

Destination Image and Memorable Tourism Experiences: Literature Gaps and Conceptual Exploration

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Abstract

In the globalized world, tourism industry is acknowledged as an opportunity to contribute to the overall development of a destination. Destination image is a major tool for a destination's attractiveness and a main pull factor in the tourist decision-making process. Therefore, destination image has been extensively studied to examine its formation process and to explore the relationship with other tourism decision-related structures. Previous studies on destination image focus on measurement development and the relationship between destination image, satisfaction and behavioral intention. Empirical research related to destination image and memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) is scant. In addition, most studies regard destination image as an overall element, ignoring the relationship between the core components of the destination and MTEs. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the tourists' perceptions of the destination image (cognitive image, affective image, and conative image), and memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) using Stimuli-Organism-Response(S-O-R) model. To achieve the above objectives, this paper proposes a conceptual model reflects hypotheses about the inter-dependence of destination image and memorable tourism experiences. The proposed framework not only lays the groundwork for further empirical research, but also benefits tourism players in strategizing tourism experience marketing.

Keywords: Destination Image, Cognitive Image, Affective Image, Conative Image, Memorable Tourism Experiences

Introduction

Destination image (DI) is the key factor for destinations to compete in the globalized competitive world (Mano & da Costa, 2015). Understanding the image of a tourism destination is essential for tourist management and destination marketing (Bui et al., 2021).

Iordanova and Styliadis (2019) stated that an in-depth study of destination image and its determinants can help a destination effectively position itself in the tourist market, and reinforce travelers' preferences for that destination (Lin et al., 2007). Recently, there has been numerous research on the perceived image of destinations, the primary area of which is the examination of the relationships between destination image, satisfaction, and behavior intention (Campo-Martínez et al., 2010; Castro et al., 2007; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Kim, 2018; Marques et al., 2021; Prayag et al., 2017; Sun et al., 2013). However, memorable tourism experience is considered to be the more important influencing factor of tourist behavior intention (Kim, 2018; Zhong et al., 2017).

The notion of providing consumers with rich and memorable experiences has become a prevalent concept in the tourism industry (Neuhofer et al., 2012). Kim et al. (2012) defined memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) as "tourism experiences positively recalled and remembered after the event occurred". MTEs are found to be the most influential determinant of behavioural intentions (Kim, 2018), the core of successful tourism products (Chen et al., 2020) and a viable method for generating competitive advantage in the tourism marketplace (Zhang et al., 2018). Therefore, the provision of MTEs is another crucial aspect in defining a destination's competitiveness and sustainability (Yu et al., 2019). However, MTE is an emerging study topic. Therefore, a conceptual framework is developed to investigate the relationship between destination image (including cognitive image, affective image, and conative image), and MTEs.

The objective of this paper is to discuss: i) the underpinning theory, literature review on destination image and MTEs that indicating the literature gaps; ii) the development of the propositions and conceptual framework.

Literature Review

Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory(S-O-R)

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, which was proposed by Woodworth (1928), focuses on delineating how the organism mediates the relationship between the stimulus and response. The S-O-R model is based on environmental psychology theory and consists of three basic elements: stimuli, an organism, and a response (Lee & Yun, 2015). The S-O-R model assumes that external environmental stimuli (S) influence the internal state (O) and the subsequent response related to behavioral (R).

In the context of tourism, considering the intangibility of tourism products and services, the S-O-R model is one of the most appropriate frameworks to study tourist behavior (Jeong et al., 2020). In empirical investigations in tourism and hospitality, constructs related to destination image, such as perceived quality (i.e., product quality, service quality, and atmospherics) Jang & Namkung (2009), hotel ambience (Jani & Han, 2015), perceived destination attributes Chen et al (2022) have been used to represent stimuli. As for organism, constructs such as emotions Jang & Namkung (2009), guests' consumption emotions Jani & Han (2015), the "fun" emotion (Chen et al (2020)), memorable tourism experiences and emotions (Chen et al., 2022) have been adopted as organism. As the outcome component, response has been conceptualized as loyalty Jani & Han (2015), visit intention (Kim et al., 2020), tourists' behavior (recommendation and revisit intentions) Chen et al (2020), and behavioral intentions (Chen et al., 2022).

