consumption. In this setting, younger generations are taking advantage of the potential of new digital technologies and communication to promote, develop, and interpret certain meaning pathways. The growth of the information society has a significant impact on visitor demand, directing it in the direction of mobility and autonomy, a significant phenomenon for tourism sociology that will become even more important in the future. This means the more technology literate the generation is, the more connected it will be and the more information it may receive.

New generations consider travel as a tool that can improve their lives and shape their identities. Young visitors are keen to encounter new worlds; they want to learn about diverse cultures that meet their own preferences. They are becoming more accustomed to planning their vacations on their own and have high expectations.

The new generation's taste is becoming increasingly related to digital media discoveries, which are no longer restricted by physical and temporal limits or traditional socialization processes. Users may now access information from all around the world thanks to digital media. As a result, a wide range of previously undiscovered sites and visitor experiences may get attention with the internet, fostering genuine global competition in tourism.

As a result, globalization and localization appear to be complementary and integrated processes that allow tourists to appreciate local characteristics on a global scale. Furthermore, the internet facilitates interactions between subcultures and the discovery of social and cultural groups other than one's own, allowing social membership borders to be more fluid. These cultural trends encourage new tourist behaviours, which reinforce the trends.

As one of the world's largest and most widespread businesses, the travel and tourism industry is as vulnerable as any other to the forces of change at work in the rapidly evolving information and communication technologies (ICT) world (Buhalis, 2000;

Buhalis & Law, 2008). Destinations all around the world are putting more money into learning how to use information and communication technology in destination management and marketing. Gamification is one of the most promising ICT technologies, with applications in entertainment, education (interpretation), and co-creation of tourism experiences, among others.

This chapter promoted the need to study future generation behaviour and gamified apps at destinations for DMOs to obtain relevant information about tourists and their point of view regarding their preferences and the role of gamification and events in improving destination image. Gamification can increase tourists' interest in a destination by providing unique experiences and knowledge that would otherwise be unavailable, resulting in a more personalized visit.

Accordingly, it is pretty important to consider the role of generations, as it was discussed in the case study of this chapter which has highlighted the important role of future generations (Y and Z) and has discussed in detail why destinations need to adapt to their future strategies and planning based on their needs, in case they are willing to stay in the competition. Moreover, this case study sheds light on the crucial role of gamification in the competitiveness level of the destinations. It discussed how gamification can affect the tourists' on-site visit experience and how it may affect their future decision making regarding a revisit.

It has been proved that these generations (Y and Z) are tech-savvy and highly connected, with new demands and expectations that sometimes can be far different from the previous generations. Accordingly, in-depth studies are needed to understand better their behaviour and the trends they are following. Apart from being known as tech-friendly generations, this thesis showed that they care a lot about the environment and sustainability (especially Gen Z); thus, the destinations and companies that are not considering this issue will soon get out of their list. Nevertheless, on the other hand, they are ready to choose unknown environmental friendly destinations over the famous environment polluting destinations, as their thoughts and actions are pretty aligned.

## 10.2. The overall conclusion of the thesis

Throughout this thesis, several significant results were achieved. Some of the findings are in accordance with past research, and some are new. All the initial objectives that this thesis conceived have been confirmed through this work. Primarily, this thesis has explored the literature related to destination Image, crises, events, innovation, gamification, and generations. Accordingly, this thesis has provided the basis for understanding these concepts in the tourism industry.

This thesis points out the important role of events (socio-cultural), crises, big brands (UNESCO), and innovation (gamification) in improving destination image with an eye on the need of future generations. The findings have demonstrated that each of those mentioned factors can affect the overall image of the destinations (positively or negatively).

Furthermore, this thesis's findings say that the positive destination image helps tourism marketers attract the potential market and even persuade them to repeat their visits. Understanding the image development process and the image's nature helps DMOs position their destination effectively in target market segments, especially by considering the future generations.

By understanding future generations' needs and behaviours, destination marketers can attract and motivate all potential customers to a particular destination. Authenticity, innovation and gamification were among the topics that emerged from this thesis in terms of effective tools in the hands of destinations.

The use of gamification as a trend in different destinations proved it could help create a positive image. At the same time, innovation and authenticity of the cultural events have been considered to have considerable potential in improving the destination image.

