

## **Exploring Czechs' and Greeks' mental associations of London: A tourist destination or a place to live in?**

*Abstract:* Existing literature on multiple place image domains is sparse with a notable lack of research on the extent to which the various images can be separated in the minds of individuals, and potential interrelationships among them. This study seeks to identify commonalities and divergences in the dimensions of image as a tourist destination and as a place to live in, from the outsider perspective, and explore how these two distinct representations of the same place can co-exist in peoples' mind. Data were collected using 42 semi-structured interviews with Czech and Greek residents. Findings suggest that the two image domains share very similar image dimensions but are clearly differentiated in peoples' mind as a result of identity salience. Destination image appears also to serve as a platform shaping peoples' images of a locale as a place to live. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the notion of place image and have implications for place marketing.

*Keywords:* Place image, Place to live, Destination image, Identity theory, Tourist destination

### **1. Introduction**

Places have multiple uses and serve diverse human needs including that of socialization, work, and leisure. Various research strands have explored peoples' perceptions of the different domains of a place (place image serves as an umbrella term encompassing the different image domains used in the literature) including studies on product-country image (Elliot & Papadopoulos, 2016; Marcoz, Melewar, & Dennis, 2016; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009), image of a place to live in (Styliadis, Sit, & Biran, 2016) and tourism destination image (e.g. Ageeva & Foroudi, 2019; Gkritzali, Gritzalis, & Stavrou, 2017; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2014; Cherifi, Smith, Maitland, & Stevenson, 2014). Extensive academic interest in this field is justified as image is known to guide and shape behaviour by providing a cue for information processing (Nadeau, Heslop, O'Reilly, & Luk, 2008), considered a powerful tool to enhance a place's competitiveness in the market (Foroudi, Akarsu, Ageeva, Foroudi, Melewar, & Dennis, 2018).

Each place image research strand, however, has developed independently of the others (see Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011). Within the tourism context, for example, a research

preference on tourist destination image can be noted as the tourism system has a profound impact on place interpretation and meaning (Hughes, 1992), while tourists also stimulate economic activities; thus their images are commonly researched to facilitate destination development and marketing (Stylidis, Woosnam, Ivkov, & Kim, 2020). As a result, the literature on multiple place image domains is sparse and scattered with a notable lack of research on: a) the extent to which multiple images and their inherited dimensions can be separated in the minds of individuals (non-residents); and b) whether potential interrelationships between such image conceptualisations exist (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). In addressing these two questions the study contributes to the discussion around the existence of a multitier place image structure proposed by Mossberg and Kleppe (2005) and Stepchenkova and Shichkova (2017).

Despite recent attempts, in particular, to bridge research on tourism destination image and country image/product country image (see Elliot et al., 2010; Nadeau et al., 2008; Stepchenkova & Shichkova, 2017), studies linking the image of a place as a tourist destination and its image as a place to live are lacking in general (Stylidis, 2018). Evidence from the lifestyle migration literature suggests that tourism experience serves as a platform through which connections to potential migration destinations are established (Gustafson, 2008), implying a strong – but not yet confirmed - relationship between the two place image domains. Similarly, these two types of image are assumed to play a role in peoples' decision to buy a second home abroad, a phenomenon becoming extremely popular worldwide stimulated by phenomena like the European integration, cheaper air travel and growing affluence (Müller & Hoogendoorn, 2013). Furthermore, the complexity of country image (including place attributes and identities) along with the abundance of stakeholders involved, directed researchers to predominantly focus their research interest on city image (Chan & Marafa, 2016; Papadimitriou et al., 2015; Pike, 2002; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Sahin & Baloglu, 2011; Stylidis, Shani, & Belhassen, 2017), which appears to be distinct from that of rural destinations or resorts (Lin et al., 2007; Wheeler et al., 2011; Zhou, 2014).