The above research provides a basis for the theoretical framework of this study. In this study, stimulus (S) reflects the cognitive image that affects the internal psychological states of tourists. The organism (O) represents tourists' emotional response, which is related to

affective image and memorable tourism experiences. The response (R) refers to the final behavior of an individual, that is, conative image (re-visit intention, intention to recommend, intention to say positive words) (O). Therefore, the S-O-R model provides a good theoretical basis for building an integrated model that can reveal the responses of tourists to destination image (cognitive, affective, and conative image) and MTEs.

Destination Image (DI)

Destination image plays an important role in tourists' decision-making, on-site experience, and future behavior (e.g., Beerli & Martín, 2004; Bigné Alcañiz et al., 2009; Melón et al., 2021; Kim, 2018). The analysis on destination image can be summarized into several ways: a three-dimensional framework Echtner & Ritchie (1991, 1993) (attribute-holistic, functional-psychological, and common-unique); cognitive, affective and conative model (Gartner, 1994); cognitive, affective and global model Baloglu & McCleary (1999); cognitive, affective and overall model (Beerli & Martín, 2004). The model proposed by Gartner (1994) is considered as the most adequate alternative for the current study, given that the model provides a more nuanced explanation of the interrelation between the core constituents of destination image (Michael et al., 2018).

(1) Cognitive Image

Baloglu and McCleary (1999) defined cognitive image as "the beliefs or knowledge a person has of the characteristics or attributes of a tourist destination". It refers to tourists' perceptions of destination attributes or features (Kim, 2018; Pike & Ryan, 2004), including all the resource attributes that can motivate a person to go to a specific destination (Stylidis et al., 2017), which can be functional/tangible (e.g., landscape, cultural attractions) or psychological/abstract (e.g., hospitality, atmosphere) (San Martín & Del Bosque, 2008). Papadimitriou et al (2018) believed that the cognitive dimensions were subject to the level of knowledge a person had about a destination and thus were more likely to fluctuate among groups with different levels of knowledge.

(2) Affective Image

In assessing the correlation of the components in the general image, Kim and Richardson (2003) claimed that the evaluation of the destination's affective characteristics may be more essential than the evaluation of its objective attributes. The affective dimension refers to individual's emotional responses and feelings towards a destination (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Zhang et al., 2014). Tourist destination image is a psychological schema formed by tourists on the basis of impressions (Papadimitriou et al., 2018). Emotions are part of destination characteristics, thus a valid contributor to destination image (Akgün et al., 2020). Commonly, a range of adjectives is used to describe the affective image. For example, four semantic differential scales (unpleasant-pleasant, sleepy-arousing, gloomy-exciting, and distressing-relaxing) were developed by Baloglu and McCleary (1999). According to Papadimitriou et al. (2018), affective image has more enduring features. Therefore, the author stressed that it is vital to keep the affective image in mind to fully interpret the tourist destination image.

(3) Conative Image

Conative image and destination loyalty have been conflated in the literature (Bagozzi, 1992) and have been used interchangeably (Tasci et al., 2022). Also, Agapito et al. (2013)

conceptualized conative image as an individual's intentions to revisit, recommend the destination to others, and spread positive word-of-mouth. Similarly, Kladou et al. (2021) applied the "cognitive – affective – conative" image approach in the research, because the purpose of the study was related to experience, satisfaction, and future behavior (e.g., intention to revisit or recommend). However, Stylos et al (2016) pointed out that although conative image was considered as synonyms for behavior intentions, there is also evidence that they are different constructs. The emphasis on conative image of destination is somewhat underplayed (Woosnam et al., 2020). Some researchers argue that conative image is indispensable and irreplaceable for rendering tourists' perceived image, having a distinct role compared to behavioral intentions (Pike & Ryan, 2004; Stylos et al., 2016).

Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTEs)

Researchers argue that MTEs are the most influential factor in determining behavioural intentions (Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2012). The most prominent definition of memorable tourism experience (MTE) is "a tourism experience that is positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred" (Kim et al., 2012).

