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Cognitive and affective dimensions of tourism destination image
An approach through the theory of social representation

Estudio de las Dimensiones Cognitiva y Afectiva de la Imagen de un Destino Turístico. Un Enfoque a través de la Teoría de las Representaciones Sociales

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A travel is not physical product than can be inspected and tried out before purchase. It is an intangible experience and its initial image is fundamental. Image is recognized as an important factor in visitor destination choice behavior (Reilly, 1990; Gartner, 1993; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Sirgy and Su, 2000; Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000; Govers and Go, 2003; O'Leary and Deegan, 2005). Image is what the traveler really purchases (Mancini, 2005) and represents the main concept under research in this dissertation.

Tourism is one of the sectors that provide the largest contribution to the economic development of countries. It contributes to the income and employment generation in society, as well as to the enrichment of many related industries. Tourism is an economic activity that already accounts for 5% of the world's GDP (UNWTO, 2012) where competence is more and more intense. Moreover, tourist activity for a country like Spain is vital, representing around 10% of GDP (IET, 2013). Destinations very much compete based on their perceived images relative to competitors in the marketplace (Baloglu and Mangaloglu, 2001). Therefore, it is of high interest to develop a positive image of the destination in target markets to achieve a real competitive advantage.

Internet has changed tourism consumer behavior dramatically (Mills and Law, 2004). Tourists have now online resources that enable them searching for possible destinations, transportation, accommodation and leisure activities, as well as the purchase of these services (Akehurst, 2009). Technological advancement and increased international competition thus affect the way in which tourism destinations are imagined, perceived and consumed. Creating a destination image is no longer a one-way 'push' process of mass communication, but a dynamic form of selecting, reflecting, sharing, and

experiencing (Molenaar 1996, 2002). Tourism is, indeed, often referred to as a hedonic consumption experience (Vogt and Fesenmaier 1998), which "designates those facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience of products" (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982: p. 92). With experiential products like travel and tourism, the consumption experience is an end in itself. The planning of a trip is an ongoing enjoyable and interactive social process, where fantasy and emotions also play an important role and consumers are involved in ongoing information search (Decrop and Snelders 2004). By going through this process and collecting all this information, the consumer creates an 'image' or 'mental representation' (Alhemoud and Armstrong 1996; Crompton 1979; Kotler et al. 1993; Tapachai and Waryszak 2000) of what the travel experience might look like. Such an image is generally accepted that involves a combination of cognitive and affective components, upon which an overall image is generated about a specific destination (Stern and Krakover, 1993; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Lin *et al.,* 2007). Therefore, this image can influence destination positioning and ultimately the tourist's behavioral intentions, as the visit or its recommendation.

But tourism is also very much a social activity (Brown and Matthew, 2003). A tourist generally travels with others, e.g. as part of a family group. Destination image, whether that held by first time or by repeat visitors, is recognized by academics and destination managers/marketers as a key factor in destination choice (Chen and Hsu, 2000; Joppe et al., 2001; Klenosky, 2002; Hui and Wang, 2003; Kozat and Tasci, 2005). This dissertation is organized around the destination image formation model through the theory of social representation. The structure of the present research is shown in Figure 1.

In the first chapter it is argued why social representations theory may offer some useful directions for improving our understanding of the role of image destination in tourism. Moreover, we discuss about the main the sources of social representations about a destination that we will develop in the following three chapters.

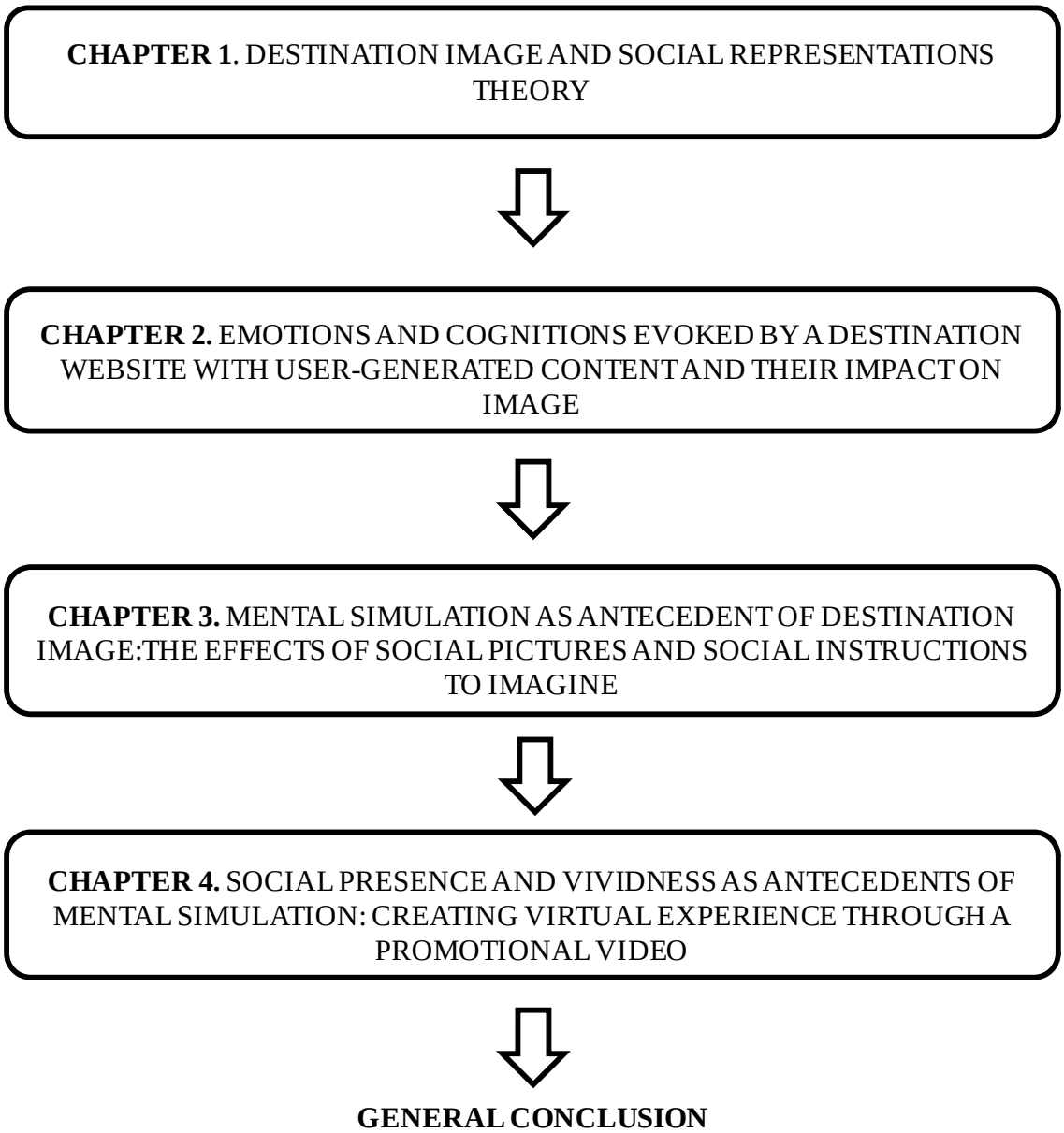
In the second chapter we demonstrate that emotional and cognitive responses influence the affective and cognitive dimensions of the destination image, respectively, evoked by individuals exposed to content generated by other users. Then, we analyze the contribution of affective and cognitive components to the overall image. Finally, the effect of overall image on purchase intention and recommendation is also evaluated.

In the third chapter we suggest that both the use of social pictures and the use of social instructions to imagine in a web site destination encourage mental simulation, which, in turn, influences the two dimensions of destination image. Moreover, the relationships of overall destination image and mental simulation with behavioral intentions are also tested.

The fourth chapter focuses on the extent to which promotional videos about the destination may represent the pre-experience of a destination through mental simulation. Consequently, its purpose is to investigate whether both social presence and vividness of the virtual experience may have a positive impact on receiver's mental simulation, which, in turn, influences on the dimensions of destination image. The relationships of overall destination image and mental simulation with behavioral intentions are also tested.

Finally, the main conclusions obtained from this thesis are presented in a last section.

Figure 1. Research Structure



CHAPTER 1

Destination Image and Social Representations Theory

1.1 DESTINATION IMAGE

The concept of destination image has attracted tourism research attention for over 20 years, resulting in a rich body of literature (Sheider and Sonmez, 1999). The interest on the topic has further increased with the development of new technologies, since there are more and more communication channels that may be used to create and/or modify a destination image. The destination image is defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas and impression that people have of a place or destination (Crompton, 1979; Konecnik, 2004).

This is a complex and important concept in the destination-selection process. The relevance and relationship of destination images to tourism development were first studied by Hunt (1975) and Mayo (1975). The importance of a tourist destination's image is widely acknowledged because it affects an individual's subjective perception, consequent behavior and destination choice (Chen and Hsu, 2000; Joppe *et al*., 2001; Hui and Wan, 2003; Kozak and Tasci, 2005; Chi and Qu, 2008; Lee, 2009; Žabkar *et al*., 2010). Destination image may be analyzed from different perspectives and it is composed a variety of individual perceptions relating to various product/services attributes. In recent times, the emphasis on destination image has shifted from establishing its importance to different styles of image measurements to examining how it is formed (Gartner, 1993; Suh and Gartner, 2004).

Image destination can be thought of as being formed through three stages: "a priori," "in situ," and "a posteriori" (Di Marino, 2008). Before tourists actually visit a destination, he/she forms a perception of a destination "a priori." This involves an image being formed from a number of sources instead of the personal experience of having been to the destination themselves. Image "in situ" is what is referred to in services marketing

as the moment of truth. At this point, when the tourists are at the destination, they are able to contrast their expectations to actual experience. Finally, image "a posteriori" refers to the idea that perceptions continue to evolve even after the actual visit (Di Marino, 2008). In this dissertation, we focus on the image before visiting the destination, i.e., in the perception of a destination "a priori", because the initial image formation stage is the most important in the tourist' destination selection processes (Gunn, 1972; Mercer, 1971).

It is worth to be aware of the variety of sources from which customers, both actual and potential, derive information to form their initial destination image. Rather than assuming tourists perceive what the brand attempts to project as reality, Pike (2004, p.109) states that because "tourism services can only compete via images, it is imperative that marketers understand that perception is reality for them". This is especially relevant for tourists who have no prior experience visiting a destination. Therefore, it is important to understand how tourists perceive destinations, the sources from which their image is derived, and how all of it can affect their purchase intentions.

The image concept has generally been considered as an attitudinal construct consisting of an individual's mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings, and global impression about an object or destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999).

1.1.1 Dimensions of destination image

Literature agrees that potential tourists' destination images are formed through two main components: cognitive and affective elements (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a, 1999b; Gartner, 1993; Walmsley and Young, 1998). The cognitive component refers to the individual's own knowledge and beliefs about the

object and the affective component is associated with emotions and feelings about a destination (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Gartner, 1993; Walmsley and Young, 1998).

The affective component includes ideas such as how pleasant or how exciting or relaxing the destination is (Pike and Ryan, 2004). This is especially relevant for the tourism sector, due to the fact that the service is intangible in nature, and symbolic meaning likely plays a significant role. However, most studies of destination image have analyzed cognitive perceptions, focusing only on tangible physical attributes (Pearce, 1977; Pike, 2002a). The affective image component has been overlooked in tourism studies (Walmsley and Young, 1998). Only more recently have destination studies considered both cognition and affect toward destinations together. Pike's (2002a) review of 142 destination image papers published in the literature during the period 1973-2000. He found that only six showed an explicit interest in affective images.

Due the subjective evaluations involved in image formation, as well as the varying level of importance, or strength, of both cognitive and affective components among tourists, each will form a unique image of the destination (Lin *et al.,* 2007). An overall image of a place is formed as a result of both perceptual/cognitive and affective evaluations of that place (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). An important issue in destination image is to define the relationship between overall image and other components of image, together with a fact that the overall perception may be favorable or unfavorable (Ahmed, 1991). So, in this dissertation we will follow to researchers who believe that the destination image is formed by both cognitive and affective evaluations, which, in turn, lead to on overall image of the destination.

In order to summarize this section, we can conclude that destination image is a central element of tourism. Tourism marketers spend much time and effort working at destination image in order to entice potential visitors. Similarly, potential visitors spend much time and effort perusing destination images in order to choose a travel destination. However, despite of the fact that the concept of 'image' has been explicitly used in the areas of destination choice and tourism marketing and is recognised in critical analyses of the representations of tourism destinations and their residents, its potential role in other aspects of tourism is less clearly presented and discussed (Moscardo, 2011). Therefore, more effort should be devoted to this interesting concept in this context. Next, we argue that social representations theory may offer some useful directions for improving our understanding of the role of image destination in tourism.

1.2 SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS THEORY

1.2.1 Social representation vs. related concepts

Although there has been debate over how to define destination images (Pike, 2002), most definitions suggest that these destination images are a type of attitude. In social psychology attitudes can be defined as cognitive representations or frameworks that organise information about a topic and contain an evaluative dimension and directions for behaviour (Olson and Zanna, 1993). As it occurs with image, the attitude concept has progressively incorporated an affective dimension in its conceptualization (Hoyer y Macinnis, 2004; Agarwal and Malhotra, 2005; Allen *et al*., 2005).

Social representations theory holds that we construct shared perspectives that enable us to make sense of the social world we inhabit and communicate with other people (Dickinson and Robbins, 2007). These shared perspectives form a widely accepted knowledge of the world on which individuals base their decisions.

According to this theory, social representations are mental constructs that guide us and define reality (Halfacree, 1993). The world is organized, understood and mediated through these basic cognitive units. Social representations consist of both real images and abstract concepts, organized around figurative nuclei, which are a complex of images (Moscovici, 1984; Halfacree, 1993). As stated by Fredline and Faulkner (2000), "Representations are the mechanisms people use to try and understand objects and events in the world around them. They tend to turn the unfamiliar into the familiar, as objects and events are recognized on the basis of past experiences, and prior knowledge serves as the reference point of new encounters" (p. 767). As Pearce *et al*. (1996, p. 39) state: 'Social representations theory is concerned with describing and understanding how and what people think in their ongoing everyday experiences and how a wider social reality influences these thoughts.

Since 1961, when the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1961) was first formulated, a large body of research has been developed, a fact which in it-self is a testimony to the heuristic value of the theory and to the extent of its impact on researchers in social psychology (Farr and Moscovici, 1984; Doise and Palmonari, 1986; Jodelet, 1989; Abric, 1994b). According to Moscovici, representations are universes of opinions about the objects in the social environment. For Herzlich (1973), representations are two-fold, being both the content and the process, i.e. they are a body of information and beliefs about an object, at the same time as they are the reconstruction of that object (Abric, 1987). In Moscovici's theory, the representation process is characterized by its social and collective dimension: representations are joint constructions about social objects, making the representation process only possible when a certain set of conditions are fulfilled.

Social representations are a growing field that has continued to attract new researchers across Europe, South America, Australasia and even the US over the last 40 years (Howarth, 2006). There has been an extensive range of topics researched, from Moscovici's seminal study of psychoanalysis (1961/1976) to the public understanding of science and new technology (Bauer and Gaskell, 1999; Gaskell *et al*., 1999; Wagner and Kronberger, 2001), popular ideas of health and illness (Campbell and Jovchelovitch, 2000; Gervais and Jovchelovitch, 1998; Herzlich, 1973; Jodelet, 1991; Joffe, 2002), constructions of identities (Breakwell, 2001; Duveen, 2001; Howarth, 2002a) human rights (Doise *et al*., 1998; Doise, 2001; Le Duc, 2001) and tourism development (Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Fredline and Faulkner, 2000; Pearce *et al*., 1996; Yuksel *et al*., 1999). Drawing on the work of Moscovici (1981), social representations can be defined as myths, knowledge, images, ideas, and thoughts about a social object or, in other words, a matter of social interest such as tourism.

According to Moscovici (2001), social representations are distinct from both attitudes and representations in that visual imagery is the central component of any social representation. Further, social representations theory explicitly addresses the link between the individual cognition and group social interaction. Philogene and Deaux (2001) note that social representations are created from social interactions within groups as members share their experiences. Once created though, these social representations then take on a life of their own, presented and repeated in the media and spread through further social interactions.

1.2.2 Social representation theory in tourism

Several authors have called for a broadening of research approaches to destination images (Selby and Morgan, 1996; Pike, 2002; Kim and Richardson, 2003) and others

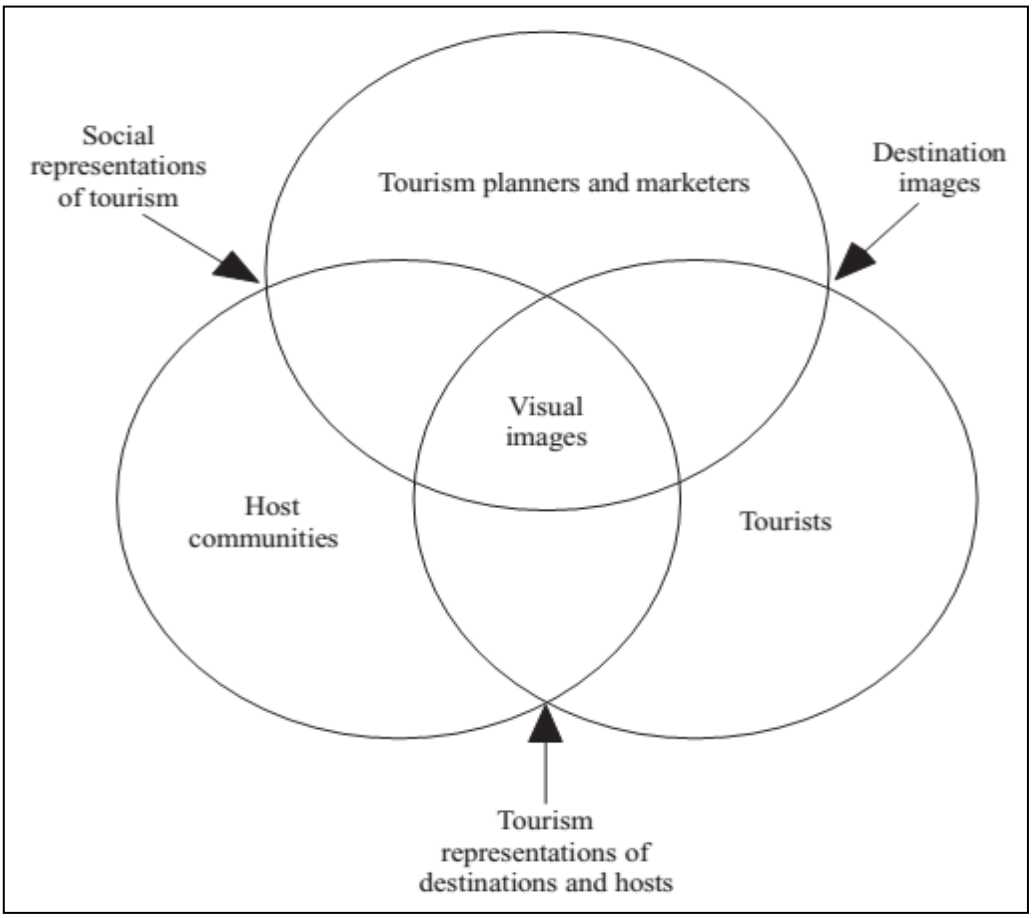
have suggested that the two traditions of research into visual images could be brought closer together by focusing on the interaction between the individual and social levels of analysis (Jenkins, 2003). According to social representation theory, for the representation process to occur, a group of individuals must be confronted with a complex or unknown object, and the practical or conceptual appropriation of that object must have genuine social implications (Moliner, 1993a). Therefore, this connection between the social and the individual level of analysis of images may be explained trough the social representations theory.

Social representations share many characteristics with the idea of tourism representations and with the conceptualization destination images as attitudes. Therefore, the development of individual attitudes and perceptions toward tourism may successfully be studied by examining the social representations. Specifically, social representations provide a framework for understanding and making sense of several types of experiences (including tourism) and guiding behavior (Fredline and Faulkner, 2000). According to Andriotis and Vaughan (2003, p. 173) social representations are a means for "constructing and understanding social reality". In a similar vein, Pearce, Moscardo, and Ross (1996) suggest that social representations are particularly valuable for explaining social conflict or reactions to salient issues within a community. In particular, social representations are a means of constructing and understanding social reality (Meier and Kirchler, 1998, p. 757). Social representations theory also shares common ground with critical analyses of tourism representations through the argument that representations are created through social interaction (Moscovici, 2001). Social representations are also like the attitudes used in psychological studies of tourism in that they organize information for individuals and help to guide their actions and evaluations

(Liu and Sibley, 2006). Therefore, social representations may be applied to different aspects of tourism, such as destinations, accommodations, guide tours, and so on.

In tourism, social representations theory has already been used to analyze community attitudes towards and responses to tourism development (Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Fredline and Faulkner, 2000; Pearce *et al*., 1996; Yuksel *et al*., 1999). There is a link between community perceptions of tourism and the representations of destinations and their residents chosen and promoted by tourism marketers (Pritchard and Morgan, 2001). Figure 1 presents a preliminary social representations model that highlights the interaction between three key groups in tourism development – destination residents, tourists, and those who develop and plan for tourism.

Figure 1. A preliminary social representations framework for tourism



Source: Moscardo (2011)

The model includes three key areas of intersection at which different social representations could operate. The intersection between each of the pairs of these groups creates an area for potential social representations. The intersection between marketers and tourists is where the current marketing research into destination images lies; the intersection between tourists and communities is where the research into tourism representations of destination and hosts is located; and the intersection between communities and marketers offers a new area of focus on social representations of tourism. At the centre of this model are the visual images that account for the various social representations held by different groups within the model.

1.2.3 Sources of social representations

Sources of social representations can be classified into three groups (Fredline and Faulkner, 2000). The first group is direct experience. Existing representations have strong prescriptive powers, but direct experience of an event provides residents and past tourists with more information on which to base their perceptions, and this information is more directly under the control of the individual than other sources. However, when direct experience with a phenomenon is limited, other sources of social representations become more important.

Social interaction, the second source of social representations, includes interaction with family, friends, colleagues, or casual acquaintances. This is a powerful mean of transmission of social representations and is probably closely related to group membership. People are likely to be affiliated with groups that have similar social identities to themselves, and they are inclined to adopt representations comparable with other group members (Breakwell, 1993). However, people are likely to be members of more than one reference group, and where such collectivities have different

representations, individuals may be forced to reconcile contradictory positions (Dougherty *et al.*, 1992). Significantly, not all members of a community have the same exposure or contact with the object or event that is the basis of the representation. As long as direct experience is limited, groups will borrow a social representation from some other source. In these cases, the media and other important individuals and groups are likely to be important references.

The media, as the third source of social representations, has the potential to influence perceptions through the actual content of stories, as well as through their decision either to report or not particular issues. In addition, it is common for the media to present some issues in the context of a conflict between various subgroups, which enables observers to identify with a particular group's perspective (Gamson *et al.*, 1992).

In tourism, two trends are of note: the rising use of the Internet for tourism promotion and the dissemination of tourism information. Tourists have a variety of sources through which they acquire information and ideas about a destination. Wagoner and Kadianaki (2007) point out that the framework that tourists use to make sense of their travel experiences is based on the social representations and symbolic resources' of their home community, including guidebooks, film, magazines and documentaries. The Internet provides tourists with a wide range of images, both verbal and visual, and arguably tourism marketers have less control than ever over the information that tourists can use to develop their own individual destination images (Money and Crotts, 2003). Prospective travelers have direct access to a great wealth of information provided by tourism organizations, private companies and increasingly by other users/consumers. The Internet provides a new type of information source that is more dynamic, interactive, and richer in content (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006; Milligan, 2006). Given

this importance of the Internet as an information source, Doolin *et al.* (2002) highlight that the content of tourism destination websites is particularly important, because it directly influences the perceived image of the destination and creates a virtual experience for the consumer. However, the research on the influence that this medium has on image, especially through its most expressive and relevant vehicle, the web site, still lacks of empirical support (Kim and Fesenmainer, 2008; Li *et al.,* 2009; Jeong et al., 2012). This lack of research is especially visible in the tourism sector, where the industry has witnessed fundamental changes in the last years (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Minghetti and Buhalis, 2009). Few researchers have examined how destinations use the Internet as an image formation agent to promote its development (Choi *et al*., 2007) or the function that these webs have on the promotion and image of a tourist destination (Kim and Fesenmainer, 2008; Stergiou and Airey, 2003).

Given its relevant on the image formation process, the present dissertation explores social representations formed by tourists through different online sources. Social representations have been studied using a wide variety of methods with an emphasis placed on diversity of data sources including both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Pearce *et al.,* 1996). As social representations are created through and for social interaction, it is important to explore how they are described and used in everyday conversations and in the words of those who generate and use them. Social representations take on a life of their own once created and are reproduced in popular culture and mass media.

A more thorough investigation of tourist's perceptions about the destination image is required. Social representations may be inspired in different sources such as direct contact, social interaction, and the media as suggested social representations theory. To

contribute to that research, in this dissertation we use three sources of social representations about a destination that we will develop in the following three chapters: (1) as a source of social interaction the influence of content generated by others users in a web destination is analyzed in Chapter 2, (2) as an example of common media sources, we use of social pictures and social instructions to imagine in a web destination in Chapter 3, and (3) as a source of direct experience, and taking into account that we are studying the image of the destination before visit and therefore there is still no direct experience with the destination, we use a promotional video about the destination as a virtual direct experience in Chapter 4.

The previous debate can be summarized in three key points. Firstly, there is widespread agreement that the image of a tourist destination is one of the most explored fields in tourism research. Secondly, social representations theory could be a useful guide to understanding the role of destination images in tourism. Thirdly, the sources of social representation are direct contact, social interaction, and the media. This dissertation is based on these three points and focus on the effects of different sources of information as a method to explore social representations of tourist destinations and how they allow tourist to form an overall image of the destination they have not visited yet.

CHAPTER 2

Emotions and cognitions evoked by a destination website with User-Generated Content and their impact on image

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has witnessed fundamental changes in the last years (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Minghetti and Buhalis, 2010). An increasing number of travelers are using the Internet for travel planning (Sigala *et al.,* 2001; Litvin *et al*., 2008). Tourists have nowadays online resources that enable them searching for possible destinations, transportation, accommodation and leisure activities, as well as the purchase of these services (Akehurst, 2009).

Online customer reviews are an important type of user-generated content (hereafter UGC), through which consumers share their experiences with products and services in order to help others make informed purchase decisions. UGC includes online information sources that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers who intend to educate each other and share information about products, brands, services, personalities and other issues (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2004).

In this context, online UGC about travel destinations, hotels, and tourism services have become important sources of information for travelers (Pan *et al.,* 2007; Sigala, 2008). Each year, hundreds of millions of potential visitors consult online reviews (Tripadvisor, 2012). Therefore, as a source of social interaction, UGC is very much related to the need for creating social representation about the destination.

Academic research is very interested in studying this UGC phenomenon. Goldenberg *et al*. (2001) observed that consumer decision-making processes are strongly influenced by word-of-mouth (WOM) from other consumers. In addition, Gretzel and Yoo (2007) further found that reviews provided by other travelers are often perceived by readers to be

more up-to-date, enjoyable, and reliable than information provided by travel service providers.

Image is also very relevant for tourist research since the services associated to this industry are mainly intangible a cannot be tried before consumption. The importance of Internet on the image formation process has been recently recognized by both academic and practitioners. Recent research on destination image (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003; Tasci and Gartner, 2007; Tasci *et al*., 2007) and on electronic platforms used by tourists (Schmallegger and Carson, 2008; Wenger, 2008) has flourished. Previous research has shown online browsing influences both the cognitive and the affective dimensions of image, although most of that research has focused just on the cognitive component (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Walmsley and Young, 1998; Chen and Uysal, 2002). This lack of research is especially visible in the tourism sector, where the influence of Internet on destination image is yet to be fully revealed as the virtual environment is broad and boasts different platforms, such as blogs and web forums that might have differential effects on the images held by tourists (Jani and Hwang, 2011).

Emotions and cognitions are regarded as antecedents of image formation. The interplay between those two is object of extensive debate. Consumer behavior literature shows a strong influence of cognitive approaches (Allen *et al.,* 2005), although a rich body of research has also investigated the role of emotions in persuasion (Burke and Edell, 1989; Batra and Holbrook, 1990; Agarwal and Malhotra, 2005, Allen *et al.,* 2005). Nonetheless, while some studies have claimed that affective responses are involved in communication processes (Morris *et al.*, 2002, Ruiz and Sicilia, 2004; Allen *et al.,* 2005; Lopez and Ruiz, 2011), models have failed to combine both cognitions and emotions in a holistic

communication model. Methodological problems associated with emotions may underlie this flaw.

Researchers have a tendency to adapt scales from emotion theorists. However, these measures are useful in the circumstances for which they were originally developed but suffer from several limitations when applied to capture consumption-related emotions (Hosany and Gilbert, 2010). Consumer emotional experiences are very broad and context specific. For example, "emotions that arise in the context of intimate interpersonal relationships are likely to differ in intensity and quality from emotions experienced when buying a pair of shoes" (Richins 1997, p. 129). As a result, existing emotion scales are difficult to be valid in a tourism context as they fail to take into account tourists' and destinations' specific characteristics.

Destination and travel marketers are interested in influencing tourists' behavior to encourage them to favor and purchase their products and services, including destinations. With the upsurge in use of UGC, as it occurs in blogs and web forums, the influence of tourism marketers on potential tourists seems to be diminishing (Pan *et al*., 2007). However, despite the crucial role they play in the modern tourism industry, little work has been done on how web forums and blogs are used to build a destination image (Wenger, 2008), particularly those capturing destination image in a holistic manner (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003; Carson, 2008). To the best of our knowledge, no previous research has studied the relationship between exposure to UGC on a web destination and the emotional and cognitive responses evocated by such content.

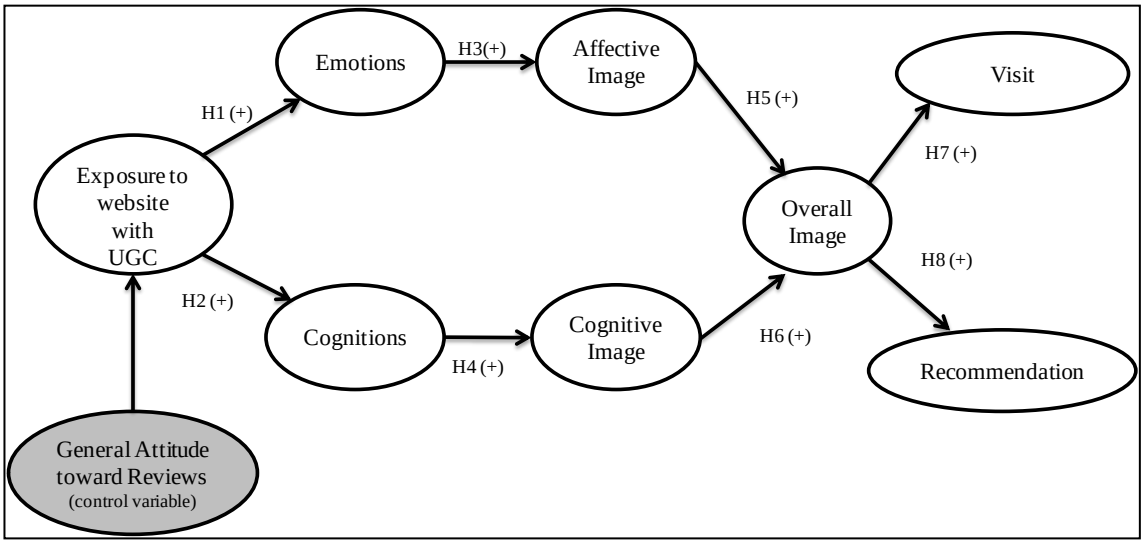
The first goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that emotional and cognitive responses evoked by UGC may influence the affective and cognitive dimensions of the destination image, respectively. Following previous literature, we analyze the contribution of

affective and cognitive components to the overall image. Finally, the effect of overall image on purchase intention and recommendation is evaluated. According to these objectives, we first review the literature and propose a set of hypotheses, then describe the methodology and present the results. Results of the study are then discussed in the light of previous studies' findings, and implications and recommendations for future research are presented at the end of this chapter.

2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

As a guide to the hypotheses development that follows, we begin with a brief overview of our model (see Figure 1). Destination image, measured by two dimensions, affective and cognitive, and the overall image represent our key constructs of the model. To analyze to what extent the exposure to UGC influences the emotional and cognitive responses generated by the web about the destination, we develop Hypotheses H1 and H2. Because of the need to study how destination image is created before visiting the destination, we propose that emotions and cognitions generated by the UGC will directly influence on the affective and cognitive dimensions of destination image, respectively. Hypotheses H3 and H4 support the antecedent structure. The combination of affective and cognitive dimensions of image gives rise to an overall image as proposed in Hypotheses H5 and H6. Moreover, destination image has a critical influence on travelers' destination choice processes, therefore, the effect of overall image on visit intention and recommendation will be also hypothesized in Hypotheses H7 and H8. Finally, Figure 1 also includes the effect of general attitude towards reviews on exposure to UGC as a control variable. In what follows, the rationale used for each hypothesis is provided.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



2.2.1 User-generated content (UGC) in tourism as a source of social representations

The decision to research opinions of those who have visited and those who are planning to visit seems logical as the method captures both modified holistic images held by experienced tourists and the baseline and enhanced images held by potential tourists (Jani and Hwang, 2011). Liu *et al*. (2011) identified four objectives of online consumer reviews: (1) to assist consumers in making accurate choices, (2) to reduce the cognitive costs of making such choices, (3) to help consumers form an unbiased understanding of the product, and (4) to construct a set of evaluative criteria.

Consumers are using electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) more and more to share opinions and experiences about products and services (Rezabakhsh *et al.*, 2006; Mendes, Tan and Mills, 2012). We can find a great deal of content on the Internet for entertainment and providing reviews on products and services such as books, restaurants, and hotels (George and Scerri, 2007).

