

To Revisit or Not to Revisit Beijing

– The Role of Destination Image –

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of destination image on the future intention of tourists to visit (or not to visit) Beijing. Ten dimensions are used to measure the destination image: landscape and surroundings, cultural attraction, nightlife and recreation, shopping, sports, accommodation, gastronomy, price and cost, transportation, social interaction and friendliness. The study is also to explore the important factor(s) that contribute to the explanation of relationship.

Keywords: Destination Image, Tourist Future Intention, Beijing.

Introduction

Tourism is regarded as a vital source of income to many countries by contributing tremendously to a country's social and economic welfare (Sinclair, 1998). Realizing the potential of tourism to a country's wellbeing, many countries started to promote their place as a destination of choice. The effort leads to the unprecedented growth of the industry that creates challenges of competing among tourism marketers (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). The intensity of competitiveness in the industry requires marketers to differentiate their offers, and many rely on trying to offer the holistic experience of their place to their customers (tourists).

Holistic experience refers to the overall perceptions of impressions or the image of a place or destination (Pearce, 1988; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Crompton (1979) states that destination image is "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination". Destination image play a big role not only to attract tourist to a particular destination but most important is for them to revisit the destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

Studies related to destination image have been a dominating area of tourism research. It is deemed as the key underlying factor in destination choice. It started in the early 1970s with Hunt's work examining the role of image in tourism development (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). However, most of the studies focus on developed country especially United States (Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002) and next to none on emerging markets like Beijing.

Beijing contributes a quarter of Chinese tourism income. In 2006, 4.18 million overseas and 176 million domestic tourists visited Beijing and spent about USD5.25 billion and USD9 billion respectively (China Tourism Report, 2007). This study is anticipated to give insights on the overall impression of tourists on Beijing. The findings it is hoped will be utilized to improve the existing image in order for it to be more competitive.

Factors of Destination Image

Review of the literature on the topic for the past 12 years (1995 to 2007) indicates that destination image is approached either using cognitive (e.g. price and cost, accommodation facilities, shopping and sports) or affective measurements (e.g. cultural attraction, social interaction and friendliness). This study, on the other hand, incorporates both measurements in order to represent the holistic elements of the place. Results of the review define 10 dimensions to represent destination image of this study. They are:

- *Landscape and Surrounding.* Nature and man-made scenery are main components of landscape and surrounding. They play a big role in the decision making for holiday destinations particularly for those who regard these attractions as a form of escapism (Dadgostar & Isotalo, 1995). They also reflect the consumer demand for recreation and nature conservation (Wilson, 1992). Landscape and surrounding more importantly, display the character of the destination. They are the physical elements that influence tourists' perceptions of the place (Anholt, 2006).

- *Cultural Attraction.* Cultural attraction can be tangible factors such as buildings, crafts, art objects, or intangible elements like behavior and values. Culture can be developed as part of the product of tourism particularly for destinations with limited supply of tourism products (Puczko & Rátz, 2007). Moreover, culture experience and learning are considered as one of the perceived overall travel benefits besides escape, social interactions and knowledge explorations (Funk et. al., 2007).

- *Nightlife and Recreation.* Hall (1991) relates recreation as leisure activities experienced by tourists. Whereas nightlife is linked to entertainment facilities and activities (Chia, 2007) such as pubs, bars, karaoke and nightclubs that can be experienced by tourists at a destination especially at night. Schroeder (1996) states that good nightlife adventures, a good range of events and activities are crucial in attracting tourists to a destination besides a good range of accommodation and attractions.

- *Shopping.* Shopping opportunities are important to tourist in their decision making for a vacation trip such that, it is highly recommended for a destination to include the opportunities in their promotional strategy (Florida, 2002). Dubai Shopping Festival is an excellent example of an innovative promotion that manages to attract million of tourists to their place. Similarly, Chia (2007) supports the ideas of shopping as part of the promotional strategy for a destination even though most of the time shopping is not considered as important activity in attracting tourists.

- *Sports.* Sport arena is part of recreation and entertainment that can be offered by a destination. It should be considered as attraction, as its development represents a large investment with a high risk (Kotler, 1993). A destination with world renowned sportsmen or women brings many advantages to the destination in that, it can be a tool not only to attract tourist but also build pride and enthusiasm among the residents (Kotler & Gertner, 2002).

- *Accommodation.* In order to attract tourist, a destination needs to provide enough and comfortable accommodation that are easily accessible and easy to find (Chia, 2007). This is in line with Schroeder (1996) who regards a good range of accommodation is crucial in attracting tourists.