MTEs are complex and multidimensional phenomena. Tung and Ritchie (2011) conducted in-depth interviews and developed a four-dimensional scale of MTEs (e.g., affect, expectation, consequentiality, and recollection) from the field of psychology, which depicts aspects of experiences that enable them to be particularly memorable. In 2012, Kim et al (2012) created a seven-dimensional scale capable of quantitatively measuring MTEs. The seven dimensions are hedonism, novelty, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, knowledge, and local culture. Chandralal et al. (2015) investigated and extracted a seven-dimensional scale of MTE (e.g., authentic local experiences, personally significant experiences, shared experiences, perceived novelty, perceived serendipity, professional guides and tour operator services, and affective emotions) from well-known travel blog narratives. To date, the most widely accepted scale of MTEs comprises seven dimensions: hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty (Sthapit & Coudoumaris, 2018; Tsai, 2016; Yu et al., 2019). Kim (2014) suggested that this seven-dimensional MTEs scale needs to be verified in more contexts and new samples.

Methodology

Conceptual frameworks are products of qualitative processes of theorization (Jabareen, 2009). According to Gilson and Goldberg (2015), beyond summarizing recent research, this study provides an integration of literature, offers an integrated framework and highlights directions for future inquiry. Through the construction of the conceptual framework, the destination image and the related concept of memorable tourism experiences are related together, so that they can not only clarify their respective phenomena, but also support each other and establish a specific framework philosophy. With reference to Jabareen (2009), the methodology of constructing the conceptual framework will mainly include the following steps

- Extensive reading and categorizing of the selected data.

The current study was conducted through a review of secondary data sources from searching of computerized databases (Scopus, WoS, Google Scholar), and these articles effectively represent the multidisciplinary literature on the phenomena studied. After extensive collection and reading, the literature related to this study is selected.

- Identifying literature gaps and naming concepts.

The purpose in this stage is to read and re-read the selected data and “discover” literature gaps. According to the research purpose, the concepts needed for the research are determined. Consistent with Jabareen (2009), the concepts for this study were derived from the literature.

- Deconstructing and integrating concepts.

This stage entails deconstructing the attributes, characteristics, assumptions, and roles of each concept. Subsequently, integrating and grouping together concepts that are similar.

- Synthesis, re-synthesis, and making it all make sense.

The goal of this phase is to synthesize the selected concepts (cognitive image, affective image, conative image, and MTEs) into a conceptual framework.

- Validating and rethinking the conceptual framework.

Finally, it is necessary to verify whether the established conceptual framework has theoretical and practical significance. Therefore, the author will discuss the feasibility of the framework with other scholars at conferences, seminars, or other types of academic meetings, receive feedback, and make revisions to the established framework.

Findings and Analysis

Literature Gaps

There has been numerous research on the perceived image of destinations. For a long time, scholars’ research on destination image has mainly focused on the relationships between destination image, satisfaction, and behavior intention (Castro et al., 2007; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Marques et al., 2021; Prayag et al., 2017; Sun et al., 2013). However, according to Kim (2018), compared with satisfaction, MTE is considered to be the most important influencing factor of tourist behavior intention and should be regarded as the core element of tourist loyalty. Zhong et al (2017) also confirmed that MTE is a stronger predictor of affective commitment than satisfaction. However, the proliferation of pertinent literature, the research in this field is still in its infancy (Hosseini et al., 2021). Empirical research into the causes and effects of MTEs is scant (Kutlu & Ayyıldız, 2021). Moreover, although some scholars have explored the relationship between destination image and MTEs, the relationship between the two constructs is contradictory (Stavrianea & Kamenidou, 2021). Some scholars support that a positive destination image perception can help exert memorable tourism experiences (Ernawadi & Putra (2020); Johari & Anuar (2020); Kutlu & Ayyıldız (2021); Mahdzar et al (2015); Melón et al (2021); Stavrianea & Kamenidou (2021); Zhang et al (2018), while others believe that memorable tourism experiences influence tourists’ perception of a destination image (Dagustani et al., 2017; Kim, 2018; Kladou et al., 2021; Sharma & Nayak, 2019). Although tourism research acknowledges the importance of studying the relationship between destination image and MTEs, most of the literature studies tourism destination image as an overall dimension, ignoring the relationship between the various elements of destination image and MTEs (Kim, 2018; Kutlu & Ayyıldız, 2021; Melón et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh, Seyfi, Hall, et al., 2021; Sharma & Nayak, 2019; Stavrianea & Kamenidou, 2021; Wong & Lai, 2021; Zhang et al., 2018). However, only a few literature has explored the relationship between the various elements of destination image and MTEs (Johari & Mohd Anuar, 2020; Kladou et al., 2021). Thus, the current study is motivated by the need for research to develop an integrated model of destination image (cognitive image, affective image, and conative image) and MTEs.