This study, therefore, seeks to identify commonalities and divergences in the attributes of place (city) image as a tourist destination and as a place to live in, from the outsider (non-resident) perceptive, and to further explore how these two distinct representations of the same place can co-exist and potentially interact in peoples' mind. The study as such sheds some light on their conceptualization, relationships and interdependency, providing a more

comprehensive understanding of the broader notion of place image. It also addresses calls for additional research on place image characteristics and components (Elliot et al., 2011), and on linking the various domains of a place (Stepchenkova & Shichkova, 2017). For practitioners, an understanding of the diverse facets and characteristics of a place will assist in building its reputation and image through the design of place branding campaigns that are cohesive, minimizing incongruent images to consumers (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006). The rest of the paper is structured as follows: section two provides the theoretical framework of this study including destination image and identity theories; section three contains the methodological approach followed; section four presents the results, while the last section offers a discussion of the findings including theoretical and managerial implications, the study's limitation and directions for future research.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1 Place Image**

Image is a highly complex concept due to its subjective and multi-dimensional nature (Gallarza et al., 2002). Boulding (1956) defined image in his seminal work as “what we believe to be true, our subjective knowledge” (p.6). Along this line of reasoning, individuals' behaviour depends on the image they have of places, people and objects. As the focus of this study is on *place*, Agnew's (1987) three-pillar definition is of relevance here, including: a) location; the geographical area; b) locale; the setting for both formal and informal social interactions; c) sense of place; feelings/emotions that people attach to places. In a given place, its landscape and atmosphere are stimuli that evoke associations in the mind of people who encounter it (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). This bunch of associations can often be conflicting, even in one's mind (Braun, 2008).

Place image is commonly defined as the mental pictures or associations that people hold of a place to live in, to visit, to study, to invest and to work, widely applied by practitioners and academics alike to explore a place's appeal and to develop a strong brand (Elliot et al., 2011; Melewar, Dennis, & Mauri, 2016). The latter refers to “selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish place through positive image building” (Cai, 2002, p.722). National governments, regional bodies and local authorities actively engage in building a strong place image and brand to attract investors, highly skilled workforce, and tourists, as individuals nowadays easily abandon deteriorating places for other prosperous ones (Kotler & Gertner, 2004).

### **2.2 Tourist destination image**

Within the tourism literature, destination image is understood as the totality of beliefs, opinions and impressions an individual has of a place as a tourist destination (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993). Researchers nowadays agree that image is dynamic and complex in nature, evolving over time and space (Gallarza et al., 2002). For Buhalis (2000), a destination is an amalgam of tourism products and services, which are also part and parcel of its brand. Destination image is only a part of the broader concept of place image, as it exclusively relates to the characteristics of a place that are associated to tourist experiences. Tourist destination image is positively associated to destination selection (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Lin, Morais, Kerstetter, & Hou, 2007), on-site experience, satisfaction, and future

behavioural intentions in relation to the destination (Chi & Qu, 2008; Stylidis, Belhassen, & Shani, 2015), thereby determining a destination's competitiveness (Pike & Page, 2014).

There is a broader consensus among researchers that destination image comprises a cognitive, an affective and a conative component. The cognitive component, which is the main focus of this study, refers to a person's knowledge and beliefs about a destination and its attributes (Pike & Ryan, 2004). The affective component corresponds to a person's feelings and emotional responses towards a destination (Shani & Wang, 2011). The conative component is equal to behaviour, namely, intentions to visit/revisit a destination (Chi & Qu, 2008). To facilitate our understanding of destination image formation, a number of theoretical frameworks have been developed (Baloglu & McCleary 1999; Gallarza et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2019; Stylidis, 2021). Baloglu and McCleary (1999), for example, supported a hierarchical relationship between the cognitive and the affective components of image, which was further verified by subsequent studies (Li et al., 2010; Stylidis et al., 2017). Previous research has also explored various factors shaping destination image including level of familiarity with the destination (Kim & Morrision, 2005; Smith et al., 2015), interaction with local residents (Stylidis, 2021), and information sources used (Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2017).

The taxonomy of place attributes used in destination image research is another area that has attracted academic interest, with Cooper et al. (2000, 2008) classifying them into their well-known '4A' framework: *Attractions* (e.g. natural, man-made); *Accessibility* (transportation system); *Amenities* (e.g. accommodation, catering, shopping); and *Ancillary services* (e.g. banks, hospitals). Buhalis (2000) extended this framework adding *Available packages* (organised by intermediaries); and *Activities* (available at the destination). Despite their notable contribution, such taxonomies have given less attention to the social environment dimension, which appears to be decisive when people consider and mentally evaluate a place as a tourist destination. Several studies, for example, have highlighted the critical role the social environment plays in shaping image, as it is difficult to divorce a place from its local residents (Woosnam, Stylidis, & Ivkov, 2020). The paper now turns to discuss the notion of image of a place to live in.

