

Importance of destination marketing on image and familiarity

Importance of destination marketing

Jeeyeon (Jeannie) Hahm

Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, USA, and

Kimberly Severt

Department of Human Nutrition and Hospitality Management, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA

37

Received 10 October 2017
Revised 19 November 2017
Accepted 27 November 2017

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the image and familiarity of Alabama as a tourism destination. More specifically, this study examined the difference in perceptions between visitors and non-visitors using quantitative and qualitative data to identify strengths and weaknesses of the image of Alabama.

Design/methodology/approach – This was a quantitative study with some qualitative aspects to it. This study examined both prior visitors and non-visitors of the state to compare their familiarity, image, and visit intentions. Data were collected online and analyzed using *t*-tests and importance-performance analysis.

Findings – The qualitative results revealed the predominant difference between people who have visited Alabama (visitors) and those who had never visited (non-visitors) was their image or lack of image of Alabama. Non-visitors had no image or characteristic that came to mind when asked about their image of Alabama, while people who had visited noted beaches the most positive image.

Originality/value – To date, the image of Alabama as a tourism destination has never been explored in academic research. This study has strong implications for destination marketing organizations of the state of Alabama.

Keywords Destination image, Importance-performance analysis, Destination marketing, Alabama, Destination familiarity, Visitors and non-visitors

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

When people decide to travel for leisure, there are various destinations to choose from. According to destination choice-sets models (Crompton, 1992; Sirakaya and Woodside, 2005; Um and Crompton, 1990), choosing a travel destination is a funnel-like process where tourists narrow down their choices among hundreds of destinations within their awareness set (destinations a tourist is aware of). During the early stages of this destination selection process, tourists will not only eliminate unfavorable destinations but more importantly, will not even consider destinations they are unaware of. Therefore, it is essential for destinations to be in people's choice-sets if they want to be considered a potential travel destination. If there is a negative image or even no perceived image of a destination, the chances of being visited are highly limited.

Within the USA, the state of Alabama has to compete with 49 other states as a travel destination. According to the Alabama Tourism Department (2017), tourism is the state's number one industry with more than 25.8 million visitors in 2016 (2.6 percent increase from 2015), spending over \$13.3 billion in Alabama (5.4 percent increase from 2015), and helping to provide more than 179,644 direct and indirect jobs (2.3 percent increase from 2015) for Alabama families. However, Alabama is not one of the top 25 states/territories being visited (National Travel and Tourism Office, 2017). The state of Alabama has many natural resources, heritage attractions, and man-made attractions to offer. People that are familiar with the state are aware of the variety of locally grown foods, the many offerings in terms of outdoor activities, the beautiful landscape, and Southern hospitality. The low ranking in terms of visitation is assumed to be due to the lack of familiarity of the



Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights
Vol. 1 No. 1, 2018
pp. 37-53
© Emerald Publishing Limited
2514-9792
DOI 10.1108/JHTI-10-2017-0002

state or negative image of the state to potential travelers. Therefore, it is critical to examine the perceived image and familiarity of Alabama and for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to act upon the results. The purpose of this study was to investigate the image (cognitive and affective) and familiarity of Alabama as a tourism destination. More specifically, this study examined the difference in perceptions between visitors and non-visitors using quantitative and qualitative data to identify strengths and weaknesses of the image of Alabama.

Previous research relating to tourism in the state of Alabama has been exploratory in nature and is outdated. The aim of this study is to change the tenuous relationship between academic research and the state of Alabama as a tourist destination. This study has strong implications for DMOs of the state of Alabama. It will provide these organizations with an insight into how the state of Alabama is perceived as a travel destination. This study will provide images to focus on and improve on in marketing material for the state and shed light on the importance of marketing in increasing tourism to the state. The contribution to academia will be the study of destination familiarity, destination image, and visit intentions in a different setting. Although the effects of destination familiarity, destination image, and visit intentions have been widely examined, these studies mostly focused on familiar tourists who had prior visitation to the destination. This research examined both prior visitors and non-visitors of the state to compare their familiarity, image, and visit intentions.

Literature review

Destination image

Destination image has been a widely popular research stream in tourism for decades (Deng and Li, 2014; King *et al.*, 2015). It is defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person or a group of persons have about a destination (Crompton, 1979; Gallarza *et al.*, 2002). It is a complex and subjective concept that is comprised of both cognitive (perceptions of individual attributes, such as quality of hotels, friendliness of people, weather) and affective components (holistic impressions, such as atmosphere or mood of the destination) (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993). The cognitive components are the perceptions of many individual attributes of the destination, such as quality of hotels, restaurants, attractions, friendliness of people, and weather. The affective components are the psychological impressions, such as atmosphere or mood of the destination (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993).

The majority of destination image studies are focused on quantitative or structured data that are based on destination attributes (e.g. Baloglu, 2000; Chen and Tsai, 2007; Hahm and Wang, 2011; Lee, 2009; Nadeau *et al.*, 2008; Wang *et al.*, 2010; Zhang *et al.*, 2014). However, according to Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) seminal research, qualitative or unstructured data provides a more unique and holistic destination image due to the fact that respondents are able to express their perceptions in their own words. The authors suggested that destination image should be visualized as having two components: attribute-based and holistic. Therefore, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) developed a measurement using both quantitative and qualitative methods. This includes a set of scales using destination attributes to measure the quantitative or structured images and a series of open-ended questions to discover the qualitative or unstructured images. Many studies have increasingly been using this approach to effectively understand the image of a destination (e.g. Chen and Hsu, 2000; Choi *et al.*, 1999; Murphy, 1999; O'Leary and Deegan, 2003; Smith *et al.*, 2015).

The main reason for examining the image of a destination is to understand what potential tourists perceive of the destination and to see if that affects their attitude and behavior toward the destination (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993). It has been found that tourists usually choose a destination with the most favorable image (Gartner, 1989; Leisen, 2001;

Dadgostar and Isotalo, 1996). In addition, destination image has a direct impact on travel behavior and plays a critical role in the destination choice process (Bonn *et al.*, 2005).