Overall the case studies in this thesis found that crises (covid-19 and sanctions), big brands (like UNESCO), hosting events (socio-cultural), and innovations (gamification) can vastly impact, negatively as positively, the destination image. While crises and sometimes big brands can negatively affect the destination image, they will provide an opportunity by putting the name of the destinations in the headline of the media. However, benefitting from this way of popularity seems very risky and can cause heavy prices. It is all in the hand of the governments how to benefit from it and make these threats to



opportunities.

On the other hand, cultural events and innovations at destinations are helpful choices that can positively affect the destination image. Especially gamification, which is considered among the top trends in the tourism industry that can bring benefits for both tourists and DMOs. Gamification has proved its usefulness and success in marketing and now taking over the tourism industry.

It is highly recommended that destinations consider this trend and employ it in order to make a fruitful and enjoyable experience for tourists and even attract more. With the help of gamification, the destination can be informative and provide both necessary and extra information that tourists may not find or go for further readings in a normal situation. So this can be an excellent opportunity to inform them through a fun experience; moreover, destinations (through gamification) can push tourists toward a particular behaviour or introduce new beneficial trends that can play a win-win role for both destinations and tourists.

Meanwhile, it is pretty important to consider the role of generations, as was discussed in the fifth case study of this thesis. It has highlighted the important role of future generations (Y and Z) and has discussed in detail why destinations need to adapt their future strategies and planning based on their needs, in case they are willing to stay in the competition. Moreover, this case study sheds light on the crucial role of gamification in the competitiveness level of the destinations. It discussed how gamification can affect the tourists' on-site visit experience and how it may affect their future decision making of a revisit.

It has been proved that these generations (Y and Z) are tech-savvy and highly connected, with new demands and expectations that sometimes can be far different from the previous generations. Accordingly, in-depth studies are needed to understand better their behaviour and the trends they are following. Apart from being known as tech-friendly generations, this thesis showed that they care a lot about the environment and sustainability (especially Gen Z); thus, the destinations and companies that are not considering this issue will soon get out of their list. Nevertheless, on the other hand, they are ready to choose unknown environmental friendly destinations over the famous environment polluting destinations, as their thoughts and actions are pretty aligned.

Innovative cultural events, such as the light festival in Lyon, are hugely successful in

attracting tourists. This highlights the role of innovation and creativity in persuading tourists to visit the destination or even repeat their visit. More than that, innovative events can become the symbol of the destinations and be known as the brand of those destinations. It is essential to know that this level of success (and being authentic) will differentiate the destination from other competitors and be highly appreciated by tourists. However, it is necessary to point out that not all innovative events can succeed, as some will fail soon and die young. Another important issue that destinations need to consider and maybe avoid is copying the successful innovative events as if an innovative example worked perfectly in a destination; this cannot guarantee reaching the same level of success at other destinations. Accordingly, DMOs need to be very careful and conservative for copying a successful example, as failing in this way can damage their image and make them known as the wasteful spending example.

Overall, many different strategies and solutions can help destinations improve their image, among which this thesis has chosen some to shed more light on and study in detail. The author of this thesis hopes these results can benefit destinations and help them improve their image. Furthermore, by studying different aspects of destination image, crisis, small scale events (cultural), new generations (Y and Z) and innovation (gamification), this thesis made several theoretical contributions to the literature which can open a way for future research on these topics.

### 10.3. Contribution to knowledge and future studies

This thesis aims to investigate how events and cultural innovations work as effective tools to assist in destination image improvement and make them more appealing or tempting for tourists?

The ultimate goal of any destination is to influence possible tourists' travel-related decision making and choices through marketing activities. Therefore, destination image has been recognized as one of the most influential concepts in tourists' destination choice process because image affects the individual's subjective perception, subsequent behaviour and destination choice (Jeong & Holland, 2012).

Destination Image is not static but changes depending on the aspects and attributes of the destination. Therefore the pre-travel image will be reshaped during and after the visit

(Beerli & Martín, 2004).

DMOs try to strategically establish, reinforce, and change their destination's image. Hence considering many different aspects are important and based on the findings of this thesis, authenticity, gamification, and innovation are among those aspects.

Even though many researchers have dealt with some of these topics before, this thesis has studied some new aspects and considered the connection of these variables to the destination image. Thus, research can contribute to the existing knowledge by considering the concepts from a new perspective.