To fill this gap, an integrated model is developed based on the S-O-R theory. The results of this study will contribute to the tourism literature by explaining the relationship between the various elements of destination image and the mechanisms by which MTE influences future behaviour.

The Relationship between Cognitive and Affective Image

In tourism destination image research, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) empirically examined the relationship between cognitive and affective components. As per their findings, perceptual/cognitive evaluations positively influence affective evaluations of destinations. Lin et al (2007) demonstrated that tourists generally evaluate a destination cognitively and then develop feelings toward that destination. Besides, Papadimitriou et al (2018) confirmed that cognitive image affected affective image in three groups of residents, past tourists and future tourists. Similarly, Styliadis (2022) discovered that cognitive image influenced affective image in his research of the interaction between tourists and local inhabitants and tourism personnel. Furthermore, after examining how emotional solidarity, cognitive and affective image affect the conative image of Greece in Serbian tourists, Woosnam et al (2020) confirmed the cognitive component has a direct effect on affective component. Based on the preceding study, the hypothesis is as follows

H₁: Cognitive image has a significant effect on affective image.

The Relationship between Cognitive, Affective and Conative Image

In an empirical study of Greece, Kladou et al (2021) confirmed the direct effects of cognitive and affective image on conative image are statistically significant. This notion is also verified by Woosnam et al (2020), who clarified affective image has direct effect on conative image, while the impact of cognitive image on conative image is positive but not-significant. That is, affective image is a more powerful antecedent to conative image (Michael et al., 2018; Pike & Ryan, 2004). Similarly, Basaran (2016) revealed both cognitive and affective images have an impact on tourists behavioral intentions(conative image in the research). Lee and Jan (2021) developed a theoretical model and identified that affective image was positively and significantly related to conative image. In addition, Styliadis (2022) explored the interactive effects of the three destination image components and found similar results to the previous studies. The subsequent hypotheses are

H₂: Cognitive image has a significant effect on conative image.

H₃: Affective image has a significant effect on conative image.

The Effects between Destination Image and MTEs

In a study on Mulu National Park in Malaysia, Mahdzar et al (2015) suggested that the higher the tourists' perception of the destination attributes, the more likely they were to obtain a positive and memorable tourism experience. Ernowadi and Putra (2020) demonstrated that the higher the DI, the higher the MTE of the tourists from Orchid Forest Cikole Lembang Kabupaten Bandung Barat. Meanwhile, a survey of respondents who visited the Greek island of Santorini found that post-visit DI has an effect on MTEs (Stavrianea & Kamenidou, 2021). In terms of a certain component of destination image, Kutlu and Ayyıldız (2021) indicated that cognitive image had a substantial impact on hedonism and local culture, and affect novelty, involvement, meaningfulness, and knowledge to some extent. As for the influence of affective

image on MTE, in research about Melaka, Johari and Mohd Anuar (2020) indicated a strong positive influence of affective image as a predictor of memorable tourism experience. Therefore, the vital role of affective image in shaping a memorable tourism experience should not be overlooked (Johari & Mohd Anuar, 2020). Thus, the preceding studies provide the foundation for the effect of destination image on MTEs in this study. The hypotheses, therefore, are

H₄: Cognitive image has a significant effect on MTEs.

H₅: Affective image has a significant effect on MTEs.

According to Pike and Ryan (2004); Woosnam et al (2020), conative image refers to the intent or action component, which is analogous to behavior. In this study, conative image will be measured by the scales proposed by Tasci et al (2022); Stylidis (2022), which will be similar to behavioral intentions. Therefore, the research results of the relationships between MTEs and behavioral intentions are applicable to the theoretical basis of this study.