One of the techniques some researchers have used in destination image research is called importance-performance analysis (IPA). This technique was introduced by Martilla and James (1977) in the discipline of marketing. It has been more frequently used in hospitality research (e.g. Kuo *et al.*, 2012; Park *et al.*, 2013; Rail *et al.*, 2008; Rood and Dziadkowiec, 2013) but not extensively in destination image studies. Especially, it has not been used in the context of perceptions of Alabama as a tourism destination. Results of the importance of attributes and the evaluation of the offering of those attributes are plotted on a grid with four quadrants. Each quadrant suggests a different marketing strategy (Joppe *et al.*, 2001). Pike and Ryan (2004) suggested that simply looking at a destination's performance is not enough to determine its position. The attributes should also be evaluated in terms of its importance to the visitor. The authors used this method to measure the cognitive perceptions of New Zealand visitors. Joppe *et al.* (2001) used IPA to examine the image of Toronto and found strengths of the destination and gaps in its marketing strategy.

Destination familiarity

The concept of destination familiarity has gained interest in recent years. These studies examined destination familiarity from the marketing perspective of product familiarity (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Cordell, 1997). Alba and Hutchinson (1987) defined familiarity as "the number of product-related experiences that have been accumulated by the consumer (p. 411)." Based on this definition, familiarity often has been conceptualized as previous visitation or previous destination experience (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Hu and Ritchie, 1993; Milman and Pizam, 1995) or the number of previous visits (Sun *et al.*, 2013; Tasci *et al.*, 2007). Prentice (2006) operationalized it as the differences between newcomers and repeaters. On the other hand, Baloglu (2001) operationalized destination familiarity as a multidimensional concept that is the composite of experiential (actual visitation) and informational familiarity (exposure to destination-related information in a tourist's daily life). Similarly, some researchers have suggested that familiarity does not have to originate from actual experience (Gursoy, 2011; Prentice and Andersen, 2003; Srull, 1983). These researchers argue that there is a certain level of destination familiarity that can be created by education, mass media, travel guides, and personal contact with others (Gursoy, 2011; Prentice and Andersen, 2003). Therefore, familiarity is related to the search of information and the amount of time spent on processing the information (Baker *et al.*, 1986).

Previous research has found that increased familiarity provides a more positive image of a destination, in general (Beerli and Martín, 2004; Kerstetter and Cho, 2004; Milman and Pizam, 1995; Sharifpour *et al.*, 2014). Many studies found that actual visitation or direct experience with a destination affects the image of the destination by comparing the image differences between people that have visited the destination (visitors) and people that have not (non-visitors) (e.g. Ahmed, 1991; Baloglu, 2001; Chon, 1991; Dann, 1996; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Fridgen, 1987; Hu and Ritchie, 1993; Konecnik, 2002; Milman and Pizam, 1995; Phillips and Jang, 2010; Sharifpour *et al.*, 2014). Fridgen (1987) compared travelers that were familiar and unfamiliar with the state of Michigan and found that familiarity (actual visitation and level of knowledge) with the destination had a positive influence on travelers' image of the destination. Chon (1991) found that post-visitors' perceptions of Korea were more positive than pre-visitors' perceptions. Also, Ahmed (1991) revealed that visitors of Utah had a more favorable image of the state than non-visitors. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) showed significantly different images between non-visitors and first-time and repeat visitors. Interestingly, there was not much change between first-time visitors and repeat visitors. Hu and Ritchie (1993) found significant differences between visitors and non-visitors' images of several destinations (Hawaii, Australia, Greece, France, and China).

Milman and Pizam (1995) compared visitors (those who visited Florida), non-visitors (those aware of Central Florida), and previously visited (those who are familiar with Central Florida). They found that those who were familiar (previously visited) with Central Florida had a more favorable image than non-visitors (those aware of Central Florida). Baloglu (2001) examined the image of Turkey by comparing US travelers and found that those that were more familiar with the destination had a more positive image. Konecnik (2002) found that people that have visited the country of Slovenia or those that had some contact with Slovenians had a more positive image of the country than those that had not visited. Phillips and Jang (2010) showed differences in the image of New York between visitors and non-visitors. Overall, these studies found that the more familiar – through actual visitation or information – people are about a destination, the more positive the image is. In contrast, some studies found that certain information sources can create negative images of a destination (McCartney *et al.*, 2008; Sonmez and Sirakaya, 2002). In any case, these studies demonstrate the fact that familiarity has some effect on the image of a destination.

Future intentions

Intention to visit a destination is defined as the likelihood to visit a destination within a certain period of time (Pike and Ryan, 2004). This concept is of great interest to both academic researchers and industry because it is used as a predictor of actual behavior. It has been explored numerous with its antecedent, destination image, and past experience (Kaplanidou, 2009).

As with familiarity, in regards to future intentions, some researchers found that there are differences between visitors and non-visitors (Baloglu, 2001; Milman and Pizam, 1995). According to Baloglu (2001), previous visitors that are familiar with a destination are more likely to revisit. Milman and Pizam (1995) showed that previous visitors to Central Florida were more interested in revisiting the destination than non-visitors. Tan and Wu (2016) found that future intentions of previous visitors and non-visitors are influenced by different types of images and familiarities. For example, future intentions of previous visitors are most influenced by cognitive destination images (perceptions of individual destination attributes). On the other hand, cognitive images do not inspire non-visitors to visit but affective destination images (atmosphere or mood of the destination) do. Therefore, past experience (actual visitation) has become important in understanding intentions.

Methodology

Survey instrument

This was a quantitative study with some qualitative aspects to it. The questionnaire was developed based on an extensive review of previous literature on destination familiarity, destination image, and intentions to visit.

The questionnaire starts with two open-ended questions to capture more in-depth information about the image of Alabama since it has not been explored before. The questions solicited images or characteristics of Alabama as a tourism destination and distinctive or unique attractions of Alabama. The following section consisted of 19 image attributes using a five-point Likert scale measurement based on the studies of Baloglu and McCleary (1999), Beerli and Martín (2004), and Echtner and Ritchie (1993). The next section measured affective images of Alabama with four items on a seven-point semantic differential scale adapted from Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) study. Next, future intentions were measured by four items based on Tian-Cole *et al.*'s (2002) study followed by selecting information sources where respondents have seen or heard about Alabama. These items were based on Baloglu's (2001) study. This study took Baloglu's (2001) approach by measuring familiarity with actual visitation and exposure to information. The next section consisted of the same 19 image attributes to see how important each attribute is to a destination (not specific to Alabama). The last section

asked for some demographic information including whether the respondent has been to the state of Alabama for leisure or not. There was a follow up question for those who have never been to Alabama to see if they would consider traveling to the state. For those that answered “no,” respondents were asked to provide a reason in their own words.