- *Gastronomy.* Eating while on holidays is part of indulging the local heritage, at par with the experience of visiting historical places and museums (Richards, 2002). Gastronomy that is, the 'art or science of good eating, or culinary customs or style' (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2008) reflects the national identity of a destination (Richards,

2002). Moreover, food and tourism is becoming a common attraction that includes agri-tourism, wine tours and the sale of food products as souvenirs. In addition, gastronomic tourism, an experience of food-related-network for instance, a trip to food festivals, restaurants, food producers and locations for food tasting, is becoming the primary motivating factor for travel (Hall & Mitchell, 2001). Realizing the potential of food as a tourism product, gastronomy can be a powerful tourism marketing tool for building a destination image.

- *Price and Cost.* Price and costs are interrelated. For instance, the cost to travel is the price a tourist has to pay for his flight ticket, accommodation, food, entertainment and other goods and services that one wants to experience at a destination (Seetaram, 2003). Thus, a choice of destination made by a tourist is influenced by the cost incurred and tourists' income level (Seetaram, 2003). For that, a variety of choices in terms of accommodation, flight prices and transportation are seen as motivating factors to attract different market segment to a destination.

- *Transportation.* Transportation is the link between tourists and their choice of destination. In this regard, the availability of transportation is crucial (Prideaux, 1999). Moreover, the transportation infrastructure and system of the destination must be reliable and efficient (Henderson, 2000) in order to become the destination of choice. German with its highly developed transport infrastructure such as intercity rail network, extensive motorway and modern airport network manage to use the system to their advantage by attracting millions of tourist to their country.

- *Social Interaction and Friendliness.* A tourist-friendly destination is associated with the qualities of its people such as, their tolerant to other people's company, low crime rates and appreciative of tourists (Henderson, 2000). Such conditions can create a lasting good image to tourists.

Tourists' Future Intentions (To Revisit or Not To Revisit)

The above discussion on the characteristics of destination image shows the importance of each factor in attracting tourists to return to Beijing (repeat visit) or at least to recommend Beijing as destination of choice to others. The intention to return is crucial as the behavior indicates the level of satisfaction in line with what is offered and experienced at the destination (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Moreover, satisfied tourists would result in positive word of mouth and repeat visitation (Li, 2004). Tourists' future intention also could be used as a tool to bridge the gap between perceptions and expectation of tourists of a destination. Information gathered on their post-visit intention could be beneficial in improving and enhancing both cognitive and affective measures used to define the holistic of destination image.

For this purpose, related studies (e.g. Besser, 1997; Castro et al., 2005) are used to represent tourists' future intentions. Several statements are used such as;

- *This is my last time visit Beijing* - indicate the bad experience experienced by the tourists while in Beijing
- *I will visit Beijing again* - tourists may have a neutral perception or even good feeling about Beijing.
- *I will visit Beijing more often in the future* - means the respondents may have a good image about Beijing.
- *I will visit Beijing and will recommend Beijing to my friends and relatives* – indicates a high retention of tourists and may attract many tourists.
- *I will try to move to Beijing* - tourists love or 'loyal' Beijing and may become new residents of Beijing.

Objectives Of The Study

There are three main objectives of the study, they are:

1. To examine the most important factors of destination image that impressed the tourists most.

2. To investigate the association between factors of destination image to tourists' future intention.
3. To examine the relationship between destination image and tourists' future intention.

Research Methodology

This study used structured questionnaire. The constructs of the study, which were from established scales, were mainly measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 'strongly disagree to agree' especially on the dimensions of destination image. For tourists' future intention, a determinant-choice question was used. In that, respondents were asked to choose only one answer from the five possible alternatives which best describe their intention toward Beijing in the near future. They are range from 'This is my last time to visit Beijing' to 'I will try to move to Beijing'.

A pretest is carried out by asking several lecturers from Marketing Department at Faculty of Business and Accountancy, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. Feedbacks received from pretest were incorporated into the questionnaire.

Tourists who are currently visiting Beijing are the targeted respondents of the study. They include both domestic and international tourists. This step is supported by many studies (e.g. Dann, 1996; Choi et al., 1999). According to Schneider and Sönmez (1999) who indicate that "investigating and attending to current tourists provides a baseline of information from which to build and tailor marketing and service promotions". Respondents of the study were approached randomly at the capital airport, high street, and around shopping complexes and train stations. Many were reluctant to participate even though the questionnaires were prepared in two languages – Mandarin and English language. Within three weeks, 150 questionnaires were collected and they were of good use.

In order to test the internal consistency of the study, Cronbach's coefficient alpha is used. Generally, a value above 0.7 is considered adequate for internal consistency (Grant, 1996). Table 1 summaries the Cronbach's Alpha score for variable used for the study. The result shows that all scores are above 0.7, strong evidence that internal consistency is achieved.