Empirical research has reported that MTE was found to be a highly influential determinant of behavioral intention (Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2012; Kim & Ritchie, 2013; Rasoolimanesh, Seyfi, Rather, et al., 2021). For example, Kim et al (2010) revealed that the memorable experiential components of involvement, hedonism, and local culture have a positive effect on behavioral intention to revisit, re-practice, and generate positive word-of-mouth publicity. Yu et al (2019) discovered that refreshment, local culture, and involvement had a positive impact on tourists' word-of-mouth intentions. It illustrates the importance of MTE to forest recreation destinations, because MTE can encourage tourists to have more word-of-mouth, and revisit intentions. Wong et al (2019) developed the Memory Minority Tourism Experience Scale (MEMTE). The results show that the three MEMTE dimensions of evaluation landscape, ethnic interaction, and ethnic entertainment are all positively correlated with tourists' overall satisfaction, word-of-mouth and revisit intention. The following assumption is developed for the study

H₆: MTEs have a significant effect on conative image.

The Mediating Effects in the Research

As Gartner (1994) proposed that a hierarchical interrelated structure of the relationship between cognitive, affective, and conative destination image exists. Agapito et al (2013) indicated that affective image mediates the relationship between cognitive and conative image. Similarly, in a research on Safranbolu, Turkey, Basaran (2016) determined that affective destination image mediates the relationship between cognitive image and conative image. Therefore, based on the above literature, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H₇: Affective image mediates the relationship between cognitive image and conative image.

In a limited study of the antecedents and consequences of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs), Zhang et al (2018) confirmed the mediating effect of MTEs between destination image and revisit intention. Another empirical research by Stavrianea and Kamenidou (2021) identified destination image influenced loyalty (including revisit intention, intention to recommend) by the mediating effect of MTEs. Rasoolimanesh, Hall, et al (2021) highlighted the importance of MTE in the relationship between destination image and revisit/eWOM intentions. Melón et al (2021) confirmed that destination image positively influences

memorable tourist experiences and, in turn, MTE positively influences revisit intentions and recommendation intentions for the destination. Therefore, based on the above literature, the following research hypothesis is proposed

H₈: MTEs mediate the relationship between cognitive image and conative image (behavior intention).

The findings of the research can be summarized as follows:

Table 1
The Hypotheses Based on the Conceptual Framework

Effect	hypothesis
Direct Effect	H ₁ : Cognitive image has a significant effect on affective image. H ₂ : Cognitive image has a significant effect on conative image. H ₃ : Affective image has a significant effect on conative image. H ₄ : Cognitive image has a significant effect on MTEs. H ₅ : Affective image has a significant effect on MTEs. H ₆ : MTEs have a significant effect on conative image.
Indirect Effect	H ₇ : Affective image mediates the relationship between cognitive image and conative image. H ₈ : MTEs mediate the relationship between cognitive image and conative image (behavior intention).

Based on the above hypotheses, the conceptual framework of this study is proposed as presented in Figure 1.