Data collection

The survey instrument was distributed using Qualtrics, an online survey platform, to potential travelers (previous visitors and non-visitors of Alabama). A link to the survey was sent out via e-mail by Qualtrics Panels. First, respondents had to pass two screening questions in order to continue with the survey. Respondents had to be at least 19 years of age and had to have traveled in the past two years. A pre-test was done to test for the reliability and validity of the instrument. In an effort to ensure validity of the responses several quality checks were used, such as attention filters, survey duration checks, and force response. A total of 340 cases were collected during five days.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 21. Data were checked for errors, missing data, outliers, and deviation from normality. For the quantitative data, descriptive statistics, *t*-tests, and IPA were used to analyze the data. For the qualitative part, a software program for qualitative data analysis, NVivo 11, was used.

Results

Profile of respondents

The demographic profile of respondents showed that the majority of respondents (64.7 percent) have never been to Alabama and only 35.3 percent have been to Alabama for leisure. There were slightly more females (57.1 percent) than males (42.9 percent). In terms of age, 29.7 percent were Matures (born 1945 or before), followed by Early Boomers (27.9 percent) and Generation Y (16.5 percent). More than half of the respondents (54.1 percent) were married and the majority were non-Hispanic whites (86.5 percent). For many of the respondents, the highest degree earned was a college degree (40.9 percent), followed by those that have some college credits but no degree (24.7 percent) and those that hold a graduate degree (23.8 percent). Income levels were at \$40,000-\$59,999 (24.4 percent) and \$20,000-\$39,999 (21.4 percent). All respondents reside in the USA. The top five states the respondents reside in were California, Florida, New York, Texas, and Illinois. In terms of leisure travel patterns, most of the respondents were domestic travelers, traveling once (22.4 percent) or two to three times (42.9 percent) each year within the USA. The majority of respondents do not travel outside of the USA each year (62.6 percent) and 28.5 percent travel once a year for leisure purposes (Table I).

Image of Alabama

Quantitative results. One of the objectives of this study was to determine the differences in the perceptions of the state of Alabama, between people who had visited the state of Alabama and those who had not. Out of 340 participants, 120 (35.3 percent) had visited Alabama while 220 (64.7 percent) had not. An independent *t*-test was conducted to examine the differences between cognitive and affective images of visitors (people that have been to Alabama for leisure) and non-visitors (people that have never been to Alabama). The analysis showed a statistically significant difference between visitors and non-visitors for all cognitive and affective image attributes. Overall, visitors showed statistically significantly higher mean values than non-visitors (Table II). This means that visitors hold a more positive image of Alabama than non-visitors. For visitors, except for “high standard of living ($M = 2.89$),” all attributes scored positively. The top rated image attributes for visitors were:

Variables	Non-visitors (n = 220)		Visitors (n = 120)		Total (n = 340)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<i>Age</i>						
Born 1945 or before (Matures)	71	32.3	30	25.0	101	29.7
Born 1946-1954 (Early Boomers)	58	26.4	37	30.8	95	27.9
Born 1955-1964 (Baby Boomers)	34	15.5	21	17.5	55	16.2
Born 1965-1976 (Generation X)	24	10.9	9	7.5	33	9.7
Born 1977-1994 (Generation Y)	33	15.0	23	19.2	56	16.5
<i>Gender</i>						
Male	87	39.5	59	49.2	146	42.9
Female	133	60.5	61	50.8	194	57.1
<i>Level of education</i>						
High school degree	24	10.9	12	10.0	36	10.6
College credits but no degree	52	23.6	32	26.7	84	24.7
College degree	94	42.7	45	37.5	139	40.9
Graduate school	50	22.7	31	25.8	81	23.8
<i>Marital status</i>						
Single	40	18.2	20	16.7	60	17.7
Married	112	50.9	72	60.0	184	54.1
Divorced/widowed/separated	59	26.8	21	17.5	80	23.5
Partnered	9	4.1	6	5.0	15	4.4
Other	0	0	1	0.8	1	0.3
<i>Household income</i>						
Less than \$20,000	22	10.0	8	6.7	30	8.8
\$20,000-\$39,999	46	20.9	27	22.5	73	21.4
\$40,000-\$59,999	56	25.5	27	22.5	83	24.4
\$60,000-\$79,999	35	15.9	23	19.2	58	17.1
\$80,000-\$99,999	28	12.7	10	8.3	38	11.2
\$100,000 or more	33	15.0	25	20.8	58	17.1
<i>Ethnic background</i>						
Non-Hispanic white/Caucasian	186	84.5	108	90.0	294	86.5
Hispanic or Latino	7	3.2	5	4.2	12	3.5
African-American or black	9	4.1	1	0.8	10	2.9
Asian or Asian American	13	5.9	3	2.5	16	4.7
Other	5	2.3	3	2.5	8	2.4
<i>Domestic travel for leisure per year</i>						
0 times	9	4.1	1	0.8	10	2.9
1 time	53	24.1	23	19.2	76	22.4
2-3 times	99	45.0	47	39.2	146	42.9
4-8 times	50	22.7	44	36.6	94	27.7
More than 10 times	9	4.1	5	4.2	14	4.1
<i>International travel for leisure per year</i>						
0 times	142	64.5	71	59.2	213	62.6
1 time	64	29.1	33	27.5	97	28.5
2-3 times	10	4.6	12	10.0	22	6.5
4-8 times	4	1.8	3	2.5	7	2.1
9 times	0	0	1	0.8	1	0.3

Table I.

Profile of respondents **Note:** Residence state – many different states across the USA

