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Climbing to New Heights: Lessons From Mount Everest on PCI and TDI Convergence

John Nadeau, Louise A. Heslop, Norman O'Reilly, and Peter Luk

Honourable Mention
Administrative Sciences Association of Canada, International Business Division (2006)

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Abstract

This paper applies attitude theory to assess the influence of beliefs and evaluations of Nepal with desired linkages and travel intentions. The main contribution is to connect TDI and PCI research by testing a general country image model in a tourism context. Attitude theory acts as the connection between the two fields.

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Climbing to New Heights:
Lessons From Mount Everest on PCIi and TDI Convergence

Introduction

Product-Country Image ('PCI') and Tourism Destination Image ('TDI') are two fields of research that have evolved separately through distinct literature and isolated research communities. TDI generally refers to images held by people about a travel destination, while PCI refers to the images people hold about countries with regards to the purchase of products whose production is related to the country (i.e. made in, designed in, head office in, located in). Although the development of each research area has generally occurred in isolation, both streams investigate complex images held by people about places and how those images affect consumer decisions. Attitude has been recognized as an underlying shared basis between PCI and TDI literature and a desire to draw the two fields together has recently been exhibited (see Mossberg and Kleppe, 2005). This paper leverages an attitude-based PCI model into the TDI context.

Images are simplifications of more complex ideas. "Image represents the sum of beliefs, attitudes, and impressions that a person or group has of an object. The object may be a company, product, brand, place, or person. The impressions may be true or false, real or imagined, but regardless, images guide and shape behaviour." (Barich and Kotler, 1991, p.95). As this definition articulates, images are important because they influence decision-making and behaviour. Images guide behaviour by providing a cue for information processing. Images are knowledge structures used as mental short-cuts for processing information in decision-making processes (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). In marketing, images represent an important consideration for promotion (Meenaghan, 1995; Miller and Berry, 1999), public relations (Grunig, 1993; Bolland 1989), products (Dodds, Monroe and Grewal, 1991; Warlop, Ratneshwar and van Osselaer, 2005), place (Panitz, 1988; Steenkamp and Wedel, 1991) and pricing (Petroshius and Monroe, 1987; Schindler and Kibarian, 2001) decisions.

Literature Review

PCI research investigates the interaction of country images with product images during the purchase decision-making process. TDI research is concerned with the influence of destination images in the decision to travel to a location. PCI and TDI research may be distinguished by this analytical focus. PCI research is focused on understanding the impact of country images in buyer and investor decisions while TDI focuses on tourism and travel decisions. Conceptually, PCI research originally explored images at the country level and TDI research utilizes any location as the unit of analysis. However, this distinction is narrowing as PCI research takes a more general perspective of images and examines provinces or states, cities and regions, as well as, countries (e.g. Wee, Lim and Tan, 1993). A research distinction may also be found in the different research expertise of the researchers involved in the two areas. While PCI is examined primarily by marketing researchers, TDI research is typically viewed from a multidisciplinary perspective drawing on researchers from a mixed background including anthropology, business, geography, history, political sciences, and psychology, among others. PCI articles are published in marketing and international business journals while TDI articles can be found in tourism specific journals, such as, the Annals of Tourism Research and the Journal of Travel Research.

Tourism Destination Image Research

Tourism research has defined destination image "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 p.870). Indeed, attitudes are argued to be the most appropriate means to represent our understandings of place and its impact on our travel decisions (White, 2004). The term destination refers to the location visited by a tourist and may be interpreted as a city (e.g., Dadgostar and Isotalo, 1995; Opermann, 1996), region (e.g., Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Ahmed, 1991) or country (e.g., Chon, 1991; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993).

A recent review outlines the nature of the TDI field as consisting of four decriptions, namely, complex, multiple, relativistic and dynamic (Gallarza, Gil and Calderon, 2002). The authors indicate that the complexity issue draws attention to the multiple components (cognitive, evaluative, conative) involved in representing TDI but also to the nature of the construct as either a collective or a single person impression. Some argue that destination images consist of cognitive and evaluative aspects (Walmsley and Young, 1998; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Foster and Jones, 2000; Kim and Yoon, 2003). The cognitive aspects include those that describe landscape or destination elements, while the evaluative aspects are representative of attitudes and appraisals of a destination. In another review of TDI research, Chon (1990) identifies major topics of TDI as influencing traveler satisfaction, influencing traveler buying behaviour, changing in the destination image, a destination image in a cross-cultural context, measuring destination image, and developing tourism. This listing supports the assertion that conative or behavioural components are also relevant to the TDI context through the acknowledgment of buying behaviour.

TDI may be described by referring to the attribute versus holistic nature and the process of its formation (Gallarza, Gil and Calderon, 2002). The nature of TDI may be represented as a multi-attribute construct (e.g.Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). While multi-attribute models are the dominant approach in TDI (Pike 2002), a recent LISREL modelling of TDI presents the view that TDI can be represented through a hierarchical model where affective and cognitive constructs highlight an underlying TDI construct (Kim and Yoon, 2003). The existence of an underpinning second tier construct may reflect the presence of constructs previously not considers in TDI research (e.g. countries and their people).

The measurement of TDI varies across different research studies. Most researchers generally agree that TDI is multi-attribute or multidimensional construct. However, they offer different approaches to measure this construct. Gallarza et al., (2002) provide a recent review of attributes studied in TDI research. The paper identifies 21 themes found among the attributes examined in 25 published works. These themes are presented in Table 1 as pertaining to the natural environment, built environment, and evaluations of the destination.