This thesis provides an extended discussion of a range of aspects that are affecting the destination image, which will make several significant contributions to the current literature. These include the following:

- 1- This thesis has explored the effect of socio-cultural events (innovative and authentic) as an affective aspect in improving destination image
- 2- This thesis has explored the role of crises and events (sanctions, big brands (UNESCO)) and their effects on destination image.
- 3- This thesis has considered the role of innovation and gamification as the important aspects that are affecting the destination image through the eye of different generations.
- 4- This thesis draws attention to the important role that innovation and gamification can play in the destination
- 5- This thesis draws attention to the important role of new strategies and planning based on future generations' needs for the destinations.
- 6- This thesis has also recommended making a positive destination image (or improving it) by using gamification and innovation.
- 7- The research conducted on these topics can contribute to governments, DMOS and other stakeholders.
- 8- This thesis findings, as a reference, will assist governments, DMOS and other entities at the destination. In addition, the results will add to existing knowledge on the role of events (socio-cultural) and cultural innovation (gamification) in

improving the destination image.

- 9- This thesis makes suggestions for future research relevant to improving the destination image.

## 10.4. Limitations of the study

Some general limitations are associated with all five studies:

- 1- The review of prior research helped define characteristics for the investigation. Studies on the role of events and cultural innovation in improving destination image have gotten very little attention. As a result, the amount of previous research on the studies' specific issues was somehow restricted.
- 2- This thesis's number of observed variables and constructs could be considered somewhat limited. Even though the observed factors and constructs were chosen based on the literature study and the researcher's observations, other significant variables and constructs may be used to improve the destination image.
- 3- The current studies have limitations regarding the data used to achieve the objectives. The data were only collected from three different countries. This geographically limited research may produce different results and conclusions that cannot be generalized. Tourism stakeholders in other destinations and countries may have different strategies, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours concerning tourism development and improving destination image. Other geographic boundaries and research scopes should be explored to see if similar findings and results could be addressed. Moreover, future research may collect data from other destinations with famous successful examples so that comparative studies can be conducted.

Here are some specific limitations for each case study:

### **Case study number 1**

This study has taken the first step toward expanding the current understanding of the factors that motivate an unconventional traveller to visit Iran as a destination facing political sanctions and travel restrictions. The main limitation of this study is the absence of quantitative and large-scale empirical supporting evidence, an issue that future research

can overcome. Future research can also test the research model on other destinations facing similar challenges, such as China, Cuba, Venezuela, Russia and Belarus. Finally, future studies can expand the model to include other potential motivators such as empathy and self-actualization.

### **Case study number 2**

This study has taken another step toward expanding the current understanding of the factors that can affect the local community's behaviour against the big brand such as UNESCO. One of the main limitations of this study is that by conducting a qualitative study, which seeks for in-depth analysis, the findings of this study based on the perspectives of ten experts and ten residents that cannot be generalized and may not resemble the perspectives of all the tourism experts nor the residents in that city. Future research, especially a large-scale quantitative one, can shed more light on this issue and introduce valuable information.

### **Case study number 3**

This study has expanded the current understanding of the role of socio-cultural events in improving destination image. However, one of the main limitations of this study was the limited time of the tourists for the interview as some were with a group and had less time than other participants. More than that, some of the participants had concerns about not discussing any political or religious views while the interviews were recorded as they were advised not to comment on these sensitive issues by their own governments. However, after ending the interview and stopping the recording procedure, they expressed more issues and gave permission to the author to note them down.

Results from a qualitative study with twenty respondents can provide a general understanding only and cannot be generalized. However, this study can help future studies, especially large-scale quantitative ones, develop more understanding and reasoning concerning the discussed issues.

### **Case study number 4**

This study has expanded the current understanding of the role of socio-cultural events in improving destination image by considering an innovative event (Montpellier Light

Festival). This study has the same limitations (as study number 3) in terms of the time of the interview with participants; however, the participants had enough time to express their points of view regarding the study's aims. More than that results from a qualitative study with twenty respondents can provide a general understanding only and cannot be generalized. Nevertheless, this study can help future studies, especially large-scale quantitative ones, develop more understanding and reasoning concerning the discussed issues.

### **Case study number 5**

A particular disadvantage of a focus group is the possibility that the members may not express their honest and personal opinions about the topic at hand. This study can be a help for future studies, especially a large-scale quantitative one, in order to develop more understanding and reasoning concerning the discussed issues.

The main limitation of this study was the absence of quantitative and large-scale empirical supporting evidence, an issue that future research can overcome. Future research can also test the research model on other destinations facing similar challenges. Finally, future studies can expand the model to include other potential factors.