Destination images	Means			t-value	F-test
	Total (n = 340)	Visitors (n = 120)	Non-visitors (n = 220)		
<i>Cognitive images</i>					
High standards of cleanliness and hygiene	3.11	3.33	2.99	3.41**	33.36**
High standard of living	2.69	2.89	2.58	3.00**	0.71
Good quality restaurants	3.42	3.71	3.27	4.79**	3.73
Good quality hotels	3.44	3.69	3.30	4.31**	0.67
Safe place to visit	3.61	3.91	3.45	4.93**	1.52
Friendly local people	3.73	3.95	3.60	3.57**	0.15
Appealing local food (cuisine)	3.56	3.77	3.44	3.26**	0.19
A real adventure	3.13	3.46	2.95	4.67**	23.74**
Everything is different and fascinating	2.93	3.15	2.81	3.02**	9.97**
Restful and relaxing place	3.52	3.78	3.38	4.29**	0.01
Natural scenic beauty	3.71	4.04	3.53	5.19**	0.88
Interesting cultural attractions	3.33	3.65	3.15	4.78**	3.20
Variety of historical attractions	3.64	3.94	3.47	4.70**	0.01
Many sports facilities/activities	3.32	3.55	3.20	3.46**	4.63*
Great beaches	3.40	3.85	3.15	6.35**	2.52
Good nightlife	3.12	3.39	2.98	4.28**	21.15**
Pleasant weather	3.41	3.67	3.27	3.49**	0.10
Good value for the money	3.49	3.79	3.33	4.74**	0.85
Family oriented	3.64	3.97	3.46	5.34**	5.69*
<i>Affective images</i>					
Unpleasant-Pleasant	5.28	5.62	5.10	3.10**	0.36
Sleepy-Arousing	4.15	4.38	4.02	2.12*	6.85**
Distressing-Relaxing	5.22	5.62	5.00	3.70**	1.61
Gloomy-Exciting	4.66	5.05	4.44	3.77**	0.04
<i>Future intentions</i>					
I will say positive things about Alabama to others	3.46	3.81	3.11	6.88**	6.07*
I will recommend others to visit Alabama for vacation	3.20	3.58	2.81	6.66**	8.63*
I will recommend Alabama as a tourism destination to anyone I know	3.10	3.44	2.76	5.76**	6.57*
I would like to visit Alabama for vacation in the future	3.47	3.84	3.10	5.82**	3.33

Notes: Cognitive images and future intentions were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree); affective images were measured on a seven-point semantic scale. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table II. Image and future intention differences by visitors and non-visitors to Alabama (t-test results)

“Natural scenic beauty ($M = 4.04$),” “family oriented ($M = 3.97$),” and “friendly local people ($M = 3.95$).” For non-visitors, there were five negatively perceived attributes: “High standard of living ($M = 2.58$),” “everything is different and fascinating ($M = 2.81$),” “real adventure ($M = 2.95$),” “good nightlife ($M = 2.98$),” and “high standards of cleanliness and hygiene ($M = 2.99$).” The top rated image attributes were similar for non-visitors to visitors but the mean scores were statistically significantly lower: “Natural scenic beauty ($M = 3.53$),” “variety of historical attractions ($M = 3.47$),” and “family oriented ($M = 3.46$).” The four affective images were all positive. Of the four affective images, both visitors and non-visitors perceived Alabama to be mostly “pleasant” and “relaxing.” Although positive, respondents gave “arousing” the lowest value. The low ratings of image attributes for non-visitors indicate a low confidence in their perceptions of Alabama. On the other hand, the image of the state of Alabama improves with visitation.

Qualitative results. In addition to the structured image attributes, there were three open-ended questions posed. The first question was: What image or characteristics come to mind when you think of the state of Alabama as a tourism destination? There were a total of 430 comments which were coded in NVivo 11, a qualitative software program to assist in the proper development of themes from the responses. The top five images or characteristics identified by people who had visited Alabama were: beaches/gulf, hot and humid climate, scenery, historic places and southern charm (tied), and southern stereotypes. Most of the comments from people who had visited were very positive which represent the top four images identified. Examples of positive responses were: “Civil War Ante Bellum Mansions and beautiful white sand beaches,” “I think of weeping willow trees and really hot summers. I also think of old plantation homes,” “great BBQ,” and “white sand beaches.” The top fifth image was labeled “southern stereotypes” and resulted in an equal mix of positive and negative responses. The positive responses included comments such as “good country people,” and “southern hospitality;” while the negative responses included comments, such as “redneck,” “backwoods,” and “hillbillies.”

The top five responses for people who had not visited Alabama were: none or nothing comes to mind, hot and humid climate, southern charm, beaches and football (tied) (see Table III). The prevalent difference between the two groups was that non-visitors had no image or characteristic that came to mind about Alabama, while visitors noted beaches the most positive image. Another major difference was that the people who had visited Alabama (visitors) reported scenery more frequently than those who had not been to Alabama.

Respondents were then asked to list any distinct or unique attractions that they can think of in the state of Alabama. There were an overwhelming number of responses (67 percent, 147 out of 220) of the non-visitors that could not identify a distinct or unique attraction in Alabama. These comments were: “I can’t think of anything,” “none,” and “I don’t know of any.” Even 23 percent (28 out of 120) of the visitors could not recall any distinct or unique attraction. This was the second most frequently ranked response (Table IV).

The last open-ended question was to provide the reason why you would not consider visiting Alabama for leisure. This was a follow up question for respondents who have never been to the state to see if they would consider traveling to the state. For those that answered

Image or characteristic	Visitors		Non-visitors		Total	
	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking
Climate (hot, humid)	20	2	35	2	55	2
Beaches/Gulf	35	1	26	4	61	1
Southern stereotypes	11	6	24	6	35	5
None/nothing	7	10	42	1	49	3
Historic	13	4	19	7	32	7
College Football	8	9	26	4	34	6
Universities	4	14	2	15	6	14
Cities	10	7	4	12	14	11
US Space & Rocket Center	5	12	1	16	6	14
Southern, charming	13	4	33	3	46	4
Country	5	12	14	8	19	9
Golf	0	0	5	14	5	16
Food	6	11	10	9	16	10
People (+)	10	7	4	12	14	11
People (-)	3	15	1	16	4	17
Music	1	16	8	10	9	13
Scenery	19	3	6	11	25	8
	170		260		430	

Table III.
Image or characteristics that come to mind when you think of Alabama

Table IV. Distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in the state of Alabama

Tourist attractions	Visitors (n = 120)		Non-visitors (n = 220)		Total (n = 340)	
	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking
None	28	2	147	1	175	1
Beaches/Gulf	42	1	16	2	58	2
Historic	23	3	14	3	37	3
Cities	22	4	12	4	34	4
Landscape/Scenery	3	10	7	5	20	5
US Space & Rocket Center	13	5	5	6	18	6
Universities	6	6	7	5	13	7
College Football	5	7	5	6	10	8
Outside activities	5	7	5	6	10	9
Food	5	7	1	10	6	10
Racing (NASCAR)	2	12	3	9	5	11
Friendly People	3	10	1	10	4	12
Warm climate	1	13	1	10	2	13
Golf	1	14	1	10	2	14

“no,” they were asked to provide a reason in their own words. The most popular answer was that they have “no interest (20 percent),” followed by “I’d rather travel to other places (18 percent)” and “don’t know about it or what it has to offer (17 percent).” The majority of responses were negative (Table V).