### **2.3 Image of a place to live in**

Studies in environmental psychology and community satisfaction have focused on different sets of attributes comprising peoples' evaluation of their place/community as a place to live in (Grillo, Teixeira, & Wilson, 2010; Sirgy, Gao, & Young, 2008). Such attributes include the social environment (Potter & Cantarero, 2006), local services (McCrea, Stimson, & Western, 2005), job availability (Sirgy, Gao, & Young, 2008), and transportation services (Grzeskowiak, Sirgy, & Widger, 2003; McCrea, Stimson, & Western, 2005). Sirgy et al. (2008), for example, classified attributes into government services (e.g. transportation), leisure (e.g. shopping), and non-profit (e.g. ancillary services, employment opportunities), while Vogt, Allen, and Cordes (2003) considered community amenities, local municipality services, transportation services, and recreational facilities. Recently, Stylidis, Sit and Biran (2016) suggested that peoples' image of a place to live in comprises four dimensions, termed physical appearance, community services, social environment, and entertainment opportunities. This stream of researchers, though, has largely neglected a number of image attributes considered critical in tourism destination literature such as attractions and amenities, leaving gaps in our understanding of outsiders' (non-residents) angle and image of a place.

As the previous review indicates, the various place image strands have developed independently, while their potential inter-relationships have rarely been further explored. Only recently, researchers studied product-country image and destination image (Elliot et al., 2011; Stepchenkova & Shichkova, 2017), reporting strong associations between the two. Additionally, evidence from the lifestyle migration literature suggests that peoples' decision to migrate is often initiated through tourism movement (Hoey, 2005). Studies, in particular, confirmed that lifestyle migrants commonly identify their new residential location through holiday visits prior to migration (Gustafson, 2008). Direct tourism experience and the destination image shaped appears, therefore, to serve as a platform through which connections to potential migration destinations are established. Despite the few studies available, our knowledge of the commonalities and divergences in the attributes and dimensions that shape the image of a place as a tourist destination and as a place to live in - from the tourist perspective - remains scarce and fragmented and a relationship among these two image domains has yet to be established. Unpacking the attributes that give shape to the image domains of place and exploring the potential linkages that exist contributes to the theoretical advancement of the place image concept and has important implications for the marketing,

branding and management of places. The paper now turns to discuss the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

## **2.4 Identity and social identity theory**

Considering that the two image domains (place to visit, place to live) under investigation are aligned with peoples' identity as tourist and resident, the framework of identity and social identity theory is considered suitable for the purpose of this study. The notion of identity can be broadly encapsulated as the subjective knowledge, meanings, and experiences that are self-defining (Ramarajan, 2014; Stets & Burke, 2003). There are two dominant traditions in the study of identity, that is, identity theory (Stryker, 1968) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1959; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The former recognizes that people have a multi-faceted and dynamic self that results from peoples' roles in society (Stryker & Serpe, 1982); it refers to "parts of a self, composed of the meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in highly differentiated contemporary societies" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 284). From a social identity lens, identity is understood as "those aspects of a person's self-concept based upon their group memberships" (Turner & Oakes, 1986, p.240). In line with a stream of researchers, although certain similarities exist, the two theories are distinct (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995), while for others there are substantial similarities and overlaps (see Stets & Burke, 2000).

Following Stets and Burke (2000) a combination of the two theories allows for a more comprehensive view of the self. Both streams accept that people have multiple identities stemming from their different characteristics and roles like gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and profession. They also acknowledge that the self is reflexive and people categorize or classify themselves (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Both theories also emphasize on the notion of identity salience (the likelihood that an identity is activated in a situation, Stryker, 1980); in line with the social identity theory, "once a group identity is made salient in a given situation, other identities recede while that single group identity guides behaviour" (Ramarajan, 2014, p.599).