## **10.5. Future Areas of the research**

There are several areas of future research that researchers can pursue, taking this thesis as the initial point. There are some opportunities to extend these studies and investigate further issues. In the first instance, this thesis suggests that there is a need to further investigate the role of other affecting factors in improving destination image.

This thesis has been conducted by considering the role of events (socio-cultural), crises, big brands (UNESCO), and innovation (gamification) in improving destination image with an eye on the need of future generations. Even if those observed variables were selected based on the literature review and the researcher's observations, other critical variables and constructs might exist to achieve further insights into the destination image.

However, this thesis has provided the basis for understanding the concepts and role of each of the mentioned factors on destination image. Accordingly, it is suggested that the researcher investigate similar topics such as:

- The role of innovative local cultural events in improving destination image. This topic is worth considering as little research has been conducted compared to mega-events, and it will be useful for many different destinations as they may not have a massive budget for hosting large events. Moreover, the importance of innovation in creating new events can play a vital role as each year; new innovative events will attract tourists to different destinations, which may help them survive in this competitive market.

-The role of gamification on tourist behaviour and destination choice. As a new trend in tourism, gamification is receiving more attention, and this requires more research to evaluate its effect and role on tourist behaviour. It is true that this trend found its way into marketing and has helped companies to keep engaging their customers, but still, this trend needs to be analysed in the tourism industry. Accordingly, it seems vital to study if/how this trend could affect tourist behaviour and destination choice.

- Or destination image through the eyes of future generations. As the future customers of the tourism market, New Generations may have different needs and expectations or even wholly different tastes in tourism compared to their parents. Accordingly, destinations need to continually analyse this need and study their behaviour if they wish to survive in the market. It is important to understand that each generation has its own preferences and values, which will dominate and build its image from the destinations.

The outcome of this thesis can be presented to governments, DMOs, and other stakeholders at destinations for future research. Subsequent research in this area would need a larger sample to confirm the findings of this thesis. Therefore, future studies with larger samples would enhance the output or lead to broader acceptance of the results presented in this thesis.

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## Appendices:

### Appendix 1:

**Table 28: Case Study Number 1**

Case study's profile	
The data collection method	Semi-structured interviews (10 mins)
Number of interviews	27 (in English and French)
Place of interview	Isphahan, Iran (2019)
Respondents Nationalities	8 nationalities: France (10), Germany (4), Italy (3), Netherlands (5), Russia (1), Slovakia (2), Spain (1), and Switzerland (1).
Respondents gender	14 Male and 13 Female
Respondents age group	21 to 30 years old = 9 respondents 31 to 40 years old = 4 respondents 41 to 50 years old = 8 respondents 51+ years old = 6 respondents
Case study's questionnaire	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Considering the gender of the participant (without asking).</li> <li>2- Where are you from?</li> <li>3- When were you born?</li> <li>4- How did you learn about Iran?</li> <li>5- Are you travelling, in a group or individual?</li> <li>6- What were the main reasons that you chose to travel to Iran?</li> <li>7- What were your family and friends' reactions to your decision to travel to Iran?</li> <li>8- What difficulties did you think of facing before travelling to Iran?</li> <li>9- Were you aware of the US sanctions about travelling to Iran?</li> <li>10- What negative points did you think of Iran before your travel?</li> <li>11- What positive points did you think of Iran before your travel?</li> <li>12- What was your overall image of Iran before travelling to this country?</li> <li>13- How, if at all, has your perception changed during your visit (first impression)?</li> <li>14- What will you say if I ask you about the first image that comes to your mind when you think of Iran?</li> <li>15- If you consider Iran as a Human, how would you describe it?</li> <li>16- Will you recommend others to travel to Iran?</li> <li>17- What will you say in order to recommend it?</li> <li>18- Will you travel to Iran again?</li> </ol>	

19- If so, What will be your main reasons for revisiting Iran?

20- What are your recommendations to Iranian authorities that can help to improve the image of Iran as a tourist destination?