Table 1 – TDI Attributes

Natural Environment	Built Environment	Evaluative
Landscape, surroundings	Accommodation	Price, value, cost
Nature	Accessibility	Originality
Climate	Cultural attractions	Service Quality
	Gastronomy	
	Information available	
	Nightlife/entertainment	
	Safety	
	Social interaction	
	Sport facilities	
	Shopping facilities	
	Transportation	
	Relaxation	
	Residents' receptivity	
	Various activities	

The natural environment contains themes about the geographical or natural settings. In TDI literature, studies have used different measures to capture perceptions of these themes. For instance, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) used climate, natural attractions, and scenery to reflect positive attributes of the natural environment, while Baloglu and McCleary (1999) measured perceptions about pollution to understand the negative impact of the built environment on the natural setting. The scope of the natural environment themes is not necessarily constrained to a small geographic location and could be used as measures for a country as a destination.

There are several destination attribute themes that refer to the built environment. Among these themes are measurement items that may also reflect beliefs about the destination as a country. For example, culture (Chon, 1991; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Driscoll et al., 1994; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Tapachi and Waryszak, 2000), a modern society (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Driscoll et al., 1994, Walmsley and Young, 1998; Tapachi and Waryszak, 2000) and the political situation (Chon, 1991; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993). Measures regarding the people of a destination are also found in TDI research. For example, the theme referred to by Gallarza et al. (2002) as receptivity of a destination's people to foreigners would include cleanliness (Chon, 1991), friendliness (Reilly, 1990; Chon 1991; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Driscoll et al., 1994; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Tapachi and Waryszak, 2000; Kim and Yoon, 2003; Pike and Ryan, 2004; Trauer and Ryan, 2005), pleasant attitudes (Chon, 1991), and receptivity to foreigners (Chon, 1991; Ahmed, 1991). Of these four measurement items, friendliness appears to be the most common measure.

Measures have also been used to record the evaluation of destinations. Destination evaluation measures include an overall evaluation (Reilly, 1990; Chon, 1990), arousing (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999), exciting (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Tapachi and Waryszak, 2000; Trauer and Ryan, 2005), importance (Chon, 1991), interesting (Walmsley and Young, 1998), like the country (Chon, 1991), meeting expectations (Chon, 1991), pleasant (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999), a rating relative to other countries (Chon, 1991), quality of service (Echtner and Ritchie,

1993), relaxing (Reilly, 1990; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Tapachi and Waryszak, 2000; Kim and Yoon, 2003),satisfaction (Chon, 1990), and value for money (Chon, 1991, Driscoll et al., 1994; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Pike and Ryan, 2004).

From a conative perspective, the decision to travel to a destination or make recommendations to others represent a common thread of measuring behavioural intentions. The decision to travel to a location is discussed as part of the travel experience process (Chon, 1990; Foster and Jones, 2000). Recommendations have been measured by the extent to which respondents would tell their friends about the destination (Chon, 1991) and specifically using the term 'recommendations' (Kim and Yoon, 2003).

Product-Country Image Research

Country images are mental maps or knowledge structures related to countries (Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 2001) "defined as the total of all descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs one has about a particular country" (Martin and Eroglu, 1993, p.193). This stream of research originated in the study of countries but has branched out to explore the images associated with regions (e.g. Schweiger, Haubl and Friederes, 1995) and cities (e.g. Mossberg and Kleppe, 2005).

People use country images to assist in the processing of information and to aid in the formulation of purchase decisions (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Country image effects are described as the "impact that generalizations and perceptions about a country have on a person's evaluations of the country's products and/or brands." (Nebenzahl, Jaffe and Lambert, 1997 p.28). Beyond influencing consumer decision-making about products, country image research has also explored the influence of these images on decisions relating to organizational buying (e.g. Heslop et al., 2004) and locations for investment (e.g. Wee, Lim and Tan, 1993). Due to the importance of country images in the marketplace, policy makers must consider the images held by foreigners about their country and be cognizant of how the products they associate with their country impact those perceptions.

Country image theory is a maturing area in the marketing discipline with current research efforts striving to confirm the modeling of theoretical concepts. Although early research conceived the country image construct as one-dimensional (e.g. Erickson, Johansson, and Chao, 1984) and product-centric (e.g. Han, 1988), more recent publications generally embrace the construct's distinctiveness and multi-dimensional nature. As such, a key aspect of country image theory is to explain the effect of these images through an understanding of attitudes. The cognitive, affective/evaluative and conative phases of attitude formation are represented through the beliefs about a country (cognitive), the feelings towards the country (affective) and behavioural intentions to purchase the country's products (conative) (Heslop et al., 2004).

The cognitive component of attitude formation is present in PCI literature as reflecting the beliefs of a country and its people. These beliefs may be best represented using two groups – descriptive beliefs and competency beliefs (Heslop et al., 2004). Among the descriptive beliefs, recent papers have used several measures to capture the essence of the construct, including, active and admirable in world affairs (Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Heslop et al., 2004), environmental protection (Heslop et al., 2004), aligned with the home country in world affairs (Lee and Ganesh, 1999), quality of life (Heslop et al., 2004), individual

rights and freedoms (Heslop et al., 2004), political stability (Orbaiz and Papadopoulos, 2003, Heslop et al., 2004), and standard of living (Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002; Orbaiz and Papadopoulos, 2003). Competencies associated with the country include technically advanced (Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Orbaiz and Papadopoulos, 2003; Heslop et al., 2004; Laroche et al., 2005), level of economic development (Manrai, Lascu and Manrai, 1998; Lee and Ganesh, 1999), stability of economy (Heslop et al., 2004), and wealth (Orbaiz and Papadopoulos, 2003; Heslop et al., 2004; Laroche, Papadopoulos, Heslop and Mourali, 2005)

Recent research papers have also measured beliefs about a country's people. The descriptive belief measures include friendliness (Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002; Heslop et al., 2004), proud (Lee and Ganesh, 1999), trustworthy (Heslop et al., 2004; Laroche et al., 2005), and individualistic (Heslop et al., 2004). The competencies of the country's people can influence product evaluations and has been measured as creative (Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002), well educated (Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002; Orbaiz and Papadopoulos, 2003; Heslop et al., 2004; Laroche et al., 2005), industrious (Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Knight and Calantone, 2000 Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002; Heslop et al., 2004), technically skilled (Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002), and high work ethic measures (Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002; Heslop et al., 2004; Laroche et al., 2005).

Cognitions about products also appear in the PCI literature and are measured through several measures (see Table 2). The table presents the measurement items used in the literature as perceptions about inherent features, peripheral features and evaluations of a country's products.

Table 2 PCI Measures for Product Cognitions

Performance Descriptors	Peripheral Features	Evaluative Terms
Defects	Advertised	Attractive
Durable	Availability	Inexpensive
Innovative	Easy to service	Luxurious
Need repairs	Features	Original
Quality	Informative ads	Prestigious
Reliable	Range of styles	
Safety	Sold worldwide	
Technical	Stylish	
Workmanship	Variety	

Sources include: Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002; Olsen and Olsson, 2002; Orbaiz and Papadopoulos, 2003; Heslop et al., 2004

The affective/evaluative component of attitudes is represented in the PCI literature through two main constructs. First, the evaluation of the country is related to the beliefs about the country and its people (e.g. Heslop et al., 2004). The construct has been measured using culturally similar (Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002), economically similar (Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002), ideal country (Laroche et al., 2005), likeable (Laroche et al., 2005) and similar political views

scales (Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002). Second, the product evaluation construct is related to the competency beliefs about a country and its people (e.g. Heslop et al., 2004). Recent articles have used several measures to represent the product evaluation construct including, like (Lee and Ganesh, 1999), other people like (Lee and Ganesh, 1999), proud (Heslop et al., 2004), satisfied (Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Heslop et al., 2004), value (Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002; Heslop et al., 2004) and an overall product rating (Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002; Olsen and Olsson, 2002; Orbaiz and Papadopoulos, 2003; Heslop et al., 2004).

Two constructs also generally represent the conative component of attitude in PCI research – desired country associations and product buying. The former include want closer ties with and more investment from the country (Laroche et al., 2005). Although desired country associations may be considered part of either conative or affect attitude components, the terminal dependent variable tends to be related to the buying decision. Here, measures include happy to buy as gift (Lee and Ganesh, 1999), intention to purchase (Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002), receptivity to buy (Orbaiz and Papadopoulos, 2003), recommend to others (Lee and Ganesh, 1999) and willingness to buy (Heslop et al., 2004).

While attitude-based country image constructs are central to the developing theory base, researchers have explored additional constructs that interact to influence buyer behaviour. For example, familiarity can impact product beliefs directly and positively (Heslop et al., 2004) or moderate the influence of country images on the buying behaviour of consumers (Han, 1989). There are different ways to view familiarity, specifically, familiarity with a product category (Knight & Calantone, 2000), with brands or products of the country (Heslop et al., 2004), and with the country itself (Erickson, Johansson and Chao, 1984; Heslop et al., 2004).

PCI and TDI Research

Despite separate publication venues for PCI and TDI outputs, a few touch points have appeared in the literature indicating possible opportunities for convergence. These points exist with place branding, major events and the use of travel as a control variable in PCI research. Place branding involves the use of images associated with potentially any location, including countries and destinations. "Every place has an image … those of nations and other places are not directly under the marketer's control" (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). Examples of place branding in practise include London Fog coats or Napa Valley wines. In the case of wines, Thode and Maskulka (1998) explore the salience of origin to revenues gleaned from the market and the distinctive nature local imagery can impart.

The influence of major events on the image of a place is another area of potential touch point for PCI and TDI. Research has drawn attention to the flexibility of images when major events force people to reconsider their conceptions of places. For instance, an examination of the image of South Korea before and after hosting the 1988 Olympics demonstrated that people with high exposure to the Games had an overall improved image of the country (Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 1993). In this case, there was a general shift in the image that was not confined to only a few attributes. However, major events do not always affect the image of a place. There is evidence to show the 1989 clash between the Chinese government and protesters in Tiananmen Square did not affect American consumers' willingness to purchase Chinese goods (Brunner, Flaschner, Lou, 1993). It is likely that the events that transpired in Tiananmen Square, although viewed

negatively by consumers, did not represent a departure from the image previously held by American consumers toward China (Brunner, Flaschner, Lou, 1993).

A third prospective touch point between PCI and TDI literature is the usage of travel and tourism in the PCI literature. Travel and country images appear to have a two-way relationship. In the one direction, travel to a country is related to the image of that place as the image moves from a simple stereotype to one that more accurately captures the actual capabilities of the country (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1986). This relationship has made travel a useful control variable in PCI research (e.g. Nijssen and Douglas, 2004). Further, the image of a country established through tourism experience is argued to have a positive effect on the export of products and services (Gnoth, 2002). In the other direction, the image of a country (including what it produces and the quality of those products) can directly affect the intention to visit (Litvin and MacLaurin, 2001).

Country and Destination Images as Products

Few products could rival the complexity of country and destination in the images they engender. Both type of images may be conceived and grow beyond the control of marketers (i.e. natural disasters, societal construction, cultural interpretation). However, there are differences in the construction of the 'product' in the two literature streams. PCI literature generally models a construct of product that is representative of tangible goods. Conversely, in the tourism context, the product construct is defined more broadly as the destination experience itself.

This distinction has led to the investigation of several product attributes particular to the tourism context that have not been explored in the PCI literature. These tourism-specific attributes include nature, cultural attractions, nightlife/entertainment, shopping, sport facilities, transportation, accommodation, food, climate, relaxation and social interaction (Gallarza et al., 2002). While the distinction in product definition is important, the difference does not exclude the application of a PCI model to explain the role of place images in a travel decision.

The attributes of countries and destinations can be contextualized in a nested framework. The outer range represents the natural environment including the wildlife, forests, beaches, mountains, lakes, and rivers. This level of a destination can be classified at the country level because it is the country that contains these characteristics of a place to many tourists. In the Nepal context, the natural environment would include the Himalayan mountain range, hills, rivers and the wildlife that inhabits the countryside. The mid range of the diagram represents a more geographically focused area that is constructed by human intervention. These are the places people visit such as the cities and towns of a country. It also includes the major attractions of these places, for example, stadiums, museums and galleries. The core of the framework represents the constructed and controlled environments that provide travellers with predictable and consistent experiences. These places are generally referred to as resorts. An example of this type of environment is Disney World or an all-inclusive sun destination where visitors seldom leave to experience the built or natural environments of their surroundings

People may choose to travel to places with the notion of visiting the wilderness of Canada or the mountains of Nepal. However, once they reach their destination, the built environment of cities

and the simulated environment of the resort are more likely to be their destination. Indeed, once a traveller arrives at the destination, the modified environments become more important (Awaritefe, 2004). Depending on the circumstances, the relevant environment can lead to different combinations of beliefs.

In conclusion, the literature review highlights some similarities between PCI and TDI research streams. The common link between the two fields is the application of attitude theory to explain the influence of images on behaviour. TDI modeling has utilized an attitudinal approach to explain destination images and their influence on travel outcomes (e.g. Pike and Ryan, 2004; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). In PCI, a similar approach is utilized for products (e.g. Heslop et al., 2004; Orbaiz and Papadopoulos, 2003). Further, a recent article that examines the concepts of country and destination images argues the two objects are quite similar and supports the assertion that attitudes are a common link (Mossberg and Kleppe 2005). Therefore, there is supporting evidence to suggest an attitude-based PCI model may provide a broad explanation to the influence of country and destination images on travel intentions. It is the purpose of this study to leverage attitude theory as the point of convergence between TDI and PCI theory and test an attitude-based PCI model in the tourism context. This paper presents the results of structural equation modeling using data collected from tourists in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Context of Study – Nepal

"Nepal is among the poorest and least developed countries in the world with 40% of its population living below the poverty line" (CIA, 2005). Agriculture is the main industry in the country engaging roughly 80% of its citizens and accounting for approximately 40% of its GDP (CIA, 2005). While destination perceptions are typically either positive or negative (Pike, 2002), developing countries may have to deal with the significant disadvantage of having negative or less positive images (Kale and Weir, 1986). The contribution of tourism to the country's economic activity is limited to about 3-4% of GDP. However, tourism is a major source of Nepal's currency exchange (Baral, Baral and Nigel, 2004). The importance of tourism to Nepal is accentuated in the tense political situation currently gripping the country. Despite a violent uprising, "rebel leaders have constantly stated that tourists are free to travel and trek in the areas of tourism interest, and the tourism industry itself has worked hard to ensure travellers' safety" (Baral, Baral and Morgan, 2004 p.189).

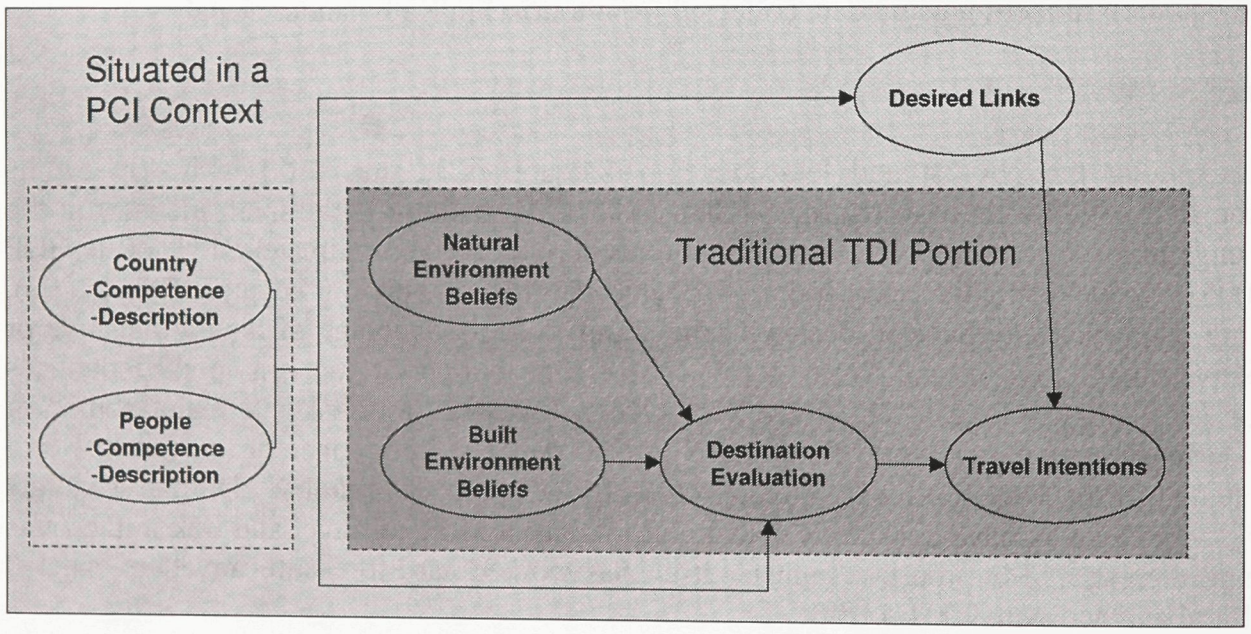
Tourists travel to Nepal to experience its natural beauty, hike along its rugged terrain, shop in its traditional markets and gaze upon the world's tallest mountain. While Nepal contains excellent mountaineering terrain, the country's visitor population contains a range of people including both mountaineers and tourists (Beedie and Hudson, 2003). Further, while trekking or climbing may be major activities for many visitors, only 6% of all tourism revenue is generated in the rural environs (Nepal, 2000). The vast majority of tourism money is spent in the urban areas of Nepal.

Proposed Model

In order to test the usefulness of merging TDI and PCI research frameworks, a model is proposed (see Figure 1) that is intended to deepen our understanding of factors that affect travel beliefs about the natural and built environments of a destination. The model is structured to reflect TDI in a way that has not previously been tested. The inner box in the figure reflects a traditional TDI

model that shows the travel intentions are directly influenced by beliefs about the natural and built environments. The model builds on the linkage of the two fields using attitude theory to explain the influence of images on consumer behaviour. Like many TDI and PCI studies, the model being tested is based on the three components of attitude theory: cognitive, affective, and conative. The cognitive component is represented in the model through five constructs, namely, People Description and Competence, Country Description and Competence, Natural Environment Beliefs and Built Environment Beliefs. The first two capture the beliefs tourists hold about the country and its people. Descriptive characteristics of a country's people are modeled separately from their competence aspects to reflect a proposed differential influence for each on the affective component of attitudes. At the affective stage, two constructs, the overall evaluation of the country as a tourist destination and the desired linkages, are believed to influence the intentions of travelling to or recommending the country. Travel intentions represent the conative component of attitudes.

Figure 1 Model of Country Effects in a Tourism Context



Methodology

In April 2005, a multi-disciplinary research expedition went to Nepal to study a broad range of topics. The expedition involved a trek to the base camp of Mt. Everest and onto the slopes of the mountain itself. This expedition brought together researchers and support personnel from four countries, to share in the objective of obtaining data for thirteen diverse research projects ranging from tourism management projects on destination image and visitor mood effects to physiological and psychological studies exploring the effects of high altitude. This research

project was conducted in the pre-climb phase as Dr. Sean Egan prepared to make his summit attempt.[1]

For purposes of the research reported here, street interviews were conducted with international tourists in Kathmandu at major attractions (e.g. Durbur Square, Pasupatinath Temple, Syambhunath Temple) and within the main tourist neighbourhood of Thamel. Two of the authors and five undergraduate and graduate students from Tribuvan University in Kathmandu conducted the interviews. The survey was conducted over four days in March 2005 corresponding to a relatively high influx of visitors to the country. Questionnaires were only administered in English. Despite the risk of excluding some tourists, the choice of English as the primary language is suitable given that English is the common language used by tourist operators in Nepal to interact with visitors.

The questionnaire contains thirty scales regarding respondents' views about Nepal as a destination and thirty-two scales to measure views about the people and their country. All the measurement items were presented as five point scales with 1 representing a negative view and 5 representing a positive view. The scales were selected from PCI and TDI literature. Several measurement items are found in both research areas. For example, the resident receptivity theme has been measured in TDI research as 'friendliness' (Driscoll, Lawson and Niven, 1994; Muller 1991; Haahti and Yavas, 1983). This same measure exists in PCI research (Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002; Heslop et al., 2004). However, other items are only found in either area as TDI destination beliefs accommodate for the distinct nature of the tourism context. For example, the Travel Intentions construct is measured by asking respondents about whether they would like to visit again, their intention to visit again, willingness to return, willingness to extend their stay, or willingness to recommend the country to friends. These are different measures than asking respondents about their willingness to purchase a product from a country.

A minimum of 300 responses were sought to facilitate an analysis of the model using LISREL. The data collection in Kathmandu resulted in a net tally of 307 useable responses. The sample is comprised of tourists from Europe (64%), Asia (25%), Australia (6%), North America (4%) and Africa (1%). Just over half of the sample is male (55%). Seventy-five percent of respondents reported they are between 21 and 50 years old and almost three quarters (74%) of the sample had visited Nepal once previously or never before.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the data begins with an assessment of the descriptive results to understand the overall perceptions held by respondents. The descriptive analysis is followed by an examination of the proposed model using structural equation modeling. The model analysis provides insight into the factors that influence beliefs about destinations and travel outcomes.

The descriptive results portray a picture of Nepal as a positive, attractive, and unique destination experience that exceeds visitors' expectations and one they are proud to have visited (see Table

[1] Dr. Sean Egan was a faculty member at the University of Ottawa and was attempting to be the oldest Canadian climber to reach the summit of Mount Everest. Unfortunately, he died during his attempt. He was 63 years old.

3). The overall image of Nepal as a tourist destination is positive as evidenced by the responses that give relatively high average ratings to exceeding expectations, overall rating and overall satisfaction. In addition, all mean responses to these scales are in excess of the scale midpoint reinforcing the view that a positive overall image exists and is one that encompasses all the aspects measured in the questionnaire. In particular, the attractive scenery leads the positive image aspects of Nepal as a destination based upon its natural attractions of mountains, hills, and rivers but also upon its built environment that showcases the cultural attractions of various temples and palaces. The less positive aspects of Nepal's image as a destination tend to be related to infrastructure issues as relatively lower mean scores are attained for accommodation, selection of restaurants, ease of getting around, shopping facilities, sport facilities and nightlife/entertainment.

The descriptive assessment of mean responses also reveals that respondents generally like the people of Nepal. The high mean scores attained on the following scales illustrate the positive view of the people: likeability, friendliness, enjoy being with, helpful, courteous, trustworthy, and honest.

Despite a positive perception of the Nepalese people, respondents are less positive about the country itself. Even with a strong overall rating of Nepal, country specific aspects receive relatively low mean ratings including education level, alignment with own country, and quality of life. Indeed, several country scales are below the scale mid-point and represent the lowest scale scores attained in the study. The lowest mean scores are given to political stability and role in world politics. These scores are likely an acknowledgement of the current domestic instability that occupies the country's political stage. The country also scores below the scale mid-point on environmental/pollution controls, wealth, stability of the economy and technology level. Respondents further viewed perceptions about rights and freedoms of Nepal's people poorly as the scale received an average rating at the scale's mid-point.

When asked about desired linkages or relationships respondents wanted with Nepal, the dominant theme in the responses is more of the same. The highest mean among the relationship scales indicates that respondents want to see tourists coming to Nepal inferring that they wish to have others do what they have done. 'Imported products from Nepal' is the second leading desired relationship reflecting the importance of tourist shopping activity when visiting the country's marketplaces. The third desired relationship epitomizes the likeability of the country's people as respondents want to see more visitors from Nepal in their home countries. However, in stark contrast to the desire for more Nepal visitors is the less positive average response for immigration from Nepal.

The leading travel response outcomes indicate an overall strong intent by for visitors to recommend or return to Nepal. Indeed, these responses demonstrate that tourists have the greatest willingness to recommend Nepal as a tourist destination, surpassing other mean travel responses. The mean scores for personal travel to Nepal decline as the level of commitment increases (i.e. like to visit, intention to visit and will return). The less positive rating given to extending their current stay may be attributable to the difficulty in altering airline tickets or the exhaustion associated with completing an already long visit involving high physical strain of trekking and climbing.

Table 3 Mean Responses to Questionnaire Scales (scale =1 to 5)

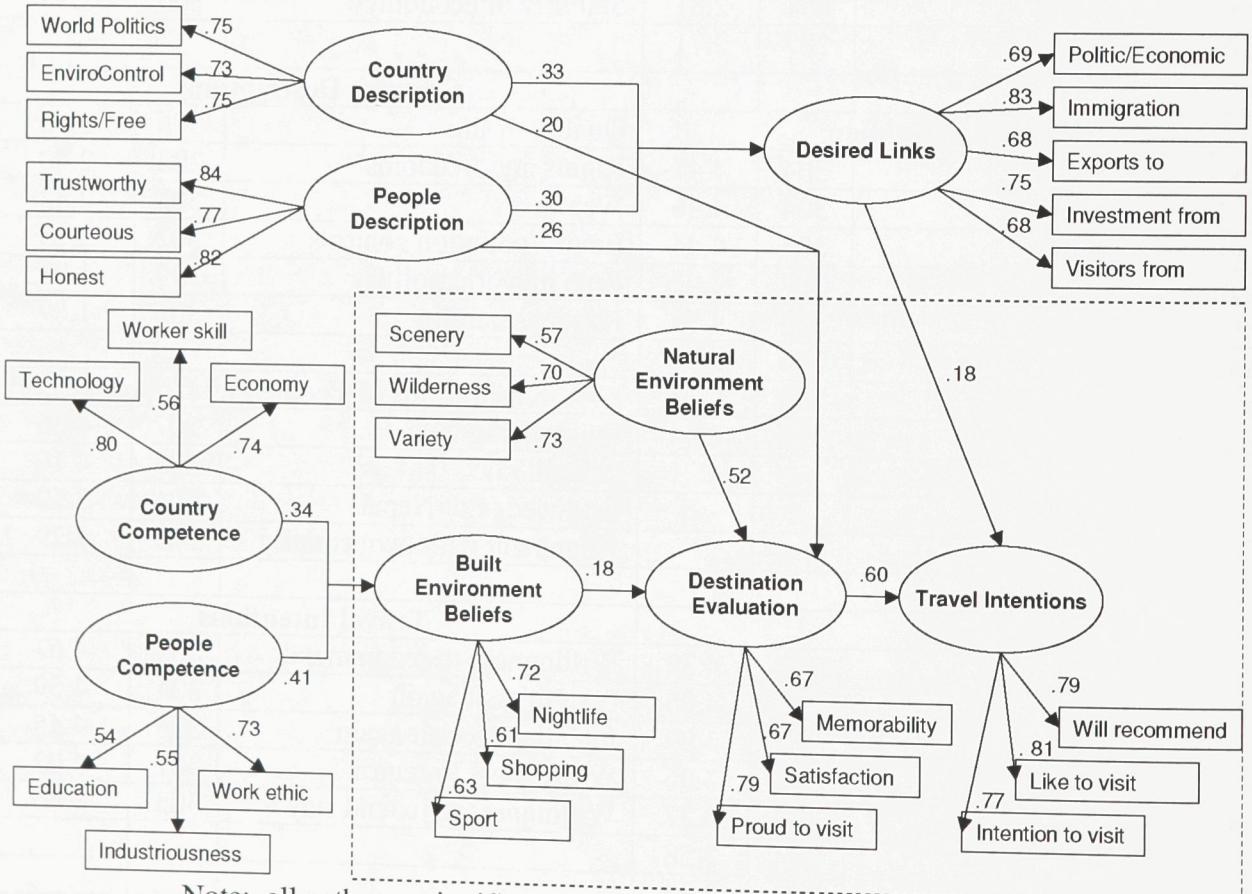
Natural Environment Beliefs		
Scale	**N**	**Mean**
Attractive scenery	307	4.53
Wilderness	290	4.11
Climate	307	4.07
Variety of activities	305	4.04
Peaceful/quiet	306	3.26
Built Environment Beliefs		
Culturally interesting	306	4.30
Profile of attractions	304	4.25
Ease of finding interesting places	307	4.05
Accommodation	306	4.02
Quality of service	307	4.01
Selection of restaurants	304	4.00
Ease of getting around	305	3.96
Shopping facilities	306	3.59
Safety	306	3.40
Family	298	3.03
Sport facilities	281	2.81
Nightlife/entertainment	287	2.71
Evaluations of Destination		
Proud to visit	304	4.47
Memorability of experience	304	4.46
Relative to expectations	307	4.44
Overall rating	307	4.41
Originality of experience	306	4.39
Overall satisfaction	306	4.18
Value for money	305	4.15
Knowledge of destination	306	3.44
Desired Links		
Tourists to Nepal	307	4.32
Imports from Nepal	306	4.06
Visitors from Nepal	307	3.99
Invest in Nepal	304	3.96
Political/Economic ties	306	3.77
Exports to Nepal	304	3.58
Investment from Nepal	303	3.31
Immigration from Nepal	303	3.30

People Descriptions of Nepal		
Scale	**N**	**Mean**
Likeability	307	4.41
Friendliness	307	4.39
Helpful	306	4.36
Courteous	303	4.14
Trustworthiness	305	3.88
Honest	305	3.87
People Competencies		
Work Ethic	299	3.60
Industriousness	298	3.33
Individualism	301	2.90
Education level	305	2.81
Country Competencies		
Workers skill level	294	2.95
Avail. skilled workers	284	2.88
Technology level	303	2.38
Stability of economy	300	2.33
Country Descriptions		
Quality of life	306	2.72
Rights and freedoms	304	2.50
Wealth	305	2.32
Enviro/pollution controls	302	2.13
Role in world politics	299	1.93
Political stability	302	1.89
Evaluations of People and Country		
Enjoy being with	307	4.36
Overall rate	303	4.16
Knowledge of Nepal	306	3.52
Alignment with own country	303	2.79
Travel Intentions		
Willingness to recommend	306	4.67
Like to visit again	304	4.59
Intention to visit again	306	4.45
Willingness to return	307	4.02
Willingness to extend stay	305	3.86

While the descriptive results provide insight into the perceptions of Nepal's tourists, the analysis of the structural model delivers an understanding of what is important to the tourists in their travel decision. Structural equation model testing involves a two stage process. The first stage ensures good measurement of the constructs while the second stage involves an assessment of the relationships in the model. Therefore, prior to testing the structural model, an assessment of the measurement model was conducted.

The measurement model analysis requires that each construct is evaluated on an individual basis. The correlation matrix of the indicators is examined to determine those variables with high correlations with each other. If the scales defined as measures of the construct are found to be highly correlated, then this relationship is a reflection of their common link to the construct. Therefore, these correlations indicate whether convergent validity exists within the measures. In addition, a confirmatory factor analysis is conducted to assess the fit of variables within the construct. As a result of this analysis, several scales reviewed in the descriptive results were dropped from the theoretical constructs due to poor empirical support. When this occurred, the variables were tested with alternative constructs where appropriate.

Figure 2 Structural LISREL Model Results



Note: all paths are significant at 95% and model converges after 20 iterations

The final construct-specified measures were used in testing the proposed structural model. The results of the LISREL model analysis are presented graphically in Figure 2 and numerically in Table 4. The results show that the more traditional TDI model (inside the dotted line box of figure 2), has a very strong relationship to travel intentions. Of particular note, is the very strong indirect relationship of natural beliefs about the destination (attractive scenery, wilderness, variety of activities) to travel intentions (will recommend, like to visit, intention to visit) through an evaluation of the destination (memorability of experience, overall satisfaction, proud to visit). The strength of this path reveals the importance of the natural environment on tourists' decisions for this type of vacation experience. Activity related beliefs (nightlife/entertainment, shopping facilities, sport facilities) also show an indirect relationship with travel intentions through the destination evaluation, albeit at a more moderate strength.

A separate LISREL investigation was conducted on the core of the model that represents traditional TDI models to see how it would perform on its own. When only beliefs about nature are included in the core model, the process reveals a higher path coefficient between evaluations and intentions but a similar path between natural beliefs and evaluations. Further, this investigation yielded very good fit statistics for the simple three-construct model. When the activity beliefs construct is added, the path coefficients are similar and the fit statistics do not demonstrate a substantial improvement than the model displayed in Figure 2. Therefore, while the simple model retains very good fit statistics, the combined PCI/TDI model offers more explanation of the phenomenon than the four-construct solution with similar fit statistics. The PCI context demonstrates that beliefs about a country and its people has a direct influence on the beliefs and evaluation of the destination. This finding would be lost using a traditional TDI model.

Table 4 Structural LISREL Model Results

Path Between Latent Variables		Path Coeff.	t-values
People Description	Desired Links	.30	3.76
People Description	Destination Evaluation	.26	3.14
Country Description	Desired Links	.33	3.97
Country Description	Destination Evaluation	.20	2.69
Country Competence	Activity Destination Beliefs	.34	3.48
People Competence	Activity Destination Beliefs	.41	4.15
Activity Destination Beliefs	Destination Evaluation	.18	2.12
Natural Destination Beliefs	Destination Evaluation	.52	5.73
Destination Evaluation	Travel Intentions	.60	6.46
Desired Links	Travel Intentions	.18	2.43
p value = 0.00			
$X^2/d.f.$ = 2.8			
CFI = 0.9			
GFI = 0.8			
NNFI = 0.9			
RMSEA = 0.09			

The demonstration that country and people dimensions are significant influencers of the travel intention of tourists is a key contribution of the model. The country aspects (technology level, worker skill level, stability of economy) are represented through the competencies that are related to the beliefs about the activities offered in Nepal. The people aspects are indirectly relevant to travel intentions in two ways. First, the competencies (industriousness, education level, work ethic) of the Nepalese people are strongly related to activity beliefs. Second, descriptive features of the Nepalese (trustworthy, courteous and honest) are indirectly related to travel intentions through a strong association with the evaluation of Nepal as a destination and the level of desired relationships with Nepal (political/economic ties, immigration from, exports to, investment from, visitors from).

The numerical representation of the model in Table 4 highlights that all the paths tested exceed the 1.96 t-value indicating significance at 95%. The $X^2/d.f.$ indicates the model has a good fit with a statistic of less than five (Taylor and Todd, 1995). Further, the RMSEA statistic provides evidence that there are no significant problems with the model as the statistic is less than 0.1 (Harlow, 2002). Although the GFI statistic is slightly below levels that indicate an acceptable fitting model, it is important to consider other statistics. First, the CFI statistic is less affected by sample size (Heck and Thomas, 2000). The sample size for this study is adequate but may be considered small. A rule of thumb using LISREL is to have 10 respondents for every parameter in the model. Given the tested model, a total sample of 300 respondents would be considered adequate. However, the sample should not be considered large and the sample size may be contributing to a lower GFI statistic. Therefore, the CFI statistic provides a measure of fit that controls for sample size. Second, the NNFI statistic provides a correction for model complexity (Wheaton, 2002). The current model is relatively complex as it contains eight constructs and their relationships. Both of these statistics achieve the 0.9 threshold value yet take into account the situational factors that could have detrimental effects on other fit statistics (Heck and Thomas, 2000). A better fitting model could easily be achieved by simplifying the model. However, such a change would be at the cost of losing insight gained from the more complex model which makes use of both TDI and PCI frameworks.

When considering the model results in the context of the nested framework of environments, the importance of the natural environment to Nepal is quite apparent. The very strong relationship of natural beliefs to the destination evaluation in the model coupled with the very high mean scores attributed to natural scales (e.g. attractive scenery) illustrate the dominant role the natural environment has on the image tourists hold about Nepal. Complimentary to the natural environment is the simulated environment in Nepal. The high mean scores awarded on people attributes and the role people constructs play in the model results indicate that the simulated environment is also important. The simulated environment in the Nepal context would include resorts (e.g. safari), trekking tours and expeditions. Therefore, the simulated environment is an overlay to the natural environment and exists to filter or sanitize the interface tourists have with the natural environment.

The theoretical nested framework places the built environment between the natural and the simulated environments. However, Nepal receives mixed views from tourists in this area. On the one hand, Nepal is viewed quite positively in terms of its cultural attractions (e.g. temples) that make up part of the built environment. On the other hand, the destination aspects that received relatively poor mean scores represent the infrastructure of the country (e.g.

accommodation, restaurants, ease of getting around). Further, the competencies of the country that help to deliver the tourist experience are related to beliefs about tourism activities in the tested model. These beliefs (i.e. technology level, stability of economy, worker skill level) were among the lowest mean scores for the questionnaire.

Discussion

Confirmation of the proposed model leads to significant theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, the model demonstrates that factors beyond the traditional TDI perspective are relevant to the travel decision process. This model helps to explain previous research that found a second order construct of destination image underlies destination beliefs and evaluations (Kim and Yoon, 2003). This underlying construct can be explained through the finding that beliefs about the country and its people are directly relevant to destination beliefs and indirectly to travel intentions through the evaluation of the destination or the desired relationships with the country. This is an important result because it situates tourists' travel intentions in the greater context of the destination host country. Therefore, constructs developed in the PCI literature have a direct relevance to the tourism context. In other words, these results provide evidence that PCI and TDI research areas can accommodate theoretical convergence using attitude theory as the common thread.

The impact of this finding has practical implications. Nepal's tourism industry may wish to consider four main research outcomes. First, the industry should promote travel to Nepal by building on the strong positive beliefs about its people. The Nepalese are generally well liked, are seen to possess positive social traits, and tourists enjoy being with them. The strong positive position on people aspects may differentiate Nepal from other destinations. Second, Nepal's messages about natural beauty and adventure tourism should remain a focus. Tourists' beliefs about attractive scenery, wilderness and variety of activities demonstrate that these attributes have already captured their attention. In particular, Nepal's leading destination belief is the attractive scenery available to tourists in the country. Third, the industry should take interest in its international image (i.e. negative media coverage due to political unrest and the strong awareness of Mount Everest) and develop its promotions to mitigate or take advantage where warranted. Fourth, the tourism industry in Nepal should consider a recommendation-based promotional program to encourage more tourists to the country. Current tourists indicate the leading travel response is to recommend the destination to others. Indeed, the willingness to recommend scale achieved the highest mean score of all scales in the study.

This study provides an initial contribution to developing a richer understanding of TDI through inclusion of PCI constructs. Since it involves only one country and one kind of destination context, replication of the study is needed. Also, other destination belief constructs may be relevant in other cases. The relevance of natural beliefs in the Nepal context is consistent with the importance of adventure tourism to the country. Future research testing the model in additional destination and destination types is recommended. Also, researchers should examine the use of segmentation to highlight possible differences in model weighting.

It is evident that future research on destination images should include country image constructs. This study presents evidence to show the country context is important to the image of the tourist destination and travel responses (i.e. recommendations, like to visit again and intention to visit again). Competencies about the country appear to directly impact the assessment or beliefs about the destination's ability to deliver on its promotional promises, especially in the built environment aspects of the tourism experience. Descriptive country beliefs are also salient. How the country and its people are perceived will impact the attitudes formed about the destination and influence the travel outcomes. Further, the extent to which tourists' desire their home countries to build on relationships with the tourist destination country influences the travel responses. This is important because desired linkages may signal a preference for personal travel. Depending upon the purposes of the research, future scholars should consider using some or all of these constructs.

From a PCI perspective, research should not ignore the impact of the tourist experience on the evaluation of products or purchase outcomes. Travel is a way for people to expose themselves to other countries and contribute to the images they form of other countries. Future research should take a modelling approach to explore the role of country and people beliefs along side destination beliefs on the intentions to purchase the country's products. Perhaps the familiarity construct used in PCI literature can accommodate the potential for tourism exposure with a country to act as a moderating influence on the relationships among country and people beliefs, product evaluations and purchase outcomes.

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