Modern theorists reject the notion of a sole, salient identity and assert that more than one can be concurrently salient, interacting or being related to one another (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005). For example, Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005) validated how two distinct identities (American, Asian) are integrated within one another in different settings. A

principal difference among the two theories though lies on how salience is being determined; for social identity theorists the external environment drives single identity salience, whereas for identity advocates salience is based on how central an identity is to the individual (Ramarajan, 2014). In support of this, Burke and Stets (2009) reported that when there are conflicting standards in salient identities, the individual has to decide between them by changing or reprioritizing the identity standards.

Identities feature a discursive character; always fluid, subject to negotiation and conflict (Bauman, 2004), having a clear performative dimension (Lison, 1997; Pearce, 1986). As such they are linked to life or imagined spaces (Anderson, 1991). A link between identity and place is commonly evident in peoples' life, with their relationship being affected by tourism (Ballesteros & Ramirez, 2007). Tourism is understood in this process as a communicational setting, a space in which to relate, become closer to others and to our self, thus having an inherent identity-related dimension (Abram, Waldren, & Macleod, 1997). In the effort to understand perceptions and behaviour it is imperative to give attention to the identities that a person has (Hagger, Anderson, Kyriakaki, & Darkings, 2007; Stets & Biga, 2003), as individuals are multifaceted with more salient identities influencing behaviours to a larger extent than the less salient ones.

By exploring the relationships among the different place image domains, the study assists in better understanding the implications of multiple identities in relation to perception of places and their marketing. As Ramarajan (2014) among others (see also Alvesson et al., 2008) suggests "identities provide lenses through which we make sense of the world and enable us to connect meaning and action" (p.595). For example, past research has shown how identity influences well-being (Bartel et al., 2012), satisfaction (Meyer et al., 2006) and socialization (Pratt, 2000). Drawing, therefore, on the premises of identity and social identity theory this study argues that, the way people perceive each place image domain (to live, to visit) will be greatly influenced by their (role) identity as resident or tourist.



### **3. Material and Methods**

#### **3.1 Research design**

Previous research has predominantly followed a structured approach in destination image measurement, using sets of destination attributes available in the literature (Styliadis et al., 2015). A notable drawback of this approach is that the attributes are pre-selected by the researcher, without giving respondents the opportunity to express any unique elements that shape their image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). To overcome this limitation and address the exploratory aim of this research, a qualitative study was conducted. Semi-structured interviews were designed to assess individuals' destination image; image of place to live in; and to explore the potential inter-linkages between the two. The interviews were divided in two main sections. The first section aimed to unpack people's broader perceptions of the key attributes of a place as a) a destination to visit, and b) as a locale to live in. To facilitate this process questions like "what are the 5 key attributes that you evaluate when you consider a place as tourist destination / place to live in" were included. The second section explored people's specific perceptions of London as a tourist destination and place to live in (results are not presented here due to the scope of study and tight word limit). Participants, in particular, were invited to share their images of London, via several location based questions (i.e. what images or characteristics come to your mind when you think of London as a tourist destination/place to live in), including questions about cognition (What do you know about London as a place to visit/place to live in), affection/feelings (How do you feel about London as a place to visit/live in) and conation/behaviour (Do you plan to visit/live in London in the future).

They were also asked to discuss differences and similarities between the two image domains, using London as the context. The interview guide was open and questions were flexible to accommodate the various perceptions and attitudes without any constrains. Prompting and follow up questions were often used to build rapport and clarify any issues (Fielding & Thomas, 2008). Prior the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted separately for each nationality (2 participants per country) to test the flow and suitability of the questions included in the interview guide.

### **3.2 Study setting and sampling**

London, the capital of United Kingdom and second most visited destination in the world in 2018 (19.83 million visitors) was selected as the study setting for three main reasons: a) it is an established tourism destination with strong affiliations to several diverse cultures; b) it is a very popular place to live in, offering an abundance of employment and career development opportunities; c) London's popularity allowed capturing both image domains, which might have not been feasible in case a less well-known destination was preferred.