## Appendix 2:

**Table 29: Case Study Number 2**

Case study's profile	
The data collection method	Semi-structured interviews (25 mins for managers + 15 mins for locals )
Number of interviews	20 (in Persian)
Place of interview	Gonbad, Iran (2019)
Respondents profile	10 Local people (Residence of Gonbad) 10 Tourism experts who had a minimum of 10 years of working experience at ICHTO (Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization)
Respondents gender	16 Male and 4 Female
Local Residence of Gonbad	5 souvenir shop owners around the UNESCO site 5 local residents
ICHTO Tourism experts	5 managers 5 employees
Case study's questionnaire A (Residents)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Are you living in Gonbad?</li> <li>2- How long have you been living in this city?</li> <li>3- What are the main characteristics of Gonbad?</li> <li>4- What is Gonbad known for?</li> <li>5- What do you know about the Gonbad WHS?</li> <li>6- What were the negative points that you had in mind about Gonbad before being chosen as a WHS?</li> <li>7- What were the positive points that you had in mind about Gonbad before being chosen as a WHS?</li> <li>8- What are the negative points that you have in mind about Gonbad after being chosen as a WHS?</li> <li>9- What are the positive points that you have in mind about Gonbad after being chosen as a WHS?</li> <li>10- How or if at all WHS has affected the city's culture from your point of view?</li> <li>11- How or if at all WHS has affected the city's economy from your point of view?</li> <li>12- How or if at all WHS has affected the city's overall image from your point of view?</li> <li>13- What weaknesses did you observe in Gonbad's tourism that need to be worked on?</li> <li>14- What are the positive points you observed in Gonbad's tourism?</li> </ol>	

- 15- What is the tourism potential of Gonbad from your point of view?
- 16- Did you observe any differences in Gonbad after the site became a world heritage site?
- 17- If I ask you about the first image that comes to your mind when you think of Gonbad, what will you say?
- 18- If you consider Gonbad a Human, how would you describe it?
- 19- Will you recommend others to visit Gonbad Qaboos? What will be your main reasons?
- 20- What are your recommendations to Province authorities that can help to improve the image of Gonbad as a tourist destination?

#### **Case study's questionnaire B (Experts)**

- 1- Are you living in Gonbad?
- 2- How long have you been working in the tourism industry?
- 3- What are the main characteristics of Gonbad?
- 4- What is Gonbad known for?
- 5- What do you know about the Gonbad WHS?
- 6- What were the negative points that you had in mind about Gonbad before being chosen as a WHS?
- 7- What were the positive points that you had in mind about Gonbad before being chosen as a WHS?
- 8- What are the negative points that you have in mind about Gonbad after being chosen as a WHS?
- 9- What are the positive points that you have in mind about Gonbad after being chosen as a WHS?
- 10- How or if at all WHS has affected the city's culture from your point of view?
- 11- How or if at all WHS has affected the city's economy from your point of view?
- 12- How or if at all WHS has affected the city's overall image from your point of view?
- 13- What weaknesses did you observe in Gonbad's tourism that need to be worked on?
- 14- What are the positive points you observed in Gonbad's tourism?
- 15- What is the tourism potential of Gonbad from your point of view?
- 16- Did you observe any differences in Gonbad after the site became a world heritage site?
- 17- If I ask you about the first image that comes to your mind when you think of Gonbad, what will you say?

18- If you consider Gonbad a Human, how would you describe it?

19- Will you recommend others to visit Gonbad Qaboos? What will be your main reasons?

20- What are the considerations and suggestions that can help to improve the image of Gonbad as a tourist destination?

## Appendix 3:

**Table 30: Case Study Number 3**

Case study's profile	
The data collection method	Semi-structured interviews (10 mins)
Number of interviews	20 (in English and French)
Place of interview	Kashan, Iran (2017)
Respondents Nationalities	9 Nationalities: Belgium (2), China (2), France (6), Germany (2), Japan (1), Malaysia (1), Netherlands (4), Russia (1), and Switzerland (1).
Respondents gender	13 Male and 7 Female
Respondents age group	21 to 30 years old = 4 respondents 31 to 40 years old = 9 respondents 41 to 50 years old = 5 respondents 51+ years old = 2 respondents
Case study's questionnaire	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Considering the gender of the participant (without asking).</li> <li>2- Where are you from?</li> <li>3- How did you learn about Iran?</li> <li>4- How do you travel, in a group or individual, and</li> <li>5- what were the main reasons that you chose to travel to Iran?</li> <li>6- What was your perception of Iran before travelling to this country?</li> <li>7- How, if at all, has your perception changed during your visit (first impression)?</li> <li>8- What kind of places and attractions are you interested in visiting in Iran?</li> <li>9- What have you experienced/joined during this festival/event?</li> <li>10- How are you enjoying/finding this festival/event?</li> <li>11- Would you mind please describing how attending this festival/event is influencing/affecting your overall image of Iran as a tourist destination – if at all?</li> <li>12- In your opinion, how might experience Iran's socio-cultural events such as this one affect tourists' tendency to revisit Iran or to recommend visiting Iran to others?</li> </ol>	