UGC is an electronic communication phenomenon enabled by Web 2.0, the second generation of web-based services, which allows people to collaborate and share information online (Cox *et al*., 2009). Because of the experiential nature of tourism services for which previous quality cannot be ascertained, WOM and, more recently, e-WOM are much relied on by potential tourists in forming images (Gretzel *et al*., 2007; Pan *et al*., 2007; Cox *et al*., 2009). Consequently, UGC much serves as an information source for potential tourists (Ye *et al*., 2009).

There is a higher perceived credibility of opinions expressed in UGC compared with traditional tourism information sources (Sarks, 2007). The answer to this evidence probably lies in the need to consume tourism products before an evaluation can take place (Senecal and Nantal, 2004; Rabanser and Ricci, 2005). Online reviews and WOM recommendations are a growing and important information source because of the perceived independence of the message source (Gitelson and Kerstetter, 1995; Crotts, 1999; Dellarocas, 2003; Johnson and Kayne, 2003; Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2004; Pan *et al*., 2007; Litvin *et al*., 2008). A UK survey found consumers trusted more sites with reviews than professional guides and travel agencies (eMarketer, 2007). Similarly, Oellrich and Auhuber (2007) showed online customer ratings have high credibility among consumers in Germany and Austria. Furthermore, a study undertaken with Tripadvisor users found that looking at other tourists' comments and travel blogs was the most popular online activity (Gretzel *et al*., 2007).

Previous studies have shown that online travel reviews may influence the decisions of travelers (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009). Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) studied the impact of online reviews on the attitudes of travelers to hotels, and found that exposure to online reviews enhanced hotel awareness, and that

positive reviews improved the attitudes of travelers toward hotels. Gretzel and Yoo (2008) also examined the role of travel reviews in trip planning processes, and demonstrated the importance of online consumer reviews at an individual level. However, the influence of online user-generated reviews in the tourism industry is still largely unknown both to tourism researchers and practitioners (Ye *et al.,* 2011).

To the best of our knowledge, there are no published articles that have studied the direct relationship between exposure to UGC and cognitive-emotional responses generated by the user. However, recent literature on UGC (Dufresne *et al.*, 2010; Volo, 2010; Jani and Hwang, 2011) may be used to infer these effects Given their importance as an information source, UGC can help tourists and travelers to form emotions and cognitions about destination before their visit. Consumer's access to information related to attributes, experiences and feelings shared by other tourists might help them to form an impression about the destination. Therefore, based on that information, they can generate a series of cognitions and emotions, respectively, related to the tourism destination. We, thus propose:

H1: Exposure to website with UGC positively influences the emotions generated by the destination website.

H2: Exposure to website with UGC positively influences the cognitions generated by the destination website.

2.2.2 Emotions and cognitions as antecedents of the affective and cognitive dimensions of destination image

Emotions are now recognized to have a critical role in the consumption experience (Mora and Moscarola, 2010; Pollai *et al.*, 2010; Li *et al.*, 2012). Zajonc (1980)

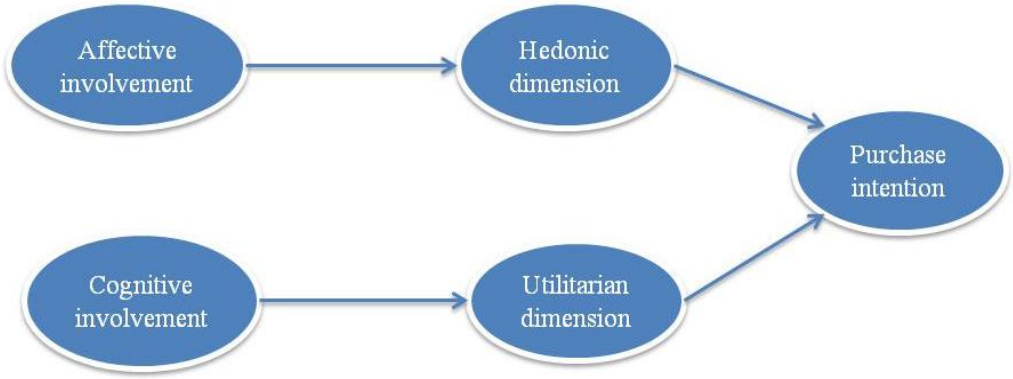
challenged us to consider more than cognition in our attempts to understand human behavior, while Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) have led the change to consider consumers '"feelings, fantasies, and fun" as part of the overall consumption experience.

As suggested by Batra and Ahtola (1990, p. 159), "consumers purchase goods and services and perform consumption behavior for two basic reasons: (a) consummatory affective (hedonic) gratification (from sensory attributes), and (b) instrumental, utilitarian reasons." Even though every product does not offers both hedonic and utilitarian attributes, previous studies suggest that hospitality and tourism products are likely to be high in both (Batra and Ahtola, 1990; Voss *et al.,* 2003).

Voss *et al.* (2003) developed a valid, reliable, and generalizable scale to measure the hedonic and utilitarian dimensions of consumers' attitudes. In their interest in testing the scale, these authors analyzed the impact of these two dimensions of attitude on purchase intention, using involvement as a proxy for cognitive elaboration. They used the two-dimensional view of involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1990) in which affective involvement is associated with the personal relevance of the product as a result of emotional attachment, and cognitive involvement arises when personal relevance is based in logic. Consistent with prior research regarding the experiential view of consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982), Voss *et al.* (2003) conceptualized the hedonic and utilitarian constructs as dimensions of brand attitude. They proposed a model (Figure 2) in which affective involvement predicts the hedonic dimension, while cognitive involvement predicts the utilitarian dimension. The hedonic dimension of a consumption experience can be derived from a product's uniqueness, symbolic meaning, or the emotional arousal and imagery it evokes (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Spangenberg *et al.,* 1997). This dimension is more subjective and personal than

the utilitarian dimension (Babin *et al.*, 1994). The utilitarian dimension, in contrast, is associated with a product or service proving instrumental in fulfilling functional goals.

Figure 2. Central route Processing model with Hedonic and Utilitarian Dimensions of Attitude



Source: Voss *et al*. (2003)

Research in consumer behavior indicates that cognitive models are limited in their ability to account for satisfaction evaluations and subsequent behaviors (Bagozzi, 1997; Erevelles, 1998; Phillips and Baumgartner, 2002; Smith and Bolton, 2002; Ladhari, 2007). In particular, the disconfirmation model might perform poorly in explaining satisfaction with services, since service encounters are not easily reduced to concrete, multi-attribute evaluations. Therefore, the inclusion of emotions into a theoretical framework is particularly critical for experiential services, including hedonic services (Mattila and Enz, 2002).

Cognitive responses to a stimulus are an important antecedent of attitudes (Sicilia *et al.*, 2005; Lopez and Ruiz, 2011). Research has shown that the net number of thoughts (favorable minus unfavorable) generated by the consumer when exposed to an action of communication has a direct influence on the attitude toward the stimulus and towards the brand or product displayed in the ad (Mackenzie *et al.*, 1986; Lord *et al.*, 1995; Sicilia *et al*., 2005; Lopez and Ruiz, 2011).

The underlying rationale is based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty *et al.*, 1983). Central to this model is a person's elaboration or generation of cognitions when exposed to a stimulus. If a consumer exposed to a positive communication (destination website) will generate favorable cognitions as a consequence of exposure, then his/her attitude towards the destination website will be also favorable. However, if cognitions are unfavorable, a negative attitude will be formed. Cognitions serve, then, as predictors of consumers' attitudes for the communication stimulus. This reasoning is clearly applicable to tourism destination and to the communication activities developed to promote them.

The cognitive approach has dominated persuasion research, whereas the affective processes have been given a relatively minor role, in spite of the wide use of emotional appeals in advertising (Morris *et al.*, 2002). Major methodological, theoretical, and empirical difficulties associated with affect have often "scared" and challenged researchers in the area, which may account for this imbalance (Schwarz, 1990).

A similar imbalance may be appreciated in the cognitive and affective dimensions of attitude or image. In this vein, Shimp (1981) theoretically stated that cognitive and emotional responses towards a stimulus are related to the cognitive (utilitarian) and affective (hedonic) dimensions of attitude, respectively. As we will discuss later on this chapter, image's conceptualization has also suffered from this bias.

A major problem in emotion research, both in psychology and marketing, remains the interchangeable use of the terms affect, emotion, and mood (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999). We first distinguish between these related but conceptually different terms because the distinction may have important implications in operationalizing variables and interpreting the research findings. Affect is an umbrella term (or vector), with moods

and emotions as instances of this feeling state (Cohen and Areni, 1991). A common distinction between moods and emotions lies in the intensity of the affective episode (Cohen and Areni, 1991). Moods are mild affective states that are easily induced and not attributable to a specific stimulus or object but rather are transient and pervasive feeling states (Gardner, 1985). On the other hand, emotions are described as episodes of intense feelings that are associated with a specific referent (Cohen and Areni, 1991). As such, importantly, emotions are tied to a specific referent such as a person, an object, or an event and instigate specific response behaviors.

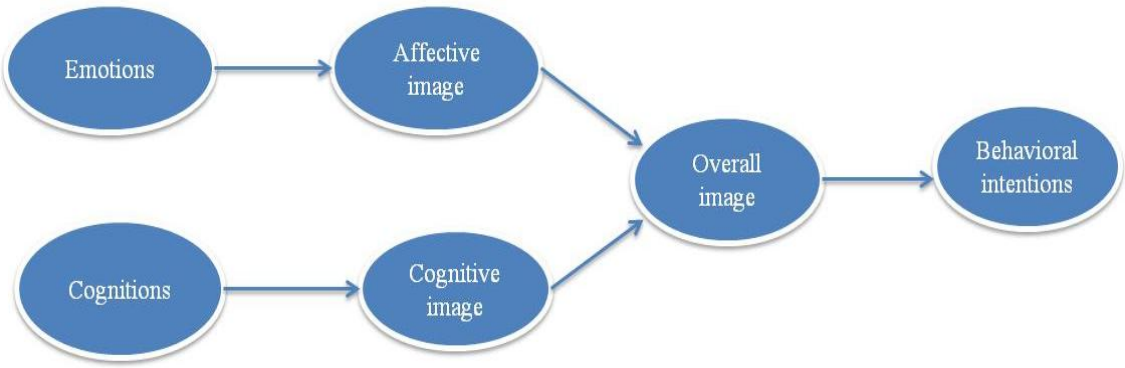
In summary, for the purpose of this study, affect and moods are seen to be conceptually distinct from emotions. Although previous research suggests that consumers' mood states might bias their service evaluations (Knowles *et al*., 1993), this study focuses on emotions rather than generalized mood effects. We are thus interested in emotions elicited during website exposure (containing UGC) as opposed to pre-consumption mood states that the consumer brings into the situation. On the other hand, cognitions are any thought that comes out during the elaboration of the information, measured using a written protocol known as thought elicitation (Meyers-Levy and Malaviya, 1990, Sicilia *et al*., 2005). Therefore, in this study the measurement of emotions has followed a similar protocol to that used for information processing and known as thought elicitation.

There are increasing attempts to understand the role of emotions in the context of tourism and hospitality. For example, past studies investigate the determinants of post-consumption emotions (Muller *et al*., 1991), or the relationship between emotions and key consumer behavior construct such as overall satisfaction (de Rojas and Camarero, 2008; del Bosque and San Martin, 2008), customer loyalty (Barsky and Nash, 2002),

behavioral intentions (Bigné *et al.,* 2005; Jang and Namkung, 2009) and decisions to purchase tourism and leisure services (Chuang, 2007; Kwortnik and Ross, 2007). Emotions have been also used as a segmentation variable for leisure and tourism services (Bigné and Andreu, 2004). This paper is in line with Kwortnik and Ross (2007), who found that tourists experience a variety of positive emotions as they plan their vacations, such as comfort and pleasure. However, empirical studies that consider the role of emotions in the context of tourist destinations remain sparse.

Additionally, destination image is also viewed as an attitudinal construct that consists of cognitive and affective evaluations (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). The proposed model considers that the affective component, also known as hedonic dimension (Batra and Ahtola, 1990), is associated with the emotions generated by the stimulus, while the cognitive or utilitarian component is related to the beliefs and perceived attributes of the stimulus. In a tourist context, the cognitive component refers to the beliefs or knowledge a person has of the characteristics or attributes of a tourist destination (Baloglu, 1999; Pike and Ryan, 2004), while the affective dimension is represented by the individual's feelings toward the tourist destination (Chen and Uysal, 2002; Kim and Richardson, 2003). Therefore, the extract of the proposed model shown in Figure 3 is similar to the model depicted in Figure 2. The similarity that may be appreciated between the two models is due to the parallelism that exits between the hedonic dimension of attitude and the affective image and between the utilitarian dimension of attitude and the cognitive image.

Figure 3. Extract the proposed model



The image of a tourist destination is one of the most explored concepts in tourism research (Gartner and Shen, 1992; Chen and Hsu, 2000; Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000; Chen, 2001), widely used in empirical research (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Walmsley and Young, 1998; Beerli and Martín, 2004). Moreover, there are many possible approaches to studying destination image, because it has many implications for human behavior, as seen through disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, geography, and marketing (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002).

An increasing number of researchers have directed their attention to identifying what constitutes destination image (Lawson and Band-Bovy, 1977; Dichter, 1985). Much empirical research supports the premise that destination image is composed of two dimensions: cognitive and affective (Crompton, 1979). With some exceptions (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Mackay and Fesenmaier, 2000; Uysal *et al.*, 2000), most destination image studies focus exclusively on the cognitive dimension and overlook the affective one. The cognitive dimension has been extensively examined in tourism literature (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Court and Lupton, 1997; Chen and Kerstetter, 1999; Leisen, 2001). However in tourism contexts, as Kim and Richardson (2003) point out, evaluation of affective qualities of places might become even more important than

objective, perceptible properties of those places. Only recently, several studies (San Martín and Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008; Li *et al*., 2009; Wang and Hsu, 2010) have proposed the cognitive-affective nature of destination image. This concept is integrated not only by the individual's cognitive evaluations, but also by their affective evaluations of a tourist destination (Kim and Richardson, 2003; Pike and Ryan, 2004). The coexistence of both components may better explain the image a tourist has of a destination (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997).

As our goal is to demonstrate the influence of consumers' responses on the two dimensions of the destination image (cognitive and affective dimensions), these constructs should intervene in the model. Due to the convenience of incorporating emotions and the bi-dimensional perspective of the destination image, we will (a) use cognitive and affective dimensions of the destination image, and (b) use cognitions and emotions, as antecedents of the two dimensions of image (Figure 3). Thus, in an attempt to reach a more favorable image, individuals who produce a more number of net emotions (obtained by subtracting the number of negative emotions from the number of positive emotions) will generate a more favorable affective destination image. Similarly, individuals who produce a more number of net thoughts will generate a more favorable cognitive destination image. As such, cognitions and emotions generated by a destination website (including UGC) will directly impact on the cognitive and affective dimensions of image towards the destination, respectively. Formally, we propose:

H3: Evoked emotions by potential tourists will have a positive influence on the affective dimension of destination image.

H4: Evoked cognitions by potential tourists will have a positive influence on the cognitive dimension of destination image.

2.2.3 Overall destination image

As affirmed by Gartner (1993), people's perceptions of various attributes within a destination will interact to form a composite or overall image of that destination. The combination of cognitive and affective evaluations gives rise to an overall or composite destination image that is greater than the sum of the parts (Calantone *et al*., 1989; Phelps, 1986; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991). Ahmed (1991) suggests that the evaluation of the overall image and its two main components should all be considered and assessed in order to understand the positioning of a destination. Indeed, the overall destination image has been considered to be a third component of the image, which may be similar to, or different from, the cognitive or affective perceptions of the destination (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a). Stern and Krakover (1993) depict that designative (cognitive) and appraisive (affective) images together form an overall image of a destination.

Recently, several studies have included cognitive and affective attributes in the measurement of destination image (Baloglu, 2001; Kim and Richardson, 2003; Beerli and Martín, 2004; Wang and Hsu, 2010). In line with this approach, destination image should be considered a multi-dimensional phenomenon that includes not only beliefs or knowledge about the place's attributes, but also the individual's feelings toward the tourist destination. Consequently, we also propose in our context that positive cognitive and affective components would be positively related to the overall image of a destination. As such, we propose:

H5: The affective dimension of image positively influences the overall destination image.

H6: The cognitive dimension of image positively influences the overall destination image.

2.2.4 Destination image and tourist behaviors

The tourist behaviors include the choice of a destination to visit and subsequent evaluations and future behavioral intentions (Chen and Tsai, 2007); including destination recommendation (Kneesel *et al*., 2010). A positive WOM is not only an indicator of a tourist's intention to continue the relationship with the destination, but also a reliable source of information for potential tourists (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Thus the diffusion of the destination may be enhanced. Behavioral intentions have therefore become a fundamental strategic metric to evaluate the success of a tourism destination (Chen and Tsai, 2007; Wang and Hsu, 2010).

Several studies have been conducted regarding the relationship between image and consumer's intentions (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989; Sirakaya *et al.*, 2001; Chalip *et al.*, 2003; Gibson *et al*., 2008).

As the tourism industry provides so much potential for destinations, it is imperative that marketers and DMOs understand the reasoning behind intention to visit. The existing literature suggests that destination image plays an important role in shaping tourists' preferences as well as their decision to visit particular destinations (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989; Goodall, 1990; Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000).

Similarly, intention to recommend the destination has been also considered as a good indicator of behavior in this context because most tourist decisions are based on WOM (Kneesel *et al.,* 2010). Word-of-mouth (WOM) is defined as "informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived noncommercial communicator and a

receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service" (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 63). Due to the intangible nature of a service product, a consumer's purchase decision usually involves higher levels of perceived risk than purchasing manufactured products. Positive WOM is an excellent source to reduce perceived risk for its clarification and feedback opportunities (Murray, 1991). In addition, it is considered an important information source influencing consumer's choice of destination (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Oppermann, 2000; Weaver and Lawton, 2002; Yvette and Turner, 2002).

Destination image plays and important role in behaviors. It has shown to influence the destination choice (Ashworth and Goodall, 1988; Mansfeld, 1992; Cooper *et al.*, 1993; Bigne *et al.*, 2001; Lee *et al.*, 2005). As pointed out by Chon (1990), the overall destination image that the tourist has received through the web can directly affect his/her behavior. Literature has shown that the overall image of the destination is influential not only for the destination selection process itself (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a) but also for tourist behavior in general (Ashworth and Goodall, 1988; Bigné *et al.*, 2001; Cooper *et al.*, 1993; Mansfeld, 1992). A positive overall assessment of the image of a tourism destination contributes to positive visit intentions (Bigné *et al*., 2008; Prayag, 2009). Similarly, Lee *et al.* (2005) argued that individuals having a favorable destination image would lead to greater levels behavioral intentions. In summary, the intentions to visit the destination and to spread a positive WOM may be considered the two most important behavioral consequences of destination image (Qu *et al.*, 2010). Thus, we expect that if a person holds a positive overall image of a particular destination, s/he would be more likely to visit the destination and recommend it to others. Therefore, we propose:

H7: Overall destination image positively influences intention to visit the destination

Regarding the intention to recommend the destination, previous research has shown that destination image may condition the after-decision-making behaviors including the willingness to recommend) (Ashworth and Goodall, 1988; Mansfeld, 1992; Cooper *et al.*, 1993; Bigne *et al.*, 2001; Lee *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, research has established a positive influence of destination image on tourists' intention to recommend behavior (Ashworth and Goodall, 1988; Mansfield, 1992; Milman and Pizam, 1995; Bigné *et al*., 2001). According to Bigné *et al*. (2001) a person with a perceived positive image is more likely to recommend the destination. Thus, we expect that if a person holds a positive overall image of a particular destination, s/he would be more likely to recommend the destination it to others. Therefore, we propose:

H8: Overall destination image positively influences intention to recommend the destination

2.2.5 Control variable: General attitude toward reviews

Attitude has long been shown to influence behavioral intentions (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). A favorable attitude toward using UGC is more likely to encourage travelers to use UGC when making travel plans (Mendes *et al.*, 2012). In a study of this kind, it is necessary to control variables that might change the effects of consumer reviews (Park *et al.*, 2007; Lee *et al*., 2008; Park *et al.*, 2009). As our main precedent in creating cognitive and emotional responses is the exposure to UGC in the destination web, we will need to control the general attitude toward reviews as a potential factor that may affect the results. Accordingly, we include the general attitude toward reviews as an additional predictor of exposure to UGC.

2.3 RESEARCH METHOD

2.3.1 Design and procedure

Regarding the recruitment of subjects, Mowen and Brown (1980) proposed that students are homogeneous and are therefore suitable for researches. Moreover, due to their homogeneity as compared to a sample chosen from the general population, they are considered ideal samples for testing theoretical predictions about the relationships among variables (Calder *et al.,* 1981), which is in line with the purpose of this study. Singh *et al*., (2000) also suggested that the effects of advertising on students and the common mass are the same. In addition, student samples have been used frequently in marketing studies (Keh and Pang, 2010; Wood, 2010; Samuelsen and Olsen, 2012; Troye and Supphellen, 2012,) and tourism studies (Kaplan *et al.,* 2010; Lee and Gretzel, 2012; Yang *et al*., 2012).

Data were collected in April 2012. College students were recruited through advertisements. After filling the questionnaire, students were thanked for participating and were given a gift. The survey population consisted of individuals over the age of 18 who had not previously visited the destination and who did not belong to that area. We collected 242 valid questionnaires. The sample average age was 22 years (ranging from 18 to 28) and 51.7% of the participants were women. The main dependent variables such as destination image and intention to visit and recommend the destination were not significantly affected by these variables.

We used a real website of a rural destination as a surrounding stimulus in this study, in order to avoid distortion in behavior that could lead the direct exposure to UGC (see Figure 4). The selection of rural tourism services was motivated by the fact that image formation process mainly occurs through destination websites in this type of small

services. In addition, rural tourism is one of the most active sectors on the Internet. Currently, it is the main medium through which 8 out of 10 rural travelers (83.79%) looking for accommodation organize their trip when tourism rural. The site included some brief info about the destination and a section of online opinion. The percentages of travelers who have chosen this type of destination conditioned by the online opinions of others users exceeds 37% (Toprural 2013). Therefore, online opinions seem to represent well UGC in this context.

On arrival at the computer laboratory, subjects were informed about the procedure. A pretest was run to ensure the statements were understood. Participants were instructed to freely visit the website of a rural destination as if they were looking for a weekend trip. After website exposure, individuals responded to the questionnaire which contained the variables of the proposed model. Among other questions, we asked participants whether they had accessed the online opinions section or not. This was a yes/no question. 66.1 % of the participants indicated that they had accessed online opinions generated by other users, which involved 160 individuals of the total sample. Since our independent variable is the usefulness of exposure to UGC for the next results we will have in mind only those 160 individuals.

Figure 4. Website used as stimulus

2.3.2. Instrument validation

A questionnaire was designed as the survey instrument to collect data for all the constructs in the proposed model (see Appendix 1). Firstly, and following the protocol previously used in the literature (MacKenzie *et al.* 1986, Karson and Fisher 2005b,

Sicilia *et al*. 2005, Lopez and Ruiz, 2011), participants wrote down all the thoughts that came into their minds while they were on the destination website. Similarly, they were instructed to write down all the feelings and emotions they experienced during exposure (Coulter 1998; Lopez *et al*., 2008). With this procedure, subjects were not obliged to fill in a list of specific emotions, but were free to disclose how they felt (Helgeson and Ursic 1994, Coulter 1998, Pham *et al.* 2001).

To comply with Rose *et al*.'s (1990) recommendations, three independent judges who were unfamiliar with the study objectives took part in the codification procedure. Two of them counted and classified the cognitive and emotional responses as positive, negative or neutral for each individual. The third judge solved disagreements between the other two. As emotion categorization could be quite difficult for the judges, to facilitate their task we provided them with a scale composed of 56 feelings proposed by Burke and Edell (1989). To obtain net emotional/cognitive responses, unfavorable either the emotional or the cognitive responses were taken away from the favorable ones, respectively (Mackenzie *et al*., 1986; Campbell and Keller, 2001). As most previous research neutral responses were not considered in the calculation.

In order to ensure content validity, selected items for the constructs were primarily revised from prior studies in the tourism context. Image scales are based on 10-point semantic differential scales. Affective image is measured by Russel's (1980) four bipolar affective items: "pleasant/ unpleasant," "relaxing/distressing," "arousing/sleepy," and "exciting/gloomy. The use of these scales in destination studies has been also reported by other authors (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Walmsley and Young, 1998; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a, b; Baloglu and Mangaloglu, 2001). For the cognitive image dimension, items were borrowed from Ong and Horbunluekit

(1997). We used the most applicable items as some of them included adjectives that were not truly bipolar, and some were not really representative of the cognitive image dimension (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Li *et al*., 2009). The final set of bipolar adjectives retained in this study to capture cognitive image includes "isolated/accessible", "unfriendly/ friendly", "dirty/ clean", "quiet/ noisy" and "unsafe/ safe". The respondents have been also asked to rate their overall image of the accommodation by three bipolar items: "unfavourable/favourable", "bad/good", "negative/positive" (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a). Behavioral intention was measured on a 10-points Likert scale. We used four items adapted from Kneesel *et al*., 2010, mainly asking the respondents whether they would recommend the destination to their family and friends and whether they would consider visiting the destination. We have used previously established scales to measure exposure to UGC (Guilly *et al*., 1998; Mishra *et al*., 1993). For example, the first item stated: "These reviews allow me to get an idea of this accommodation". Moreover, in order to control for possible confounding effects, we also measured general attitudes toward reviews (Park *et al.*, 2007). At the end of the questionnaire, individuals provided some demographic information, including gender, age and city of residence.

2.4 RESULTS

2.4.1 Confirmatory factor analyses: reliability, convergent and discriminant validity

To assess measurement reliability and validity, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) containing all the multi-item constructs in our framework was estimated with EQS (Bentler, 2005) using the maximum likelihood method. Raw data screening showed

evidence of non-normal distribution[1] (Mardia's coefficient normalized estimate = 40.3) and although other estimation methods may be used when the normality assumption does not hold, the recommendation of Chou *et al*. (1991) and Hu *et al.* (1992) of correcting the statistics rather than using a different model of estimation was followed in this study. Therefore, robust statistics (Satorra and Bentler, 1988) will be provided.

An initial CFA led to the deletion of two items related to the cognitive image dimension (CI1 and CI2, "isolated/accessible" and "unfriendly/ friendly, respectively) based on low loading estimates (below .60), patterns of residuals and Lagrange multiplier tests (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hatcher, 1994). The results of the final CFA are reported in Table 1 and suggest that our final measurement model provides a good fit to the data on the basis of a number of fit statistics (S-B χ^2 (df=216)=300.95, p<.01; NNFI= .90; CFI=. 92; IFI= .92; RMSEA= .050). As evidence of convergent validity, the CFA results indicate that all items are significantly (p<.01) related to their hypothesized factors, the size of all the standardized loadings are higher than .60 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), and the average of the item-to-factor loadings are higher than .70 (Hair *et al*., 1998).

Table 1 also demonstrates the high internal consistency of the constructs. In each case, Cronbach's alpha exceeded Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) recommendation of .70. Composite reliability represents the shared variance among a set of observed variables measuring an underlying construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Generally, a composite reliability of at least .60 is considered desirable (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). This requirement is met for each factor. Average variance extracted (AVE) was also

[1] Bentler (2005) suggested that, in practice, values > 5.00 in the normalized estimate of Mardia coefficient, are clear indicators of a non-normal distribution. In this case, a statistic of 40.3 clearly suggests non-normality of the sample.

calculated for each construct, resulting in AVEs greater than .50 as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Table 1. Internal consistency and convergent validity of the theoretical construct measures

Variable	Indicator	Factor loading	Robust t-value	Loading average	CA	CR	AVE
Exposure to UGC	UGC1	.841**	8.806	.823	.894	.894	.678
	UGC2	.823**	7.951				
	UGC3	.779**	8.501				
	UGC4	.850**	9.484				
Cognitive image	CI3	.806**	5.533	.730	.768	.775	.537
	CI4	.644**	2.988				
	CI5	.739**	10.125				
Affective image	AI1	.779**	5.386	.773	.842	.856	.600
	AI2	.683**	8.289				
	AI3	.805**	8.742				
	AI4	.823**	6.010				
Overall image	OI1	.868**	6.485	.868	.898	.902	.754
	OI2	.859**	8.338				
	OI3	.878**	7.099				
Visit	VS1	.957**	14.073	.952	.950	.950	.905
	VS2	.946**	13.736				
Recommendation	RC1	.964**	13.268	.965	.964	.964	.931
	RC2	.966**	12.333				
General attitude toward reviews	e-WOM1	.904**	8.785	.809	.867	.885	.660
	e-WOM2	.838**	9.295				
	e-WOM3	.682**	11.302				
	e-WOM4	.810**	9.984				
S-B χ^2 (df=216)=300.95 , p<.01; NNFI=.90 ; CFI=.92; IFI=.92; RMSEA=.050 n=160							

Note: CA = Cronbach's alpha; CR= Composite reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Evidence for discriminant validity of the measures was provided in two ways (Table 2). First, none of the 95 per cent confidence intervals of the individual elements of the latent factor correlation matrix contained the value of 1.0 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Second, the shared variance between pairs of constructs was always lower than the corresponding AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). On the basis of these criteria, we concluded that the measures used in the study exhibited sufficient evidence of reliability, convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 2. Discriminant validity of the theoretical constructs measures

Construct	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Exposure to UGC	7.81	1.67	**.68**	.26	.32	.41	.28	.31	.64
2. Cognitive image	8.64	1.25	[.26; .77]	**.54**	.57	.42	.19	.12	.07
3. Affective image	7.88	1.40	[.36; .78]	[.63; .88]	**.60**	.49	.29	.23	.12
4. Overall image	8.32	1.44	[.49; .79]	[.36; .94]	[.44; .96]	**.75**	.53	.55	.18
5. Visit	6.90	2.11	[.38; .78]	[.22; .66]	[.33; .74]	[.62; .83]	**.91**	.57	.13
6. Recommendation	7.72	2.07	[.40; .71]	[.13; .57]	[.27; .69]	[.63; .86]	[.66; .84]	**.93**	.15
7.General attitude toward reviews	7.66	1.78	[.71; .89]	[.02; .50]	[.14; .57]	[.19; .66]	[.15; .57]	[.17; .59]	**.66**

Note: Diagonal represents the average variance extracted; while above the diagonal the shared variance (squared correlations) is represented. Below the diagonal the 95% confidence interval for the estimated factors correlations is provided.

2.4.2 Descriptive analysis

Firstly, we conducted a descriptive analysis of the cognitive and emotional responses (see Table 3). Overall, considering the favorable, unfavorable and neutral responses, 712 cognitive responses and 533 emotional responses were recorded. Table 3 shows the mean of individual cognitions and emotions obtained in relation to the destination. Values are presented in total terms, as the sum of favorable, unfavorable and neutral responses, in net terms, as the difference between favorable and unfavorable.

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of emotions and cognitions towards the destination*

	Cognitions		**Emotions**	
	N	**Mean value**	**N**	**Mean value**
Favorable	602	2.49	510	2.11
Unfavorable	46	0.19	23	0.10
Neutral	64	0.26	-	-
TOTAL	**712**	**2.94**	**533**	**2.20**
Net	556	2.30	487	2.01

***N=242 (Total sample)**

Net responses are an approximation to the level of cognitive and emotional persuasion of the individual (Mackenzie *et al*., 1986; Rose *et al*., 1990; Campbell and Keller, 2003; Karson and Fisher, 2005; Sicilia *et al*., 2005), that is, they indicate to what extent the stimulus has been able to convince the consumer and generate more favorable cognitions and emotions than unfavorable ones. Thus, in both (emotions and cognitions) cases, the net responses were positive and remained at similar levels.

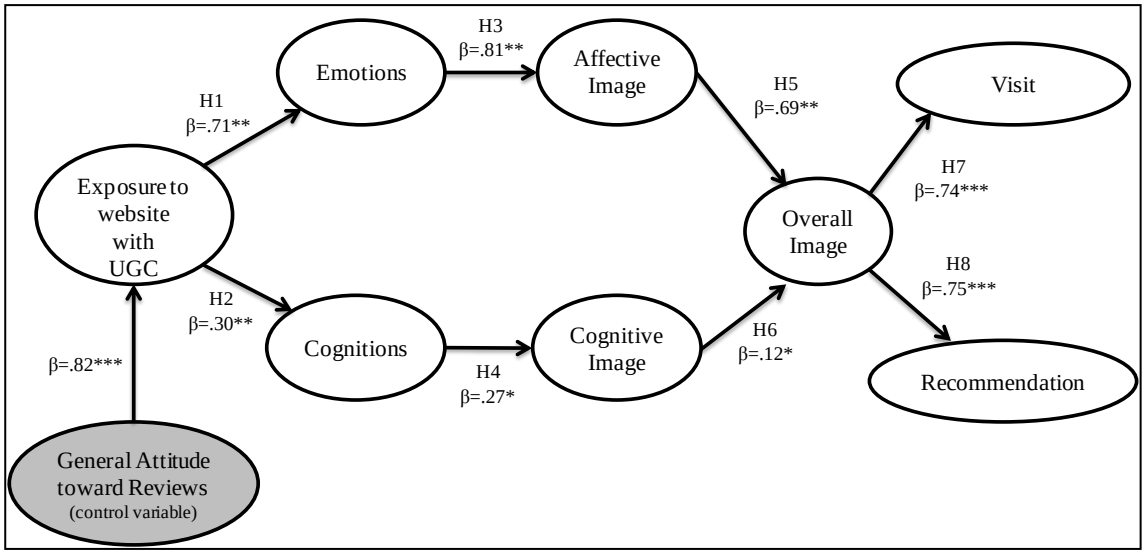
2.4.3 Path analysis results

We tested the proposed conceptual model using structural equation modelling. The empirical estimates for the main-effects model are shown in Figure 5. The results indicate that the data fit our conceptual model acceptably (S-B (df=236) =349.33, p<.01; NNFI=.89; CFI=.90; IFI=.90; RMSEA=.055). All the paths proposed in the structural model were statistically significant and of the expected positive direction.

