
14 Investigating the affective image of emerging tourism destinations

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The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Identify the elements associated with the destination image of a Brazilian emerging destination related to sentiments expressed by international tourists;
- Explore the methods of descending hierarchical analysis and similarity analysis as a technique to complement the sentiment analysis using the data obtained from social media;
- Apply the methodology based on the computer assisted qualitative data analysis to perform a sentimental Analysis using hybrid methods, namely lexical analysis, and cluster techniques;
- Point out the tourism destination has a positive image although it has some problems similar to overdeveloped destinations despite it is an emerging destination;
- Conclude that the tourism destination generated place attachment by its pleasantness, but also, annoyed feelings due to the harassment by local vendors.

Keywords: Sentiment analysis; destination image; emerging tourism destinations; descending hierarchical analysis; similarity analysis; Brazil

Introduction

Emerging tourism destinations are building their image and characteristics step-to-step, sometimes in a self-knowledge process. In this stage, destination marketing organizations have more responsibility for attracting and retaining valued visitors through effective promotional strategies (Esu and Ebitu, 2010). Since the 1990s, Brazil has emerged as a potential long-haul tourism destination in South America (Bianchi, Pike and Lings, 2014). However, few cities have concentrated on the tourist flow, e.g. Rio de Janeiro, Foz do Iguassu or some parts of Northeast coast. Currently, other cities have a growing international tourism flow, as emerging tourism destinations.

The annual survey of international tourist demand conducted by the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism (MTur) points out that 58.8% of foreign tourists travel to Brazil motivated by the leisure, of which 71.7% is related to sun and beach. The data also indicates that 79.6% of tourists do not use travel agencies or tourism packages; therefore, they are more independent travelers. In addition, 55.5% identified the internet as their main information source to support choosing Brazil for their holidays (Brazilian Ministry of Tourism, 2019). Indeed, online comments are a viable source of information used by tourists to decide their holiday destination.

In this context, tourists' comments shared through social media impact tourism destinations to boost or hinder the demand. Destination authorities can use this information source to improve the tourism performance, as a part of their marketing research or as an application of either internal or external benchmarking using qualitative measures, i.e., monitoring the changes in the overall performance of destinations (Kozak, 2004). However, it is a high volume of data, thus the processing demands analytical approaches (Alaei, Becken and Stantic, 2019). One useful approach is the sentiment analysis extracted from semantic meaning in tourists' reviews (Alaei, Becken and Stantic, 2019; Mehraliyev, Kirilenko and Choi, 2020).

The online comments, such as Tripadvisor, FourSquare, etc., represent electronic word-of-mouth (Phillips et al., 2017) and have a particular importance to emerging destinations as a cheaper way of marketing research. However, the research on these destinations is scarce. Indeed, despite the attention that scholars and practitioners have given to this phenomena, little is known about how tourists' comments shared through social media impact the image of tourism destinations (Li et al., 2017). As a result, the originality and value of this research is, on the one hand, because it identifies positive elements to be used on destination marketing that represent the destination. On the other hand, the findings show some points to improve, because they generate negative sentiments for tourists. The study offers a hierarchy of problems to be solved by destination authorities.

Literature review

Currently, electronic word-of-mouth reaches a broader scope of communication and interactivity. Therefore, managers can use the information available online for developing offers and knowledge about their market, to provide a better tourism experience (Dolnicar and Ring, 2014; Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan, 2008). Understanding the emotional experience generated by tourism is essential for the development of the industry, as tourism is part of the experience economy (Ma et al., 2017); besides, it is a preliminary step in marketing research. Sigala (2016) highlights that online platforms are a two-way avenue, as information production and consumption occur, and they can be used as a process of value co-creation. Therefore, online platforms are suitable to gather information about the tourism experience provided by a destination; they represent electronic word of mouth recommendation.

The image of a tourism destination has cognitive and affective aspects and influences tourists' purchasing behavior. In emerging destinations, it is essential to monitor the elements that visitors associate with the tourism destination, as it will impact on their image, their positioning and identity (Chen and Tsai, 2007). The emotions evoked by a tourism destination in its visitors generate both place attachment and affective image. 'Place attachment' can be defined as the concerns and values that connect a person with the place (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). It is a field still little explored, related to environmental psychology, that studies the feelings generated by items or actions that connect a person with a place. It also represents values that the individual grants to the place, that creates connection and can increase the likelihood of repeat visitation and word or mouth recommendation.

Environmental psychology corresponds to a sub-area of psychology that studies the interrelationship between individuals and their actions with the environment (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). One theoretical background of environmental psychology studies is the stimulus-organism-response model (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Environmental psychology examines characteristics that influence individuals, such as marketing mix variables and other environmental inputs. The organism is the internal process and structure intervening between the stimuli external to the person. Both affect the emotional responses of consumers (Chang, Eckman and Ya, 2011). This approach suggests a multiplicity of perspectives and, therefore, interdisciplinary dialogues in several areas of knowledge, e.g. tourism (Mehraliyev, Kirilenko and Choi, 2020; Miller, Merrilees and Coghlan, 2015).

Taking advantage of the large volume of data available on the internet, to boost business, is the current challenge for organizations (O'Leary, 2011). In the tourism industry, social media and blogs are sources of information