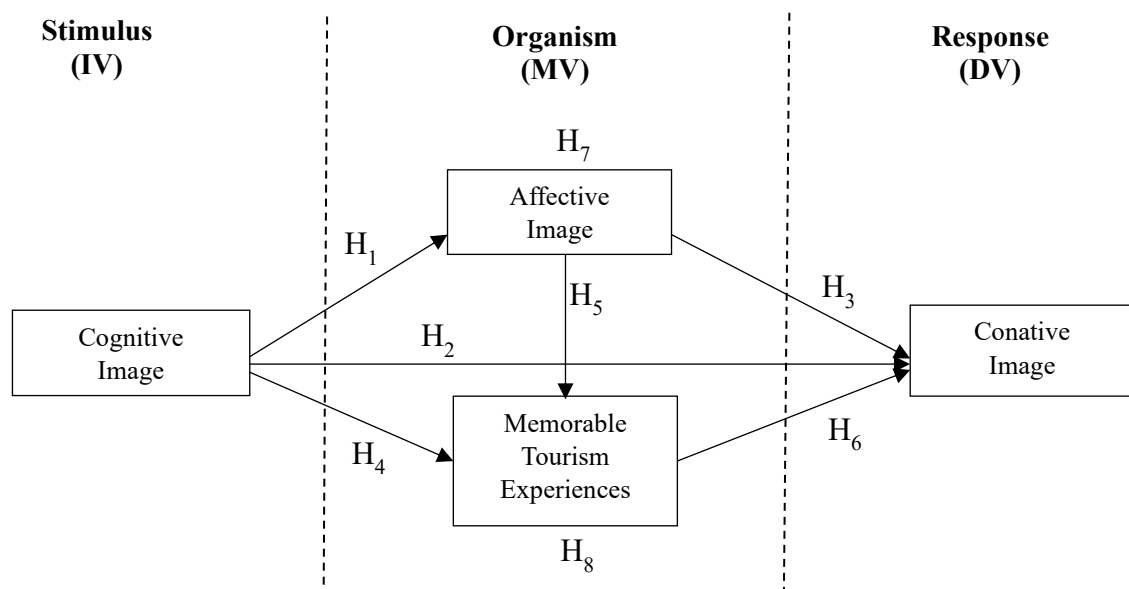


Figure 1 A Conceptual Framework of Destination Image and MTEs

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Given that research on destination image mainly focuses on the relationship between destination image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, there are few empirical studies on

the correlation between destination image and MTEs. In addition, in related studies, destination image is always regarded as an integral element, and the relationship between the core components of destination image and MTE is seldom explored. This study identified research gaps through the above literature research. Therefore, a conceptual framework for research on the relationship between various elements of destination image and MTEs is necessary.

In this proposed study, a conceptual model of destination image and MTEs is established by adapting a S-O-R model. The study includes 4 constructs, namely, cognitive image, affective image, conative image and MTEs. 8 hypotheses have been proposed, including 6 direct effects and 2 indirect effects. The essential relationship between the elements of destination image (cognitive image, affective image, and conative image) and MTEs will be investigated in this study. Importantly, this study investigates the mediation effects of affective image/MTEs between cognitive image and conative image. The conceptual framework provides a comprehensive view to help understand the relationship between the elements of destination image and MTEs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study proposes the operationalization of destination image and MTEs in this conceptual paper. The findings from the current study provide significant theoretical and practical implications for scholars and destination managers and marketers.

(1) Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, this study's most significant contribution is the explanatory model it provides. This model not only clarifies the relationships among the three destination image components (cognitive, affective and conative image) proposed by Gartner (1994), but also integrates memorable tourism experiences into the model based on the S-O-R model framework. Thus, the integrated model in the study assumes that external environmental stimuli (cognitive image) influence the internal state (affective image, MTEs) and the subsequent response related to behavioural (conative image). This study contributes to tourism research by providing deeper insight into the different components of destination image and their relations with MTEs. The results highlight the importance of affective image and MTEs. Other researchers can use the theoretical implication from this study for further research. The current research model can be used in the tourism industry and can be applied to different destinations. In addition, this framework can be used to validate the seven-dimensional MTEs scale developed by (Kim et al., 2010). The research results can confirm the universality of the MTEs scale and can also expand its use in assessing individual MTEs in cross-cultural environments. Moreover, this study endorses the conclusions of previous studies Agapito et al (2013); Pike & Ryan (2004); Stylidis (2022), that is, the three-component model of recommended destination images (i.e. cognitive image, affective image and conative image). This study also demonstrates the interconnectedness of these three image components, showing specifically that cognitive image can create affective image (as their antecedents) or affect the future behaviours (conative image). Such findings reveal the complexity of destination image to tourism researchers. It also provides interesting insights into the image formation process and provides clues for future research.

(2) Practical Implications

In addition to the theoretical insights, a number of practical implications exist from this

research for the Tourism Organization, local DMOs, and tourism planners. Firstly, cognitive image consists of various attributes offered by the destination. i.e., beautiful natural/man-made attractions, suitable climate, unusual ways of life and customs, appealing local restaurants. In this way, it's very important for destination marketing organizations to emphasize and highlight the various attributes of the destination. Only by managing the physical attributes can the destination attract more current and potential tourists. In addition, the research highlighted the importance of affective image. That is, if tourists have positive feelings about the destination (e.g., pleasant, exciting, arousing, and relaxing) then the tourist's perception of the cognitive attributes provided by the destination may have a stronger impact on tourist behaviour (Basaran, 2016). In addition to striving to maintain the physical attributes of the destination, it is equally important to ensure that the destination portrays the right mood or emotion. Furthermore, DMOs should pay more attention to take care of tourists' needs and experiences through eyes of tourists. Only by this way can destinations gain sustainable competitiveness and development capabilities in the fierce tourism market. From this perspective, research on tourism experience and MTEs can help guide destination managers to value the role of MTEs.

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