Results of hypothesized relationships are reported in Figure 5. Regarding the influence of other's opinions, after accounting for the variance explained by general attitude toward reviews (β_c= .82; p<.001), the exposure to UGC by the individual was able to generate favorable emotions (β_1= .71; p<.01), but also cognitions (β_2= .30; p<.01). These results provide support for Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2. We also confirmed the correspondence between emotions and affective image (β_3=.81; p<.01) and between cognitions and cognitive image (β_4=.27; p<.05). These results provide support for Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4.

As far as the results about the relationship between the dimensions of image, the results confirmed that the affective image has the strongest effect on overall image (β_5=.69; p<.01). The cognitive image also has an effect on the overall image, although much lower than that of the affective image (β_6=.12; p<.05). These results provide support for Hypothesis 5 and for Hypothesis 6. Finally, the overall image had an impact, both on the intention to visit and on the intention to recommend the destination, supporting Hypotheses 7 and 8 ((β_7= .74; p<.001) and (β_8= .75; p<.001) respectively).

Figure 5. Hypothesized structural model



S-B χ^2 (df=236) =349.33, p<.01; NNFI=.89; CFI=.90; IFI=.90; RMSEA=.055

N=160. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

2.4.4 Rival model

As a final approach to model assessment, we compared the proposed model with a competing model. A nested model approach was adopted as the competing model strategy. To check for better-fitting, more parsimonious models, we looked at the Lagrange Multiplier test and the Wald test provided by EQS. The Lagrange Multiplier test did reveal new paths that could significantly improve our estimated model. So, we added the path between the affective image and the cognitive image and between emotions and cognitions. For so doing, it is necessary that new effects are previously justified in the literature (Hair *et al.*, 1999). A new literature revision gave us an argument for such relationships.

The debate over the relationship between affect and cognition continues to be a hot topic in psychology (Chebat and Michon, 2003; Dubé *et al*., 2003, Bigné, *et al.*, 2008). The traditional cognition-leads-to-emotions school of thought (Lazarus, 1991) posits the causal role of cognition as a necessary but not sufficient condition to emotions. In contrast, the emotions-lead-to-cognition approach contends that an emotion can be

generated by biological, sensory or cognitive events (Zajonc and Markus, 1985). In this vein, Coulter (1998) found a direct link from feelings to cognitions. Later, Pham *et al*. (2001) showed that feelings could guide and, consequently, predict thoughts. They argue that once feelings have been registered, the initial affective response will lead to the subsequent thought generation through automatic and controlled processes. Similarly, Lopez and Ruiz (2011) demonstrated that emotions exert a direct influence on thoughts. According to the previous literatures, the initial affective response will take the subject to retrieve congruent material with this affect (Blaney, 1986). The individual will then check whether the previous knowledge stored in his/her memory fits with the affective responses. This process will lead to a more elaborated, relevant and, in short, cognitive response (Cohen and Areni, 1991).

In tourism literature, the distinction and direction of relationship between cognitive and affective components has been emphasized in a number of tourism decision-making models (Lin *et al*., 2007; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999b). A common agreement among tourist researchers seems to point out that affective evaluation depends on cognitive assessment (Gartner, 1993; Stern and Krakover, 1993; Vogt and Andereck, 2003; Ryan and Cave, 2005; Lin *et al*., 2007; Wang and Hsu, 2010). Thus, the traditional cognition-leads-to emotions approach seems to be followed in this field. In a similar vein, Mayo and Jarvis (1981) conceptualized a model of the tourism decision-making process with special emphasis on attitudes or images toward destinations. In their model, tourists formed their feelings as a function of beliefs and opinions (cognitions). We have no assurance that other authors have studied the inverse relationship, i.e. that affective image has an influence on cognitive image. But the results discussed above about emotions and thoughts provide certain evidence to the intervening role of affective

evaluation on cognitive evaluation, contrary to what was proposed so far in image literature.

Table 4. Structural model estimates[a]

Structural Path	Theoretical Model (M_0)	Competing Model (M_1)
H1: Emotions→ Affective Image	.81 (2.74)**	.27 (3.13)***
H2: Cognitions → Cognitive Image	.27 (2.43)*	.07(1.30) n.s
H3: Affective Image → Overall Image	.69 (2.73)**	.94 (3.40)***
H4: Cognitive Image → Overall Image	.12 (2.01)*	.10(.90) n.s
H5: Exposure to UGC → Emotions	.71 (2.74) **	.25 (2.31)*
H6: Exposure to UGC→ Cognitions	.30 (2.82)**	.08 (1.12) n.s
H7: Overall Image → Intentions to visit	.74 (9.87)***	.76 (10.98)***
H8: Overall Image → Intentions to recommend	.75(11.22)***	.77 (12.43)***
New H9: Emotions → Cognitions	-	.38 (4.02)***
New H10: Affective Image → Cognitive Image	-	.90 (8.18)***
Control variable: General Attitude towards reviews → Exposure to UGC	.82 (9.18)***	.83 (9.07)***
Goodness- of- fit indices		
Degrees of freedom	**236**	**234**
S-B χ^2	**349.33**	**340.28**
NNFI	**.89**	**.90**
CFI	**.90**	**.90**
IFI	**.90**	**.91**
RMSEA	**.055**	**.053**

a. Standardized estimates with t-values in parentheses.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001; n.s, not significant

The path coefficients of both the theoretical and new competing model are shown in Table 4. Whereas the traditional difference chi-square test allows researchers to compare directly the fit of nested models when using standard goodness-of-fit chi-square values, this is not the case when using SB scaled chi-square values. In particular, the difference in SB scaled chi-square values for nested models does not correspond to a chi-square distribution (Satorra, 2000). For this reason, simply subtracting the SB chi-square value for the less restrictive, comparison model (M_1) from the SB chi-square value for the more restrictive, theoretical model (M_0) yields an invalid statistic for testing hypotheses about differences in model fit.

To overcome this limitation, Satorra (2000) derived a formula for testing the difference in nested SB chi-square values, to permit scaled difference chi-square testing. However, because this formula uses statistical information not readily available in conventional SEM software, it is an impractical approach for most applied researchers. Accordingly, Satorra and Bentler (2001) developed a simpler, asymptotically equivalent procedure for scaled difference chi-square testing that is easily implemented using the scaled and unscaled chi-square values and the degrees of freedom for the two models contrasted.

Thus the proposed practical procedure is as follows. When fitting models and M_0 and M_1 we obtain the unscaled and scaled goodness-of-fit tests, that is T_0 and $\overline{T_0}$ when fitting M_0 and T_1 and $\overline{T_1}$ when fitting M_1. Let r_0 and r_1 be the associated degrees of freedom of the goodness-of-fit test statistics. Then, the scaling corrections $\widehat{c_0}= T_0 /\overline{T_0}$ and $\widehat{c_1}= T_1 /\overline{T_1}$, and the usual chi-square difference $T_d=T_0-T_1$ are calculated. The SB scaled difference test can finally be computed as $\overline{T}_d= T_d/\hat{c}_d$, where:

$$\hat{c}_d = (r_0\widehat{c_0} - r_1\widehat{c_1})/\text{m}.$$

The following values for the Normal Distribution and SB scaled chi-square statistics are obtained:

$$T_1 =563.19,\ \overline{T_1} = 340.28,\ r_1= 234,\ \widehat{c_1}= 1.65,$$

along with the degrees of freedom r_1 and the scaling correction $\hat{c}_1$.

On the other hand, the theoretical model gives the following statistics:

$$T_0 =660.70,\ \overline{T_0} = 349.33,\ r_0= 236,\ \widehat{c_0}= 1.89$$

Our main interest lies in testing the difference between M_0 and M_1, which we do with the chi-square difference test. The Normal Distribution difference statistic is:

$$T_d = 660.70 - 563.19 = 97.51$$

Since the data is not normal, we compute the SB (2001) scaled difference statistic. This requires computing the scaling factor $\hat{c}_d = (r_0\hat{c_0} - r_1\hat{c_1})/m$ given by:

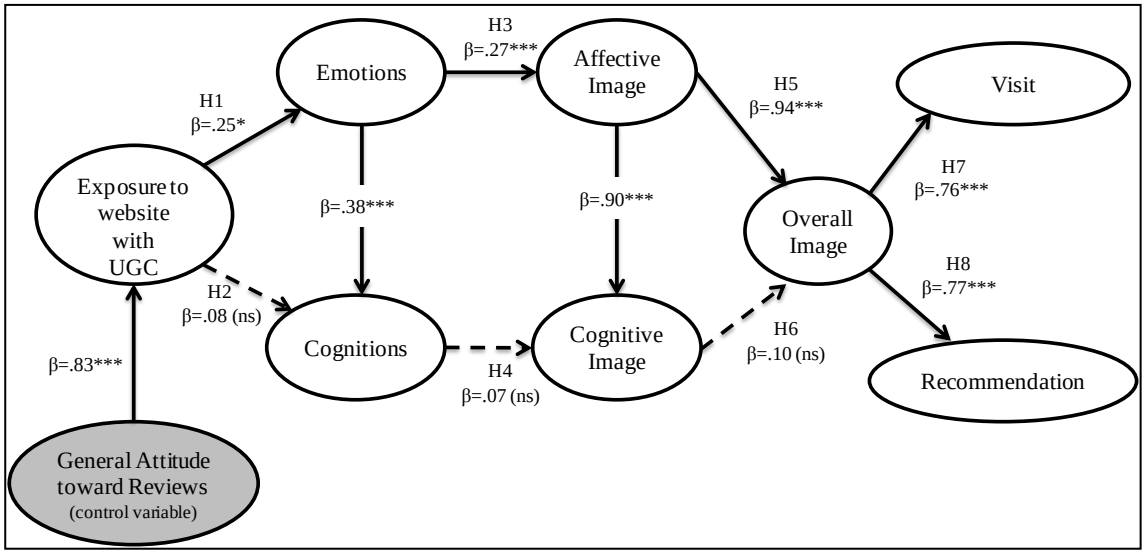
$$\hat{c}_d = [236(1.89) - 234(1.65)]/2 = 30.37$$

Finally, we can compute the proposed new SB corrected chi-square statistic as:

$$\bar{T}_d = T_d/\hat{c}_d = 97.51/30.37 = \mathbf{3.21}$$

which can be referred to a χ^2 variety for evaluation. The results of a χ^2 difference test suggest that there is no significant difference between model M_0 and model M_1 (Chi-square difference = 3.21, df = 2, p = .19). Therefore, the theoretical model **(M_0)** is retained. Moreover, although the new paths are significant, three hypotheses that were raised in our theoretical model are no longer significant in the competing model (Figure 6). This is and additional reason to stick to the proposed theoretical model.

Figure 6. Competing model



S-B χ^2 (df=234) =340.28, p<.01; NNFI=.90; CFI=.90; IFI=.91; RMSEA=.053
N=160. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

2.5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The increasing use of web 2.0 applications has generated much UGC. The intangible nature of tourism products impedes the evaluation before consumption, while it has long been recognized that interpersonal communications are an important information source among tourists (Litvin *et al*., 2008). With the spread of the Internet, virtual interactions among consumers have become commonplace, which has led some tourism researchers to point out that online WOM plays an important role in the acquisition and retention of consumers in the e-commerce era (Litvin *et al*., 2008; Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009; Ye *et al*., 2011). With this in mind, this empirical research has attempted to contribute to the body of knowledge on destination image in two ways: (1) by exploring the role of emotions and thoughts in destination image formation, and (2) demonstrating how UGC is able to generate emotions and thoughts about the destination. As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, UGC may serve as a source to generate social representations. Since tourism is a social activity, the experience of others may serve individuals to imagine how the destination is and to form a cognitive and affective dimension of it.

In relation to the nature of destination image, our results suggest that cognitive and affective image components are significant antecedents of overall image. In this sense, the mental representation of a tourist destination is formed on the basis of individuals' beliefs about the place (cognitive image), as well as their feelings toward it (affective image). Tourists will use these image dimensions to form their impressions and evaluate the considered destinations in their choice processes. Thus, as expected, cognitive image positively influences overall image. This result confirms the results of previous studies (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Stern and Krakover, 1993), arguing for the

positive effect of cognitive image on overall image. This study also supports the results of Baloglu and McCleary's (1999) regarding the impact of the affective image on overall image. Moreover, contrary to others' research findings, which found the stronger impact of cognitive evaluation on overall image than that of affective evaluation (Qu *et al*., 2011), this study shows that affective image is the most influential dimension of destination image. This results may be due to the fact that affective image may have more impact on overall image before actual visitation, as in our study, whereas cognitive image may exert more influence on overall image when actual visitation is realized.

In this study overall image stands out as an important predictor of destination preferences. Results confirm the previous argument that the image of a destination directly influences intentions to visit and recommend the destination to others (Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000; Bigné *et al*., 2001; Lee *et al.,* 2005). It also supports the relationship of overall image on intentions to visit. Furthermore, in tourism, where product trial is impossible before consumption, the positive influence of overall image on intentions to recommend should be emphasized even more than in other product categories.

Another contribution concerns the correspondence that exists between cognitions that came into consumers' minds and the cognitive dimension of image, as well as the emotions expressed by subjects and the affective dimension of image. To the best of our knowledge, both links have been not empirically tested before in image literature. Finally, it is interesting to note the results about new paths through the competing model proposed. In this new model, tourists form their beliefs and opinions as a function of their feelings. This result contradicts the results of previous studies, which

suggested that affective responses are formed as a function of the cognitive responses (Anand *et al.,* 1988; Woodside and Lysonski 1989; Um and Crompton 1990; Gartner 1993; Stern and Krekover, 1993; Baloglu and Brinnberg, 1997).

2.5.1 Managerial implications

Tourism destinations today are facing fierce competition and challenges are growing yearly (Chi and Qu, 2008). It is essential to gain a better understanding of what drives tourist behaviors. The major findings of this study offer meaningful implications to tourism practitioners in the context of sun-and-sand tourism destinations.

Companies are interested in using WOM as a new communication tool (Verlegh et al., 2013). They are encouraging consumers to spread the word about their products and services (Verlegh et al., 2013). For potential tourists, UGC is an important information source in forming an image towards a particular destination. So, tourism destinations need to provide favorable experiences to tourists, and these experiences include the advice and comments from other travelers.

Creating and managing an appropriate image is important for destination managers because a positive image helps position the destination in relation to its competitors. For that reason, it is necessary to identify the roles of cognitive of affective components of destinations image in order to accurately implement the most affective positioning strategies (Hu and Ritchie, 1993; Pike and Ryan, 2004).

Since tourists use cognitive and affective dimensions to form their images of a tourist destination, promoters should emphasize in the destination's positioning not only its physical properties (usual practice up to now), but also the amalgam of emotions or feelings that it is able to evoke in the tourist's mind. In the first case, the individual's

beliefs about the tourist destination are reinforced, while in the second one the tourist promotion affects the individual's affective or sentimental component. Previous research had given more emphasis to the display of information while the emotional reactions to destination websites had not attracted so much attention. Analyzing the relative importance of each dimension will provide tourism marketing managers with insights about whether to introduce more emotional appeals or more cognitive stimuli when communicating through their websites. If this promotion is carried out properly, the tourist destination might have a privileged position among the places considered by the individual during the decision-making process.

Our results may help both public administrations and tourism marketing managers to understand the image formation process and to design more efficient marketing strategies for tourist destination sites. By understanding the relationships between future behavioral intentions and its determinants, destination tourism managers would better know how to build up an attractive image and improve their marketing efforts to maximize their use of resources. Due to the great importance of the affective measure in our results, marketers should provide more affective information to tourists involved in trip preparation, while also providing the appropriate services during the vacation to satisfy these tourists. They will then perceive a good image of the destination and will therefore visit the destination and spread a positive image by WOM to other potential travelers.

2.5.2 Research limitations and suggestions for future research

There are some limitations in this study. First, the main limitation is related to the tourist website where the research process was carried out. This research methodology should be applied to other studies and tourist destinations in order to generalize the

findings. Moreover, we analyzed how UGC from the official destination site influences on the image of a tourist destination, but further research should be conducted to find out what results are produced in other sites or platforms. It would be then interesting to address other platforms different from the official destination site. For example, social networks such as Facebook or Twitter may also contribute to image creation and their impact on behavioral intentions should be addressed in future research.

Second, we have not taken into account the number of reviews and the type of reviews (positive or negative). It took into account that at the time of exposure to the web by individuals, the comments that other users had were all positive. However, in reality, consumers seek to read both positive and negative reviews simultaneously. In general, the number of positive reviews occupies a larger portion of total reviews (Resnick and Zeckhauser, 2002; Mulpuru, 2007). Although the number of positive reviews overwhelms that of negative reviews, negative reviews are influential to consumers (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Pavlou and Dimoka, 2006). So, studies on mixed reviews (a combination of positive and negative reviews) can be another future research area in the image literature.

Third, the sample investigated in the study involved only undergraduate students, a group which represents only a specific. Moreover, the results could be replicated with a sample comprised of real consumers (not only college students) to prove the generalizability of our findings.

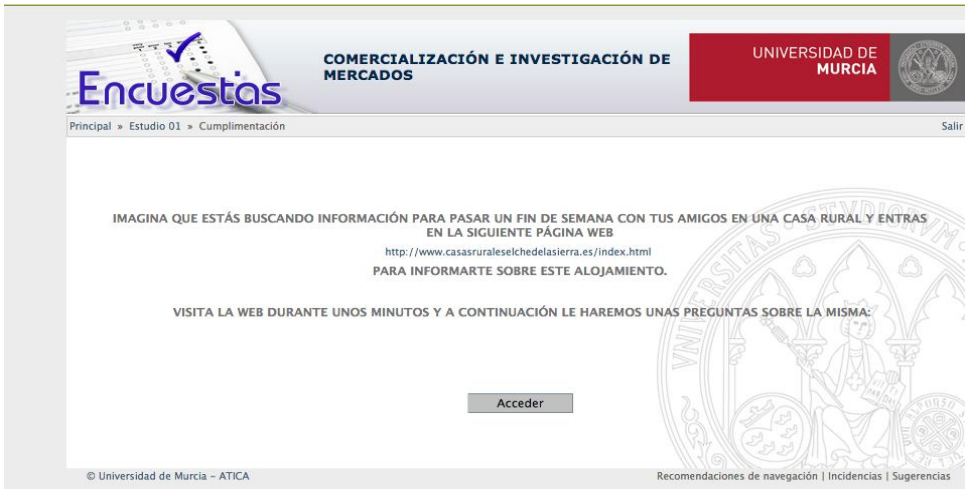
This study significantly extends the body of image literature exploring the role of both cognitive and affective responses as antecedents of the formation destination image and its subsequent effect on tourists' destination choice. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine whether the relationship between image and choice is moderated by other

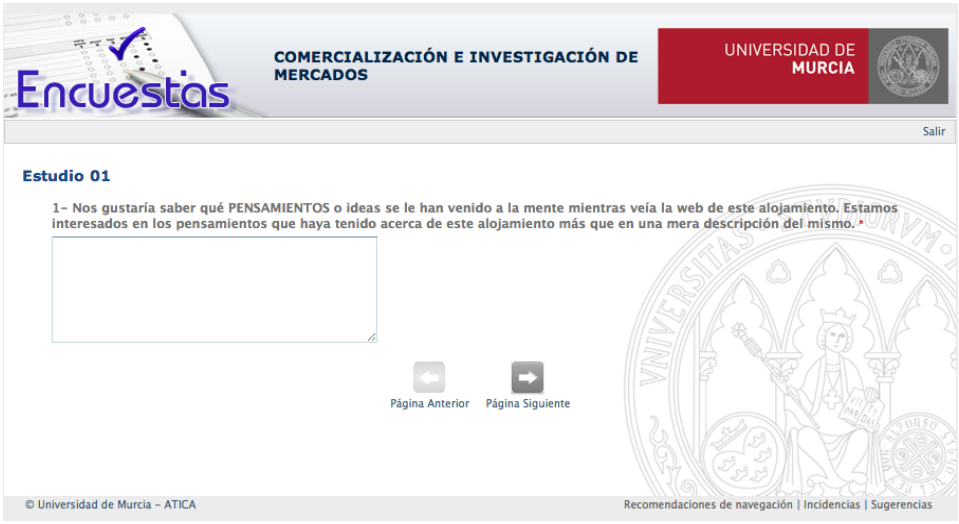
variables. For example, Gartner (1993) argued that tourists' affective destination image is to a great extent influenced by their motivations. In addition, Goh and Litvin (2000) and Sirgy and Su (2000) reported that the relationship between destination image and destination preference was mediated by the tourists' self-image. Hence, future research could examine the relationships between motivation, the dimensions of destination image, and tourist's behavioral intentions before to destination.

APPENDIX 1

Online questionnaire

Appendix 1: Online questionnaire



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3- Respecto a la IMAGEN que le ha transmitido la página web sobre este alojamiento rural, marque de 1 a 10 según se encuentre más cerca de un rasgo o de su contrario.
Pienso que se trata de un alojamiento...
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Estresante * Relajante
Aburrida * Divertida
Deprimente * Excitante
Desagradable * Agradable
De difícil acceso * De fácil acceso
Frío * Amigable
Sucio * Limpio
Ruidoso * Tranquilo
Inseguro * Seguro
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Estudio 01
4- ¿Cómo calificaría de 1 a 10 su impresión global de este alojamiento?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Muy desfavorable * Muy favorable
Muy mala * Muy buena
No me ha gustado * Me ha gustado
5- En una escala de 1 a 10, ¿cúal es su impresión global de este alojamiento? siendo 1 "MUY DESFAVORABLE" y 10 "MUY FAVORABLE": *
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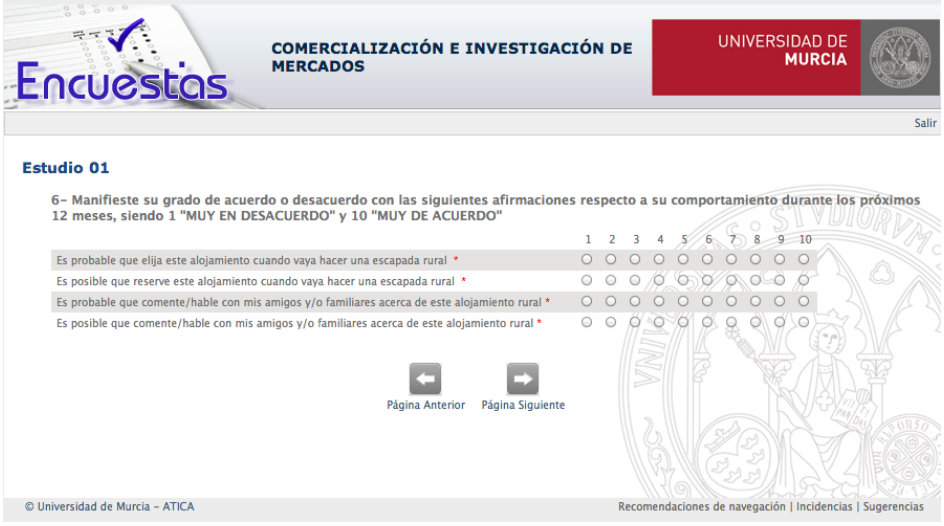
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6- Manifieste su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones respecto a su comportamiento durante los próximos 12 meses, siendo 1 "MUY EN DESACUERDO" y 10 "MUY DE ACUERDO"
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Es probable que elija este alojamiento cuando vaya hacer una escapada rural *
Es posible que reserve este alojamiento cuando vaya hacer una escapada rural *
Es probable que comente/hable con mis amigos y/o familiares acerca de este alojamiento rural *
Es posible que comente/hable con mis amigos y/o familiares acerca de este alojamiento rural *
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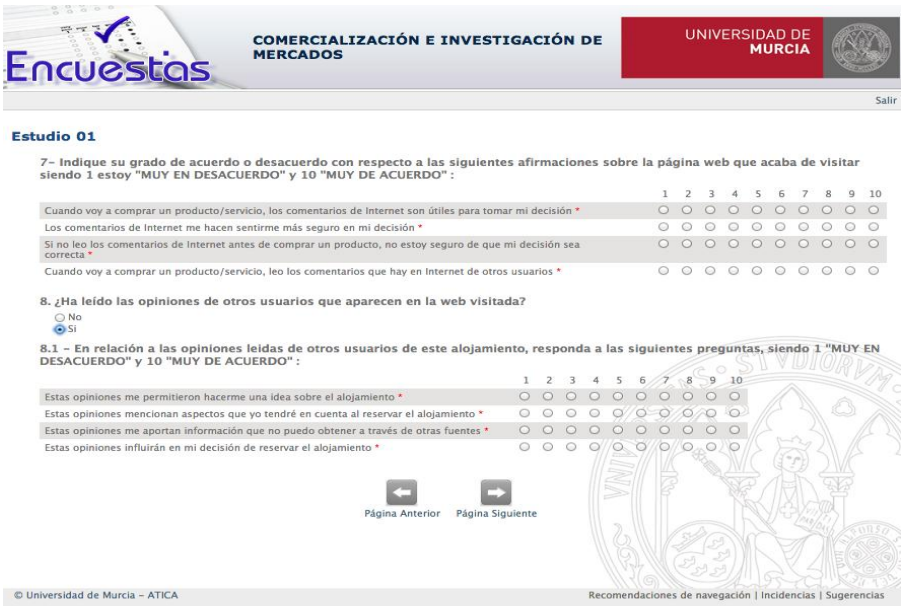
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7- Indique su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con respecto a las siguientes afirmaciones sobre la página web que acaba de visitar siendo 1 estoy "MUY EN DESACUERDO" y 10 "MUY DE ACUERDO" :
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Cuando voy a comprar un producto/servicio, los comentarios de Internet son útiles para tomar mi decisión *
Los comentarios de Internet me hacen sentirme más seguro en mi decisión *
Si no leo los comentarios de Internet antes de comprar un producto, no estoy seguro de que mi decisión sea correcta *
Cuando voy a comprar un producto/servicio, leo los comentarios que hay en Internet de otros usuarios *
8. ¿Ha leído las opiniones de otros usuarios que aparecen en la web visitada?
No
Si
8.1 - En relación a las opiniones leidas de otros usuarios de este alojamiento, responda a las siguientes preguntas, siendo 1 "MUY EN DESACUERDO" y 10 "MUY DE ACUERDO" :
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Estas opiniones me permitieron hacerme una idea sobre el alojamiento *
Estas opiniones mencionan aspectos que yo tendré en cuenta al reservar el alojamiento *
Estas opiniones me aportan información que no puedo obtener a través de otras fuentes *
Estas opiniones influirán en mi decisión de reservar el alojamiento *
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CHAPTER 3

Mental simulation as antecedent of destination image:

The effects of social pictures and social instructions to imagine

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Mental simulations can make events seem real. When people run through a set of events in their minds and imagine them in concrete and specific form that makes those events seem true. Mental images often come into play in daily life and are very much related to the need for creating social representation. For example, anticipating an idyllic vacation of lying on a beach, swimming, sailing, and snorkeling may make the experience seem so real that it propels a person into the sometimes lengthy and tedious process of making the vacation plans (Taylor *et al*., 1998). Therefore, because the experience needs to be simulated mentally and because it involves other people either other tourists or residents, the mental simulation is likely to lead to social representations.

Mental simulation is also an important construct in consumer research. Advertisements and television commercials use both pictures and words to induce consumers to generate mental images of products or services. For years, marketers have included instructions for consumers to imagine using their product. Slogans like "Imagine the Possibilities" from Intel and Apple, or merely "Imagine" from Samsung, encourage consumers to transport themselves into a state in which they are using the product (Elder and Krishna, 2012). The success of such appeals has been well documented within the consumer behavior literature (Gregory *et al*., 1982; MacInnis and Price 1987; McGill and Anand 1989; Bone and Ellen 1992; Petrova and Cialdini 2005, 2008). Regarding the tourism category, a hotel ad may lead consumers to imagine a comfortable bed or a delicious breakfast. Moreover, it may provoke some form of social representation of the experience with other people. Similarly, an ad for a sports car might induce a male consumer to imagine the interior and exterior of the car (Wyer *et*

al., 2008). It may also take the consumer to a social representation of the car in with more people are participating of the experience with the car.

From a consumer behavior perspective, specifically in relation to intangible or experiential purchases, a consumer's mental image of a product is at times a primary source of information available to assist them in forming a judgment (Schwarz, 1986). In addition, due to the intangible nature of tourism, if the consumer had never visited or had any previous experience involving the destination, his/her consumption vision, that is, self-constructed mental simulations of future consumption situations, may be the only initial source of information and serve as the only influence at the early stages of the decision process (Schwarz, 1986).

A unique experience is the essence of tourism sought by tourists. The most effective way to communicate the notion of a tourism experience at a destination is to provide visual cues that stimulate the imagination and connect with potential tourists in a personal way (Ye and Tussyadiah, 2011). These visual cues may favor mental simulation, which, in turn, lead consumers to the creation of social representations. Recent studies have especially addressed the importance of virtually transporting consumers of travel information to the destination to support the formation of concrete expectations (Lee *et al*., 2010; Rozier-Rich and Santos, 2010). It is indeed a major concern of providers of tourism products to encourage quasi-trial experiences to support travel decision-making processes (Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003). Oh *et al.* (2007) emphasize that destination choice is influenced by the mental images the tourist forms based on the expected experience at the destination. Further, Miller and Stoica (2004) have demonstrated that consumers' choices of vacations may be significantly influenced by mental simulation processing. Since actual product trial is impossible, being able to

vividly imagine the experience is the next best alternative in order to form concrete expectations (Goossens, 1995).

Previous research investigating tourists' decision processes suggests that tourists' visions of their future consumption experience may have a substantial influence on their future behavior (MacInnis and Price, 1987; Etzioni, 1988; Goossens, 2003; Miller *et al*., 2000). For that reason, understanding the effects of imagery-evoking stimuli on tourism consumers' visionary responses to advertising material is of considerable importance to tourism destination marketers. The effectiveness of various imagery-evoking strategies in influencing consumer responses has attracted the attention of numerous marketing researchers.

To date, there has been limited research investigating how advertising stimuli and resulting effectiveness in evoking elaborate consumption visions for holiday travel decision-making (Lee and Gretzel, 2012). Mental images of future consumption are a largely ignored and thus understudied aspect of consumer behavior, specifically in the tourist marketing. This oversight is unfortunate given importance of mental imaging in human thought processes (Demasio, 1994) and the pervasive frequency of future thought (Brann, 1991). While there is strong theoretical and partly empirical support for the positive effects of narrative and pictorial stimuli on mental simulation, and for mental simulation processing leading to stronger destination images, only one empirical study have so far tested these relationships in a comprehensive model (Lee and Gretzel, 2012). Our research builds upon the literature to demonstrate how images and texts can evoke a social consumption vision in potential tourists, which may predict their intentions to visit the destination. A comprehensive model is important to simultaneously test the effects and also to identify interaction effects. In addition, most

of the research on which the theories are based was conducted using print advertising. Therefore, our research is conducted in a web site context, because websites represent nowadays one of the most important vehicles for marketing touristic destinations.

Building on the theory of social representations, the present study suggests that both the use of social pictures and the use of social instructions to imagine in a web site destination stimulate mental simulation, which, in turn, influences the dimensions of destination image. Moreover, the relationships of overall destination image and mental simulation with behavioral intentions are also tested. In what follows, we provide a review of the literature and outline our conceptual framework. Hypotheses are then presented and tested. Research methodology and results are discussed next. Finally, implications of the study are discussed.

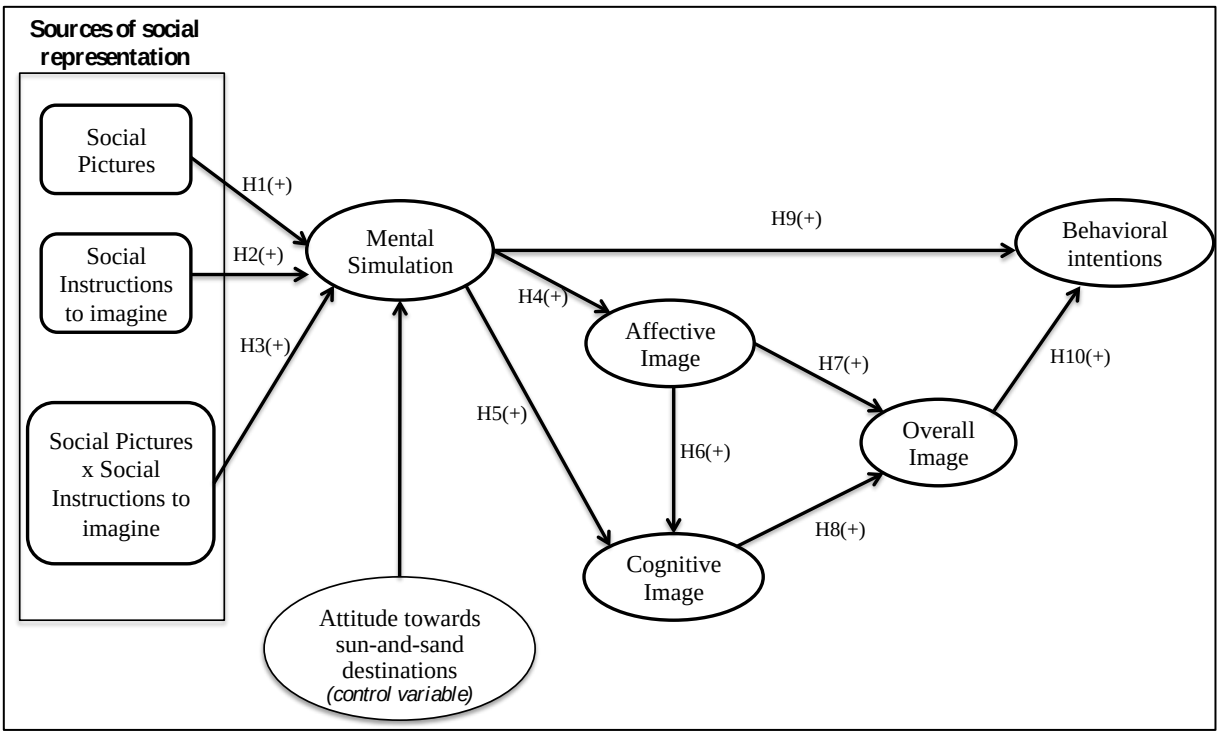
3.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

As a guide to hypotheses development, we begin with a brief overview of our model. Past research has revealed that mental simulation can be stimulated by various external advertising elements (Miller and Marks, 1997; Babin and Burns, 1997; Lee *et al.,* 2010; Lee and Gretzel, 2012). The proposed research model is shown in Figure 1. It states that both the use of social pictures and the use of social instructions to imagine stimulate mental simulation (Hypotheses H1, H2 and H3). The theoretical background is based on Dual Coding and Multimedia Learning theories.