IPA

To meet the purpose of study, IPA was conducted to examine the difference in perceptions between visitors and non-visitors to identify strengths and weaknesses of the image of Alabama as a tourism destination. IPA is presented graphically using the y-axis “importance” and the x-axis “performance.” Respondents first indicated the importance of specified attributes and then reported the performance of the same attributes. Each attribute was plotted on the IPA graph and fell into one of the four quadrants: A. Concentrate here, B. Keep up the good work, C. Low priority, and D. Possible overkill. The mean values of both the importance attributes and performance attributes created the four quadrants. Two graphs were created: one for visitors and the other for non-visitors (Figures 1 and 2).

Importance-performance for visitors. The majority of attributes, 10 out 19, fell in Quadrant B (see Figure 1). These attributes included: “good quality restaurants,” “good quality hotels,” “safe place to visit,” “friendly local people,” “appealing local food,” “restful and relaxing place,” “natural scenic beauty,” “variety of historical attractions,” “pleasant weather,” and “good value for the money.” These attributes were rated highly important and

Reasons	Ranking	Frequency
No interest	1	16
Other places I would rather travel	2	15
Do not know about it or what it has to offer	3	14
Stereotypes	4	13
Do not like to visit the south	5	6
Visit family when I travel	6	6
Personal reasons	7	5
Nothing appealing	8	4
Distance	9	3
Total number of responses		82

Table V. Reason(s) why you would not travel to Alabama

Figure 1.
Importance-performance for visitors of Alabama

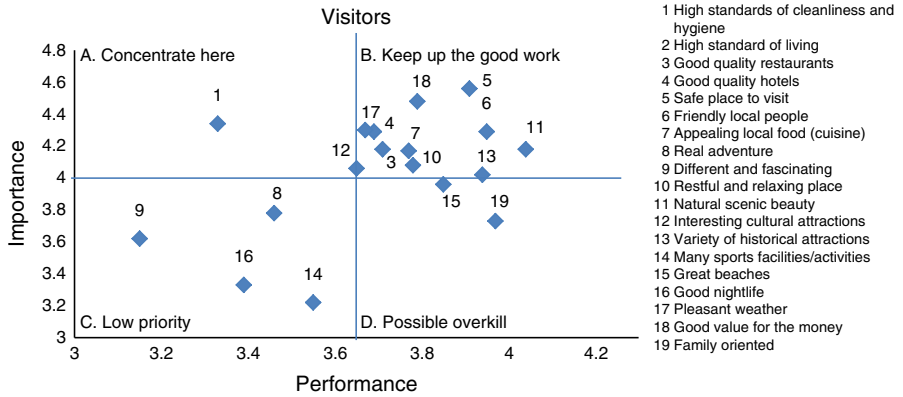
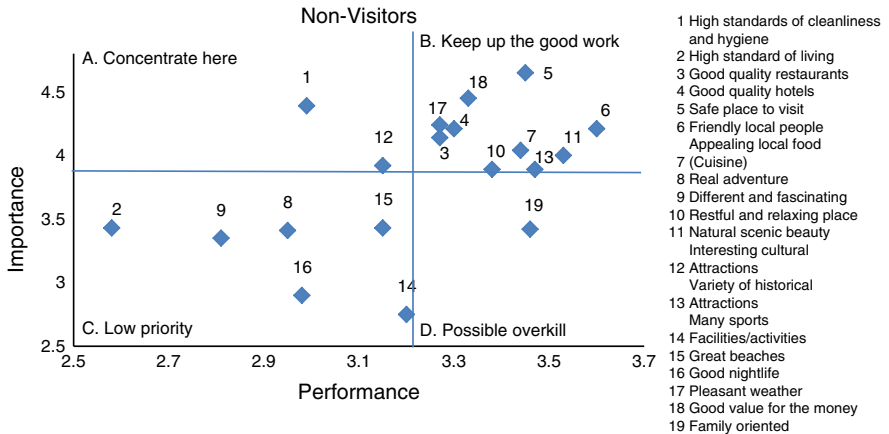


Figure 2.
Importance-performance for non-visitors of Alabama



performed highly meaning that not only do visitors perceive these attributes as important but Alabama is performing well in these areas and should keep up the good work. Five attributes (“high standard of living,” “real adventure,” “different and fascinating,” “many sports facilities/activities,” and “good nightlife”) fell in Quadrant C. These attributes were reported as the least on importance and performance: low priority. Quadrant D included two attributes (“great beaches” and “family oriented”) that reported high in performance yet low in importance: possible overkill. This means that Alabama may want to reconsider the appropriated resources to these two attributes, which would save money and yet meet the expectations of their visitors. Two attributes (“high standards of cleanliness and hygiene” and “interesting cultural attractions”) fell in Quadrant A. Any attribute that falls into this quadrant needs to be addressed because these attributes were rated as highly important yet the performance was low: concentrate here. In this case, this information gives the DMOs and tourism organizations of Alabama an area in which they should spend additional resources to improve the image and performance of the state as a tourism destination.

Importance-performance for non-visitors. Similarly, for non-visitors, ten of the same attributes fell in Quadrant B (see Figure 2). These attributes were highly important and performed well meaning that Alabama is doing a good job in these areas and should keep up the good work. Six attributes (“high standard of living,” “real adventure,” “different

and fascinating,” “many sports facilities/activities,” “great beaches,” and “good nightlife”) fell in Quadrant C. Compared to visitors, “great beaches” was added to this quadrant. These attributes were ranked as the least important and performed low: low priority. Quadrant D had only one attribute, “family oriented,” that ranked high in performance yet low in importance: possible overkill. This means that Alabama may not need to work on this image. Two of the same attributes as visitors (“high standards of cleanliness and hygiene” and “interesting cultural attractions”) fell in Quadrant A: concentrate here. These attributes need to be addressed because these were rated as highly important yet the performance was low. This is very interesting because the same results were found for both visitors and non-visitors.