Table 1. Summary of Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Destination Image	
Landscape and Surroundings	0.847
Cultural Attraction	0.845
Nightlife and Recreation	0.846
Shopping	0.847
Sports	0.850
Accommodation	0.850
Gastronomy	0.843
Price and Cost	0.849
Transportation	0.849
Social Interaction and Friendliness	0.845

Results

"Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Programs" (SPSS) version 14.0 was used to analyze the data of the study. In order to answer the objectives of the study, several analysis techniques were carried out. Discussion on the results is done according to the objectives of the study.

Table 2 summarizes the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Percentage
Tourist	Domestic tourist	72.4
	International tourist	27.4
State	China	72.4
	France	6.3
	Japan	5.9
	Canada	4.1
	Israel	4.1
	Sweden	2.7
	Italy	1.8
	Russia	1.8
	Algeria	1
	U.S	0.5
Gender	Male	57
	Female	43
Marital Status	Married	64.7
	Single	35.3
Age	14 and below	2
	15-19	9.5
	20-24	17.6
	25-34	29.4
	35-44	7.7
	45-54	7.2
	55-64	23.4
	64 and above	3.2
Visit Time	1-3 times	89.1
	4-6 times	1.4
	7 times and above	9.5
Main Purpose of visiting	Holiday	45.8
	Business	16.8
	Conference	1
	Official mission	0.5
	Health treatment	0
	Transit	7.2
	Shopping	2.9
	Sports	0
	Incentive travel	0
	Education	7.7
	Visit friends	18

Objective 1: To examine the most important factors of destination image that impressed the tourists most.

Mean score is used to gauge the level of importance place by the tourists on the destination image. Sanger et al. (2007) suggest that descriptive statistic score can be high ($M = 3.51$ to 5.00), average ($M = 2.50 - 3.50$) and low ($M = 1.00$ to 2.49). Result shows that the highest mean score is gastronomy ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.66$), followed by cultural attraction ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.43$), then followed by sports ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.49$), then accommodation ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.47$) and lastly by shopping ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.58$). The lowest mean score is for the factor of price and cost ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 0.61$). Overall, gastronomy, cultural attraction, sports, accommodation and shopping are of highest importance placed by the tourists on the destination image of Beijing.

Table 3. The Result.

	Means	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Gastronomy	3.9613	0.65975	-0.462	0.416
Cultural Attraction	3.8827	0.43051	0.712	-0.222
Sports	3.7413	0.48800	0.684	0.571
Accommodation	3.7040	0.47471	0.413	0.733
Shopping	3.6480	0.58329	0.462	-0.043
Social Interaction and Friendliness	3.4880	0.56211	0.706	0.239
Nightlife & Recreation	3.4760	0.61597	0.576	-0.222
Transportation	3.4493	0.60465	-0.139	1.761
Landscape and Surrounding	3.3507	0.64545	-0.340	1.223
Price and Cost	2.5640	0.61089	0.263	0.199

Objective 2: To investigate the association between factors of destination image to tourists' future intention.

Pearson Correlation and Coefficient generated from Bivariate Analysis is used to check the correlation between each of the destination image constructs to the tourists' future intention to Beijing. Guildford's rule of thumb on interpreting the size of correlation suggest that a construct can have a very high relationship ($r = 0.9 - 1.0$), high relationship ($r = 0.7 - 0.9$), moderate relationship ($r = 0.5 - 0.7$), low relationship ($r = 0.3 - 0.5$) and little relationship ($r = 0.0 - 0.3$), and a coefficient significance value of less than 0.05.

The correlation matrix in Table 4, shows there is a strong negative relationship but not significant ($r^2 = 0.740$, $p = 0.295$) between price and cost (destination image) and 'I will try to move to Beijing'. This shows that a decrease in price and cost would increase the future intention of tourists 'I will try to move to Beijing'. A strong negative relationship but not significant ($r^2 = 0.504$, $p = 0.391$) also occur between landscape and surrounding (destination image) and 'I will visit Beijing and recommend it to my friends and relatives'. The results were found not significant due to the fact that the sample size is rather small. However, weak positive relationships were found to be significant between nightlife and recreation, and 'I will try to move to Beijing' ($r^2 = 0.031$, $p = 0.032$); shopping and 'I will try to move to Beijing' ($r^2 = 0.032$, $p = 0.028$); and sports and 'I will try to move to Beijing' ($r^2 = 0.041$, $p = 0.013$).

Table 4. The Results of the Association.