Greece and the Czech Republic provide a good sample to study as they are of similar population size and economy; and London is among the three most visited destinations globally for both countries (London Data, 2017). Equally important, the two countries have commonalities in peoples' mobility, with key diaspora centers for both cultures being the USA, London, Germany and Melbourne. On the other hand, Greece and the Czech Republic differ in terms of the degree of urbanization (higher in Greece), language spoken, and religious affiliation as about 9 out of ten Greeks declare Christian Orthodox, whereas the equivalent proportion of Czechs are undeclared or atheist (World Atlas, 2017). Of importance, the selection of two different samples facilitated deeper insights into the two different image domains (minimizing cultural bias) and enabled researchers to cross-validate the findings (Iordanova & Stylidis, 2017).

The data collection was conducted over the summer term in 2015 by one researcher in each country who was fluent in Greek or Czech. Altogether, 42 interviews were conducted comprising 21 with Czechs and 21 with Greeks. These numbers fall within the recommended volume of interviews for heterogeneous populations, proposed by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). Xiong, Hashim and Murphy (2015), for example interviewed 16 tourists to understand the importance of the five senses in destination image and tourism, while Lee and Bai (2016) interviewed 24 people from different nationalities to explore their perceptions of the Korean pop star Ahn Jae-wook and their destination image of Korea. For Czech participants, the interviews were conducted in the capital city of Prague, while for Greek participants they took place in Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece. The decision to interview people while at home and not in the destination (London) was purposeful, to avoid any bias that temporary experiences might generate. The sample was purposefully selected using convenience and snowball sampling to include a variety of respondents in terms of age and frequency of travel as these might significantly affect peoples' perceptions of a place as

tourist destination and place to live in (for a detailed profile, see Table 1, Appendix). The average duration of an interview was half an hour and all interviews were digitally recorded (with the consent of participants), transcribed verbatim, and then translated into English by the bilingual researchers to sustain original meanings. To ensure participants' anonymity, pseudonyms were used throughout the analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Thematic data analysis was used, to identify themes and aggregate dimensions (Boyatzis, 1998) through the manual examination and comparison of perceptions/images disclosed over the interview stage. The manual data analysis was preferred over the software one, as it offers greater sense of data and overview of them (Patton, 2002). This approach also enables creativity and critical thinking when concepts seem to fit into more than one theme. Following Corley, Gioia, and Hamilton (2015) the analysis involved the following stages: To identify patterns, various colour highlighting pens were used (Jennings, 2001) in the first stage, with each colour representing a different concept/pattern, which were then compared to each other. For example, many participants mentioned museums, galleries and parks as key attributes that attract their interest in a given destination. Next, similar concepts were combined into broader categories under a common heading, so-called themes, in a manner consistent with the literature; (i.e. museums, galleries and parks were all grouped under the broader theme 'Attractions'). Finally, the themes identified in the second phase were compared and contrasted (Eisenhart, 1989), resulting in the final aggregate dimensions (i.e. destination image or place image). For instance, the theme 'Economic Environment' was checked against all the other identified themes to avoid any overlapping and placed under the broader theme Place Image. Triangulation of data was achieved as both researchers concurrently analysed the dataset and reached similar conclusions regarding the key themes that emerged. The paper now moves to discuss the key themes that derived from the interviews.

## 4. Results

The analysis of the findings commences with a 'universal' approach of the two image domains, as respondents expressed their perceptions of the key attributes of a place as a destination to visit and as a setting to live in.

### 4.1 Unpacking place image dimensions: Place to visit and place to live in

The generic (that is, not related to a specific place/destination) place image attributes identified in the first part of the study were grouped following the procedures described above under seven themes/dimensions, namely: Attractions, Amenities, Social Environment, Aesthetics, Ancillary Services, Access/accessibility, and Economic Environment. The vast majority of respondents revealed that a principal component of their image of a tourist destination is the abundance and quality of "Attractions" that it offers. "An attraction is a single unit, an individual site or a clearly defined small-scale geographical area, based on a single key feature and perceived by visitors as such" (Weidenfeld, Butler, & Williams, 2016, p.10). Attractions are not necessary tangible natural or heritage, but can be related to culture, fame and reputation, as illustrated by the account of a 34-year-old Greek male: *"To be interesting for some reason: attractions, museums, culture and history. Especially history and culture, as the most important is the place's history,"* and of a 70-year-old Czech female: *"Well, the very first thing would probably be the history, architecture; museums, galleries, opera, concerts and parks."* Attractions are regarded key pull factors and central in satisfying tourists' needs (Garrod, