

Marketing Innovations for Sustainable Destinations

14 A Study of Non-visitors: Which Image Do They Hold of Destinations Not Visited?

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Armelle Maumelat, Enita Clermont-Ferrand

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Introduction

Image has always been a topic of interest among tourism scholars and practitioners as it represents a central element in consumers' selection and consumption processes. If numerous studies have been conducted on current customers, the market of non-consumers remains relatively unexplored. Non-visitors constitute a segment of potential customers holding interesting information on the image shortcomings and therefore on strategic marketing orientations that should be taken. This chapter is concerned with the reasons why a destination might not be chosen. The destination selected for the study was that of Auvergne, in central France, which has suffered image problems for many years. After a literature review, the chapter will describe how a study was conducted (focus groups) with Parisian participants. The novel method used to elicit and understand better the limits of the Auvergne image (i.e. drawing) will be described.

Literature Review

Image has been the object of intense academic interest over the past decade since it is a critical element in the tourist visitation intention (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Chon, 1990; Crompton, 1979; Goodrich, 1978; Sirakaya et al., 2001; Um and Crompton, 1990; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989).

Image is a vast and vague concept, which has been defined as 'an attitudinal construct consisting of an individual's mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings and global impressions about an object or destination' (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999: 70). Tourist destination image is therefore constituted not solely of the sum of individual tangible and intangible attributes, it refers also to a more holistic and global feeling about the destination (Crompton, 1979; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Gallarza et al., 2002). In other terms the study of image needs to integrate the idea that a tourist destination image cannot be reduced to a set of cumulative attributes, it is also the result of more global feelings, which translate into abstract impressions about a destination. For instance, the atmosphere, the spirit of the destination, its exotic/different dimensions, all contribute to the image formed in tourists' minds. This holistic component has been stressed in Echtner and Ritchie's work (1991), among others, and represent an important part of image analysis.

Chapter extract

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