	This is my last time visit Beijing	I will visit Beijing again	I will visit Beijing more often in the future	I will visit Beijing and recommend it to friends and relatives	I will try to move to Beijing
Landscape and Surrounding					
Pearson Correlation	0.107	-0.096	0.040	-0.71 *	0.127
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.194	0.244	0.623	0.391	0.121
Cultural Attraction					
Pearson Correlation	-0.070	-0.169	0.098	0.066	0.135
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.392	0.038 *	0.234	0.425	0.100
Nightlife and Recreation					
Pearson Correlation	-0.059	-0.096	-0.044	0.050	0.175
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.471	0.243	0.591	0.542	0.032*
Shopping					
Pearson Correlation	-0.066	-0.070	-0.102	0.066	0.180
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.419	0.397	0.215	0.423	0.028*
Sports					
Pearson Correlation	0.022	-0.209	0.017	0.088	0.202
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.786	0.010**	0.835	0.283	0.013**
Accommodation					
Pearson Correlation	0.006	-0.019	-0.105	0.066	0.061
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.939	0.816	0.200	0.425	0.458
Gastronomy					
Pearson Correlation	-0.102	-0.110	-0.024	0.106	-0.139
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.214	0.182	0.773	0.199	0.091
Price and Cost					
Pearson Correlation	0.048	-0.003	-0.110	0.156	-0.86 *
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.563	0.973	0.180	0.056 *	0.295
Transportation					
Pearson Correlation	0.071	-0.029	-0.008	-0.059	0.079
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.387	0.723	0.919	0.477	0.335
Social Interactions and Friendliness					
Pearson Correlation	0.011	0.005	-0.071	0.005	0.054
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.897	0.955	0.387	0.950	0.524

Objective 3: To examine the relationship between destination image and tourists' future intention.

The results of Table 5 are as follows. In Model 1, none of the relationship is significant, indicates that none of the dimensions of destination image predict the tourists' future intention of '*This is the last time I visit Beijing*'. This shows that none of the respondents had a bad experience in Beijing. The model explains 17.6 percent of the variance (Nagelkerke R^2). Hosmer and Lameshow suggest the Model fit to the data well.

In Model 2, sports is significant ($p < 0.05$). Saying that of all destination image dimensions of the study only sports is able to explain tourists' future intention of '*I will visit Beijing again in the future*'. Sports manage to give a neutral perception or even good feeling about Beijing.

Culture is significant ($p < 0.05$) in Model 3. In that, culture is the destination image variable that predicts '*I will visit Beijing more often in the future*'. Culture is a pull factor that will get existing tourists to come again to Beijing, a real booster to image of Beijing. The model explains 18.7 percent of the variance ((Nagelkerke R^2)) and it also fit the data well (Hosmer & Lameshow Goodness of Fit).

Price and cost is significant ($p > 0.05$) in Model 4. Meaning that price and costs in Beijing is able to explain the relationship between destination image and '*I will visit Beijing and will recommend Beijing to my friends and relatives*'. Price and costs in Beijing will be able to attract more tourists to Beijing in the near future.

In Model 5, none of the dimensions of destination image able to predict '*I will try to move to Beijing*'. A stage where tourists start to fall in love with Beijing and become loyal to Beijing. The model explains 14 percent of the variance (Nagelkerke R^2). Hosmer and Lameshow is significant indicting that the Model fit the data well.

Table 5. Destination Image and Tourists' Future Intention.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Nagelkerke R^2	17.6%	10.4%	18.7%	13.7%	14.0%
Hosmer & Lameshow Goodness of Fit Sig ($p > 0.05$)	5.543 (8) 0.698*	3.768 (8) 0.877*	6.589 (8) 0.582*	9.202 (8) 0.326*	4.577 (8) 0.802*
Wald test ($p < 0.05$)	-	Sports (0.050)*	Culture (0.037)*	Price & cost (0.029)*	-

Hosmer & Lameshow Test is χ^2 with df in bracket. All are significant.

Conclusion

This is an exploratory study and its main limitation is that the population surveyed is rather small. The overall impressions of tourists on Beijing are very promising and positive, and therefore this impression should influence their future intention to revisit.

Gastronomy is the most important element of the destination image of Beijing. This could be because majority of the tourists surveyed were domestic tourist of China. Culture seems to persuade tourist to revisit Beijing more often. This is due to the fact that Beijing is a city with five thousand years of history and thus, rich in historical sites and cultural attractions. Since this study was done before the Beijing Olympics Games 2008, the element of sports attract tourist to revisit Beijing again.

The findings of this study offer important implications for the development of destination marketing strategies. In today's competitive climate, creating and managing an appropriate destination image has become vital for effective positioning and differentiation. Destination marketers should concern themselves with the image of the destinations under their charge if they are to differentiate themselves in today's competitive holiday market and influence tourists' future intention, via destination management tactics (Ekinici & Hosany, 2006). Hence, destination marketers of Beijing could develop and maintain, all the factors of destination image especially Beijing's gastronomy, culture and

sports. They should also control the element of price and cost in Beijing, which is attractive to tourist. These tactics would ensure tourists to revisit Beijing.

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