Figure 1 also includes the effect of attitude towards sun-and-sand destinations on mental simulation as control variable. Including this variable as an additional predictor of mental simulation allows us to determine whether the mechanisms used to enhance social representations, such as social pictures and social instructions to imagine, have a significant impact on mental simulation after accounting for the variance explained by

this control variable. Because of the need to study how destination image is created before visiting the destination, we propose that mental simulation generated by social pictures or/and social instructions to imagine will directly influence on the affective and cognitive dimensions of destination image (Hypotheses H4 and H5). As in our previous study, relationships among the dimensions of destination image (affective, cognitive and overall) are tested and they correspond with Hypotheses H6, H7 and H8. Finally, in order to predict tourists' behavioral intentions, we also propose Hypotheses H9 and H10, i.e., the relationships between mental simulation and behavioral intentions and between overall image and behavioral intentions. In what follows, the rationale for each hypothesis is provided.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



3.2.1 Mental simulation processing in online information search for tourists

A mental image is often conceptualized as a mental representation of an object, event or situation whose features are spatially and temporally organized (Shepard and Metzler,

1971; Kosslyn, 1976, 1988). The construction of such a representation can be stimulated by direct experience with its referent, by a picture, or by a verbal description.

Mental simulation can be seen as a way to process information. According to previous research, elicitation of mental simulation can generally emerge through one of three types of strategies, or external treatment variables: pictorial stimuli (picture or illustration), concrete verbal stimuli, and imagery instructions (Paivio, 1971; Lutz and Lutz, 1978; MacInnis and Price, 1987; Bone and Ellen, 1992; Burns *et al*., 1993; Miller and Marks, 1997; Babin and Burns, 1997; Miller and Stoica, 2004). Lutz and Lutz (1978) further elaborated that the brain may be more engaged in the response to an ad when imagery is favored, as a combination of verbal and pictorial information is more likely to activate both the left and right hemispheres. Consistent with Lee and Gretzel (2012), the significance of mental simulation is supported by two theories: the Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1971) and the Multimedia Learning Theory (Mayer, 1997). From a Dual Coding perspective, information is best represented and processed when displayed using a combination of verbal and nonverbal stimuli. Multimedia Learning theory posits that content presented in both verbal and pictorial form can result in enhanced immersion into that content, in turn making it more meaningful. Therefore, this study adopts both Dual Coding and Multimedia Learning theories as frameworks to guide the research.

In both social psychology and consumer research, mental simulation leads to improved ad attitudes and brand evaluations (Escalas, 2004). While there is a long history of mental simulation research in psychology, consumer research has recently begun to examine some related concepts, such as imagery in advertising and ease of imagining in consumer decision-making. Instructions to imagine are just one possible antecedent of

imagery. Bone and Ellen (1992) found that imagery increased when radio advertisements encourage participants to imagine themselves using a product (versus imagining someone else) Imagery also affected attitude toward the ad (measured with emotion terms), but not attitude toward the brand or purchase intentions. Moreover, previous research in marketing communications and mental imagery has investigated a number of individual forms of external stimuli with regard to their effectiveness in evoking mental imagery. For example, Miller and Stocia (2004) found that photographic images of beach scenes were more effective in evoking mental imagery than artistic renditions. Babin and Burns (1997) revealed that concrete imagery eliciting words evokes high instances of product recall, while a study by Miller and Marks (1997) found a strong relationship between instructions to imagine and the quantity of imagery. However, to date, research in this area has failed to investigate the combined use of these various forms of external stimuli and their combination's effectiveness in evoking elaborate consumption visions, that is, in enhancing mental simulation.

From the consumer research perspective, a consumer's mental image of a tourism destination may be the main source of information available to enhance expectations and facilitate purchasing decisions (Walters *et al*., 2007). Therefore, it is critically important for tourism marketers to understand what types of stimuli should be included in a destination website effectively induce mental simulation, in order to design persuasive sites that can successfully compete in the tourism information space.

3.2.1.1 From self- referencing mental simulation to social mental simulation

While one can mentally simulate an episode involving other people, mental simulation typically involves the self. Krishnamurthy and Sujan (1999) have studied self-focused mental simulation (which they label "anticipatory self-referencing"). These authors find

that the persuasive effects of mental simulation are facilitated by ads with high degrees of contextual detail. Contextual detail helps create the setting for the forward-looking simulation, as opposed to the case of autobiographical memory retrieval (which they label "retrospective self-referencing"), which is more persuasive with low degrees of contextual detail because memories already have detailed information associated with them.

Mental simulation is at the same level of specificity as social interaction (i.e. imagine interacting with other people), and they bring in information about social settings, social roles, and specific people (Taylor *et al*., 1998). Research has shown that simply imagining a particular social context can evoke cognitive and behavioral effects similar to those experienced in the context itself. For instance, Garcia *et al*. (2002) demonstrated that simply imagining being in a crowded room led to significantly less helping behavior (Darley and Latane, 1968). There is quite an established focus on the impacts of mental imagery in a range of domains within social psychology (Crisp *et al*., 2010). Imagined contact research has found that simulating positive social interactions with outgroupers can improve outgroup evaluations, and, just like actual contact, it does so by reducing intergroup anxiety (Turner *et al*., 2007a; Stathi and Crisp, 2008; Turner and Crisp, 2010).

An imagined contact may be effective as a preparatory measure, instigating an interest in, and appreciation of, the value in actual intergroup contact (Husnu and Crisp, 2010a,b). For this reason, we believe it is important to consider the possible impact of imagined contact on mental simulation in the tourism context, because the contact with other people and cultures is associated to most tourist experiences (Cohen, 1996).

3.2.1.2 From non-social picture to social picture

A picture is "any two-dimensional representation in which the stimulus array contains at least one element that is not alphabetic, numeric, or arithmetic" (Lutz and Lutz, 1978, p.611). Pictures have been studied extensively in the context of mental imagery processing (Shepard, 1967; Kisielius and Sternthal, 1984). They have the advantage of presenting visual images in an appropriate modality for internalization as the basis for mental imagery (Rossiter and Percy, 1980). In addition, Lutz and Lutz (1977, 1978), Alesandrini and Sheikh (1983), and Rossiter and Percy (1983) have shown the effects of various types of pictures specifically on recall and attitude. Babin *et al*. (1992) found a picture superiority effect, which demonstrated that visual information would be remembered over verbal information. Similarly, a picture superiority effect ensues whereby visual information tends to be remembered over verbal information because according to the dual-coding hypothesis (Pavio, 1986), pictures activate a visual as well as a verbal encoding process. The interactive nature of new technologies enriches the possibilities of projecting destination images. As the Multimedia learning theory (Mayer, 1997) proposes, multimedia presentations can foster focused attention and immersion into the content and, consequently, can make it more meaningful. Therefore, using the new technologies may be useful for enhancing mental simulation of the destination.

Tourism can be categorized as a form of hedonic consumption, where the experience is an end in itself (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Leemans, 1994; Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998). Sternberg (1997) argues that "tourism planning has as its central challenge in the design of effective touristic experiences, and can find conceptual sources for this task in

iconography" (p. 951). Garlick (2002) also brings up this question when asking about what role photography plays in determining the nature of touristic experience (p. 289).

In the context of destination marketing, Olson *et al.* (1986) found that pictures presented in destination advertisements have an influence on a consumer's perception of the vacation experience through the association of variety of pictures with certain types of experiences. Furthermore, Miller and Stoica (2004) indicated that photographic images of beach scenes effectively stimulated mental imagery processing.

The importance of photographic material seems to be increasing in the tourism sector, mainly because it is representing an experiential product. Urry (2002) clarifies and extends the argument that tourism experiences have a fundamental visual character, drawing an analogy with Foucault's concept of the gaze. He develops the notion that there are diverse tourist gazes. Pictures may include some social content in the form of other tourists. 'Humanized' pictures are rarely found in the tourist brochures. The tourist attractions and sites are shown deprived of their everyday activity: with no people in the streets, or just in front of the sites (Barthes, 1957; Urry, 1990; Galí, 2005). For instance, Govers and Go (2005) analyzed how destination identity is projected through the use of photographic imagery in an online environment. Results of their content analysis reflects that tourists appeared in 24% of the images, i.e. in general terms the experiential nature of tourism was not often reflected in the projected imagery.

The appearance or absence of tourists in images has been used as a way to distinguish between tourist gaze (Urry, 2002) and experience (Urbain, 1989; Fairweather and Swaffield, 2002; Garlick, 2002). Fairweather and Swaffield (2002) propose an interesting metaphor in this respect, using the graded experience of the Elizabethan

theater, "in which some of the audience become active participants, some choose to remain detached spectators, and others move between the two. Furthermore, watching others in the audience perform becomes part of the experience" (p. 294). Moreover, Walters et al. (2007) demonstrated that the presence of more real pictures affects the extent of elaboration and the quality of consumers' consumption visions. Therefore, we propose that using social pictures may enhance mental simulation, because watching others may facilitate the process mental simulation (Fairweather and Swaffield, 2001). Thus, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: The presence of social pictures encourages mental simulation

3.2.1.3 From self-narratives to social instructions to imagine

Verbal stimuli may serve as a basis for mental simulation. Direct instructions to imagine encourage mental simulation. Both verbal stimuli and instructions to imagine usually take a narrative form. Recent studies have looked at narratives and how they evoke mental imagery (Green and Brock, 2000; Escalas, 2004). Narrative is an important mean by which individuals can make sense of their experiences. According to Padgett and Allen (1997), narrative is "the primary form through which people communicate and comprehend experiences" (p. 56). Wiles *et al.* (2005) also state that "narratives reflect, communicate and shape the world and our understanding of it" (p. 90). Narratives, through the form of consumer stories, can result in potential visitors imagining themselves experiencing a destination and, hence, can be used to effectively promote a destination and influence decision-making (Tussyadiah *et al.*, 2011).

Narrative processing has indeed been linked to persuasion. Padgett and Allen (1997) contend that narrative advertising would be the most effective way to communicate, especially in the context of an experiential product such as tourism. This argument has

been also supported by Mattila (2000). Escalas (2007) finds that self-referenced narratives enable consumers to generate a positive evaluation of an advertised product no matter what level of argument strength they include. When narrative ads are presented in the form of stories, potential customers are likely to envision functional consequences and derive symbolic meanings to interpret the advertisement (Padgett and Allen, 1997). Phillips and McQuarrie (2010) also point out that the greater the transportation into a story, the greater the belief that the world within the story is true, since there will be less critical examination of the ideas that were presented in the story world. In summary, previous research on narratives seems to supports the notion that narratives contribute to mental simulation.

In the context of tourism, Gretzel (2006) suggests that "travel stories help us understand and make meaning of our travel experiences and encourage us to relive and reflect on trips, as well as integrate travel experiences with the rest of our experiences and knowledge"(p. 175). Vacations at unfamiliar destinations were more positively evaluated by consumers who were exposed to advertising information in a narrative format rather than in a list of attributes (Adaval and Wyer, 1998).

Blogs represent very well the advantages of narrative formats. According to Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2007), the narrative structure of travel blogs allows readers to feel empathy and associate the experiences of the blogger with their own experience. A connection between the reading of travel narratives and narrative transportation was also established by Rozier-Rich and Santos (2011). While tourism-related print and TV advertising make extensive use of sensory descriptions and narrative texts, destination Web sites often contains functional lists of, for example, attractions or accommodation establishments (Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2002).

One method through which consumers may refer to their consumption vision as a valued information source is narrative self-referencing. Debevec and Romeo (1992) refer to this phenomenon as a cognitive process that individuals use to comprehend incoming information by comparing it to self-relevant information stored in their memory. According to Green and Brock (2000), this method of imagery processing has been shown to affect the persuasion power of the advertisement's message and is often accompanied by strong affective responses. Escalas (2007) confirmed this assertion in a study revealing that narrative self-referencing leads to a favorable evaluation of an advertised product regardless of the advertisement's argument strength. This author suggests that the success of an advertisement in persuading the consumer is due to the positive affect that occurs as a result of the mental simulation that distracts consumers from weak arguments.

The mental simulation that is elicited by asking people to imagine themselves in a particular situation typically leads people to make more extreme judgments. For example, Bone and Allen (1992) found that when participants were asked to imagine themselves as the character in an advertisement, they generated more self-related imagery, and the plausibility (the likelihood of the person's finding himself/herself in the ad scene) directly influenced participants' attitude towards the ad and product. In a similar vein, Petrova and Cialdini (2005) found that explicitly instructing consumers to imagine themselves experiencing the situations described in an ad increased the ad's effectiveness, but only when they could easily construct mental images. However, imagination instructions were detrimental to the ad's effectiveness when either the consumers were personally unable to form vivid mental images or the ad content was not conducive to constructing those images.

This study goes beyond the self-referential narrative of instructions to imagine by adding the social aspect enabling shared representations between self and others (i.e., imagine with friends, family or even meeting new people). However, to the best of our knowledge the incorporation of the social aspect has not been studied yet in this context. Given this research gap, this study specifically investigates the effectiveness of this stimulus in evoking the tourism consumer's mental simulation by looking at their usage within a tourism context. The inclusion of other people in the narratives may have incremental benefits on the potential tourists because tourism is very much a social activity (Brown and Chalmers, 2003; Minnaert *et al*., 2009). The presence of social instructions to imagine may be more realistic and may therefore favor the construction of mental images (Petrova and Cialdini, 2005). As a result of this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: The presence of social instructions to imagine encourages mental simulation

Dual Coding theory developed by Paivio (1971) establishes that people learn better when stimuli include related verbal and pictorial information compared to verbal information alone or pictorial information alone. He also indicated that information presented via the pictorial channel is more salient and better remembered than information presented through the verbal channel (Paivio, 1991). Similarly, Richardson (1999) pointed out that information is likely to be retrieved more accurately when it is encoded using dual codes rather than just one code. If one code is forgotten, the other code can still facilitate the retrieval of all the information. Extending the Dual Coding theory, Lukosius (2004) claimed that the more codes (e.g. picture, sound, text, touch, etc.) used, the better the recall.

Separately, social instructions to imagine and social pictures might have a similar impact on consumers. Adaval and Wyer (1998) showed that instructions to imagine the events described in a narrative and a list had effects that were similar to those that occurred when these descriptions were accompanied by pictures, suggesting that the impact of self-generated mental images might be similar to the effect of pictures. However, there may be some kind of interaction between social instructions and social pictures that need to be explored. Evidence that the addition of pictures to verbal descriptions of a product increases the favorableness of product evaluations is rather mixed (Edell and Staelin, 1983; Childers and Houston, 1984; Miniard *et al.*, 1991; Costley and Brucks, 1992; Adaval and Wyer, 2004). Unnava and Burnkrant (1991), for example, found that pictures facilitated the recall of product information only if the verbal material itself was unlikely to elicit an image of the situation in which the product was used. When the verbal material spontaneously elicited an image, pictures had little additional effect on recall. However, given the weak relationship between the recall of information about a referent and evaluations based on it (Loken, 1984; Wyer and Unverzagt, 1985), the implications of these findings for product evaluations are unclear.

The theory of Multimedia Learning may help to make inferences about the more likely effect of the interaction between social instructions to imagine and social pictures. According to Mayer (1997), a story supplemented with multimedia such as pictures may foster a deeper understanding of information. For it to be truth, the story should have some kind of relation with the pictures. In such a case, the picture presented in combination with the narrative text can cause a verbal event description to be more vivid, help the recipients to enhance perceptual links between events, and increase the story's coherence (Verhallen *et al*., 2006; Adaval *et al.*, 2007). Adaval and Wyer (1998)

also noted that the addition of pictures to a narrative format can encourage readers to imagine the sequence of events, and can facilitate the construction of a representation to be used as a basis for judgment. Therefore, this combination of social instructions to imagine with social pictures seems to become an ideal source of social representations for the potential tourist. Consequently, there is strong support for interaction effects to emerge. More specifically, we propose that social instructions to imagine and social pictures, enrich information, foster immersion, and encourage a deeper and more extensive mental simulation. Therefore, we propose:

H3: The positive impact of social instructions to imagine on mental simulation will be further increased when social pictures are present.

3.2.2 Mental simulation and the dimensions of destination image

Narratives about places are the basis for creating destination image and are enhanced by photographic material (Govers and Go, 2005). According to Konecnik (2004), tourism destinations often compete via the images that are held in the minds of prospective tourists and spend a great deal of time, money and effort in creating a positive image aimed at making their destination more favorable than that of their competitors.

Images are individual perceptions, subjective introspections that are constructed in the mind of the visitor. As we stated in chapter 1, we only take into account the perception 'a priori', that is, the mental construction an individual makes of a destination without having a physical connection with the place. This is a key component of the tourist experience. Tourists are travellers even before the journey. In other words, tourists have already visited the place before they physically visit it (Galí and Donaire, 2005). Images are a subjective construction (that varies from person to person) and a social construction, based on the idea of collective imagination.

Destination image includes a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of attributes and/or activities available at a destination (Richardson and Crompton, 1988; Dadgostar and Isostalo, 1992; Kotler *et al*., 1993). An increasing number of researchers have directed their attention to identify what constitutes destination image (Lawson and Band-Bovy, 1977; Dichter, 1985). Much empirical research supports the premise that destination image is composed of two dimensions: cognitive and affective (Crompton, 1979; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a). The cognitive component refers to the beliefs or knowledge a person has about the characteristics or attributes of a tourist destination (Baloglu, 1999; Pike and Ryan, 2004), while the affective dimension is represented by the individual's feelings toward the tourist destination (Chen and Uysal, 2002; Kim and Richardson, 2003). When consuming experiential products (Govers and Go, 2005), such as tourism, consumers build up emotional stimulations and mental multisensory imagery, either historic (i.e., based on prior experiences) or fantasy imagery, based on what they (expect to) taste, hear, smell, see, or feel. All of them help to conform the affective dimension of image destination.

In psychology, mental simulation has been considered relevant to psychopathology due to its supposed special relationship with emotions (Holmes and Mathews, 2010). By encouraging individuals to mentally simulate using a product via a narrative, affective responses will be likely to be associated with narrative transportation. In addition, mental simulation of episodes involving the self has been shown to evoke strong responses in terms of feelings (Taylor and Schneider, 1989). From an information processing point of view, it is suggested that mental simulation is an anticipating and motivating force that mediates emotional experiences (Goossens, 2000). If the narrative is able to generate mental simulation, positive feelings may become linked to the consumption experience.

In the context of tourism, the influence of mental simulation on the affective dimension of image destination remains largely unknown. As it occurs with ads and the products shown in them, mental simulation can help tourists and travelers to form the affective image of a destination. Therefore, previous results on mental simulation from the ad literature can be extended to tourism, with mental simulation also contributing to the creation of the affective dimension of image. Thus, based on the idea that mental simulation can be encouraged by a social pictures or social instructions to imagine, we propose:

H4: Mental simulation positively influences the affective dimension of destination image

When engaged in mental simulation, individuals imagine themselves using a product, think about themselves in future scenarios, linking personal experience and the product, and are "transported" by these thoughts (Escalas, 2004). This process precludes them from critically evaluating the information that took them to imagine. On the other hand, when not engaged in mental simulation, individuals' thought processes tend to be more critical in nature. Green and Brock (2000) demonstrate that analytical cognitive responses dominate when one is not engaged in narrative transportation in the context of written stories. In advertising research, Wright (1973) founds that cognitive responses mediate message acceptance: counter arguing and source derogations are important mediators of attitudinal acceptance. Thus, narrative transportation should reduce critical thoughts when consumers are captivated by their simulations (Escalas, 2004). Our thought here is that mental simulation can help tourists and travelers to form the cognitive image of a destination. Mental simulation seems to play an important role in information processing (Block, 1981; MacInnis and Price, 1987) and when mental

simulation is present, the process is likely to lead to more favorable cognitive responses. Based on the idea that mental simulation can be stimulated by social pictures or by social instructions to imagine, we propose the following:

H5: Mental simulation positively influences the cognitive dimension of destination image

3.2.3 The relationship between the dimensions of destination image

In the past, the cognitive dimension of destination image has been extensively examined in the tourism literature (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Court and Lupton, 1997; Chen and Kerstetter, 1999; Leisen, 2001; Hui and Wan, 2003). Only recently, several studies have proposed the cognitive-affective nature of destination image (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu, 2001; Kim and Richardson, 2003; Beerli and Martín, 2004). Following this perspective, destination image is integrated not only by the individual's cognitive evaluations, but also by their affective evaluations of a tourist destination (Kim and Richardson, 2003; Pike and Ryan, 2004). Kim and Richardson (2003) posit that in tourism contexts, evaluation of affective qualities of places might become even more important than objective, perceptible properties of places. In line with recent research, the cognitive-affective nature of destination image is explored in this study.

The distinction and direction of relationship between cognitive and affective components have been discussed in a number of tourism decision-making models (Lin *et al.,* 2007; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999b). Both cognitive and affective evaluations have been shown to exert a direct impact on the overall image. However, the debate about whether cognition precedes emotion or vice versa is still open and unsolved (Lin 2004). Image literature shows that the cognitive evaluation has an indirect influence on the overall image through the affective evaluation (Baloglu, 1999; Baloglu and

McCleary, 1999a, 1999b; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Lin *et al*., 2007; Stern and Krakover, 1993; Wang and Hsu, 2010). In contrast, recent consumer behavior literature seems to support the opposite. Coulter (1998) found a direct link from feelings to cognitions. Later, Pham *et al*. (2001) showed that feelings could guide and, consequently, predict thoughts. They argue that once feelings have been registered, the initial affective response will lead to the subsequent thought generation through automatic and controlled processes. Therefore, the initial affective response will take the subject to retrieve congruent material with this affect (Blaney, 1986). This process will lead to a more elaborated, relevant and, in short, cognitive response (Cohen and Areni, 1991). Lopez and Ruiz (2011) demonstrated that emotions exert a direct influence on thoughts, while the impact of the former on attitude flows both directly and indirectly through cognitions.

These results provide a strong support to the intervening role of affective evaluation on cognitive evaluations, contrary to what was proposed so far in image literature. As the image is derived from mental simulation through social pictures and social instructions to imagine, emotional response can go before the cognitive response. In addition, tourism is more and more focused on engaging consumers in affective experiences. On the basis of the conceptual and empirical perspectives from previous literature, the following hypothesis is postulated:

H6: The affective dimension of image positively influences the cognitive dimension of image.

The combination of cognitive and affective evaluations gives rise to an overall or composite destination image that is greater than the sum of the parts (Calantone *et al*., 1989; Phelps, 1986; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991). Ahmed (1991) suggests that the

evaluation of the overall image and its two main components should all be considered and assessed in order to understand the positioning of a destination. Indeed, the overall destination image has been considered to be a third component of the image, which may be similar to, or different from, the cognitive or affective perceptions of the destination (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a). Stern and Krakover (1993) depict that designative (cognitive) and appraisive (affective) images together form an overall image of a destination.

Recently, several studies have included cognitive and affective attributes in the measurement of destination image (Baloglu, 2001; Kim and Richardson, 2003; Beerli and Martín, 2004; Wang and Hsu, 2010). In line with this new approach, destination image should be considered a multi-dimensional phenomenon that includes not only beliefs or knowledge about the place's attributes, but also the individual's feelings toward the tourist destination. Consequently, we also propose in our context that positive cognitive and affective components would be positively related to the overall image of a destination. As such, we propose:

H7: The affective dimension of image positively influences the overall destination image

H8: The cognitive dimension of image positively influences the overall destination image

3.2.4 Behavioral intentions

Consumer researchers have employed mental simulation techniques to improve attitudes and facilitate behavioral intentions towards advertised products (Escalas and Luce, 2003, 2004). Similarly, imagery research; very related to the idea of mental simulation,

suggests that elaborated imagery processing affects behavioral intentions (McMahon, 1973). Better elaborated imagery processing increases perceived likelihood of an event (MacInnis and Price, 1987), and people who imagined themselves performing a behavior showed a significant increase in their behavioral intentions (Gregory *et al.*, 1982). Therefore, mental simulation should be also related to behavioral intentions.

The tangible impact of imagery on attitude change is perhaps best demonstrated within the advertising domain. Consumer researchers have demonstrated that imagery-eliciting strategies, such as encouraging viewers to imagine positive scenarios involving themselves and the advertised products, can be used to facilitate more positive attitudinal judgments towards products. Babin and Burns (1997) presented undergraduate business students with advertisements for a fictitious car and an accompanying questionnaire assessing attitudes towards the product. Half of the adverts contained five statements placed throughout the advert, instructing the recipient to ‘‘imagine the car in your mind . . . ’’, ‘‘imagine it . . . ’’, ‘‘hear it . . . ’’, ‘‘picture it . . . ’’ and ‘‘feel it . . . ’’. The other half contained no such instructions. The results revealed that adverts containing instructions to imagine the product resulted in more favorable attitudinal judgments than adverts with no imagination instructions. In similar research, Escalas (2004) asked participants to view a one-page color advertisement for a running shoe with a fictitious brand name. Half the adverts contained text encouraging the participant to imagine themselves running in the shoes through a park, while the other half contained no such instructions. Instructions to imagine resulted in more favorable brand evaluations than advertisements that did not encourage mental simulation.

The ability to imagine behavioral scenarios has been also shown to have a large impact on intentions to perform such behaviors (Gregory *et al*., 1982; Schlosser, 2003). Indeed,

imagined behavior can influence intentions without directly affecting attitudes (Schlosser 2003). Since attitudes and image are similar concepts, a direct effect of mental simulation on behavioral intentions may be expected. In the former studies, participants were explicitly asked to imagine product interaction behaviors (Gregory *et al*., 1982; Anderson, 1983), or the experimental stimuli varied in the level of actual product interaction (Schlosser, 2003). As opposed to the more explicit manipulations of product interaction in these former studies, we are focusing on obtaining mental simulation through social pictures and social instructions to imagine as a means of inducing behavioral intentions, as future visit and the recommendation to other individuals of this destination. In sum, mental simulation of some behavior leads to greater intentions to carry out that behavior in the future. Therefore, we propose that the simulated experience will also affect future behavioral intentions in a manner similar to actual interaction. As such, we propose that:

H9: Mental simulation positively influences the behavioral intentions

Destination image has a critical influence on travelers' destination choice processes (Cai, 2002), and it is a crucial method of differentiating destinations among competitors. When potential travelers have a limited knowledge of a destination, the perceived image fulfills an important function. Strong, positive, distinct and recognizable images increase the probability of a destination being chosen by travelers. Destination marketing, therefore, often focuses on promoting a favorable destination image, which can provide travelers with vicarious experiences before an actual visit (Hyun and O'Keefe, 2012).

Literature has shown that the overall image of the destination is influential not only for the destination selection process itself (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a); but also for

tourist behavior in general (Ashworth and Goodall, 1988; Mansfeld, 1992; Cooper *et al.*, 1993; Bigné *et al*., 2001). How to attract tourists to visit a place and/or how to favor their recommendation of the destination to others is crucial for the success of tourism development (Chen and Tsai, 2007). Several studies have illustrated that destination images do, indeed, influence tourist behavior (Hunt, 1975; Pearce, 1982). In essence, extant research suggests that those destinations with strong, positive images are more likely to be considered and chosen in the travel decision process (Goodrich, 1978; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). Therefore, it has been generally accepted in the literature that destination image has influence on tourist behaviors. Research has demonstrated that image is a valuable concept in understanding the destination selection process of tourists (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a,b). Thus, if a person holds a positive overall image of a particular destination, s/he would be more likely to visit the destination and recommend it to others. Therefore, we propose:

H10: The overall destination image positively influences the behavioral intentions

3.3 RESEARCH METHOD

We designed an experiment to analyze the effects of social instructions to imagine and the presence of social pictures as means of inducing the mental simulation. We also investigate mediating influence of mental simulation on the dimensions of destination image and behavioral intentions.

3.3.1 Design and stimuli

We chose a ‘sun and sand’ destination. A beach scene was chosen as the type of picture to be included in the experiment because previous research indicated that photographic images of beach scenes effectively stimulated mental simulation processing (Miller and

Stoica, 2004; Lee and Gretzel, 2012). Specifically, we chose the island of Corsica because a pre-test indicated that it was an accessible destination and rarely visited by the Spanish population.

Once we had chosen destination, a next pre-test was conducted to select the pictures to be used in our study. The pictures used are shown in Figures 2-4. This pretest consisted of a focus group with thirty graduate students. They were asked their opinion about what images seemed more real to them and which of the images led them to imagine there. Stimulus 3 was perceived by 87 percent of respondents as the most realistic. Therefore, pictures shown in figure 4 were selected for the experiment.

Figure 2. Stimulus 1 (pre-test)

Figure 3. Stimulus 2 (pre-test)

Figure 4. Stimulus 3 (pre-test)

The study used a 2 (social picture vs. non-social picture) x 2 (social instructions to imagine vs. no instructions to imagine) factorial between-subjects experimental design. The first manipulation consisted of including either a social picture, that is, with people, or a non-social picture, that is, without people. Regarding the second manipulation, social instructions to imagine were either present in or absent, depending on the experimental condition. All conditions were pre-tested to ensure their appropriateness. To make sure that the manipulations were reliable and effective, this study conducted several manipulation checks by asking pre-test subjects about the suitability of different texts and pictures. More specifically, fifty-five undergraduate students were involved in a series of pre-tests to evaluate the validity and score reliability of the scales used in this study as well as to test whether subjects could successfully distinguish the social picture from the non-social picture; pre-testing determined that this was the case. The stimulus used for one of the conditions (social pictures and social instructions to imagine) is presented in Figure 5. For comprehensive purposes, the text of this stimulus has been translated into English. All experimental conditions of the instructions to imagine and picture are presented in Appendix 1 in Spanish as the experiment was entirely developed in Spain.

Figure 5. Experimental condition: social picture and social instructions to imagine

CORSICA BEACHES

DO YOU LIKE THE IDEA?

Now spend a few seconds to imagine yourself **with your friends or with your partner/couple** in that place enjoying its beaches, landscapes, and forests. In addition, imagine yourself **meeting new people** in Corsica. It is a place plenty of possibilities where to find relax and diversion alike. The ideal destination for a perfect vacation.

3.3.2 Data collection and sample

Data were collected through an online survey and the invitation to participate was sent via e-mail using an online panel. A marketing research firm was hired to assist us with the data collection. The study was done in December 2012. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions. Subjects were informed about the procedure via email. Survey population consisted of individuals between 18 and 40

years old, since they are a relevant target group of sun-and-sand destinations. They had not previously visited the destination and who did not lived in this destination. The final sample consisted of 285 consumers. They were instructed to carefully look at the pictures and read the vacation destination description provided as if they were looking for information for a next vacation. After being exposed to the scenario, they were given an online self-administered questionnaire, which contained the variables of the proposed model.

The sample average age was 29 years old (ranging from 18 to 40) and 53.3% of the participants were male. A profile of the sample is shown in Table 1. As it can be observed, most people travel at least one a year and more than 40% of the sample is used to travel abroad for vacation.

Table 1. Sample profile

Variable	Percentage (%)
Gender	
Male	53.3 %
Female	46.7 %
Age	
18-25	37.9 %
26-32	26.4 %
33-40	35.7 %
Frequency of travel for leisure or vacation	
Less than once a year	15.8 %
Once a year	29.1 %
Twice a year	31.9 %
More than twice a year	23.2 %
Main destinations for leisure or vacation	
National	58.6 %
International	8.8 %
Both equally	32.6 %

3.3.3 Instrument validation

In order to ensure content validity, selected items for the constructs were primarily revised from prior studies in the tourism context. Image scales are based on 10-point semantic differential scales. Affective image was measured by Russel's (1980) four bipolar affective items: "pleasant/ unpleasant," "relaxing/distressing," "arousing/sleepy," and "exciting/gloomy. The use of these scales in destination studies

has been also reported by other authors (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Walmsley and Young, 1998; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a, b; Baloglu and Mangaloglu, 2001). For the cognitive image dimension, items have been borrowed from Ong and Horbunluekit (1997). We used the most applicable items as some of them included adjectives that were not truly bipolar, and some were not really representative of the cognitive image dimension (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Li *et al*., 2009). The final set of bipolar adjectives retained in this study to capture cognitive image includes "isolated/accessible", "unfriendly/ friendly", "dirty/ clean", "quiet/ noisy" and "unsafe/ safe". The respondents were also asked to rate their overall image of the accommodation by three bipolar items: "unfavorable/favorable", "bad/good", "negative/positive" (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a). Mental simulation and behavioral intentions were measured on 10-point Likert scales. The three items for mental simulation were adapted from prior research on mental simulation (Bone and Ellen, 1992; Green and Brock 2000; Escalas, 2004). For example, the first item stated, "I have been able to imagine myself being on vacation in Corsica". Behavioral intentions were measured with five items adapted from Kneesel *et al*., 2010, mainly asking the respondents whether they would recommend the destination to their family and friends and whether they would consider visiting the destination. Individual differences in prior attitudes may influence the size of the imagery effect (Luzt and Luzt, 1978). In order to control for the possibility of a subject's pre-existing attitude influencing mental simulation, we also incorporated attitudes towards sun-and-sand destinations as a control variable in our research model. Including this construct as an additional predictor of mental simulation allows us to determine whether the hypothesized antecedents have a significant impact on mental simulation after accounting for the variance explained by attitude towards sun-and-sand destinations. This control variable was measured using a 10-points differential semantic

scale. The scale was composed of three items adapted from previous literature (Mackenzie *et al.,* 1986; Bruner, 1998). At the end of the questionnaire individuals provided some demographic information (gender and age) and some additional information about how often they travel for leisure and their preferred destinations. The full questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 2.

3.4 RESULTS

3.4.1 Manipulation checks

Manipulation checks aimed to make sure that the subjects actually paid attention to the scenarios. All subjects in the social picture conditions stated that they saw people in the picture. Social instructions to imagine manipulation was successful with 94 percent of participants who received this condition claiming that the instructions to imagine did in fact tell them to imagine something in their mind. Therefore, the manipulations undertaken were successful.

3.4.2 Confirmatory factor analyses: reliability, convergent and discriminant validity

In order to assess measurement reliability and validity, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) containing all the multi-item constructs in our framework was estimated with EQS (Bentler, 2005) using the maximum likelihood method. Raw data screening showed evidence of non-normal distribution[2] (Mardia's coefficient normalized estimate = 77.1) and although other estimation methods have been developed for use when the normality assumption does not hold, the recommendations of Chou *et al*. (1991) and Hu

[2] Bentler (2005) suggested that, in practice, values > 5.00 in the normalized estimate of Mardia coefficient, are clear indicators of a non-normal distribution. In this case, a statistic of 77.1 clearly suggests non-normality of the sample.

et al. (1992) of correcting the statistics rather than using a different model of estimation has been followed. So, robust statistics (Satorra and Bentler, 1988) will be provided.

The results of the final CFA are reported in Table 2 and suggest that our final measurement model provides a good fit to the data on the basis of a number of fit statistics (S-B χ^2 (df=263)=456.51, p<.01; NNFI= .938; CFI=. 950; IFI= .951; RMSEA= .051). As evidence of convergent validity, the CFA results indicate that all items are significantly (p<.01) related to their hypothesized factors, the size of all the standardized loadings are higher than .60 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), and the average of the item-to-factor loadings are higher than .70 (Hair *et al.*, 1998).

Table 2. Internal consistency and convergent validity of the theoretical construct measures

Variable	Indicator	Factor loading	Robust t-value	Loading average	CA	CR	AVE
Mental simulation	MS1	.887***	17.898	.909	.934	.935	.828
	MS2	.949***	22.885				
	MS3	.892***	17.612				
Cognitive image	CI1	.566***	8.866	.762	.872	.877	.592
	CI2	.803***	11.839				
	CI3	.866***	16.611				
	CI4	.761***	11.256				
	CI5	.815***	14.101				
Affective image	AI1	.603***	7.034	.727	.817	.820	.536
	AI2	.684***	10.386				
	AI3	.799***	14.528				
	AI4	.821***	11.206				
Overall image	OI1	.915***	11.404	.919	.941	.943	.846
	OI2	.945***	14.363				
	OI3	.898***	11.686				
Behavioral intentions	BI1	.740***	15.002	.828	.915	.919	.697
	BI2	.844***	17.164				
	BI3	.935***	20.606				
	BI4	.945***	23.880				
	BI5	.677***	12.316				
Attitude towards sun-and-sand destinations	AD1	.902***	14.451	.936	.954	.955	.876
	AD2	.957***	17.684				
	AD3	.948***	15.527				
S-B χ^2 (df=263)=456.518, p<.01; NNFI= .938; CFI=. 950; IFI= .951; RMSEA= .051 n=285							

Note: CA = Cronbach's alpha; CR= Composite reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 2 also demonstrates the high internal consistency of the constructs. In each case, Cronbach's alpha exceeded Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) recommendation of .70.

Composite reliability represents the shared variance among a set of observed variables measuring an underlying construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Generally, a composite reliability of at least .60 is considered desirable (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). This requirement is met for every factor. Average variance extracted (AVE) was also calculated for each construct, resulting in AVEs greater than .50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Evidence for discriminant validity of the measures was provided in two ways (table 3). First, none of the 95 per cent confidence intervals of the individual elements of the latent factor correlation matrix contained a value of 1.0 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Second, the shared variance between pairs of constructs was always less than the corresponding AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). On the basis of these criteria, we concluded that all the measures used in the study exhibited sufficient evidence of reliability, convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant validity of the theoretical constructs measures

Construct	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Mental simulation	6.68	2.16	**.83**	.11	.12	.25	.44	.08
2. Cognitive image	7.04	1.74	[.23; .46]	**.59**	.52	.47	.11	.11
3. Affective image	7.36	1.70	[.21; .45]	[.66; .78]	**.54**	.42	.04	.15
4. Overall image	7.87	1.70	[.41; .60]	[.61; .76]	[.57; .73]	**.85**	.18	.20
5. Behavioral intentions	5.37	1.92	[.59; .74]	[.22; .45]	[.07; .33]	[.32; .53]	**.70**	.08
6. Attitude towards sun-and-sand destinations	8.09	2.07	[.16; .39]	[.21; .45]	[.27; .50]	[.35; .55]	[.17; .40]	**.88**

Note: Diagonal represents the average variance extracted; while above the diagonal the shared variance (squared correlations) is represented. Below the diagonal the 95% confidence interval for the estimated factors correlations is provided.

3.4.3 ANCOVA results

First of all, we conducted an ANCOVA to analyze the impact of the stimuli used on mental simulation as proposed in H1 and H2. Sun-and-sand attitudes were included as a control variable in the analyses ($F(1,280)=25.39$ $p<.05$). ANCOVA F-values for the main effects of social pictures ($F(1,280)=4.78$, $p<.05$) and social instructions to imagine

(F(1,280)=11.40, p<.01) were significant, but those for the interaction were not (F=1.56; p>.05). This result provides support for H1 and H2, but not for Hypothesis 3.

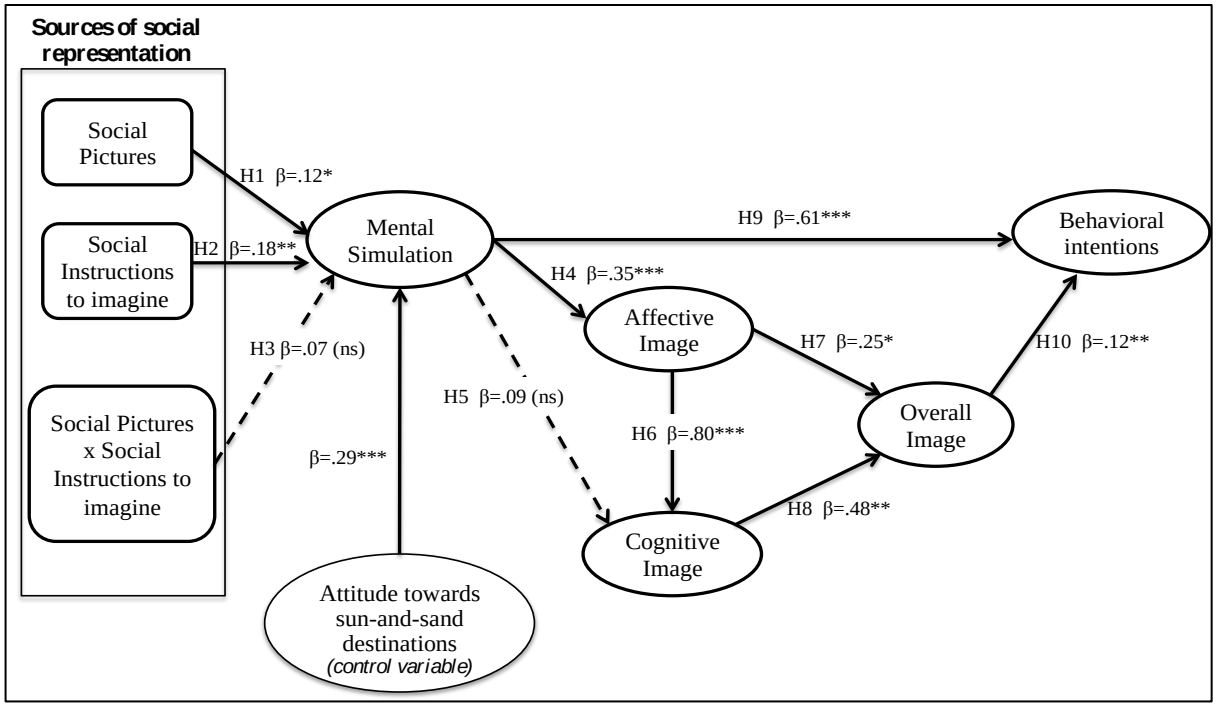
3.4.4 Path analysis results

We tested the proposed conceptual model using structural equation modeling. The empirical estimates for the main-effects model are shown in Figure 6. The results indicate that the data fit our conceptual model satisfactorily (S-B χ^2 (df =276) = 478.249 (p=0.00); NNFI= .939; CFI=.948; IFI= .949; RMSEA= .051). The recommended threshold is .90 for NNFI, CFI and IFI (Brown, 2006), and RMSEA values lower than .08 are seen as indicating satisfactory fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

Results of hypothesized relationships are also reported in Figure 6. After accounting for the variance explained by attitude towards sun-and-sand destinations (β_c= .29; p<.001), both social pictures and social instructions to imagine showed a significant effect on mental simulation (β_1= .12; p<.05; β_2= .18; p<.05). These results provide further support for Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2. However, the interaction effect was not significant (β_3= .07; p>.05). Thus H3 is not supported. Mental simulation had a significant impact on the affective dimension of image (β_4=.35; p<.001), but not on the cognitive dimension (β_5=.09; p>.05). This result provides support for Hypothesis 4, but not for Hypothesis 5. Regarding the results about the relationship between the two dimensions of image, the affective dimension showed a significant direct effect on the cognitive dimension of image (β_6=.80; p<.001). Moreover, both the affective dimension of image (β_7=.25; p<.05) and the cognitive dimension (β_8=.48; p<.01) determined the overall image. Therefore, Hypotheses 6, 7 and 8 are all supported.

Finally, both mental simulation and the overall image have a significant impact on the behavioral intentions supporting Hypotheses 9 and 10 (β_9= .61; p<.001; β_{10}= .12; p<.01).

Figure 6. Hypothesized structural model



S-B χ^2 (df =276) = 478.249 (p=0.00); NNFI= .939; CFI=.948; IFI= .949; RMSEA= .051
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, ns: Not significant

3.4.5 Rival model

An emerging consensus in structural equations modeling is that researchers should compare their proposed model with a rival model, not just test the proposed model (Bollen and Long, 1992). In order to achieve a more parsimonious explanation of the relationships under study, model trimming was used. Model trimming is appropriate in exploratory research when several path coefficients fail to reach statistical significance (Duncan, 1975; Pedhazur, 1982). So, the non-significant paths between mental simulation and cognitive image and the interaction effect were eliminated in the trimmed model. The estimates of this trimmed model are shown in Table 5, together with the estimates of the theoretical model.

Table 5. Structural model estimates[a]

Structural Path	**Theoretical Model (M_1)**	**Trimmed Model (M_0)**
H1: Social pictures → Mental simulation	.12 (2.11)*	.12 (1.26)
H2: Social Instructions to imagine → Mental Simulation	.18 (2.53)*	.18 (2.51)*
H3: Social Pictures x Social Instructions to imagine → Mental simulation	.07 (1.25)	-
H4: Mental simulation → Affective image	.35 (4.29)***	.38 (4.59)***
H5: Mental simulation → Cognitive image	.09 (1.59)	-
H6: Affective image → Cognitive image	.80 (5.37)***	.84 (5.69)***
H7: Affective image → Overall image	.25 (2.14)*	.33 (2.76)*
H8: Cognitive image → Overall image	.48 (3.00)**	.40 (2.40)**
H9: Overall image → Behavioral intentions	.12 (2.61)**	.13 (2.60)**
H10: Mental simulation → Behavioral intentions	.61 (9.39)***	.61 (9.41)***
Control variable: Attitude towards sun and sand →Mental simulation	.29(4.88)***	.30 (4.95)***
Goodness- of- fit indices		
Degrees of freedom	**276**	**278**
S-B χ^2	**478.249**	**517.769**
NNFI	**.939**	**.928**
CFI	**.948**	**.939**
IFI	**.949**	**.939**
RMSEA	**.051**	**.055**

a. Standardized estimates with t-values in parentheses.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Whereas the traditional difference chi-square test allows researchers to compare directly the fit of nested models when using standard goodness-of-fit chi-square values, this is not the case when using Satorra and Bentler (SB) scaled chi-square values. In particular, the difference in SB scaled chi-square values for nested models does not correspond to a chi-square distribution (Satorra, 2000). For this reason, simply subtracting the SB chi-square value for the less restrictive, baseline model (M_1) from the SB chi-square value for the more restrictive, comparison model (M_0) yields an invalid statistic for testing hypotheses about differences in model fit.

To overcome this limitation, Satorra (2000) derived a formula for testing the difference in nested SB chi-square values, to permit scaled difference chi-square testing. However, because this formula uses statistical information not readily available in conventional SEM software, it is an impractical approach for most applied researchers. Accordingly, Satorra and Bentler (2001) developed a simpler, asymptotically equivalent procedure

for scaled difference chi-square testing that is easily implemented using the scaled and unscaled chi-square values and the degrees of freedom for the two models contrasted.

Thus, the proposed practical procedure is as follows. We obtain the unscaled and scaled goodness-of-fit tests that is, T_0 and $\overline{T_0}$ when fitting M_0 and T_1 and $\overline{T_1}$ when fitting M_1. Let r_0 and r_1 be the associated degrees of freedom of the goodness-of-fit test statistics. Then, we compute the scaling corrections $\widehat{c_0}$= T_0 /$\overline{T_0}$ and $\widehat{c_1}$= T_1 /$\overline{T_1}$, and the usual chi-square difference T_d=T_0-T_1. The SB scaled difference test can thus be computed as $\overline{T}_d$= $T_d/\hat{c}_d$, where:

$$\hat{c}_d = (r_0\widehat{c_0} - r_1\widehat{c_1})/\text{m}.$$

The following values for the Normal Distribution and SB scaled chi-square statistics are obtained:

$$T_1 = 724.85,\ \overline{T_1} = 478.249,\ r_1 = 276,\ \widehat{c_1} = 1.51,$$

along with the degrees of freedom r_1 and the scaling correction $\hat{c}_1$.

On the other hand, the trimmed model gives the following statistics:

$$T_0 = 729.41,\ \overline{T_0} = 517.769,\ r_0 = 278,\ \widehat{c_0} = 1.40$$

Our main interest lies in testing the difference between M_0 and M_1, which we do with the chi-square difference test. The Normal Distribution difference statistic is:

$$T_d = 729.41 - 724.85 = 4.55$$

Since the data are not normal, we compute the SB (2001) scaled difference statistic. This requires computing the scaling factor $\hat{c}_d = (r_0\widehat{c_0} - r_1\widehat{c_1})/\text{m}$ given by:

$$\hat{c}_d = [278(1.40) - 276\ (1.51)]/2 = (389.2\text{-}416.76)\ /2 = -13.78$$

The scaling factor $\hat{c}_d$ is negative, so the SB difference test cannot be carried out; or, if carried out, it results in an improper negative chi-square value. Although Satorra and Bentler's (2001) original scaled difference chi-square test has been widely used, it sometimes produces a negative scaling correction factor that leads to a negative difference in chi-square values, as in our case. This is particularly likely in small samples or when the more restrictive model (M_0) is highly incorrect. For this reason, Satorra and Bentler (2010) recently proposed an improved scaling correction procedure that precludes negative differences in chi-square values and produces results identical to those obtained when using Satorra's (2000) complex formula.

As with the original scaled difference test, the new-scaled difference test (Satorra and Bentler, 2010) requires the user to estimate and obtain goodness-of-fit statistics for the baseline model (M_1) and comparison model (M_0). With the new scaled difference test, however, the user must also estimate the baseline model with the number of iterations fixed at zero, using the final parameter estimates from M_0 as starting values (termed "model M_{10}"). As with the original scaled difference test, the new test requires the user to compute the scaling correction factor(c) for model M_0 by dividing the proper chi-square value by the SB chi-square value for this model. With the new-scaled difference test, the user also computes c for model M_{10} by dividing the proper chi-square value for model M_{10} by the SB chi-square value for model M_{10}. One then uses c for model M_{10} in place of c for model M_1, to compute the correction factor for the new-scaled difference test (c_d).

To conduct the new-scaled difference test, one follows the same computational steps as with the original scaled difference test, except that one replaces the scaling correction

factor (c) for model M_1 in the denominator with the scaling correction factor for model M_{10}. The scaling factor for the new SB scaled difference test (c_d) is thus: ((df for model M_0) x (c for M_0) – (df for model M_1) x (c for M_{10}))/m.

As a result, we create a model setup M_{10} that contains the parameterization of M_1 with start values taken from the output of model M_0. Model M_{10} is run with zero iterations, so that the parameter values do not change before output including test statistics is produced. The new method gives the following result:

$$T^{(10)}=729.411,\ \overline{T}^{(10)}=525.3,\ r_1=276,\ \hat{c}^{(10)}=1.39,$$

where, as expected, $T^{(10)}=T_0$ as reported above (i.e., the ML statistics are identical), and the value $\hat{c}^{10}$ is hand-computed. Next, we can compute:

$$\hat{c}_d^{(10)}=(r_0\hat{c_0}-r_1\hat{c}^{(10)})/m=[(278)(1.40)-(276)(1.39)]/2=2.78,$$

which, in contrast to the Satorra and Bentler (2001) computations, is positive. Finally, we can compute the proposed new SB corrected chi-square statistic as

$$\hat{T}_d^{(10)}=(T_0-T_1)/\hat{c}_d^{(10)}=4.55/2.78=\mathbf{1.63},$$

which can be referred to a χ^2 variety for evaluation. The results of a χ^2 difference test suggested that there is no significant difference between model M_0 and model M_1 (Chi-square difference = 1.63, df = 2, p = .44). Therefore, the theoretical model **(**M_1) is retained.

3.5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to generate insights into the nature of stimuli that evokes mental simulation, including social pictures and social instructions to imagine, as well

as to explore the relationship between mental simulation and the two dimensions of destination image, cognitive and affective. The overarching goal was to see whether mental simulation evoked through the stimuli discussed above, induce to future behavioral intentions to potential tourists.

Prior research has found that mental simulation can be evoked by various external advertising stimuli (Lutz and Lutz, 1977; MacInnis and Price, 1987; Bone and Ellen, 1992; Babin and Burns, 1997; Miller and Marks, 1997). Most of this research has focused on print advertising and has usually only included one type of stimulus, which does not allow for interaction effects to be tested. Recently, Lee and Gretzel (2012) have contributed to mental simulation research by simultaneously testing three different stimuli in the context of a Website (pictures, narratives and sound). Their results indicated that only pictures significantly affected mental simulation .In addition, in the tourism field very little research has been conducted on the effects of features (Lee and Gretzel, 2008) and particularly on pictures included in destination Websites (Jeong and Choi, 2004). Thus, the findings certainly contribute to this body of literature as well.

Specifically, although the effects of different stimuli have been studied in the past, our research contributes to knowledge in several ways. We examined social pictures instead of simply pictures. Our research demonstrates that social pictures stimulate mental simulation. The result is consistent with existing research (Starch, 1966; Shepard, 1967; Paivio, 1971; Rossiter, 1978; Hirschman and Solomon, 1984; Kisielius and Sternthal, 1984; Babin *et al.,* 1992) that finds pictures to more efficiently evoke mental simulation than other stimuli. Whereas pictures might be considered subtle cues for enhancing mental simulation, social pictures further stimulate imagery on consumers, and this difference should be highlighted. In addition, the study extend the results obtained for

social instructions to imagine to the tourism industry. Prior non-consumer based research has shown that explicit instructions to imagine affect memory and attitudes (Lutz and Lutz, 1978; Babin *et al*., 1992, 1997). In our study, we adapted social instructions to imagine to a real sun-and-sand destination. Our research contributes to the knowledge base by demonstrating that social instructions to imagine stimulate mental simulation. Therefore, it provides a reason why social instructions affected memory and attitudes in previous studies. Mental simulation may be enhanced when social instructions are provided stimulating the formation of more favourable attitudes and reinforcing memory processes. Moreover, these findings make a unique and valuable contribution to the existing tourism literature by addressing the need for more clarification regarding the effectiveness of various external stimuli in evoking mental simulation among potential tourism consumers.

Mental simulation can offer a positive sensory and emotional experience that can substitute, enhance or supplement consumption (MacInnis and Price, 1987). The most important finding of the study is that mental simulation leads to a positive affective image rather than to a cognitive image. In our study, mental simulation was stimulated by both pictures and instructions to imagine. This issue had not been addressed in the context of tourism nor in the context of online information processing. In the present study, mental simulation was confirmed as an important mediator of persuasive communication in the context of travel planning.

Regarding the relationships between the dimensions of image, as discussed in the previous chapter, the notion that overall destination image consists of cognitive and affective image components was confirmed in this study. Although analytically the current study's empirical findings confirm results already extant in the tourism

literature, one notable merit of this study lies in its observation that the relationships and parameters of destination image hold in an integrated model. On the other hand, in tourism literature, affective image was reported to mediate the indirect effect of cognitive image on overall destination image (Stern and Krakover, 1993; Baloglu, 1999; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a, 1999b; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Lin *et al.*, 2007; Wang and Hsu, 2010). With regard to the relationships between cognitive and affective image destination we found the opposite to what previous image literature holds, as results indicated that the affective image precedes the cognitive image. Once feelings have been registered, the initial affective response will lead to the subsequent thought generation through automatic and controlled processes (Pham *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, the initial affective response will take the subject to retrieve congruent material with this affect (Blaney, 1986) to check, with the previous knowledge stored in his/her memory, whether the affective responses are suitable.

Results on mental simulation are the more interesting of the study developed. Previous research has shown it plays an important role in remembered consumption and intention to repurchase (MacInnis and Price, 1987). In this study, mental simulation plays a key role in the proposed model. It not only leads to a positive affective image, but also affects directly to the behavioral intentions of future tourists. Consequently, more emphasis needs to be placed on studying mental simulation in the context of tourism marketing and travel decision-making.

In addition, our findings may be generalizable not only to tourism products but also to experiential products, that is, products consumers choose, buy and use solely to experience and enjoy (Cooper-Martin, 1992). Finally, online environments serve themselves of the power of pictures and text to persuade consumers and therefore the

study developed may be specially interesting for online marketers as it gives them several ideas about how to affectively stimulate imagery and future intentions on consumers.

3.5.1 Managerial implications

Tourism destinations today are facing fierce competition and the challenges are growing yearly (Chi and Qu, 2008). Therefore, it is essential to gain a better understanding of what drives tourist behaviors. The major findings of this study offer meaningful implications to tourism practitioners particularly in the context of sun-and-sand destinations.

Our findings suggest that mental simulation enhances the availability of cues present in the simulated context, enhancing the extent to which people can subsequently bring to mind a relevant event, issue, person, etc. (Sherman and Anderson, 1987). Hirschman and Holbrook (1982, p. 92) emphasize the importance of multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of experiential or hedonic products such as tourism. Yet, the way the tourism industry projects images of its tourism product offering, such as on destination marketing websites (Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2003), is still "*focusing on communicating lists comprised of functional attributes such as price, distances and room availability. The design is based on a model of a rational and information seeking consumer which often results in simple activity based descriptions that reflect the supply side . . . rather that an actual consumer's perceptions of tourism experiences. It is argued that this lack of an experiential mindset within the tourism industry is due largely to a lack of understanding of the nature of tourism experiences*". (p. 50).

The current study emphasizes the importance of social pictures. While many tourism marketers intuitively know that they may be important, this study demonstrates that

they can make a significant difference; thus, decisions to place social pictures on Websites need to be made with an understanding that those changes will positively affect destination image of future potential tourists though mental simulation.

This study provides tourism marketers with valuable information regarding the internal stimulus often referred to by consumers as an information source when considering hedonic or experiential purchases. Such research has several implications for the tourism industry's marketing professionals. First, these findings can assist tourism marketers to better understand how certain stimuli are processed mentally by customers and therefore improve their ability in targeting and capturing their desired audiences (Burns *et al.,* 1993). Second, knowledge of such an area can also assist the industry's marketing professionals to overcome the issue of intangibility associated with the tourism product as they become more informed of the pictures and instructions to imagine that can be used to evoke imaginary consumption experiences among their potential customers. Third, previous research suggests that the successful evocation of mental simulation may reduce the time in which the consumer makes his / her decision (Etzioni, 1988). In general, should a tourism marketer have an understanding of the usage and effectiveness of these types of stimuli, the more likely they are to sell their destination.

Creating and managing an attractive image in target customers' minds is an important key to sustainable success for all businesses, and this is particularly true for tourism destinations because a positive image helps position the destination in relation to its competitors. As prior research suggest (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999b), generating a positive holistic image among potential visitors may be a very important process through which destination managers can generate demand and it is necessary to identify

the roles of cognitive and affective components of destinations image in order to accurately implement the most effective positioning strategies (Hu and Ritchie, 1993; Pike and Ryan, 2004). In this sense, this study has shown that stimulating mental simulation very much contributes to creating a favorable affective image of the destination.

3.5.2 Research limitations and suggestions for future research

Our research had several limitations. First, it was a single laboratory experiment, and replications and/or extensions are needed before strategic implications can be based on a solid foundation of empirical evidence. Second, while the manipulations were extensively pre-tested there always remains the question of whether they were strong enough. Third, using just a sun-and-sand destination for this experiment may constrain the generalizability of the results found in this study. The use of websites for a broader array of tourism products such as hotels, events and other destinations, may generate different results in terms of mental simulation as a key mediator in the proposed model. Fourth, as it is typical for experiments, the context was artificially created and did not represent a truly real travel-planning scenario, which can influence motivations to process the information.

Moreover, the close connection between actual and simulated product experience provides rich avenues for future research. Much research remains to be done on mental simulation within the realm of consumer behavior. Future research in this area should be extended to include a greater variety of stimuli that evoke the mental simulation. For example, presenting pictures with narration in the form of audio instead of narrative text, or videos that combine moving pictures with narrative and sound may result in a

different level or effects of mental simulation. Also, varying the length of the narratives and the type and quality of pictures and sound might produce different results.

Several issues need to be discussed with regard to the text and pictures manipulation. Some individuals were exposed only to the image, so that individuals exposed to image more instructions have more information. The proposed structural model showed that both the picture and the instructions to imagine, significantly affected mental simulation, but indicated a small-standardized coefficient (β_1 = .12, β_2 = .18, respectively), which means that both the pictures and the instructions to imagine had a small influence on mental simulation. Previous research has found that the proper mixture of sensory information presented on Websites can strongly evoke mental simulation, which can greatly influence consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions (Miller *et al.,* 2000; Schlosser, 2003; Lee *et al.,* 2010). Another aspect that might have to be considered is the length of the text as it was rather short to avoid burdening the study subjects. In real trip planning contexts, individuals are highly motivated to process information and will probably consume more text, which might make effects more visible.

Furthermore, the processing of visual and verbal information differs in fundamental ways. These differences exist both at the time the information is received and comprehended and later, when the information is used as a basis for judgments and decisions. Moreover, the effects are not independent. Information that is conveyed in pictures can be encoded semantically, and verbally presented information can elicit visual images. When both types of information are presented, their combined effects depend in part on the ease with which the different processes can be applied (Wyer *et al.,* 2008). They also depend on situational, individual and informational differences in

the disposition to use visual imagery. Considering that in our study the interaction effect is not significant, future studies would need to consider all this. A clear theoretical formulation of the combined influence of visual and verbal information on information processing has yet to be developed.

In summary, this research has not only contributed to the academic body of literature surrounding the consumer behavior discipline, it has also addressed a specific knowledge gap that existed within the destination choice literature. This research has provided those with an interest in tourism marketing communications with an explanation about mental simulation processing on the formation of a destination image and how best to evoke such mental simulation via social pictures and social instructions to imagine in order to be more effective when marketing tourism destinations.

APPENDIX 1

Experimental conditions

Appendix 1: Experimental conditions

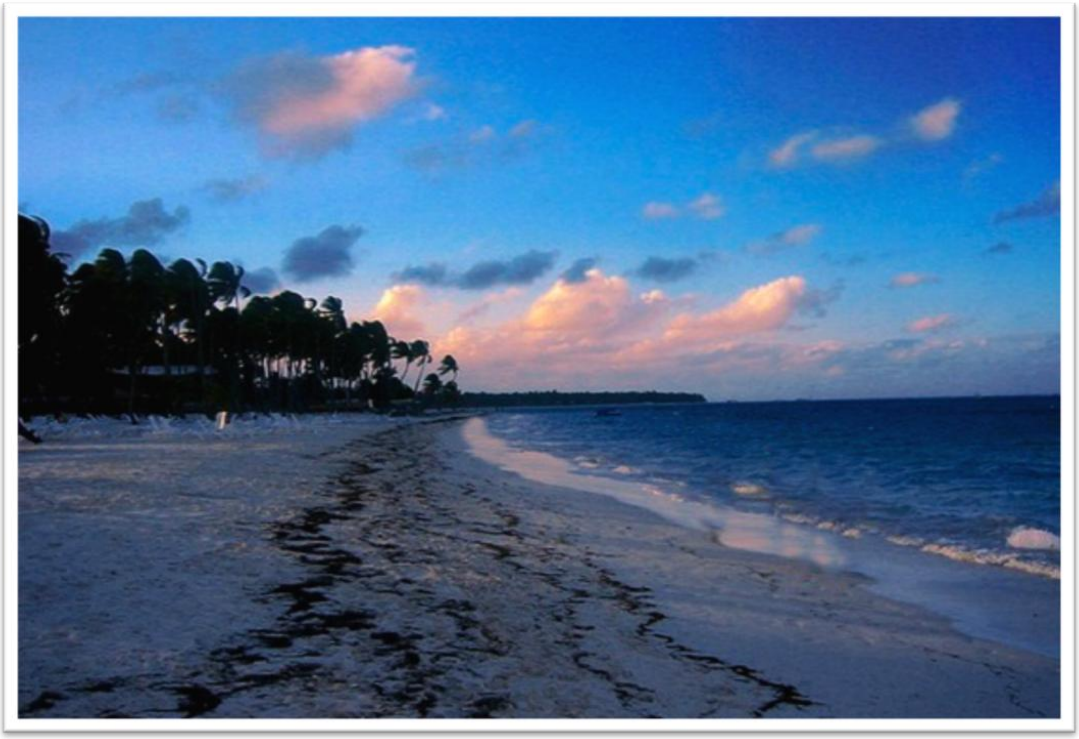
EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION 1: SOCIAL PICTURE AND SOCIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO IMAGINE

¿TE GUSTA LA IDEA?

Ahora tómate unos segundos para imaginarte **con tus amigos o con tu pareja** en ese lugar disfrutando de las playas de la isla, de sus paisajes y de sus bosques. Y, además, imagínate **conociendo a gente en Córcega**. Es un lugar lleno de posibilidades para encontrar relax y mucha diversión. Lo ideal para unas vacaciones perfectas.

EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION 2: NON-SOCIAL PICTURE AND SOCIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO IMAGINE

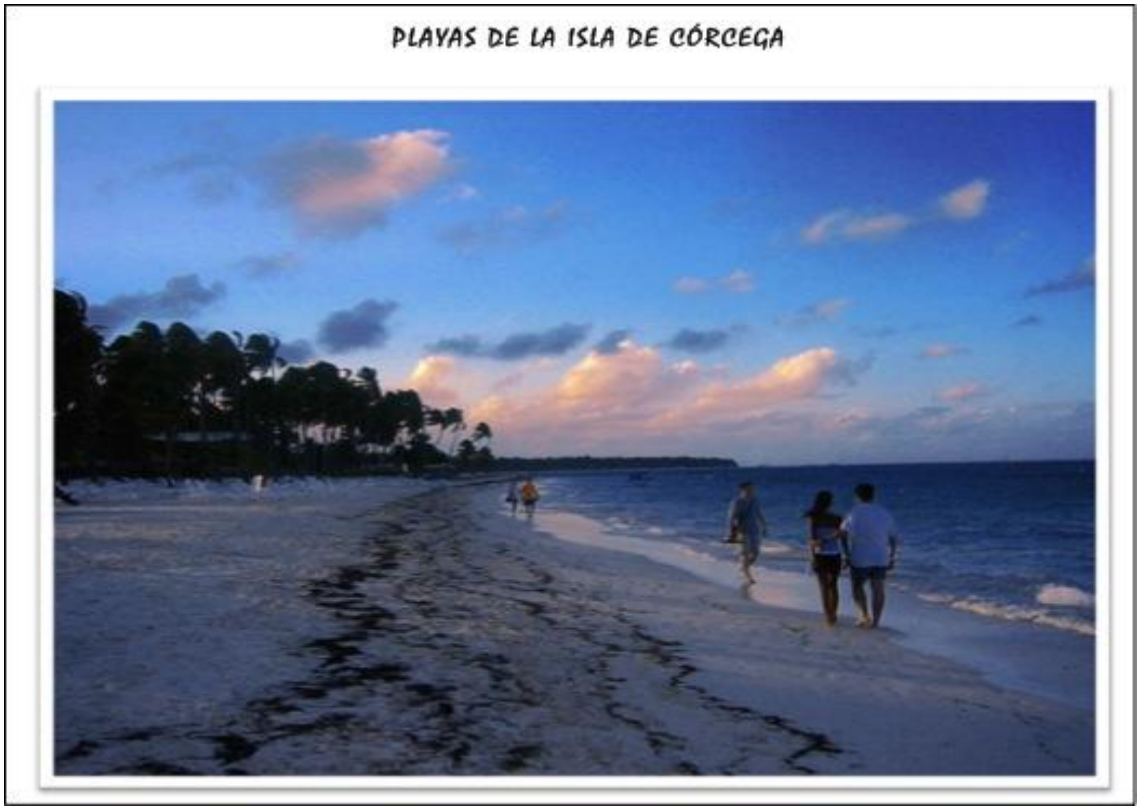
PLAYAS DE LA ISLA DE CÓRCEGA



¿TE GUSTA LA IDEA?

Ahora tómate unos segundos para imaginarte **con tus amigos o con tu pareja** en ese lugar disfrutando de las playas de la isla, de sus paisajes y de sus bosques. Y, además, imagínate **conociendo a gente en Córcega**. Es un lugar lleno de posibilidades para encontrar relax y mucha diversión. Lo ideal para unas vacaciones perfectas.

EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION 3: SOCIAL PICTURE ONLY WITHOUT SOCIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO IMAGINE

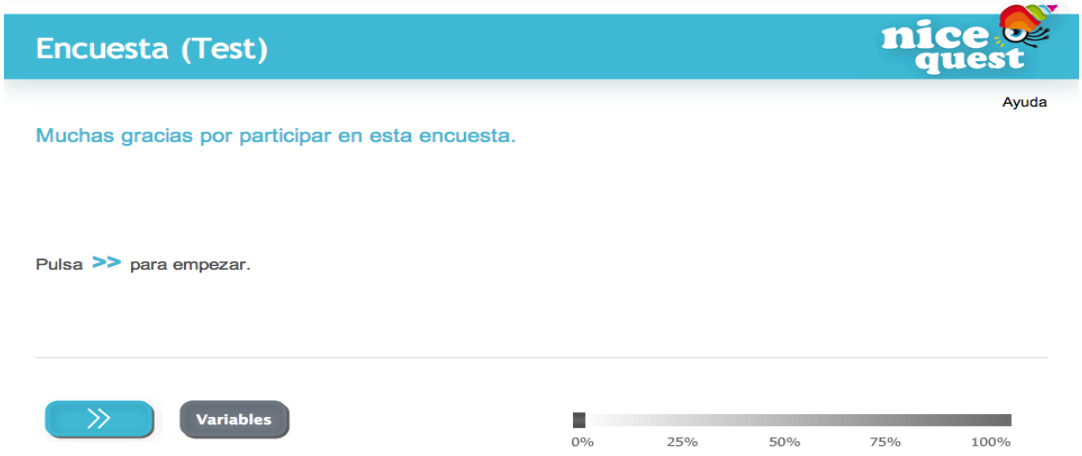


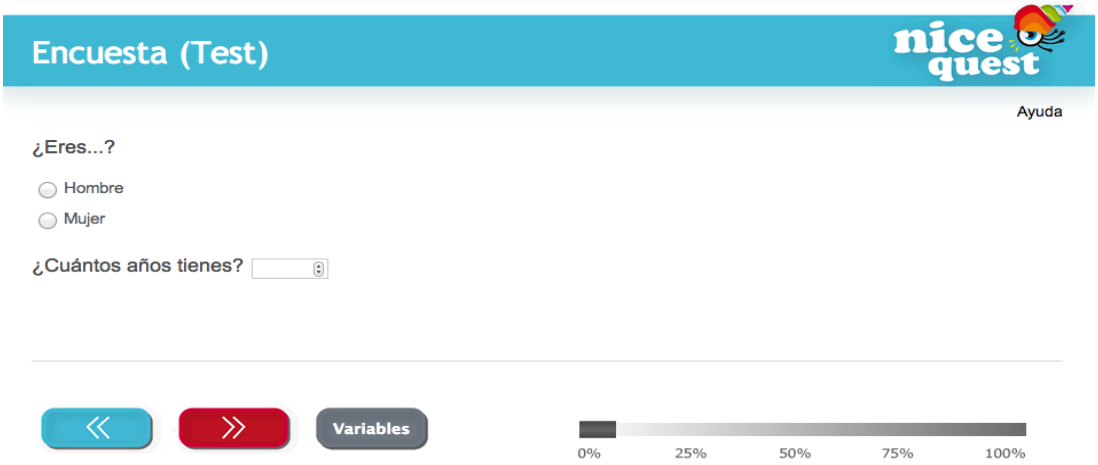
EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION 4: NON-SOCIAL PICTURE ONLY WITHOUT SOCIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO IMAGINE

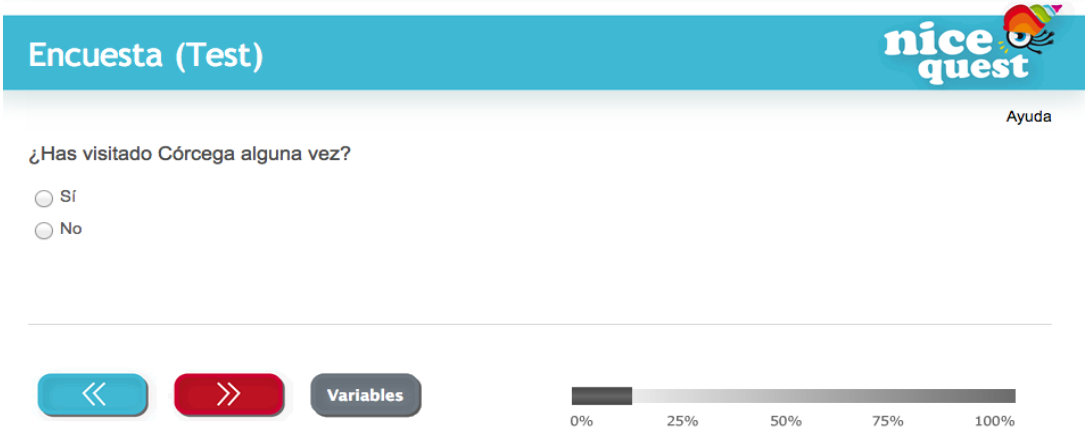
APPENDIX 2

Online questionnaire

Appendix 2: Online questionnaire







Encuesta (Test)

Ayuda

Ponte en la situación de que estás buscando información para la planificación de tus próximas vacaciones y te encuentras con la siguiente información sobre la isla de Córcega.

Clica >> para continuar.

<< >> Variables

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Encuesta (Test)

Ayuda

Observa la siguiente imagen durante unos segundos. En breve aparecerá el botón para continuar.

Encuesta (Test)

Ayuda

¿Te gusta la idea?

Ahora tomate unos segundos para imaginarte con tus amigos o con tu pareja en ese lugar disfrutando de las playas de la isla, de sus paisajes y de sus bosques. Y, además, imagínate conociendo a gente en Córcega. Es un lugar lleno de posibilidades para encontrar relax y mucha diversión. Lo ideal para unas vacaciones perfectas.

<< Variables

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

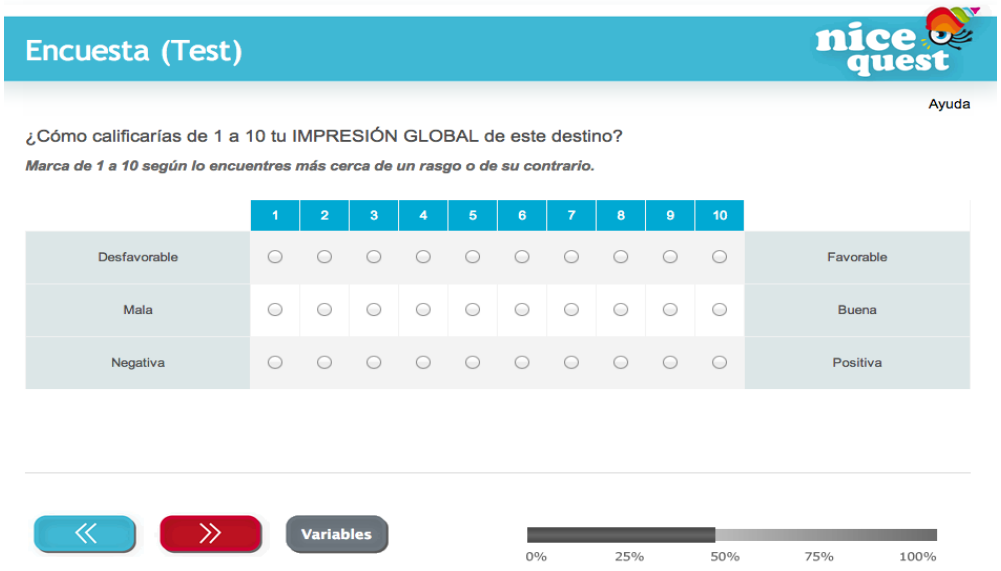
Encuesta (Test)

Ayuda

Una vez visto lo anterior, consideras que Córcega como destino turístico es…

Marca de 1 a 10 según lo encuentres más cerca de un rasgo o de su contrario.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Estresante	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Relajante
Aburrido	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Divertido
Deprimente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Excitante
Desagradable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Agradable
De difícil acceso	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	De fácil acceso
Frío	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Amigable
Sucio	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Limpio
Ruidoso	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Tranquilo
Inseguro	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Seguro



Encuesta (Test)

Ayuda

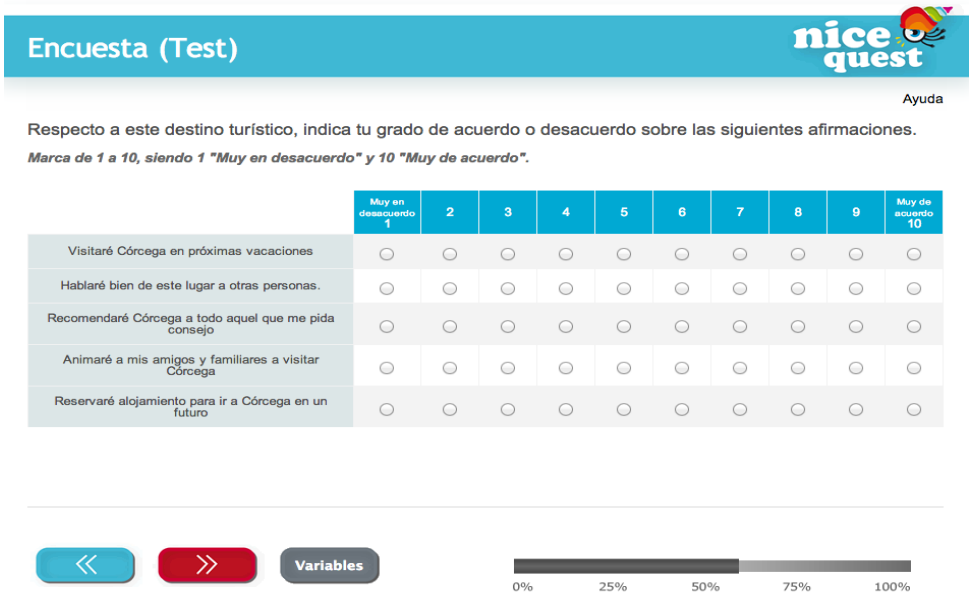
¿Cómo calificarías de 1 a 10 tu IMPRESIÓN GLOBAL de este destino?

Marca de 1 a 10 según lo encuentres más cerca de un rasgo o de su contrario.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Desfavorable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Favorable
Mala	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Buena
Negativa	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Positiva

Variables

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%



Encuesta (Test)

Ayuda

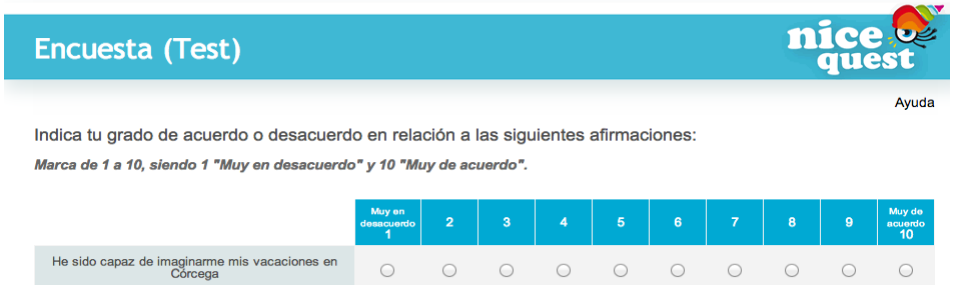
Respecto a este destino turístico, indica tu grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo sobre las siguientes afirmaciones.

Marca de 1 a 10, siendo 1 "Muy en desacuerdo" y 10 "Muy de acuerdo".

	Muy en desacuerdo 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Muy de acuerdo 10
Visitaré Córcega en próximas vacaciones	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hablaré bien de este lugar a otras personas.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Recomendaré Córcega a todo aquel que me pida consejo	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Animaré a mis amigos y familiares a visitar Córcega	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reservaré alojamiento para ir a Córcega en un futuro	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Variables

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%



Encuesta (Test)

Ayuda

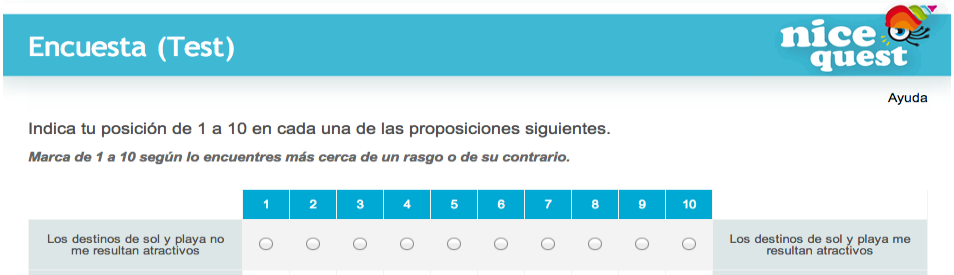
Indica tu grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo en relación a las siguientes afirmaciones:

Marca de 1 a 10, siendo 1 "Muy en desacuerdo" y 10 "Muy de acuerdo".

	Muy en desacuerdo 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Muy de acuerdo 10
He sido capaz de imaginarme mis vacaciones en Córcega	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Me he imaginado yendo a Córcega	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Me he imaginado a mí mismo en Córcega	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Variables

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%



Encuesta (Test)

Ayuda

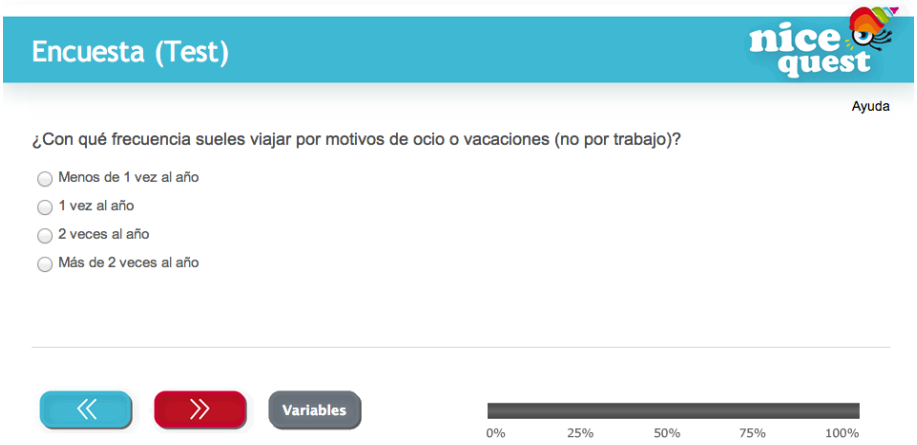
Indica tu posición de 1 a 10 en cada una de las proposiciones siguientes.

Marca de 1 a 10 según lo encuentres más cerca de un rasgo o de su contrario.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Los destinos de sol y playa no me resultan atractivos	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Los destinos de sol y playa me resultan atractivos
Los destinos de sol y playa no me gustan	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Los destinos de sol y playa me gustan
Estos destinos no me agradan	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Estos destinos me agradan

Variables

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%


Encuesta (Test)
nice quest
Ayuda
¿Con qué frecuencia sueles viajar por motivos de ocio o vacaciones (no por trabajo)?
Menos de 1 vez al año
1 vez al año
2 veces al año
Más de 2 veces al año
Variables
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%


Encuesta (Test)
nice quest
Ayuda
¿Cuáles suelen ser principalmente tus destinos en tus viajes de ocio o vacaciones?
Nacionales
Internacionales
Ambos destinos por igual
Variables
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%


Encuesta (Test)
nice quest
Ayuda
Muchas gracias por tu participación.
Haz clic en >> para obtener tus puntos-caracola.
Variables
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%

CHAPTER 4

Social Presence and vividness as antecedents of mental simulation: Creating virtual experience through a promotional video

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Virtual experiences have started to play a significant role in marketing and promotion of the tourism industry (Wan *et al*., 2007). Tourism products are unique, complex, and experiential, making it difficult to effectively help tourists form concrete expectations and reach informed decisions. Thus, it is important for tourism marketers to understand how customers make sense of tourism products and create and attach self- relevant meanings to them (Schmitt, 1999).

New information and communication technologies are being more and more used in supporting tourism-related experiences (Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003). A number of emerging technologies including virtual reality, simulation rides, video conferencing, home theater, and high definition television are designed to provide media users with an illusion that a mediated experience is not really mediated (Lombard and Ditton, 1997; Riva *et al.*, 2003). Specifically, destination-marketing organizations provide features such as images, videos, podcasts, and blogs on their websites to better support tourists. These advances allow people to benefit from being able to use multimedia features including text, images, video streaming, and virtual reality to enhance and add value to their tourism experiences. Particularly in the anticipatory of experience, videos containing ‘‘foreign’’ landscapes and attractions enable viewers to access and experience the virtual gaze on tourist places (Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009).

Riegelsberger *et al.* (2001, 2003) recommend virtual re-embedding in the Web environment to incorporate social cues in online design (such as photos, video, text or speech). Because a lack of the ‘‘human touch’’ or presence may constitute a barrier for at least some consumers to trust online merchants (Riegelsberger and Sasse, 2002), several researchers have investigated the possibility of bringing consumer online

experiences closer to interpersonal, face-to-face level interactions. This approach has been referred to as ‘‘virtual re-embedding’’ (Riegelsberger and Sasse, 2002; Steinbruck *et al.,* 2002). Steinbrück *et al.* (2002) confirm that virtual re-embedding effectively increases online trust. Specifically, they found that photographs help create social presence, and bring the virtual interaction closer to a face-to-face communication. Moreover, it may provoke some form of social representation of the experience with other people.

The concept of social presence, simply understood as the feeling of being ‘‘with’’ another mediated being, has become a major concern among developers of new media technology because it is believed to enhance the effectiveness of mediated interpersonal and group interactions (Biocca *et al*., 2003). Because high levels of social presence have the ability to improve social exchanges and strengthen source cue effects (Lombard and Ditton, 1997; Skalski and Tamborini, 2004), technology developers are interested in identifying features that increase the potential for social presence. The work of Short *et al.* (1976) on social presence has been adopted by scholars interested in comparing the appropriateness of different forms of media to implements social interaction (Rice, 1993; Walther, 1996). Ultimately, it is concerned with the best ways to use media for social purposes. Therefore, the area of social presence, particularly in the online environment communication, invites to further inquiry in the tourism literature.

On the other hand, virtual experiences can be also used to approximate vividness through a real-time contact with a destination by technological applications (Hyun *et al.,* 2009). Previous research has showed that vivid pictures have characteristics resembling the real setting (clear, bright, sharp, detailed and lively) (McKelvie, 1995)

which, in turn, leads to heightened intentions (Marks, 1972). Both social presence and vividness may stimulate mental simulation in potential tourists.

Previous research has shown that several features of virtual environment may arouse mental simulation (Li *et al.,* 2001). Such mental simulation makes the environment seem more “real" (Taylor, 2002; Nowak and Biocca, 2003). It is assumed that having run a simulation-like scenario in one’s mind is important in the process of destination decision making. Pre-trip consumption visions of vacation sites play a significant role in travel information search and decision- making (Fridgen, 1984). In addition, imagining destinations creates product interest (Goossens, 2003).

However, although visual images can be dominant in virtual environments (Miller and Stoica, 2004), auditory stimuli can also affect perceived properties of the virtual environment (Biocca *et al*., 2001). In general, literature on virtual experience suggests a strong link between multimedia features, mental simulation, and perceptions of directly experiencing an environment (Lee *et al*., 2010). The question is whether such pre-experiences will have important implications for destination image formation processes.

This chapter focuses on the extent to which promotional videos may represent the pre-experience of a destination through mental simulation. Consequently, the purpose is to investigate how the social presence and the vividness of a promotional video about a destination impact on receiver’s mental simulation, which, in turn, affects the dimensions of destination image. Moreover, the relationships of overall destination image and mental simulation with behavioral intentions will be also evaluated. The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows. First, we review the literature and outline our theoretical framework. Hypotheses are then justified and presented. After

this, research methodology and results are described. Finally, the last section concludes with a discussion of the findings, implications, and suggestions for further research.

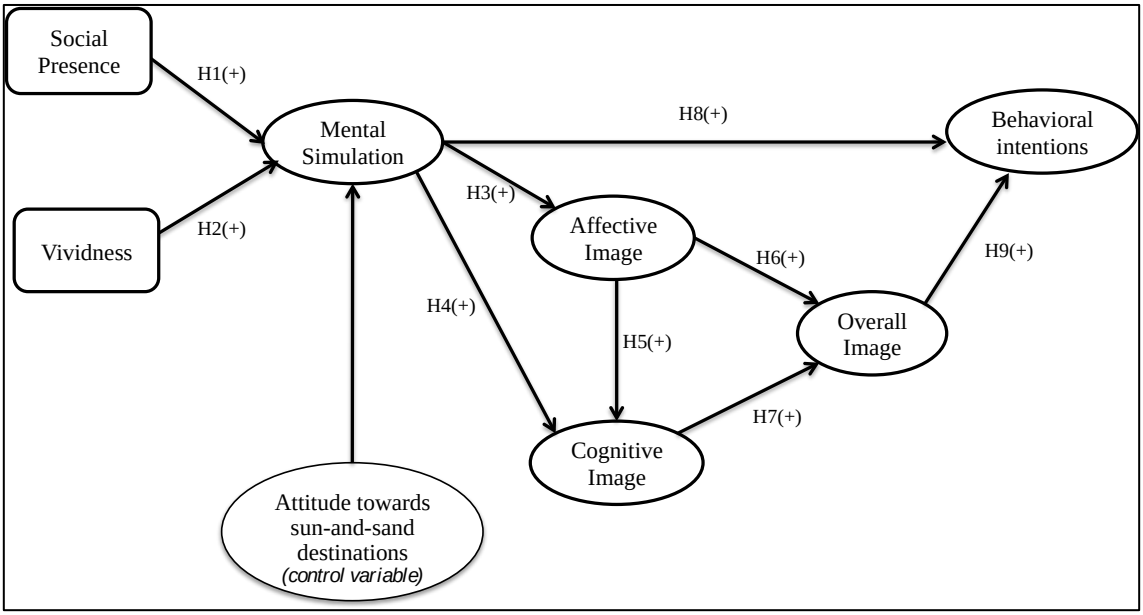
4.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Virtual reality offers numerous opportunities to both tourism researchers and professionals (Guttentag, 2010). In this study, we investigate several factors that may impact on the ease with which consumers can imagine the tourism experience and, consequently, influence their future destination preferences. The proposed research model is shown in Figure 1. First, we examine whether the social presence transmitted through a promotional video leads the individual to greater mental simulation. Then we also analyze the vividness of the promotional video about a destination as an external factor that can impact on mental simulation (Hypotheses H1 and H2). Figure 1 also includes the effect of attitude towards sun-and-sand destinations on mental simulation as a control variable. Including this variable as an additional predictor of mental simulation allows us to determine whether the two factors, social presence and vividness, evoked by the promotional video have a significant impact on mental simulation after accounting for the variance explained by this control variable.

Because of the need to study how destination image is created before visiting the destination, we propose that mental simulation will directly influence on the affective and cognitive dimensions of image towards the destination (Hypotheses H3 and H4). As in chapter three, relationships about the dimensions of destination image (affective, cognitive and overall) are also tested (Hypotheses H5, H6 and H7). Finally, in order to predict tourists' behavioral intentions, we formulate Hypotheses H8 and H9, where we firstly account for the relationship between mental simulation and behavioral intentions

and, secondly, between overall image and behavioral intentions. In what follows, the rationale for each hypothesis is provided.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



4.2.1 Virtual reality experiences in tourism

Because of the development of high technology and the convenience of the Internet, many companies have begun to use virtual experiences in product marketing and promotion (Ryan, 2001). They have created virtual experience environments that will enable consumers to have more interaction with the products and thereby create a greater and more lasting impression. Due to the rapid development of applications for the computer and Internet, virtual experience has been adopted to promote travel destinations (Wan *et al*., 2007).

Virtual experience (VE) uses virtual reality (VR) technology to enable online customers to feel, touch, and try simulations of products or services through their computers (Ryan, 2001). Li *et al*. (2001) have contended that VE resembles direct (in-store) product experience, insofar as both are interactive in nature; however, it differs from

direct product experience because it generates a sense of being with products, indirectly through a communication medium (Kumar and Benbasat, 2002).

The tourism product is based on a holiday experiences substantially different from other products as facilitated by numerous suppliers (Gnoth, 2002). Travel is increasingly more about experiences, fulfillment and rejuvenation than about places and things (King, 2002). Moreover, the tourism product is generally perceived as experientially demanding (Bei *et al*., 2004; Dolnicar, 2005). Given its specific nature, literature on experiential products is applicable for tourism.

Experiential product attributes can be accessed only through the limited use of the product (Kempf and Smith, 1998). Products dominated by experiential attributes are referred to as experience products and are best evaluated by consumers through first-hand experience (Smith and Swinyard, 1982). Such requirement makes it difficult for one to 'pre-immerse a trial', because one can personally experience a destination only after embarking the trip and arriving at the destination.

To reduce the perceived risks and difficulties, travelers use various information sources, such as TV, brochures, newspapers, word-of-mouth, and previous vacation experiences. This implies that travelers seek information that vividly describes a destination (Nelson *et al.,* 2006) and are highly interactive to virtually experience the destination. This sub-optimal reality is at least close to a direct experience before the trip actually takes place. Cho *et al*. (2002) defined virtual experience as the experience in the virtual environment using a computer-mediated environment and is based upon 'the extent to which consumers feel their existence in the virtual space' (Shih, 1998, p. 658). An increasing number of tourism services (e.g., hotels, exhibitions, and travel destinations) provide virtual experiences, such as panoramic views, animation, and interactive photos, in

order to get a direct experience without actually traveling to the destination (Wan *et al*., 2007). Numerous researchers have advocated the incorporation of such interactive features into tourism websites (Cho *et al*., 2002; Doolin *et al*., 2002; Fotakis and Economides, 2008) and these recommendations are supported by evidence from various studies. For example, Wan *et al*. (2007) found that virtual experiences provided more effective advertising than brochures for both theme parks and natural parks. Also, Lee and Oh (2007) found that a 'virtual tour' of panoramic photos on a hotel website may offer psychological relief to individuals feeling travel anxiety. Moreover, findings that sites featured in movies experience increased tourism (Riley and Van Doren, 1992; Tooke and Baker, 1996), and visiting a museum's website can increase one's interest in visiting the real museum (Thomas and Carey, 2005), serve as indirect evidence that visiting tourism destinations in VR may encourage real visitation.

Virtual experiences may lead the individual to a feeling of presence. Heeter (1992) describes three distinct types of presence that contribute to the experience of "being there": personal presence, social presence, and environmental presence. Personal presence is defined by this author as the extent to which and the reasons why you feel like you are in a virtual world. Social presence is the extent to which other beings (living or synthetic) also exist in the world and appear to react to you. Finally, environmental presence is the extent to which the environment itself appears to know that you are there and to react to you. Since this thesis is framed under the theory of social representations discussed in Chapter 1, in this chapter we will focus only on the social presence.

4.2.2 Social presence and the web experience

Social presence theory (Short *et al*., 1976) describes how social context affects medium use. High social presence is typically found in face-to-face communication whereas low social presence is often found in e-mail, and paper-based mail. Social presence is therefore influenced by channel attributes of communication media.

Social presence has been frequently used to evaluate people's ability to connect via telecommunication systems (Short *et al*., 1976; Rice, 1993; Walther, 1996). Short *et al*., (1976) are credited with giving broad theoretical currency to the concept of social presence. They defined social presence as "the degree of salience of the other person in the interaction and the consequent salience of the interpersonal relationships" (p. 65). However, their measures of social presence have been shown to relate more to the user's perception of a medium's ability to provide salience of another as opposed to measuring the actual perceived salience of another person (Nowak, 2001).

In contrast, Biocca (1997) defined perception of social presence as the degree to which a user feels access to the intelligence, intentions, and sensory impressions of another. Social presence occurs when users feel that a form, behavior, or sensory experience indicates the presence of another intelligence. The perception of the other is the empathetic simulation of internal states of another "if we were there in the space" over there (Biocca, 1997). This second perspective of the concept has more to do with the original conceptualization of social presence. Originally, social presence was defined as the feeling that communication exchanges are sociable, warm, personal, sensitive, and active or the degree to which a medium is perceived as conveying the presence of the communicating participants (Short *et al*., 1976).

Recent research has offered the following interpretations of the concept: “the feeling that others are involved in the communication process” (Whiteman, 2002, p. 6); “the degree to which a person feels ‘socially present’” (Leh, 2001, p. 110); “the degree of person-to-person awareness” (Tu, 2000, p. 1662); “the sense of being present in a social encounter with another person” (McLellan, 1999, p. 40), and “the degree to which participants are able to project themselves affectively within the medium” (Garrison, 1997, p. 6). Similar to this last contribution and to the original contribution of social presence, in this chapter, we assume that social presence refers to perceptions that the medium or the message has human contact, and is personal, sociable, warm, and sensitive (Gefen and Straub, 2003).

Social presence build trust through the perception that the vendor is displaying through a promotional video a sense of personal, sociable, and sensitive human contact (Gefen and Straub, 2004). Social presence also facilitate systematic processing, in the form of message processing. As suggested by Huang (1999), when media users become more involved in a media experience, they should become motivated to pay more attention to message arguments, which is symptomatic of systematic processing. Skalski and Tamborini (2004) suggest that interactive media and social presence may affect processing, given the potential for sources that seem ‘‘present’’ to make receivers attend more to the source and the message than they would during passive media experiences. In fact, Sicilia et al. (2005) demonstrates that interactivity increased the level of consumers’ information processing. Communication media higher in social presence tend to be preferred in communications settings where the task is ambiguous and uncertain (Straub and Karahanna, 1998). As a summary, promoting people’s perception of social presence in media environments has become an important issue.

The need to create a personal connection with the message is the foundation of social presence. In online environments, social presence gives customers a sense of personal connection with the source and creates a belief that the source is more sensitive to their needs, resulting in higher social presence of the source (Fogg, 2003). For example, an e-Commerce website typically involves no actual interaction with other people, which does not mean, however, that social presence cannot be embedded in a website (Gefen and Straub, 2004). If photos of people can convey a sense of personal, sociable and sensitive human contact, so too should multimedia sources. This antecedent is of particular interest assuming that the perception of social presence can still be created despite the lack of actual human contact. Another way in which this is done in many online materials is through adding a "social touch" to the interaction.

Prior research has indicated that social presence could increase interactions and effectiveness in online environments (Yoo and Alavi, 2001). As a result, strengthening social presence not only encourages people's social interactions, it also enhances users' experience and ensures users' future revisits and shopping on the websites (Lingyun and Dong, 2008). Kim and Biocca (1997) found that the sense of being present in a mediated environment has a positive effect on attitude change (e.g., buying intention and confidence in product decision). Latter, Shaffer *et al*. (2000) argued that although the Internet itself should not be considered an object of addiction, it does offer a form of social interaction and power that is rewarding for some users. Moreover, recent research has shown that online materials, by providing support for consumer reviews, can create the feeling of a place where people interact, thus increasing the social presence of the source of information (Dholakia *et al*., 2000).

Social presence implies a psychological connection with the user, who perceives the source of information as ‘‘warm’’, personal, sociable, thus creating a feeling of human contact (Yoo and Alavi, 2001). Factors that contribute to the degree of social presence face-to-face encounter are facial expression, direction of gaze, posture, dress, nonverbal cues, and vocal cues. Perception of social presence, initially seen as an attribute of the medium (Shot *et al*., 1976), varied among users (Perse *et al*., 1992; Gunawardena, 1995; Young, 1999) and should be viewed as a subjective quality, depending on the objective quality of the medium (Walther, 1992). Examples of source features that encourage social presence include socially rich text content, personalized greetings (Gefen and Straub, 2003), human audio (Lombard and Ditton, 1997), or human video (Kumar and Benbasat, 2002). Gefen and Straub (2003) suggest that pictures and text are able to convey personal presence in the same manner, as do personal photographs or letters. Hassanein and Head (2006) showed emotive text and pictures of humans as resulting in higher perceptions of social presence within websites.

Virtual environments have the potential to produce a sense of physical presence, which is identified as the user’s feeling of “being there” in a mediated environment (Heeter 1992; Steuer 1992; Takatalo *et al.,* 2008). Mental simulation in a virtual context refers to feelings of presence in an environment projected through technologies (Sheridan 1992). Specifically, mental simulation is defined as “the subjective experience of being in one place or environment, even when one is physically situated in another” (Witmer and Singer 1998, p. 225).

Social presence has desirable consequences in an online context and can create a sense of warmth and sociability within a source of information (Gefen and Straub, 2003). Social presence is the crucial factor that keeps people interacting in social activities

(Walther, 1992) and tourism is very much a social activity (Brown and Chalmers, 2003). As a result promoting people's perception of social presence in media environments has become an important issue. Past research has confirmed that users' social presence has a positive effect on perceived usefulness in the online shopping environment (Hassanein and Head, 2007).

Mixing that virtual environments offer the potential of mental simulation and the utility of social presence in sources of information, we propose that a high degree of social presence in a promotional video will take the receiver to imagine oneself more on this destination, than a low degree of social presence. Individuals who perceive strong social presence in virtual environment systems become immersed more easily (Cyr *et al*., 2007). When people have a strong feeling of social presence, they are likely to immerse themselves in the environment represented by the medium (Steuer, 1992), which can lead to more compelling online experiences (Novak *et al*., 2000). Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Perceived social presence relates positively to mental simulation of a virtual experience

4.2.3 Vividness

Information is vivid to the extent that it attracts or holds attention and excites the imagination (Nisbett and Ross, 1980). Vividness has been a key focus of research on mental simulation (Marks, 1999). It is defined as "a combination of clarity and liveliness. The more vivid an image the closer it approximates an actual percept" (Marks, 1972, p.83) and according to McKelvie (1995) vivid visual imagery has characteristics resembling the real scenario in that it is generally clear, bright, sharp, detailed and lively. Vividness also means the representational richness of a mediated

environment (Lombard and Ditton, 1997; Steuer, 1992). As virtual experience increases based on the degree to which people are exposed to features that enhance the level of vividness, it is an important factor to take into account within the tourism literature topic.

Vividly presented information has more impact on judgment than does pallid and abstract information (Nisbett and Ross, 1980). Communication modality is one of the major sources of vividness effects (Kisielius and Sternthal, 1986). Even though the effects of vividness on persuasion seem controversial, several researchers show that it has an effect on attitude change (e.g., Andreoli and Worchel, 1978; Chaiken and Eagly, 1983).

Vividness is one feature favoring recall of an event as being real (Gonsalves *et al*., 2004; Johnson, 2006) and emotional images are typically experienced as being more vivid than are neutral images (Bywaters *et al*., 2004). Consequently, it might be expected that more vivid emotional images should be particularly liable to be misremembered as being real events, or even assumed to be valid 'premonitions' of some future event occurring (Holmes and Mathews, 2010).