Familiarity

Familiarity was measured using actual visitation and exposure to information. The results showed that the majority of respondents have never visited Alabama (64.7 percent). When looking into the exposure to information (Table VI), 41.8 percent said they “haven’t seen or heard any information about Alabama.” This shows that almost half of the respondents had no exposure to the state of Alabama, which is an indication of lack of marketing. For non-visitors, 54.5 percent have not seen or heard any information about Alabama and for visitors, it was 18.3 percent. In terms of information sources of the respondents that have been exposed to Alabama, for visitors, 48.3 percent received information from “friends/family members,” followed by “brochures/travel guides (47.5 percent),” “advertisements (36.7 percent),” “books (26.7 percent),” and “movies/TV dramas (23.3 percent).” For non-visitors, although all relatively low, the most popular source was “friends/family members (19.1 percent),” followed by “movies/TV dramas (16.4 percent),” “books (15 percent),” “advertisements (12.3 percent),” and “articles/news (12.3 percent).” The results of familiarity indicate a lack of tourism marketing efforts. Close to half of the respondents had no exposure to Alabama (41.8 percent) and the ones that had exposure, received their information from friends/family members. In addition, non-visitors that acquired some information about Alabama received it from non-travel-related sources rather than “brochures/travel guides” and “advertisements.” In comparison, a larger percentage of visitors actually received their information from “brochures/travel guides” and “advertisements,” which are tourism marketing efforts.

Information sources	Non-visitors (n = 220)		Visitors (n = 120)		Total (n = 340)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Travel agents	13	5.9	13	10.8	26	7.6
Friends/family members	42	19.1	58	48.3	100	29.4
Tour operators/companies	5	2.3	15	12.5	20	5.9
Books	33	15.0	32	26.7	65	19.1
Movies/TV dramas (non-travel related)	36	16.4	28	23.3	64	18.8
Reality TV shows	8	3.6	9	7.5	17	5.0
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)	12	5.5	19	15.8	31	9.1
Brochures/travel guides	12	5.5	57	47.5	69	20.3
Airlines	5	2.3	14	11.7	19	5.6
Advertisements	27	12.3	44	36.7	71	20.9
Articles/news	27	12.3	33	27.5	60	17.7
Travel-related TV shows (e.g. Travel Channel, Food Network, etc.)	19	8.6	28	23.3	47	13.8
Direct mail	4	1.8	9	7.5	13	3.8
None, I have not seen or heard any information about Alabama	120	54.5	22	18.3	142	41.8

Table VI. Information sources where respondents have seen or heard about the state of Alabama

Future intentions

There were four statements that measured future intentions. According to the independent *t*-test of visitors and non-visitors, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups (see Table II). The mean values were significantly higher for visitors. Two values were negative for non-visitors (“recommend others to visit Alabama for vacation ($M=2.81$)” and “recommend Alabama as a tourism destination to anyone I know ($M=2.76$)” and the other two were in the middle (“say positive things about Alabama to others ($M=3.11$)” and “like to visit Alabama for vacation in the future ($M=3.10$)”). This result makes sense because these respondents have never been to Alabama and thus do not have enough information or confidence to recommend the state to others. For visitors, although the mean values were not very high, they were all positive. The highest ranked statement was “I would like to visit Alabama for vacation in the future ($M=3.84$).” However, interestingly, the lowest ranked statement was “I will recommend Alabama as a tourism destination to anyone I know ($M=3.44$).” The respondents that have been to Alabama would like to go back themselves but to a lesser degree would recommend to others to visit.

Discussion and conclusions

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the image and familiarity of Alabama as a tourism destination. More specifically, this study examined the difference in perceptions between visitors and non-visitors using quantitative and qualitative data to identify strengths and weaknesses of the image of Alabama.

The qualitative results revealed the predominant difference between people who have visited Alabama and those who had never visited was their image or lack of image of Alabama. Non-visitors had no image or characteristic that came to mind when asked about their image of Alabama, while people who had visited noted beaches the most positive image. Also, when respondents were asked why they would not travel to Alabama, the top answer was “no interest,” followed by “other places I’d rather travel to” and “don’t know about it or what it has to offer.” These results show the lack of marketing of the state that possibly led to unfamiliarity. As mentioned at the beginning of the study, if there is no perception of a destination, it is not in people’s choice set.

The IPA results did not show many differences between visitors’ perceptions of the state of Alabama and non-visitors’ perceptions, yet important information was revealed. Based on the cognitive and affective images, overall, respondents perceived Alabama to be a pleasant, relaxing, and family oriented place. The results showed that for those seeking more excitement and fun activities, they may not necessarily consider Alabama. Perhaps DMOs can show arousing and exciting activities that the state offers, such as festivals and sporting events. Since Alabama is home to the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail, Talladega Speedway, national sand volleyball tournaments, and renowned collegiate sports, capitalizing on these activities in marketing efforts may attract those visitors who seek exciting activities. Non-visitors may not know these activities are offered or take place in Alabama and thus do not consider Alabama as a travel destination.

The IPA results showed that Alabama performs well in many areas such as having quality restaurants and hotels, friendly people and southern hospitality and they should continue to support those efforts because they are important to visitors. However, there were two distinct attributes that DMOs should pay close attention to. The aspects of cleanliness and hygiene and cultural attractions were both important destination attributes but performance was low. DMOs may be able to improve performance by instituting stricter regulations that monitor the maintenance of public settings and increase the marketing efforts to promote the vast historic and cultural attractions the state offers.

The results also showed that the destination is not in people's choice set as a tourism destination. When respondents were asked to list any distinct or unique attractions, over half of the respondents (175 out of 340) could not recall one. Especially when seeking first-time visitors to the state because potential visitors do not have the information they need to make the decision to visit, the state of Alabama may consider combating this situation with an aggressive ad campaign to highlight what Alabama has to offer. It is critical to note that four of the top five states where respondents reside are not geographically located near Alabama. Thus, this could be a contributing factor to the lack of information. Extending advertising efforts beyond the southeast may increase people's awareness of the destination.

Additionally, based on information sources, non-visitors were not exposed to Alabama very much. If they were, it was through friends/family, non-travel-related movies/TV dramas, or books. On the other hand, visitors received their information about Alabama via brochures/travel guides and advertisements after friends/family. Based on these results, it is possible to suggest that non-visitors might visit the state of Alabama if they were exposed to the state via official marketing channels (e.g. brochures/travel guides, advertisements).

When asked about future intentions to visit Alabama, non-visitor results were low primarily due to the lack of information regarding Alabama. For visitors, the mean values were not very high, yet they were all positive. The highest ranked statement was "I would like to visit Alabama for vacation in the future." Interestingly, the lowest ranked statement was "I will recommend Alabama as a tourism destination to anyone I know." DMOs should determine why people who have visited Alabama would like to go back themselves yet they may not recommend others to visit. Resources should be allocated to increase the likelihood of repeat visitation and positive recommendations to others. By doing so, the state of Alabama would see an increase in tourism revenue.

