*Comparing Tourist Destination Images between Pre-trip and Post-trip*

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0129

The Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities 2013

Official Conference Proceedings 2013

Abstract

There are several studies identified tourism destination image to three types-original image, reduced image, and complex image based on before and after traveler's itinerary. However, the dimension of comparing the transformation of these three types in different formation stages is not emphasized. This research aims to explore the transformation of the organic image before the trip and the complex image after the trip based on the traveler's experiences, and then further approach to the important forces which influence images development.

This research identified four major dimensions-nature ecology, religious culture, leisure activity, and travel atmosphere to analyze the tourism destination image through literature reviews. Using these four dimensions extended to design 24 image items as the measuring determinants of the reduced images and the complex images of the travelers.

We conducted to 400 questionnaires for two categories travelers-with the travel experience (after the trip) and without the travel experience (before the trip) by cluster sampling way. The 24 image items were factor analyzed using $t$ test and principal component analysis with a varimax rotation procedure to examine whether the reduced image and the complex image transformed or not, and the influences of stimulus factors and personal factors to destination image development.

There were two study findings in this research. First, the reduced image and the complex image transformed with significance, especially identified in dimensions on nature ecology and travel atmosphere of the reduced images, and on religious culture and leisure activity of the complex images. Secondly, from the 16 items distinguished based on $p < 0.05$ significance level, the stimulus factors than personal factors played more important role to the development of destination image.
**Keywords: Tourism destination image, Organic image, Complex image**

## 1. Introduction

Numerous studies have used cognitive and affective image components to measure destination image (Walmsley & Jenkins 1992; Baloglu & Brinberg 1997; Baloglu 2001; Chen 2001; Wang & Hsu 2010; Kim & Perdue 2011). The cognitive image, also defined as an evaluative image, is referred to beliefs and knowledge about the physical attributes of a destination and the way people evaluate places (Crompton 1979). Alternatively, the affective image is referred to the emotional feelings about the destination attributes and its surrounding environment (Baloglu & McClearly 1999). Several studies tested and validated the scale measuring the affective image construct by using four semantic differential scales, such as arousing–sleepy, pleasant–unpleasant, exciting–gloomy and relaxing–distressing (Walmsley & Jenkins 1992; Hanyu 1993; Baloglu & Brinberg 1997; Martinez & Alvarez 2010; Kim & Perdue 2011).

Investigating the influence of image on destination choice has been a popular research topic (e.g. Gartner 1989; Bign´e et al. 2001; Ramkissoon et al. 2011). These studies concluded that destination image creates pre-trip expectations that influence visitor decision-making (Gartner 1989; Woodside & Lysonski 1989; Fakeye & Crompton 1991; Papadimitriou & Gibson 2008) during and after-trip evaluations as well as their future intentions to revisit a destination (Wang & Hsu 2010; Ramkissoon et al. 2011). Crompton (1992) enunciated that any pre-travel negative or indifferent images of the destination may encourage visitors to remove the region from the set of awareness choices. As a result, the suggestion was made to treat the concept of destination image as consisting of different components. The two major dimensions of destination image that are widely accepted are cognitive and affective components (Baloglu & McClearly 1999; Wang & Hsu 2010; Kim & Perdue 2011).


Mayo & Jarvis (1981) indicated positive tourist perceptions enhance decision-making for travelling. Many researches present the more positive impression of tourist destination image (TDI) is, the more travel motive (Um & Crompton, 1990; Rittichainuwat, et al., 2001; O'Leary & Deegan, 2005; Prayag, 2007; Kim & Perdue, 2011). It is becoming increasingly important to identify different elements of destination image in order to promote marketing and maintain competitiveness (Konecnik, 2002; Prayag, 2010). There are many literatures discussing about that destination image changes according to different tourist attributes (Lai & Li 2012) and destination attributes such as core area or periphery area exists in the structures of tourist destination images (Lai & Li 2012). To provide a more comprehensive concept of TDI, a designed model to distinguish the structure of TDI in different shaping

stages was developed based on previous literature review.

Tourist destination image is composed of cognitive imagery and emotional imagery. Cognitive imagery refers to travelers' consciousness towards tangible characteristics of the environment, which focuses on the real properties of the tourist destination; emotional imagery refers to travelers' emotions to the tourist destination, which centers on the abstract properties (Baloglu Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a). The formation of the tourist destination image is influenced by personal factors and stimulus factors. Personal factors include cognitive, emotional and demographic attributes in the psychological level such as travel motivation. Stimulus factors include tangible things, past experiences, sources of information, etc. (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Beerli & Martin, 2004).

Fakeye and Crompton (1991) divided the tourist destination image into three types - organic image, induced image and complex image. Original image refers to the information that is casual and obtained through non-active search, the source of which is not dominated by tourism professionals, rather, comes from newspaper reports, magazine articles, news coverage, videos, geography or history books. Induced image refers to the information dominated by tourism professionals, e.g. advertisements on sightseeing, tourist information publications and cyberspace set up by tourism professionals, which are mainly marketing and promotion practices carried out by tourism professionals for publicity. Complex image refers to tourists' actual travel experience after reaching the tourist destinations, which will later affect their willingness to revisit the place after reassessment.

Fakeye and Crompton suggest that the tourist destination image can be divided into three types - organic image, induced image and complex image. However, the researcher believes that before their arrival, it is difficult for tourists to identify whether a variety of information they have received is dominated by tourism professionals or not. Thus, in this research, tourist destination image can only be divided into two types - organic image and complex image.

Tourist destination image is complex and multi-faceted, involving tourists' subjectivity and various travel behaviors. The tourist destination image before tourists' arrival is the important factor in tourists' choice of future tourist destinations (Gunn, 1972). Gunn (1988) points out that tourists' formation of the tourist destination image is a series of processes, which can be divided into seven stages.