## Appendix 4:

**Table 31: Case Study Number 4**

Case study's profile	
The data collection method	Semi-structured interviews (10 mins)
Number of interviews	20 (in French)
Place of interview	Montpellier, France (2019)
Respondents Place of living	10 from the "Occitanie" region 10 from different regions of France
Respondents gender	6 Male and 14 Female
Respondents age group	21 to 30 years old = 5 respondents 31 to 40 years old = 4 respondents 41 to 50 years old = 8 respondents 51+ years old = 3 respondents
Case study's questionnaire	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Considering the gender of the participant (without asking).</li> <li>2- Where do you come from?</li> <li>3- When were you born?</li> <li>4- How did you learned about this Festival (Coeur de Ville en Lumières in Montpellier)?</li> <li>5- What was your perception of this festival before taking part in it?</li> <li>6- Did your perception change during your visit (first impression)? If so, how?</li> <li>7- What did you like the most about this festival?</li> <li>8- What would you like to have in addition to this festival?</li> <li>9- What additional activity would you like to have?</li> <li>10- Does this festival attract tourists to Montpellier?</li> <li>11- Do you think tourists will recommend the festival to others?</li> <li>12- Do you recommend this festival to others?</li> <li>13- If so, how would you describe this festival in order to recommend it?</li> <li>14- What tourist attractions in Montpellier would you recommend to tourists?</li> <li>15- What strategies should Montpellier put in place to attract tourists and improve its image?</li> </ol>	



## Appendix 5:

**Table 32: Case Study Number 5**

Case study's profile				
The data collection method	Focus group (90 mins)			
Number of focus group	4 (in English)			
Place of interview	Veszprém, Hungary (2020)			
Respondents profile	FG 1	FG 2	FG 3	FG 4
	Undergraduate Students	Undergraduate Students	Postgraduate Students	University Professors
Generation	Gen Z	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X
Female	5	5	6	4
Male	3	2	1	3
Case study's questionnaire				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- What do you think of the tourism industry in Balaton?</li> <li>2- How/If the DMOs and the authorities are aware of the importance of the tourism industry?</li> <li>3- What kind of advantages does Balaton have compared to any other similar destinations?</li> <li>4- What are the disadvantages?</li> <li>5- What are the possible types of tourism that can work in Balaton?</li> <li>6- Have you ever taken part in an event? What was the best one(s)?</li> <li>7- What were the positive points of it?</li> <li>8- What is the first festival (here) that comes to your mind?</li> <li>9- What are the advantages and disadvantages of existing festivals compared to similar ones in other destinations?</li> <li>10- What is the image of Balaton in your mind?</li> <li>11- What kind of image does Balaton have in tourists' minds?</li> <li>12- If you want to consider Balaton as a human, what kind of character will you give to it (Paris = young lady)?</li> <li>13- What are the strategies that can be used by DMOs to enrich the experience of the tourists and to improve the Balaton image regarding the tourists'</li> </ol>				

preferences and behaviours?

- 14- What do you know about gamification?
- 15- Have you ever used gamification-based apps? If so, When was your last experience?
- 16- How did you feel about it?
- 17- How can these tools affect the attractiveness of events and help the competitiveness of the destinations to win over other competitors?
- 18- How can gamification persuade tourists to extend their stay?
- 19- How can gamification persuade tourists to revisit?
- 20- What are the economic benefits of gamification in events?
- 21- Is the authenticity of gamified apps and their innovative level matter to visitors?
- 22- Who are the actual target markets?
- 23- Who will be the future target markets?
- 24- What general characteristics (personality) have you noticed in Millennials?
- 25- What general characteristics (personality) have you noticed in Gen Zs?
- 26- What types of tourism do Gen Zs prefer?
- 27- What types of tourism do Millennials prefer?
- 28- What kind of festivals may Gen Zs be interested in?
- 29- What kind of festivals may Millennials be interested in?
- 30- How likely would you think Millennials tend to use gamification or gamified apps at destinations or as a tool in festivals?
- 31- How likely would you think Gen Zs tend to use gamification or gamified apps at the destinations or as a tool in festivals?