Practical implications

There are several important implications for the Alabama Tourism Department and DMOs within the state of Alabama as a result of this study. The results indicate there may be a lack of destination marketing and there is substantial room for improvement. Visitors and non-visitors agreed that cleanliness and cultural attractions were important destination attributes yet performance was low. Even though non-visitors have not experienced the destination the perception is the same as visitors. More evidence of lack of marketing is found in the qualitative results. The majority of respondents were not able to provide a distinctive or unique tourist attraction in Alabama and many responded that they would not visit the state because they "don't know about it or what it has to offer" (third popular answer). In addition, lack of marketing evidence was found where respondents received information regarding Alabama. For visitors, information sources included travel-related sources, such as brochures/travel guides and advertisements. However, for non-visitors, the majority of information was received by friends/family or non-travel related sources. This lack of marketing of the state could have possibly led to unfamiliarity. These results in combination with the finding that there are no positive intentions to visit, or make a recommendation to visit, provide evidence there is an opportunity to develop a more positive image of Alabama. Knowing that people who visit want to revisit, provides evidence that by increasing first-time visitors Alabama would also increase repeat visitation.

Theoretical implications

The results of this study also have implications for academia. This was the first empirical study about the image of Alabama as a tourism destination. This study used both cognitive and affective images in addition to qualitative (unstructured) data to provide a more unique and holistic destination image as suggested by Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) study.

In an effort to evaluate the destination's position better, IPA was used to compare the performance of destination attributes and importance of those attributes (Pike and Ryan, 2004). This method has not been extensively used in tourism research. Finally, familiarity was operationalized as a composite of experiential (actual visitation) and informational familiarity (exposure to destination-related information) (Baloglu, 2001). The results of this study support the notion that people who are familiar (actual experience and information sources) with the destination – visitors – have a more positive image than non-visitors (e.g. Ahmed, 1991; Baloglu, 2001; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Chon, 1991; Dann, 1996; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Fridgen, 1987; Hu and Ritchie, 1993; Kerstetter and Cho, 2004; Konecnik, 2002; Milman and Pizam, 1995; Phillips and Jang, 2010). There were statistically significant differences found in all cognitive and affective image attributes of Alabama, familiarity, and future intentions between previous visitors and non-visitors.

Limitations and future research

There are several limitations to this study. First, the sample size should be increased to verify the results of the study. Since this is the first destination image study for the state of Alabama comparison cannot be made. Second, surveying respondents in a closer proximity to Alabama may reveal different results since four of the top five states where respondents reside were California, New York, Texas, and Illinois. Tourism marketing efforts may have focused on the southeast region of the USA and not nationally thus justifying why Alabama is not in people's choice set as a tourism destination.

Third, the purpose of visit of those that have previously been to Alabama was not examined in this study. Perhaps this information could answer the question why those that have previously visited would travel back in the future but not necessarily recommend the destination to others. For example, if their purpose of visit were to visit friends and relatives, they would most likely go back for that same reason. However, they might not consider the destination as a leisure travel destination to recommend to others.

Finally, a qualitative study may provide insight into specific reasons why people choose or do not choose to visit Alabama. Future studies should also focus on the impact of future marketing efforts and monitor the changes in tourist perceptions of destination image. Since tourism has increased over the past few years, future studies should also measure tourist intentions to return and explore reasons why people revisit and why they do not.

References

- Ahmed, Z.U. (1991), "The influence of the components of a state's tourist image on product positioning strategy", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 331-340.
- Alabama Tourism Department (2017), "2016 economic report", available at: http://tourism.alabama.gov/content/uploads/FullFY16AnnualReport4_17.pdf (accessed October 5, 2017).
- Alba, J.W. and Hutchinson, J.W. (1987), "Dimensions of consumer expertise", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 13 No. 4, pp. 411-454.
- Baker, W., Hutchinson, J., Moore, D. and Nedungadi, P. (1986), "Brand familiarity and advertising: effects on the evoked set and brand preference", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 637-642.
- Baloglu, S. (2000), "A path analytic model of visitation intention involving information sources, socio-psychological motivations, and destination image", *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 81-90.
- Baloglu, S. (2001), "Image variations of Turkey by familiarity index: informational and experiential dimensions", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 127-133.

- Baloglu, S. and McCleary, K.W. (1999), "A model of destination image formation", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26 No. 4, pp. 868-897.
- Berli, A. and Martín, J. (2004), "Factors influencing destination image", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 657-681.
- Bonn, M.A., Joseph, S.M. and Dai, M. (2005), "International versus domestic visitors: an examination of destination image perceptions", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 43 No. 3, pp. 294-301.
- Chen, C.F. and Tsai, D.C. (2007), "How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions?", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 28 No. 4, pp. 1115-1122.
- Chen, J.S. and Hsu, C.H.C. (2000), "Measurement of Korean tourists' perceived images of overseas destinations", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp. 411-416.
- Choi, W.M., Chan, A. and Wu, J. (1999), "A qualitative and quantitative assessment of Hong Kong's image as a tourist destination", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 361-365.
- Chon, K.S. (1991), "Tourism destination image modification process: marketing implications", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 68-72.
- Cordell, V.V. (1997), "Consumer knowledge measures as predictors in product evaluation", *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 241-260.
- Crompton, J.L. (1979), "An assessment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of geographical location upon that image", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 18-23.
- Crompton, J.L. (1992), "Structure of vacation destination choice sets", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 420-434.
- Dadgostar, B. and Isotalo, R. (1996), "Content of city destination image for near-home tourists", *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 25-34.
- Dann, G.M.S. (1996), "Tourist images of a destination: an alternative analysis", in Fesenmaier, D.R., O'Leary, J.T. and Uysal, M. (Eds), *Recent Advances in Tourism Marketing Research*, The Haworth Press, New York, NY, pp. 41-55.
- Deng, Q. and Li, M. (2014), "A model of event-destination image transfer", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 53 No. 1, pp. 69-82.
- Echtner, C.M. and Ritchie, B.J.R. (1993), "The measurement of destination image: an empirical assessment", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 3-13.
- Fakeye, P.C. and Crompton, J.L. (1991), "Image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the lower Rio Grande Valley", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 10-16.
- Fridgen, J.D. (1987), "Use of cognitive maps to determine perceived tourism regions", *Leisure Sciences*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 101-117.
- Gallarza, M.G., Saura, I.G. and Garcia, H.C. (2002), "Destination image: towards a conceptual framework", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 56-78.
- Gartner, W. (1989), "Tourism image attribute measurement of state tourism products using multi-dimensional scaling techniques", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 16-20.
- Gursoy, D. (2011), *Modeling Tourist Information Search Behavior: A Structural Modeling Approach*, Lambert Academic Publishing, Saarbrücken.
- Hahm, J. and Wang, Y.C. (2011), "Film-induced tourism as a vehicle for destination marketing: Is it worth the efforts?", *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 165-179.
- Hu, Y. and Ritchie, J.R.B. (1993), "Measuring destination attractiveness: a contextual approach", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 25-34.
- Joppe, M., Martin, D.W. and Waalen, J. (2001), "Toronto's image as a destination: a comparative importance-satisfaction analysis by origin of visitor", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 39 No. 3, pp. 252-260.
- Kaplanidou, K. (2009), "Relationships among behavioral intentions, cognitive event and destination images among different geographic regions of Olympic games spectators", *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 249-272.