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### *Study Area*

Song-Bo-Keng area, located on Ba-qua-shan platform with altitude for 500 meters, includes unique resorts, bike lanes with beautiful landscapes, hiking trails with a lot of tea farms, and pilgrim places. In Taiwan, this recreation area is famous for tea production, with platform terrain, climate, soil conditions suitable for tea cultivating.

Table 1 Tourist spots of Songboling recreation area

| Resorts | Bike Lanes |
|---|---|
| 1. Heng-Shan Butastur indicus -view terrace | 1.Evergreen Bike Lane |
| 2.Chi-Shui-Qi Park | 2.Yong-Xing Bike Lane |
| 3. Tian-Zhong Forest Park | 3.Chi-Shui Bike Lane |
| 4. Osmanthus Forest Park | 4.Er-Shui Bike Lane |
| 5.Army Base Park | |
| 6. Feng-Bo Plaza | |
| 7.Ba-Bao-Jun Park | |
| 8.Formosan rock-monkey Preservation Area | |
| 9. Cha-Mi-Xiang Recreational Farm | |
| **Hiking Trails** | **Pilgrim Places** |
| 1.Deng-Miao Trail | 1. Imperial Lord Temple |
| 2. Heng-Shan Butastur indicus view Trail | 2.Qing-Shui-Yan Temple |
| 3.Wooden Plank Road | 3.Lin-Xian-Sheng Temple |
| 4.Tea Fragrance Trail | |
| 5.Eighteen Curve Ancient Trail | |

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Data Collection

This research examined the difference dimension between tourists' organic image (tourists who have not visited the place) and their complex image (tourists who have visited the place) in Song-Bo-Keng area. The samples subjects are divided to two group, those tourists who have visited Song-Bo-Keng area and those who have not, and different tourist destination images are probed into. The research hypothesis is as follows:

Research Hypothesis 1: The tourist destination image of tourists who have not visited Song-Bo-Keng area is organic image.

Research Hypothesis 2: The tourist destination image of tourists who have visited Song-Bo-Keng area is complex image.

As for target people of the questionnaire survey, analysis is conducted on the complex image of tourists at Song-Bo-Keng area through convenience sampling. Then the organic image of tourists who have not visited Song-Bo-Keng area (Riyuetan Pool which receives the largest number of tourists among all tourist attractions in 2010 is selected) is analyzed through the questionnaire survey and purposive sampling.

To ensure the content validity of the questionnaire, researcher's scale is revised based on the expert validity assessment. As for the scoring of the questionnaire, Likert's five-level rank scale is adopted, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" at two ends, which are respectively corresponding to 5 points, 4 points, 3 points, 2 points and 1 point.

### 2.2 Data Analysis

In this research, simple descriptive statistics, such as the mean, standard deviation and percentage, are applied to the analysis of the demographic attributes of tourists, while reliability test is adopted to analyze the reliability of the questionnaire items. Cronbach'sα reliability coefficient is employed to analyze the consistency and reliability of the questionnaire results, in which, the greater the Cronbach'sα value, the greater the correlation between each item, and the higher the internal consistency; independent samples T-test is used to identify whether there is significant difference between each statistical variables of visitors who have visited the place and those who have not; Pearson Product-moment Correlation is applied to find out whether there is a positive correlation between the organic image and complex image of the two

groups of visitors, and further explain the positive or negative correlation, if there is any, or absence of correlation.

## 3. Result

### *3.1 TDIs in different stages*

(I) Complex image: the survey made of tourists with the complex image of the Song-Bo-Keng area reveals that among the 24 tourist destination images, the top ten relevant ones are successively: 1. No communication problems during travel in Song-Bo-Keng area. 2. Trekking paths available for fitness and sightseeing in Song-Bo-Keng area. 3. Refreshing tea garden scenery in Song-Bo-Keng area. 4. Beautiful natural landscape in Song-Bo-Keng area. 5. Quiet and peaceful atmosphere in Song-Bo-Keng area. 6. Comfortable and pleasant climate in Song-Bo-Keng area. 7. Educational functions of natural ecology in Song-Bo-Keng area. 8. Distinctive rural landscape in Song-Bo-Keng area. 9. Sports and leisure facilities available along the cycling lanes in Song-Bo-Keng area. 10. Song-Bo-Keng area is a resort for relaxation.

(II) Organic image: the top ten least different items during the two stages are: 1. Unique folklore in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.0368 2. A large number of cultural relics and exhibits in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.0543. 3. Song-Bo-Keng area is not an overcrowded scenic area, with an average disparity of 0.0617. 4. A variety of outdoor recreation activities available in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.1485. 5. Easy access to relevant tourist information in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.1856. 6. Clean environment in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.2025. 7. Song-Bo-Keng area is a famous and reputable tourist attraction, with an average disparity of 0.2438. 8. Sports and leisure facilities available along the cycling lanes in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.2652. 9. Representative cultural landscape in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.2715 10. Friendly local residents in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.2742.

(III) Difference between the two stages: through investigation and analysis, tourists in the two stages show difference in their cognition, and the top ten most different items are: 1. No communication problems during travel in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.5469. 2. Religious and cultural heritage in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.4739. 3. Quiet and peaceful atmosphere in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.4651 4. Beautiful landscape in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.4331. 5. Educational functions of natural ecology in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.4129. 6.

Refreshing tea garden scenery in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.4078. 7. Comfortable and pleasant climate in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.3965. 8. Easy access to Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.3947. 9. Song-Bo-Keng area is a resort for relaxation, with an average disparity of 0.3902 10. Distinctive rural landscape in Song-Bo-Keng area, with an average disparity of 0.3688.

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