According to Miller and Stocia (2004), for a pictorial representation of a destination to be effective in evoking this association it must contain vivid information because it evokes concrete mental simulation, is emotionally interesting and stimulates the senses (Nisbett and Ross, 1980). Miller and Stocia (2004) contend that the key process in producing these vivid effects is the mental simulation evoking quality of the information, which has been shown to affect both attitudinal and memory responses to advertising (Burns *et al*., 1993).

In previous studies, vividness has been manipulated using (1) the presence/absence of pictures (Keller and Block 1997; Kisielius and Sternthal, 1984), (2) concrete versus abstract pictures (Babin and Burns, 1997), (3) concrete versus abstract words (Rook, 1987), or (4) narrative versus statistical information (Keller and Block, 1997). Across manipulations, literature has demonstrated that because vivid information stimulates greater generation of mental simulation, it has a positive effect on product/services preferences. To the best of our knowledge, there is no evidence of manipulating vividness through the quality of a promotional video about a destination, although as we discussed in the introduction, a video can provide highly rich multimedia experience (Hyun *et al*., 2009).

Past research has demonstrated that individuals who differ in their imagery abilities are differentially impacted by vivid information (Pham *et al*., 2001). Anderson (1983) argued that increasing the vividness of an imagined scenario enhances behavioral intentions because it represents a strengthening of the memory of the imagined scenario. Previous studies seem to support this reasoning. Mental simulation is more effective when the product was described in a vivid way (Keller and McGill, 1994). High-resolution quality and large image size can elicit more reality and a higher perception of presence (Reeves *et al*., 1993; Bocker and Muhlbach, 1993; Lombard, 1995). Therefore, we expect that when consumers rely on the presented information to generate the virtual experience without vivid cues, they would experience difficulty in generating mental simulation about the destination. Petrova and Cialdini (2005) found that when the product was depicted in a vivid way, the imagination of the product increased. Moreover, previous research suggests that vivid information facilitates memory (Kieras, 1978) and memory very much depends on mental simulation. Thus, we propose:

H2: Perceived vividness relates positively to mental simulation of a virtual experience

When mental simulation is encouraged through vivid product information, it strongly influences consumers' attitudinal judgments (McGill and Anand, 1989). Mental simulation seems to play an important role in information processing (Block, 1981; MacInnis and Price, 1987) and when mental simulation is present, the process is likely to lead to more favorable cognitive responses. Moreover, from an information processing point of view, it is suggested that mental simulation is an anticipating and motivating force that mediates emotional experiences (Goossens, 2000). So, following chapter three, mental simulation achieved through a promotional video as source of social representation, it also acts as a mediator to the cognitive and affective dimensions of destination image. Moreover, a level of vividness increases imagination will be enhanced (Petrova and Cialdini, 2005), and the destination is more likely to be chosen in the future. So, obtaining mental simulation through social presence and vividness of a promotional video may to be also a means of inducing behavioral intentions.

The following hypotheses have already been justified and tested in the previous chapter. For this reason, we do not provide further rationale for these hypotheses but include them in the proposed model, which was represented in Fig. 1.

H3: Mental simulation positively influences the affective dimension of image

H4: Mental simulation positively influences the cognitive dimension of image

H5: The affective dimension of image positively influences the cognitive dimension of image.

H6: The affective dimension of image positively influences the overall destination image

H7: The cognitive dimension of image positively influences the overall destination image

H8: Mental simulation positively influences the behavioral intentions

H9: The overall destination image positively influences the behavioral intentions

4.3 RESEARCH METHOD

We designed an experiment to analyze the effects of social presence and vividness derived from a promotional video, as a means of inducing mental simulation about a tourist destination.

4.3.1 Experimental design and stimulus

The research consists of a 2x2 between-subjects experimental design. Two levels of social presence (social script vs. neutral script) and vividness (high vs. low) were created generating four experimental conditions.

The stimuli for the experiment consisted of a promotional video about the southeastern coast of Spain. Based on the factorial design, four versions of the stimulus material representing two levels of social presence by two levels of vividness were generated. The goal of the experiment was to manipulate social presence and vividness while maintaining other factors constant. To this end, the information content of the stimulus material essentially remained constant throughout all experimental conditions and only social presence and vividness features were allowed to vary.

Social presence was varied by creating two versions of the script. The content of the narrative was the same, but the tone of voice and the personalization were different. The use of voice is a potent social cue and has been shown to elicit different perceptions

(Nass and Steuer, 1993) and to evoke gender stereotypes (Nass and Green, 1993; Nass *et al*., 1994). Voices that sound more human (with higher audio realism and fidelity) enhance the illusion of interaction with a social entity (Lombart and Ditton, 2006). Therefore, for the social script we used a voice with a more human tone and address the message to the listener with terms like you and yours. For the neutral script, the voice was less human and the script was impersonal. It is important to highlight that the same person put his voice to record both videos. The script for each condition was:

> ***Neutral script****: "Coast of southeastern Spain are full of impressive cliffs, heavenly beaches, marshes full of life and yet undiscovered underwater world. Wonderful ports and its gastronomy. So are the beaches of the Southeast, the ideal place to spend a few days relaxing destination." (This text was displayed in the promotional video with a neutral tone of voice).*
>
> ***Social script: "****Be seduced by the coast of southeastern Spain, impressive cliffs, heavenly beaches, marshes full of life and an underwater world that is waiting for you. You will find magnificent ports where you can meet people and share their gastronomy. So are the beaches of the Southeast, your ideal destination to spend a few days relaxing with your family, your friends or your partner." (This text was displayed in the promotional video with a social tone of voice).*

Vividness was varied by manipulating the quality of video image. It has been found that certain colors and quality make images more vivid (Kim, 2010). Therefore, for the high degree of vividness, the quality of image was high, and for the low degree of vividness, the quality of image was reduced using video manipulation software (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Manipulation of vividness

High Vividness

Low Vividness

In order to make sure that these manipulations were reliable and effective, we conducted a pre-test with forty-three undergraduate students. Participants were summoned to the lab in groups of 9 to 11 people in four different sessions, one for each condition. Once they were seated at the computer lab, they saw the video and then

answered the questions about the variables, social presence and vividness. Using the scale means as dependent variables, two separate ANOVAs were conducted to examine the effectiveness of the manipulations. Social presence was successfully manipulated with the use of social vs. neutral scripts ($M_{social\ script}$=5.14, SD=1.98; $M_{neutral\ script}$= 3.73, SD=2.05; F(1,41)= 5.25, p=.027). On the other hand, vividness of video was also successfully manipulated as perceived vividness was higher when quality image was higher than when it was lower ($M_{high\ vividness}$=6.76, SD=2.16; $M_{low\ vividness}$= 4.89, SD=2.61; F(1,41)= 6.54, p=.014). These results reinforce the adequacy of our manipulation.

4.3.2 Data collection and sample

The study was developed through an online panel and the invitation to participate was sent via e-mail. A marketing research firm was hired to assist us with the data collection process. The study was carried out in November 2013. Subjects were informed about the procedure via email. Survey population consisted of individuals between 20 and 50 years old, who had not previously visited the destination and who did not lived in this area. The final sample consisted of 405 panelists. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions. They were instructed to carefully watch the promotional video as if they were looking for information for a vacation. After being exposed to the scenario, they were given an online self-administered questionnaire, which contained the variables of the proposed model.

The sample average age was 36 years old and 51.4% of the participants were female. A demographic profile of the sample is shown in Table 1. This profile was similar among the four experiment conditions.

Table 1. Sample profile

Variable	Percentage (%)
Gender	
Male	48.6 %
Female	51.4 %
Age	
20-29	24.9 %
30-39	37.5 %
40-50	37.5 %

4.3.3 Instrument validation

Existing multi-item scales, adapted to suit the context of the study, were used for the measurement of the constructs. Image scales are based on 10-point semantic differential scales. Affective image was measured by Russel's (1980) four bipolar affective items: "pleasant/ unpleasant," "relaxing/distressing," "arousing/sleepy," and "exciting/gloomy". The use of this type of scale in destination studies has been also reported by other authors (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Walmsley and Young, 1998; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a, b; Baloglu and Mangaloglu, 2001). For the cognitive image dimension, items were borrowed from Ong and Horbunluekit (1997). We used the most applicable items as some of them included adjectives that were not truly bipolar, and some were not really representative of the cognitive image dimension (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Li *et al.*, 2009). The final set of bipolar adjectives retained in this study to capture cognitive image includes "isolated/accessible", "unfriendly/ friendly", "dirty/ clean", "quiet/ noisy" and "unsafe/ safe", the same as used in previous chapters. The respondents were also asked to rate their overall image of the destination through the following bipolar items: "unfavorable/favorable", "bad/good", "negative/positive" (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a). Mental simulation and behavioral intentions were measured on 10-points Likert scales. The three items for mental simulation were adapted from prior research on mental simulation (Bone and Ellen, 1992; Green and Brock 2000; Escalas, 2004). For example, the first item stated "I have

been able to imagine myself being on vacation in the southeastern coast of Spain". Behavioral intentions were measured with five items adapted from Kneesel *et al*. (2010), mainly asking the respondents whether they would recommend the destination to their family and friends and whether they would consider visiting the destination.

Regarding the manipulation check, social presence was measured with a 10-points scale and vividness with a 10-point semantic differential scale. For social presence, we used five items adapted from Gefen and Straub (1997) and Kumar and Benbasat (2006). The first item was: "In the narrative of the video there is a sense of human contact". Vividness was measured through five items adapted from Steuer (1992) and related with the brightness and vividness of colors and graphics, and the quality and resolution of the video.

Individual differences in prior attitudes may influence the size of the imagery effect (Luzt and Luts, 1978). Therefore, in order to control for the possibility of a subject's pre-existing attitude influencing mental simulation, we also incorporated attitudes towards sun-and-sand destinations as a control variable in our research model. Including this construct as an additional predictor of mental simulation allows us to determine whether the hypothesized antecedents have a significant impact on mental simulation after accounting for the variance explained by attitude towards sun-and-sand destinations. We measured this control variable through a 10-points differential semantic scale, composed of three items adapted from previous literature (Mackenzie *et al.*, 1986; Bruner, 1998). Moreover, we measured prior and post attitude toward this particular destination. We used three items borrowed from Mackenzie *et al*. (1986) built on a 10-point semantic differential scale. At the end of the questionnaire, subjects

provided demographic information (gender and age). The questionnaire is included in Appendix 1.

4.4. RESULTS

4.4.1 Manipulation checks

In order to examine the effectiveness of manipulations, the measures of perceived social presence and perceived vividness were used. Both scales were normally distributed and performed quite well with α's of .96 and .95 for the social presence and vividness, respectively. Using the scale means as dependent variables, two separate ANOVAs were conducted to check the effectiveness of the manipulations. Social presence of the promotional video was successfully manipulated ($M_{social\ script}$ =6.02, SD=1.78; $M_{neutral\ script}$ = 4.93, SD=2.21; F(1,403)= 29.92, p=.001). Vividness was also successfully manipulated as perceived vividness was higher when intended ($M_{high\ vividness}$ =7.06, SD=1.64; $M_{low\ vividness}$ =4.84, SD=2.16; F(1,403)=135.16, p=.001). The manipulation checks showed that participants were able to perceive significant differences among the four conditions.

4.4.2 Confirmatory factor analyses: reliability, convergent and discriminant validity

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the maximum likelihood method was conducted by means of EQS (Bentler, 2005) to assess measurement reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity. Raw data screening showed evidence of nonnormal distribution[3] (Mardia's coefficient normalized estimate=104.2) and although other estimation methods have been developed for use when the normality assumption

[3] Bentler (2005) suggested that, in practice, values > 5.00 in the normalized estimate of Mardia coefficient, are clear indicators of a nonnormal distribution. In this case, a statistic of 104.2 clearly suggests non-normality of the sample.

does not hold, the recommendation of Chou *et al*. (1991) and Hu *et al*. (1992) of correcting the statistics rather than using a different model of estimation has been followed. So, robust statistics (Satorra and Bentler, 1988) will be provided.

An initial CFA led to the deletion of item related to the cognitive image dimension (CI1 "isolated/accessible") based on low loading estimate (below .60), patterns of residuals and Lagrange multiplier tests (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hatcher, 1994). The results of the final CFA are reported in Table 3 and shows a very good fit (S-B χ^2 (df=239) = 440.78, p<.01; NNFI= .969; CFI=. 975; IFI= .975; RMSEA= .046). As evidence of convergent validity the CFA results indicate that all items are significantly (p<.01) related to their hypothesized factors, the size of all the standardized loadings are higher than .60 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988) and the average of the item-to-factor loadings are higher than .70 (Hair *et al*., 1998).

Table 3. Internal consistency and convergent validity of the theoretical construct measures

Variable	Indicator	Factor loading	Robust t-value	Loading average	CA	CR	AVE
Mental simulation	MS1	.872***	20.790	.926	.947	.948	.860
	MS2	.965***	27.203				
	MS3	.942***	25.368				
Cognitive Image	CI2	.593***	10.925	.726	.808	.819	.534
	CI3	.815***	17.434				
	CI4	.732***	17.184				
	CI5	.765***	15.346				
Affective image	AI1	.759***	17.750	.787	.863	.867	.621
	AI2	.753***	16.637				
	AI3	.765***	15.491				
	AI4	.869***	21.047				
Overall image	OI1	.959***	23.711	.962	.973	.974	.925
	OI2	.963***	27.436				
	OI3	.963***	27.806				
Behavioral intentions	BI1	.743***	20.421	.863	.934	.938	.756
	BI2	.927***	24.656				
	BI3	.969***	30.605				
	BI4	.952***	27.256				
	BI5	.724***	17.528				
Attitude towards sun-and-sand destinations	AD1	.967***	24.033	.965	.976	.976	.932
	AD2	.958***	23.019				
	AD3	.971***	22.906				
S-B χ^2 (df=239) = 440.78, p<.01; NNFI= .969; CFI=. 975; IFI= .975; RMSEA= .046 n=405							

Note: CA = Cronbach's alpha; CR= Composite reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Reliability of the measures was confirmed with composite reliability (CR) indexes higher than the recommended level of .60 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988) and all average variance extracted values (AVE) higher than the recommended level of .50 (Hair *et al*., 1998). Table 3 also demonstrates the high internal consistency of the constructs. Moreover, in each case, Cronbach's alpha (CA) widely exceeds Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) recommendation of .70.

Discriminant validity was provided in two ways (see Table 4). First, none of the 95 per cent confidence intervals of the individual elements of the latent factor correlation matrix contained a value of 1.0 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Second, the shared variance between pairs of constructs was always less than the corresponding AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). On the basis of these criteria, we can conclude that all the measures used in the study exhibited sufficient evidence of reliability, convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 4. Discriminant validity of the theoretical constructs measures

Construct	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Mental simulation	6.17	2.08	**.86**	.14	.21	.21	.35	.07
2 Cognitive image	6.50	1.55	[.27; .48]	**.53**	.58	.47	.37	.14
3. Affective image	6.41	1.67	[.37; .55]	[.70; .82]	**.62**	.46	.52	.22
4. Overall image	6.87	1.87	[.36; .55]	[.62; .75]	[.63; .73]	**.93**	.58	.21
5. Behavioral intentions	5.89	2.04	[.50; .67]	[.53; .69]	[.66; .79]	[.71; .82]	**.76**	.16
6. Attitude towards sun-and-sand destinations	7.59	2.27	[.16. 38]	[.27; .47]	[.38; .56]	[.36; .55]	[.31;.50]	**.93**

Note: Diagonal represents the average variance extracted; while above the diagonal the shared variance (squared correlations) is represented. Below the diagonal the 95% confidence interval for the estimated factors correlations is provided

4.4.3 ANCOVA results

Following a similar procedure to that used in chapter 3, we conducted an ANCOVA to analyze the impact of social presence and vividness on mental simulation, as proposed in H1 and H2. Sun-and-sand attitudes were included as a control variable in the analyses ($F(1,400)= 33.08$; $p<.001$). ANCOVA F-values for the main effects of both social

presence (F(1,400)=9.22, p<.01) and vividness (F(1,400)=10.75, p<.01) were also significant. These results provide support for H1 and H2. Moreover, the interaction effect is also significant (F(1,400)=4.84; p<.05). As we can see in Table 4, a deeper analysis of this interaction showed that only when social script is provided, the effect of vividness on mental simulation is significant ((F(1,198)=15.84; p<.001). Mental simulation reaches its maximum level when both, social script and high vividness are included in the stimulus.

Table 4. Interaction effects between social presence and vividness on mental simulation

Dependent variable: Mental Simulation					
Social Presence	**Vividness**	**N**	**Mean**	**F**	**p**
Social script	High vividness	101	6.98	15.841	.000
	Low vividness	100	5.92		
	Total	201	6.45		
Neutral script	High vividness	104	5.98	.561	.455
	Low vividness	100	5.79		
	Total	204	5.89		
Interaction F=4.845, p=.028					

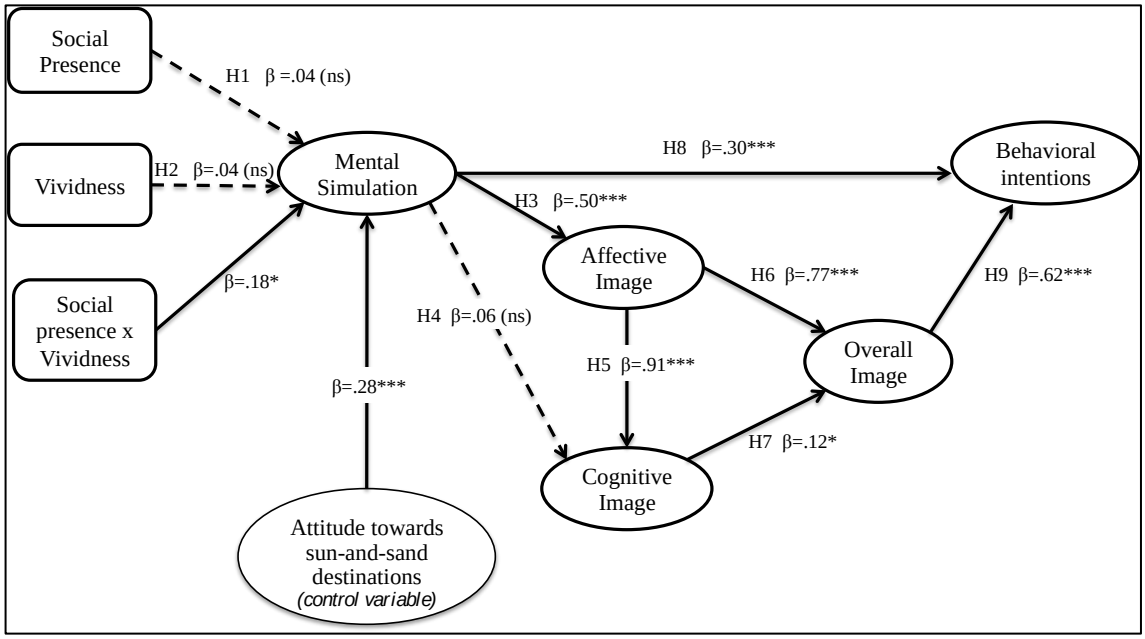
4.4.4 Path analyses

We tested the proposed conceptual model using structural equation modeling with EQS. The empirical estimates for the main-effects model are shown in Figure 3. The results obtained indicate that the data fit our conceptual model satisfactorily (S-B X^2(df=277) = 617.33, p<.01; NNFI= .951; CFI=. 959; IFI= .959; RMSEA= .055).

Results of the path analysis support most of the propositions and confirm most of the relationships among the variables. Although the first two hypotheses were tested in the initial ANCOVA, we turn their inclusion in the model and also their interaction. After accounting for the variance explained by attitude towards sun-and-sand destinations (β_c= .18; p<.001), as we saw in the results of the previous ANCOVA, mental simulation

is evoked when social script is present in the promotional video and when vividness is high (β= .18; p<.05).

Figure 3. Hypothesized structural model



S-B X^2 (df=277) = 617.33, p<.01; NNFI= .951; CFI=. 959; IFI= .959; RMSEA= .055

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, ns: Not significant

Figure 3 also reveals that the mental simulation construct influences the affective dimension of image (β_3=.50; p<.001), but not the cognitive dimension (β_4=.06; p>.05). This result provides support for Hypothesis 3, but not for Hypothesis 4. Because of the affective dimension has a strong significant direct effect on the cognitive dimension of image (β_5=.91; p<.001). The indirect effect of mental simulation on cognitive image through affective image is shown later in the additional results section. Regarding the results about relationship between the dimensions of image, both the affective dimension of image (β_6=.77; p<.001) and the cognitive dimension (β_7=.12; p<.05) have a significant effect on the overall image, having a greater weight the affective image. Therefore, Hypotheses 6 and 7 are supported. Finally, both mental simulation and overall image have a significant impact on the behavioral intentions supporting Hypotheses 8 and 9 (β_8= .30; p<.01; β_9= .62; p<.001).

4.4.5 Additional results about the indirect effect

The indirect effect of mental simulation on cognitive image through affective image was tested using the bootstrap method of Preacher and Hayes (2008) (Table 4). The bootstrapping asks whether it is possible (with 95% confidence) that the indirect effect would be zero (basically, no mediation). The bootstrapping provides a 95% bias corrected bootstrapped confidence interval. If zero does not occur between the lower limit and the upper limit and the estimated effect lies between these two values, then we can conclude that the indirect effect for this mediator is significant. In contrast, if zero lies in between these lower and upper limits the mediation will not be significant (Preacher and Hayes; 2004; Preacher and Hayes, 2008; Hayes, 2009).

Results show a positive and significant relationship between mental simulation and the affective dimension of image destination (β=. 36; $p<.001$), and between affective image and cognitive image (β=. 67; $p<.001$). However, the direct effect between mental simulation and the cognitive image (c´) is not significant (p=.419). As shown in Table 4, the bootstrapping analysis indicates that the indirect effect through the affective dimension of image is positive and significant (a x b) with 95% confidence interval excluding zero (.19 to .29). This result suggests that the effect of mental simulation on cognitive image is totally mediated through the affective image.

Table 4: Regression results for the mediating effect of affective image on the relationship between mental simulation and cognitive image

Model	Estimate	Bias Corrected Bootstrapped Confidence Interval
Mental simulation ⟶ Affective image (a)	.36***	[.28; .42]
Affective image⟶ Cognitive image (b)	.67***	[.60; .74]
Mental simulation ⟶ Cognitive image (c´)	.02	[-.03; .07]
Indirect effect (a x b)	.24	[.19; .29]

Note: Mental simulation is the independent variable (*X*), affective image is the mediator (*M*) and cognitive image is the outcome (*Y*). *p<.05; **p<.01***p<.001

4.5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Through the incorporation of two new variables that favor mental simulation, social presence and vividness, this study extends the results of the previous chapter. We also explore the relationship between mental simulation and the two dimensions of destination image, cognitive and affective, as well as whether mental simulation evoked through social presence and vividness induces behavioral intentions to potential tourists. While previous research has almost exclusively focused on pictures and instructions to imagine (Walters *et al*., 2007), the current study tested script and vividness through a promotional video. We also contribute to the research on virtual product experiences, which so far has mostly focused on interactivity as the driving feature (Klein, 1998, 2003; Schlosser, 2003).

As we hypothesized, social presence and vividness are important factors in evoking mental simulation. Results indicate that users are more likely to evoke mental simulation when social script and high vividness are present in the promotional video. These findings reinforce the importance of social presence and suggest that in order to evoke high mental simulation, it is imperative to find ways to enhance users' sense of

social presence. By doing it, the promotional video may become an ideal source of social representations for the potential tourist.

One more interesting finding of this study regards the mediator role of affective image. The direct influence of mental simulation on cognitive image is not significant. Instead, mental simulation influences the formation of an affective image, which in turn affects the cognitive image. Mental simulation affects indirectly on cognitive image through affective image. That is, mental simulation evoked through a video improves a person's positive feelings about image of the destination, through an immersive experience and emotional engagement that can contribute to developing people's travel intentions and awareness of destinations in their trip decision-making process. Results confirm that mental simulation is important for virtually experiencing a destination and that such virtual, quasi-trial experience leads to destination images and preferences.

The results of this study clearly indicate that a promotional video has the potential to substantially affect touristic pre-experiences. Based on the perceived roles of videos for viewers, they appear to generate mental pleasures through imagination that bring to life people's dreams and fantasies to see themselves visiting that destination. Results are in line with Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) when affirming that generic travel-related videos are shown to be powerful as media of ''transportation'' within the concept of virtual mobility.

In summary, this study enhances and strengthens the current understanding about pre-experience in tourism mediated by exposure to a promotional video. Our results contribute not only to tourism experience literature, but also to the field of information systems and communication media within the context of tourism. Finally, this study

advances our understanding of social presence and its effects on how it evokes mental simulation as a source of social representation about the destination.

4.5.1 Managerial implications

From a practical perspective, these findings provide important insights regarding the need for anticipated experiences, and suggest that destination marketers need to place an emphasis on communicating them. Because the integration of Virtual Reality (VR) into the tourism sector remains in its infancy, only a limited amount of existing research has directly examined VR's applications and implications for the sector.

Many other sources including guidebooks, documentaries, film, pictures, brochures, and websites also have a part in shaping how people experience places. This framing of experience has two parts: the nature of particular places, and how one should behave when traveling. Both involve anticipation, imagination, and imagery constructed from available representations. Jannsen (2007, p.11) points out that tourism is a experience where potential tourists engage with representations through marketing and popular culture in a kind of "imaginative hedonism'. The product of these imaginings is more than simply a "referential framework for trip planning', it is guide for how one should experience the place. Thus, it is important to find out which elements of videos have the ability to evoke mental simulation.

Consistent with prior research (Hassanein and Head, 2007; Lingyun and Dong, 2008), the findings of this study confirm that social presence generally acts as an influential factor that results in more favorable intentions to use a particular source and that could be significant antecedent to evoke mental simulation. The finding about social presence also might have far reaching implications for Internet-based vendors, because of the noted lack of social presence in many sources, not only videos but also websites. Given

these tentative conclusions, tourism marketing organizations might wish to invest in creating and maintaining effective social presence channels with potential tourists.

In the tourist online environment, where space and time are separated between parties (potential tourists and tourism marketers), virtual re-embedding strategies can utilize social cues to infuse social presence through the Web interface. This can help bringing the virtual interaction closer to the face-to-face communication found in traditional shopping environments, leading to an enhanced online experience and, ultimately, greater intentions to recommend or visit the destination.

As the Internet has become a widely used source to find travel information and make destination-related decisions, designing effective online materials should be of great concern to destination marketers. Simply having a website is no longer enough. Consumers now have access to information about attractive destinations around the world. It is important to distinguish a specific destination from others by communicating the experiences it offers in compelling ways. Helping consumers form strong images and instilling confidence in them is especially important in an informational environment where users can find many potentially diverging opinions about destinations, for example, in the form of consumer-generated reviews or blogs.

4.5.2 Research limitations and suggestions for future research

There are also some limitations of this research that should be noted. However, these limitations provide a foundation for future studies to continue investigating the influential factors of virtual experiences within a tourism context. First, consider that notable discrepancy exists regarding the definition of VR, as proposed definitions vary when describing the different features considered as necessary to create a VR (Burdea and Coiffet, 2003; Vince, 2004). VR can be defined as the use of a computer-generated

3D environment – called a 'virtual environment' (VE) – that one can navigate and possibly interact with, resulting in real-time simulation of one or more of the user's five senses. 'Navigate' refers to the ability to move around and explore the VE, and 'interact' refers to the ability to select and move objects within the VE (Gutierrez et al., 2008; Vince, 2004). Vince (2004) and Gutierrez et al. (2008) actually posed interactivity as a necessary component of VR and we have not taken it into account as a factor that evokes mental simulation of the individual since we consider it as an optional feature. Following other authors, we consider that a promotional video is a type of VR (Burdea and Coiffet, 2003; Vince, 2004). Even taking this into account, in future research interactivity should be incorporate as an antecedent of mental simulation.

Second, we only use a promotional video as mean for virtual experience. Future research could build on the work of Wan et al. (2007), who compared virtual experiences with brochures for marketing theme parks and natural parks, comparing VR with other marketing devices (e.g. tour virtual), or for other types of attractions (e.g. museums).

Third, we consider a limitation the vividness manipulation. As the vividness was manipulated through the video quality, it is likely that subjects could observe different qualities depending on the computer they accessed the video form. Future research should try to find out a more accurate manipulation of vividness.

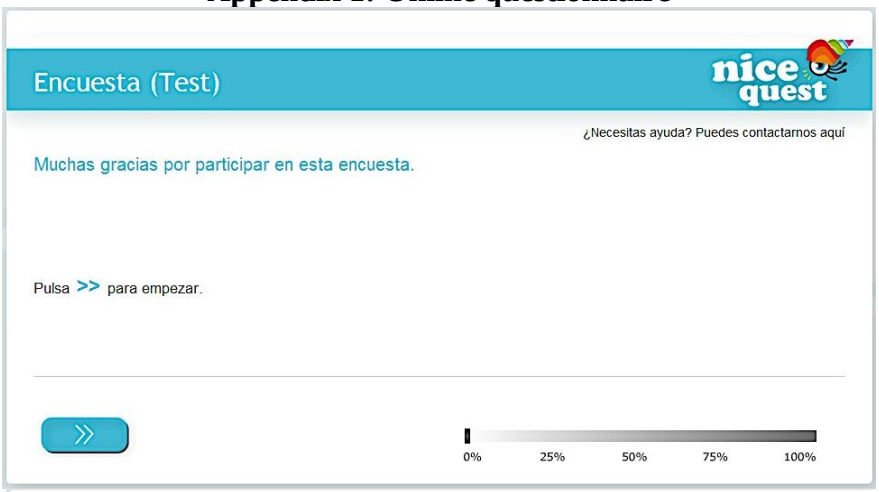
The potential importance of social presence raises the question of how a video can be designed to increase social presence and what additional features should be included in order to increase social presence. Additional research is needed to investigate these aspects. As technologies continue to improve in vividness and interactive capabilities,

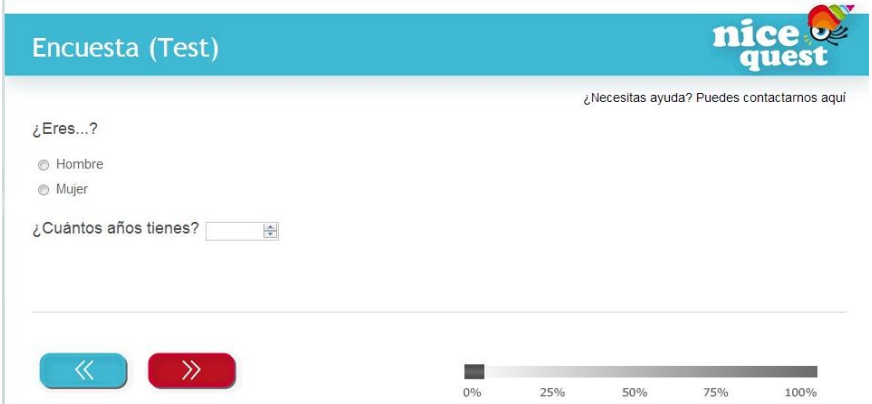
the role of social presence will become increasingly important from both a theoretical and a practical standpoint.