- Kerstetter, D. and Cho, M. (2004), "Prior knowledge, credibility and information search", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 961-985.
- King, C., Chen, N. and Funk, D.C. (2015), "Exploring destination image decay: a study of sport tourists' destination image change after event participation", *Journal of Hospitality Tourism Research*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 3-31.
- Konecnik, M. (2002), "The image as a possible source of competitive advantage of the destination – the case of Slovenia", *Tourism Review*, Vol. 57 Nos 1/2, pp. 6-12.
- Kuo, Y., Chen, J. and Deng, W. (2012), "IPA-Kano model: a new tool for categorizing and diagnosing service quality attributes", *Total Quality Management*, Vol. 23 No. 7, pp. 731-748.
- Lee, T.H. (2009), "A structural model to examine how destination image, attitude, and motivation affect the future behavior of tourists", *Leisure Sciences*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 215-236.
- Leisen, B. (2001), "Image segmentation: the case of a tourism destination", *Journal of Service Marketing*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 49-55.
- McCartney, G., Butler, R. and Bennett, M. (2008), "A strategic use of the communication mi in the destination image-formation process", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 47 No. 2, pp. 183-196.
- Martilla, J.A. and James, J.C. (1977), "Importance-performance analysis", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 41 No. 1, pp. 77-79.
- Milman, A. and Pizam, A. (1995), "The role of awareness and familiarity with a destination: the Central Florida case", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 33 No. 3, pp. 21-27.
- Murphy, L. (1999), "Australia's image as a holiday destination: perceptions of backpacker visitors", *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 21-45.
- Nadeau, J., Heslop, L., O'Reilly, N. and Luk, P. (2008), "Destination in a country image context", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 84-106.
- National Travel and Tourism Office (2017), "Overseas visitors to select US states and territories 2015-2016", available at: http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/outreachpages/download_data_table/2016%20Excel%20PDF%20Top%20States.pdf (accessed October 5, 2017).
- O'Leary, S. and Deegan, J. (2003), "People, pace, place: qualitative and quantitative images of Ireland as a tourism destination in France", *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 213-226.
- Park, O., Lehto, X. and Houston, C. (2013), "Assessing competitive attributes of service quality in university foodservice", *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 235-254.
- Phillips, W.M.J. and Jang, S.C. (2010), "Destination image differences between visitors and non-visitors: a case of New York City", *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 12 No. 5, pp. 642-645.
- Pike, S. and Ryan, C. (2004), "Destination positioning analysis through a comparison of cognitive, affective, and conative perceptions", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 333-342.
- Prentice, R. (2006), "Evocation and experiential seduction: updating choice-sets modeling", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 27 No. 6, pp. 1153-1170.
- Prentice, R. and Andersen, V. (2003), "Festival as creative destination", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 30 No. 1, pp. 7-30.
- Rail, A., Rail, J., Varela, J. and Real, E. (2008), "An application of importance-performance analysis (IPA) to the management of sport centers", *Managing Leisure*, Vol. 13 Nos 3-4, pp. 179-188.
- Rood, A. and Dziadkowiec, J. (2013), "Cross cultural service gap analysis: comparing SERVQUAL customers and IPA mystery shoppers", *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 359-377.
- Sharifpour, M., Walters, G., Ritchie, B. and Winter, C. (2014), "Investigating the role of prior knowledge in tourist decision making: a structural equation model of risk perceptions and information search", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 53 No. 3, pp. 307-322.
- Sirakaya, E. and Woodside, A.G. (2005), "Building and testing theories of decision making by travelers", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 26 No. 6, pp. 815-832.

-
- Smith, W.W., Li, X., Pan, B., Witte, M. and Doherty, S.T. (2015), "Tracking destination image across the trip experience with smartphone technology", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 48 June, pp. 113-122.
- Sonmez, S.F. and Sirakaya, E. (2002), "A distorted destination image? The case of Turkey", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 41 No. 2, pp. 185-196.
- Strull, T. (1983), "The role of prior knowledge in the acquisition, retention, and use of new information", in Bagozzi, R. and Tybout, A. (Eds), *Advances in Consumer Research*, Association for Consumer Research, Ann Arbor, MI, pp. 572-576.
- Sun, X., Chi, C.G.Q. and Xu, H. (2013), "Developing destination loyalty: the case of Hainan Island", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 43 October, pp. 547-577.
- Tan, W. and Wu, C. (2016), "An investigation of the relationships among destination familiarity, destination image and future visit intention", *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 214-226.
- Tasci, A., Gartner, W. and Cavusgil, S. (2007), "Conceptualization and operationalization of destination image", *Journal of Hospitality Tourism Research*, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 194-223.
- Tian-Cole, S., Crompton, J. and Willson, V.L. (2002), "An empirical investigation of the relationships between service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions among visitors to a wildlife refuge", *Journal of Leisure Research*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 1-24.
- Um, S. and Crompton, J.L. (1990), "Attitude determinants of tourism destination choice", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 432-448.
- Wang, Y.J., Wu, K. and Yuan, J. (2010), "Exploring visitors' experiences and intention to revisit a heritage destination: the case for Lukang, Taiwan", *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and Tourism*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 162-178.
- Zhang, H., Fu, X., Cai, L.A. and Li, L. (2014), "Destination image and tourist loyalty: a meta-analysis", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 40 February, pp. 213-223.

Corresponding author

Jeeyeon (Jeannie) Hahm can be contacted at: jeeyeon.hahm@ucf.edu

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

Reproduced with permission of copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.