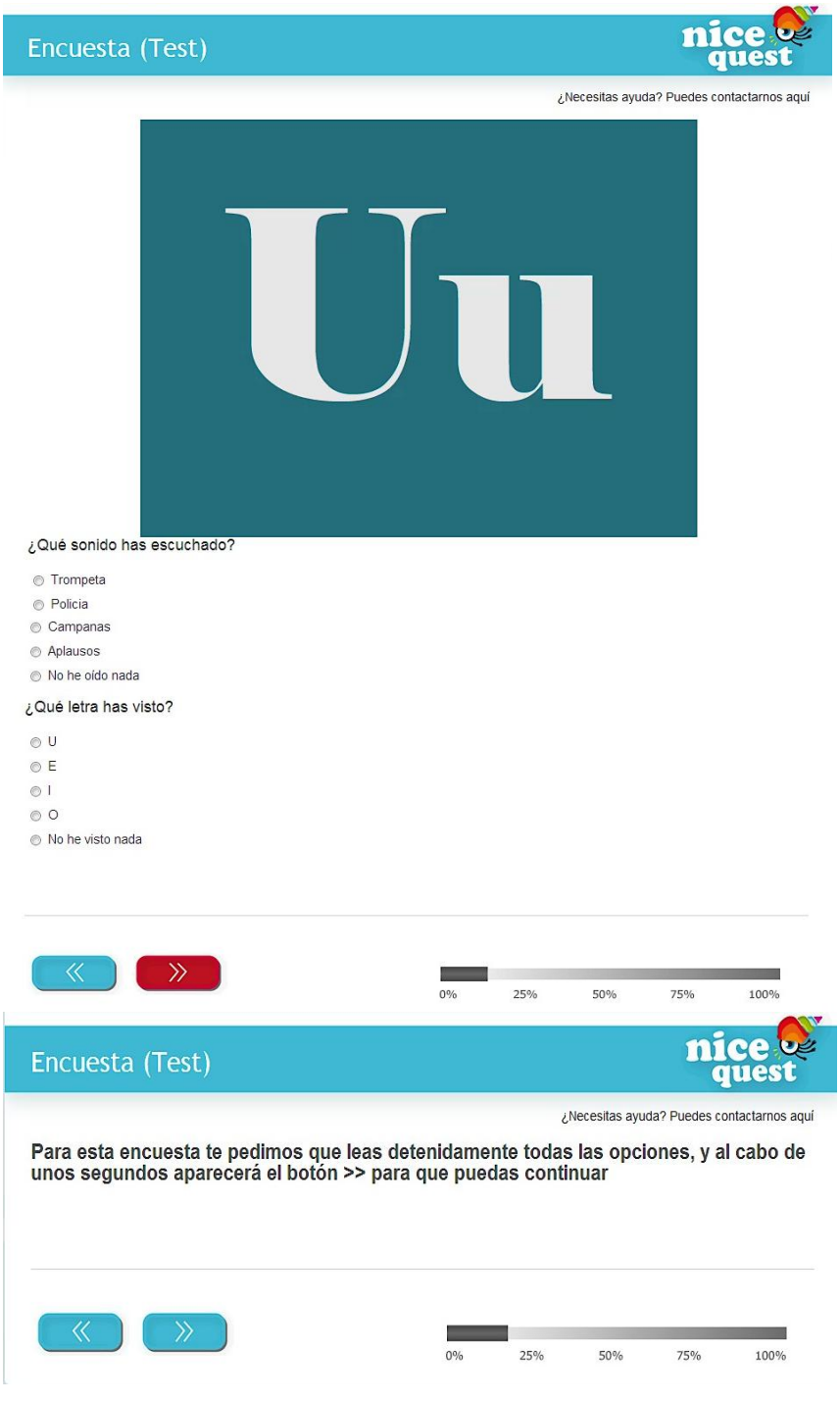
APPENDIX 1

Online questionnaire

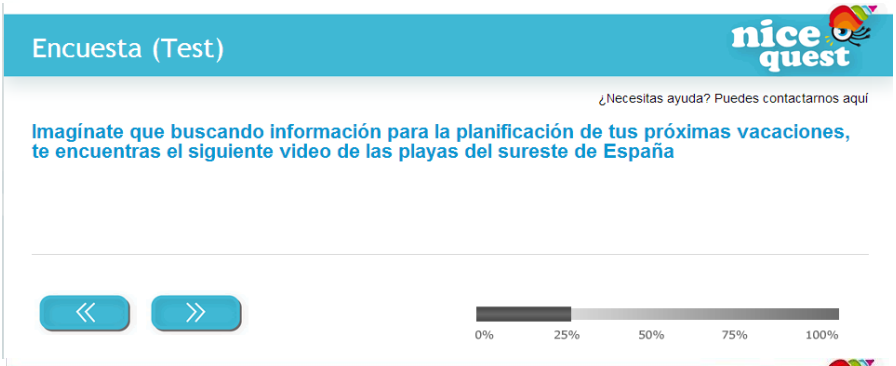
Appendix 1: Online questionnaire

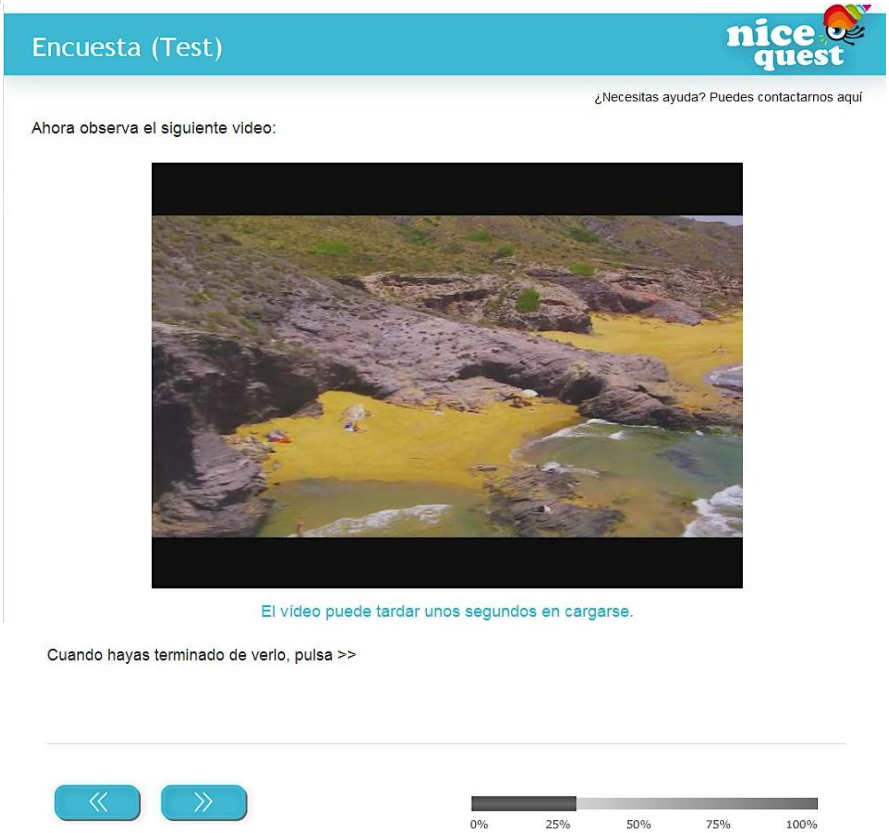





Encuesta (Test)
nice quest
¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí
Uu
¿Qué sonido has escuchado?
Trompeta
Policía
Campanas
Aplausos
No he oído nada
¿Qué letra has visto?
U
E
I
O
No he visto nada
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
Encuesta (Test)
nice quest
¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí
Para esta encuesta te pedimos que leas detenidamente todas las opciones, y al cabo de unos segundos aparecerá el botón >> para que puedas continuar
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%


Encuesta (Test)
nice quest
¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí
Respecto a la opinión que tienes hacia las playas del sureste de España como destino turístico, indica tu posición en la siguiente escala
Marca de 1 a 10 según te encuentres más cerca de la frase de la izquierda, o de la frase de la derecha.
Las playas del sureste no me resultan atractivas 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Las playas del sureste si me resultan atractivas
Las playas del sureste no me gustan 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Las playas del sureste sí me gustan
Las playas del sureste no me agradan 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Las playas del sureste si me agradan
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%


Encuesta (Test)
nice quest
¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí
Imagínate que buscando información para la planificación de tus próximas vacaciones, te encuentras el siguiente video de las playas del sureste de España
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%


Encuesta (Test)
nice quest
¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí
Ahora observa el siguiente video:
El vídeo puede tardar unos segundos en cargarse.
Cuando hayas terminado de verlo, pulsa >>
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

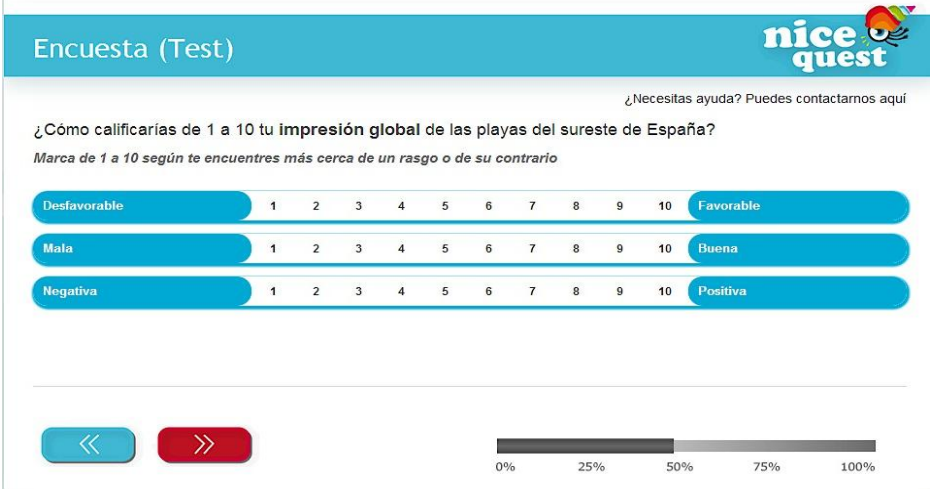
Encuesta (Test)

¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí

Consideras que las playas del sureste de España como destino turístico son....

Marca de 1 a 10 según lo encuentres más cerca de un rasgo o de su contrario

Estresantes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Relajantes
Aburridas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Divertidas
Deprimentes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Excitantes
Desagradables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Agradables
De difícil acceso	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	De fácil acceso
Frías	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Amigables
Sucias	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Limpias
Ruidosas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Tranquilas
Inseguras	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Seguras



Encuesta (Test)

¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí

¿Cómo calificarías de 1 a 10 tu **impresión global** de las playas del sureste de España?

Marca de 1 a 10 según te encuentres más cerca de un rasgo o de su contrario

Desfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Favorable
Mala	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Buena
Negativa	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Positiva

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Encuesta (Test)

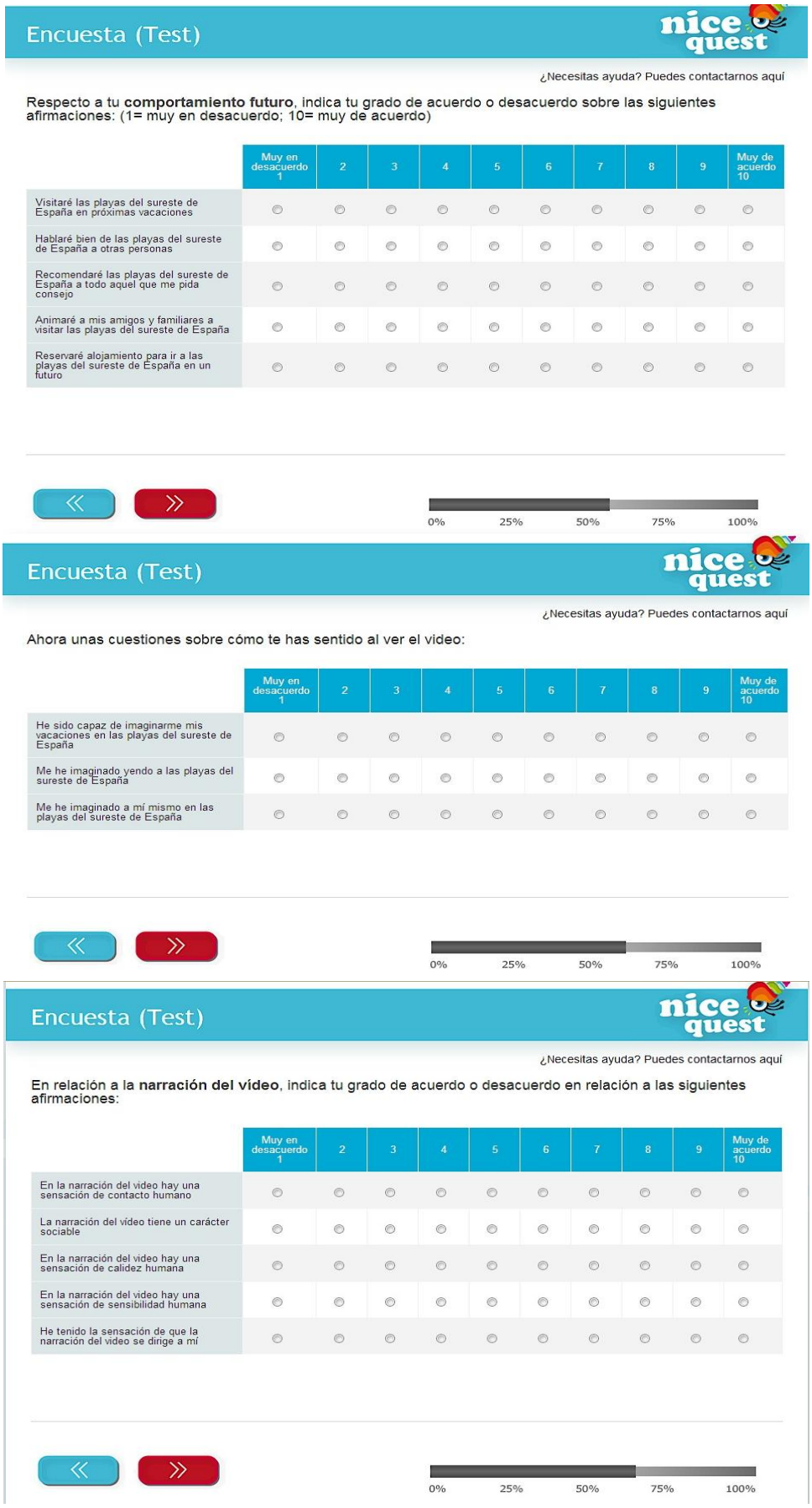
¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí

Respecto a la opinión que tienes hacia las playas del sureste de España una vez visto el video, indica tu posición en la siguiente escala

Marca de 1 a 10 según te encuentres más cerca de la frase de la izquierda, o de la frase de la derecha

Las playas del sureste no me resultan atractivas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Las playas del sureste sí me resultan atractivas
Las playas del sureste no me gustan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Las playas del sureste sí me gustan
Las playas del sureste no me agradan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Las playas del sureste sí me agradan

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%



Encuesta (Test)

nice quest

¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí

Respecto a tu **comportamiento futuro**, indica tu grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo sobre las siguientes afirmaciones: (1= muy en desacuerdo; 10= muy de acuerdo)

	Muy en desacuerdo 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Muy de acuerdo 10
Visitaré las playas del sureste de España en próximas vacaciones	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hablaré bien de las playas del sureste de España a otras personas	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Recomendaré las playas del sureste de España a todo aquel que me pida consejo	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Animaré a mis amigos y familiares a visitar las playas del sureste de España	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reservaré alojamiento para ir a las playas del sureste de España en un futuro	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

« »

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Encuesta (Test)

nice quest

¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí

Ahora unas cuestiones sobre cómo te has sentido al ver el video:

	Muy en desacuerdo 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Muy de acuerdo 10
He sido capaz de imaginarme mis vacaciones en las playas del sureste de España	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Me he imaginado yendo a las playas del sureste de España	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Me he imaginado a mí mismo en las playas del sureste de España	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

« »

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Encuesta (Test)

nice quest

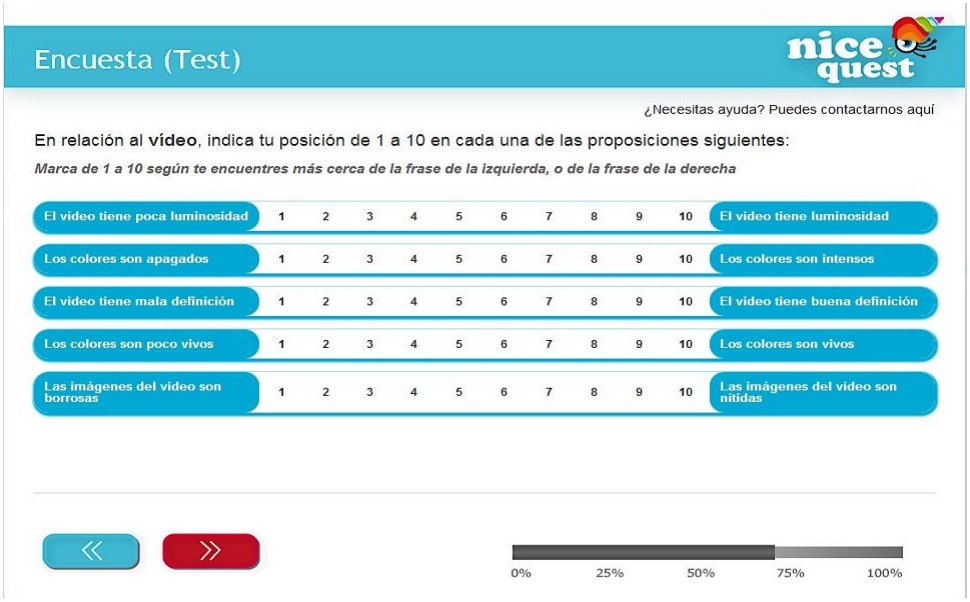
¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí

En relación a la **narración del vídeo**, indica tu grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo en relación a las siguientes afirmaciones:

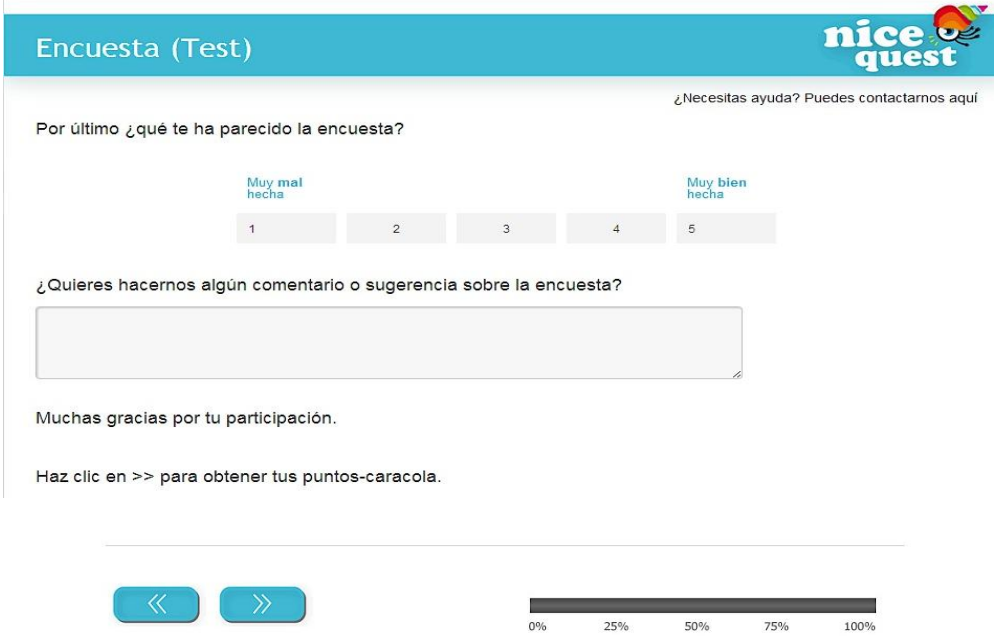
	Muy en desacuerdo 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Muy de acuerdo 10
En la narración del video hay una sensación de contacto humano	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
La narración del vídeo tiene un carácter sociable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
En la narración del video hay una sensación de calidez humana	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
En la narración del video hay una sensación de sensibilidad humana	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He tenido la sensación de que la narración del video se dirige a mí	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

« »

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%


Encuesta (Test)
nice quest
¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí
En relación al vídeo, indica tu posición de 1 a 10 en cada una de las proposiciones siguientes:
Marca de 1 a 10 según te encuentres más cerca de la frase de la izquierda, o de la frase de la derecha
El video tiene poca luminosidad 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 El video tiene luminosidad
Los colores son apagados 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Los colores son intensos
El video tiene mala definición 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 El video tiene buena definición
Los colores son poco vivos 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Los colores son vivos
Las imágenes del video son borrosas 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Las imágenes del video son nítidas
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%


Encuesta (Test)
nice quest
¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí
Indica tu posición de 1 a 10 en cada una de las proposiciones siguientes:
Los destinos de sol y playa no me resultan atractivos 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Los destinos de sol y playa me resultan atractivos
Los destinos de sol y playa no me gustan 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Los destinos de sol y playa me gustan
Estos destinos no me agradan 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Estos destinos me agradan
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%


Encuesta (Test)
nice quest
¿Necesitas ayuda? Puedes contactarnos aquí
Por último ¿qué te ha parecido la encuesta?
Muy mal hecha
Muy bien hecha
1 2 3 4 5
¿Quieres hacernos algún comentario o sugerencia sobre la encuesta?
Muchas gracias por tu participación.
Haz clic en >> para obtener tus puntos-caracola.
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this research was to contribute to a better understanding of image formation process before visiting a tourist destination. Destination image has received considerable attention in the tourism literature over the last two decades and the conceptualisation and operationalization of the construct has varied considerably within the tourism discipline. Insights from social representation theory were drawn in an attempt to broaden our understanding of the image construct. As tourism is a social activity, literature review suggests that the dominant focus of this research should be on how social sources can help potential tourists form the initial image of destinations.

As a first source of social representation, in the *second chapter* we demonstrate how content generated by other users in a web destination is able to generate emotions and thoughts about the destination, and then we explore the role of emotions and thoughts in destination image formation. Following previous literature, we also analyze the contribution of affective and cognitive components to the overall image, and finally we examine the effects of overall image on visit intention and recommendation of the destination. Our results show that a correspondence exists between cognitions that came into the consumers' minds and the cognitive dimension of image, as well as between the emotions expressed by subjects and the affective dimension of image. Concerning to the nature of destination image, our results show that cognitive and affective image components are significant antecedents of overall image. This study found that the affective image is the most influential image dimension in forming overall image. Internet-based communication channels connect people. When these people then communicate with one another, the personal experience involves the elicitation of emotions (Levine, 1998, Mantovani, 2001, Mckenna *et al*., 2002). For potential tourists,

user generated content (UGC) is an important information source in forming an image towards a particular destination. Finally, the results confirm that the image of a destination directly influences intentions to visit and recommend the destination to others. Overall image was an important predictor of destination preferences.

In the *third and fourth chapters*, we propose insights into the nature of stimuli that may evoke mental simulation, using different sources of social representation as stimuli. In the *third chapter* we demonstrate how mental simulation can be evoked through the social pictures and social instructions to imagine as a source of social representation. The relationship between mental simulation and the two dimensions of destination image, cognitive and affective was also tested. The overarching goal was to determinate whether mental simulation, evoked through the stimuli discussed above, induces future behavioral intentions to potential tourists. Results show that social pictures do stimulate mental simulation. Whereas pictures might be considered subtle cues for enhancing mental simulation (Starch, 1966; Shepard, 1967; Paivio, 1971; Rossiter, 1978; Hirschman and Solomon, 1984; Kisielius and Sternthal, 1984; Babin *et al.*, 1992), social pictures further stimulate imagery on consumers, and this difference should be highlighted. Moreover, our results contribute to the literature by demonstrating that social instructions to imagine also stimulate mental simulation. Another important finding of the study is that mental simulation leads to a positive affective image rather than to a cognitive image. Regarding the relationships between the dimensions of image, we found the opposite to what previous image literature holds, as results indicated that the affective image precedes the cognitive image. Following consumer behavior literature (Coulter, 1998; Pham *et al*., 2001; Lopez and Ruiz, 2011) we found a direct link from affective image to cognitive image. This result may be explained by the type of destination used in this chapter, a real sun-and-sand destination.

The direct experience with the destination is usually mentioned as a source of social representation. For that reason, the *fourth chapter* was motivated by a need to better understand the impact of the constructs contributing to virtual world usage from social perspectives, since tourist cannot have a direct experience with the destination before visit. To extend the results of the previous chapter, we incorporated two aspects that may help evoke mental simulation. Social presence and vividness were manipulated using a promotional video. The main goal of this chapter was to analyze whether mental simulation evoked through social presence and vividness influences future behavioral intentions. Results confirm our expectation. Social presence and vividness of a promotional video are important factors in the context of evoked mental simulation. More specifically, users are more likely to evoke mental simulation when social voice and high vividness are present in the promotional video. Therefore, both aspects should be activated together to evoke a greater simulation of experience. One of the most interesting findings of this study regards the mediator role of affective image. Results demonstrate that mental simulation affects indirectly on cognitive image through affective image. That is, mental simulation evoked through a video, improves a person's positive feelings about the image of the destination. The immersive experience and emotional engagement derived from the virtual experience can contribute to developing people's travel intentions and awareness of destinations in their trip decision-making process. Promotional videos have the potential to substantially affect touristic towards pre-experiences because mental simulation affects on behavioral intentions.

From chapter 3 and 4 we can conclude that mental simulation not only leads to a positive affective image, but also affects behavioral intentions of future tourists. We have confirmed that mental simulation can be an important mediator of persuasive communication in the context of travel planning. Consequently, more emphasis needs to

be placed in future research on studying mental simulation in the context of tourism marketing and travel decision-making. The structural relationship between overall image and behavioral intention analysis indicates that destination image appears to have an important effect on behavioral intentions (i.e. intention to visit and willingness to recommend) in our three studies. Hence, endeavors to build or improve the image of a destination facilitate future tourists visits and recommending behaviors, thus being critical to the success of the destination tourism development.

In summary, findings from the three empirical studies described in this doctoral dissertation highlight the importance of considering sources of social representation as a very relevant approach for studying destination image formation. Since tourism is very much a social activity (Brown and Chalmers, 2003), social representation theory should be more present in the tourism literature. Internet offers the potential to communicate with similar others and share travel and destination experiences including visual images, both static and moving, real-time images, as well as a variety of text in a wide range of formats. Therefore, Internet provides an excellent opportunity to study the development of more complex social representations.

SUMMARY IN SPANISH
(RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL)

El turismo es uno de los sectores que mayor contribución proporciona al desarrollo económico de un país. Es una actividad económica que ya representa el 5% del PIB mundial (UNWTO, 2012), donde la competencia es cada vez más intensa. Por otra parte, la actividad turística para un país como España es vital, ya que representa alrededor del 10% del PIB (IET, 2013). Muchos destinos compiten sobre la base de sus imágenes percibidas en relación con otros competidores del mercado (Baloglu y Mangaloglu, 2001). Por lo tanto, es necesario el desarrollo de una imagen positiva de los destinos en los mercados con el objetivo de lograr una ventaja competitiva real, ya que la imagen se reconoce como un factor importante en el comportamiento de elección de un destino de los futuros turistas potenciales (Reilly, 1990; Gartner, 1993; Baloglu y McCleary, 1999; Sirgy y Su, 2000; Tapachai y Waryszak, 2000; Govers y Go, 2003; O'Leary y Deegan, 2005).

Internet ha cambiado el comportamiento del consumidor turístico drásticamente (Mills y Law, 2004). Los turistas tienen ahora recursos en línea que les permiten la búsqueda de posibles destinos, transporte, alojamiento y actividades de ocio, así como la compra de estos servicios (Akehurst, 2009). El avance tecnológico y la creciente competencia internacional, afectan por tanto a la manera en que los destinos turísticos son imaginados, percibidos y consumidos. El turismo se refiere a menudo como una experiencia hedónica de consumo (Vogt y Fesenmaier, 1998). Con productos experienciales como los viajes y el turismo, la experiencia de consumo es un fin en sí mismo y la planificación de un viaje es un proceso social agradable e interactivo, donde la fantasía y las emociones también juegan un papel importante y los individuos están involucrados en una continua búsqueda de información (Decrop y Snelders 2004). Al pasar por este proceso y con la recopilación de toda esta información, el individuo crea una "imagen" o "representación mental" (Alhemoud y Armstrong 1996; Crompton,

1979; Kotler et al., 1993; Tapachai y Waryszak, 2000) de lo que la experiencia de viaje podría ser en un futuro. Tal imagen generalmente implica una combinación de componentes cognitivos y afectivos, sobre la cuales se genera una imagen global acerca de un destino específico (Stern y Krakover, 1993; Baloglu y McCleary, 1999; Beerli y Martin, 2004; Lin et al., 2007). Esta imagen puede influir en el posicionamiento del destino y en última instancia, en las intenciones de comportamiento de los turistas, como la futura visita o su recomendación.

El turismo es en gran medida una actividad social (Brown y Matthew, 2003), ya que un turista generalmente viaja con otras personas, como por ejemplo, con su familia y/o con amigos. La imagen de un destino, ya sea para los que lo visitan por primera vez o para los visitantes que repiten, es un término reconocido tanto por académicos y como por los gestores de los destino, como un factor clave en la elección de destino (Chen y Hsu, 2000; Joppe et al, 2001; Klenosky, 2002; Hui y Wang, 2003; Kozat y Tasci, 2005).

Por lo tanto, el objetivo principal de esta investigación es contribuir a una mejor comprensión del proceso de formación de la imagen antes de la visita directa al destino por parte del turista. La presente tesis se organiza en torno al modelo de formación de la imagen de destino a través de la teoría de la representación social.

En el primer capítulo se discute cómo la teoría de las representaciones sociales puede ofrecer algunas indicaciones útiles para mejorar nuestra comprensión del papel de la imagen de destino en el turismo. Por otra parte, se discuten las fuentes de las representaciones sociales acerca de un destino que vamos a desarrollar en los siguientes tres capítulos.

Como primera fuente de representación social, en el segundo capítulo, exponemos cómo el contenido generado por otros usuarios sobre un destino es capaz de generar

emociones y pensamientos sobre el destino, ya que seguidamente analizaremos el rol que estas emociones y los pensamientos tienen en la formación de la imagen del destino. Además, siguiendo la literatura previa, también se analiza la contribución que los componentes afectivos y cognitivos de la imagen tienen sobre la imagen global, para finalmente ver como la imagen global afecta en la intención de visitar y/o recomendación el destino. Los resultados muestran que existe una relación entre las respuestas cognitivas de los individuos y la dimensión cognitiva de la imagen, así como entre las respuestas emocionales expresadas por los individuos y la imagen afectiva del destino. En relación a la naturaleza de la imagen de destino, los resultados sugieren que tanto los componentes de la imagen afectiva como de la cognitiva son antecedentes significativos de la imagen global, concretamente en este capítulo se encontró que la imagen afectiva es la imagen más influye para formar la imagen global del destino. Para los turistas potenciales, el contenido generado por otros usuarios es una importante fuente de información en la formación de una imagen de un destino, sobre todo de la imagen afectiva. Por último, los resultados confirman lo estudiado ya por otros investigadores, la imagen de un destino influye directamente tanto en las intenciones de visitar como de recomendar el destino a otros individuos (Bigné et al., 2001). La imagen global es un antecedente importante de las preferencias de un destino.

En el tercer y cuarto capítulo, proponemos diferentes estímulos que sirven para evocar la simulación mental del individuo, como diferentes fuentes de la representación social. Por un lado, en el tercer capítulo, se propone cómo la simulación mental puede ser evocada a través de las imágenes sociales y de las instrucciones sociales a imaginar. Posteriormente se propone la relación entre la simulación mental del individuo y las dos dimensiones de imagen de destino, cognitiva y afectiva. El objetivo general era ver si la simulación mental evocada a través de los estímulos mencionados anteriormente, induce

a las futuras intenciones de comportamiento de los turistas potenciales. Los resultados muestran que las imágenes sociales estimulan la simulación mental. Considerando que las imágenes pueden ser consideradas señales sutiles para mejorar la simulación mental (Shepard, 1967; Paivio, 1971; Rossiter, 1978; Hirschman y Solomon, 1984; Kisielius y Sternthal, 1984; Babin *et al*, 1992) las imágenes sociales estimulan aun más a la imaginación de los consumidores, y esta diferencia hay que resaltarla. Además, en este capítulo, hemos adaptado las instrucciones sociales para imaginar a un destino real de sol y playa. Nuestros resultados contribuyen a la base de conocimientos mediante la demostración de que las instrucciones sociales para imaginar estimulan también la simulación mental del individuo. El hallazgo más importante de este estudio es que la simulación mental del individuo conduce a una imagen afectiva positiva pero en cambio no tiene un efecto directo sobre la imagen cognitiva. Respecto a las relaciones entre las dimensiones de la imagen, se encontró lo opuesto a lo que se mantiene en la literatura previo sobre imagen, ya que los resultados indicaron que la imagen afectiva precede a la imagen cognitiva. Siguiendo la literatura del comportamiento del consumidor (Coulter, 1998; Pham et al, 2001; López y Ruiz, 2011) nuestros resultados muestran una relación directa de la imagen afectiva hacia la imagen cognitiva. Esto puede tener sus razones, ya que debido a los estímulos utilizados en este capítulo, las respuestas afectivas pueden ir antes que las respuestas cognitivas.

Dado que la experiencia directa con el destino se considera otra fuente de las representaciones sociales, el cuarto capítulo fue motivado por la necesidad de comprender mejor el impacto de las variables que contribuyen al uso del mundo virtual desde perspectivas sociales, ya que el individuo no tiene ha tenido todavía la experiencia directa con el destino. Para extender los resultados del capítulo anterior, hemos incorporado dos nuevos estímulos que evocan la simulación mental, la presencia

social y la viveza en un vídeo promocional de un destino real. También se propuso, en línea con el capítulo anterior, la relación entre la simulación mental del individuo y la dimensión cognitiva y afectiva de la imagen, así como también, si la simulación mental evocada a través de la presencia social y de la viveza, indujo a las futuras intenciones de comportamiento a los futuros turistas potenciales. Los resultados muestran que tanto la presencia social como la viveza de un vídeo promocional son factores importantes en el contexto de evocar la simulación mental. Más específicamente, los resultados indican que los usuarios son más propensos a evocar su simulación mental cuando la presencia social y la viveza están presentes en el video promocional. Por lo tanto, ambos estímulos deben ser tratados juntos para evocar una mayor simulación de la experiencia. Uno de los hallazgos más interesantes de este estudio se refiere al papel mediador de la imagen afectiva. Los resultados demuestran que la simulación mental afecta indirectamente en la imagen cognitiva a través de la imagen afectiva. Es decir, la simulación mental a través de un video, mejora los sentimientos positivos de una persona sobre la imagen del destino, la experiencia virtual y el compromiso emocional, que pueden contribuir al desarrollo de las intenciones de viaje de las personas y el conocimiento de los destinos en su proceso de toma de decisiones sobre un viaje. Los resultados de este capítulo indican que los videos tienen el potencial de afectar sustancialmente hacia las experiencias previas de un turista, porque como el tercer capítulo se vio también, la simulación mental afecta directamente a las intenciones de comportamiento (visita y/o recomendación del destino).

En conclusión, después de ver los resultados obtenidos en el capítulo tres y cuatro, podemos decir que la simulación mental no sólo conduce a una imagen afectiva positiva, sino que también afecta directamente a las intenciones de comportamiento de los futuros turistas. Se confirmó que la simulación mental puede ser un importante

mediador de la comunicación persuasiva en el contexto de la planificación de viajes. En consecuencia, debe haber un mayor énfasis en el estudio de la simulación mental en el contexto de la comercialización del turismo y la toma de decisiones de los viajes.

La relación propuesta en los tres estudios entre la imagen global y la intención de comportamiento indica que la imagen global del destino parece tener un efecto importante sobre las intenciones de comportamiento. Por lo tanto, los esfuerzos para construir o mejorar la imagen de un destino puede facilitar a que futuros turistas visiten o recomienden el destino, siendo por tanto fundamental para el éxito del desarrollo del destino turístico.

En general, los resultados de los tres estudios descritos en esta tesis ponen de manifiesto la importancia de considerar las fuentes de la representación social como una aproximación para la formación de la imagen del destino. Dado que el turismo es en gran medida una actividad social (Brown y Chalmers, 2003), este enfoque a través de la teoría de las representaciones sociales, debería estar más presente en la literatura sobre turismo. Internet ofrece la posibilidad de comunicarse con otros y compartir experiencias sobre viajes y destinos similares, incluyendo imágenes visuales, tanto estáticas como en movimiento, e imágenes en tiempo real, así como una variedad formatos de texto. Por lo tanto, Internet como fuente de información ofrece una excelente oportunidad para estudiar el desarrollo de las representaciones sociales más complejas, como puede ser la de un destino.

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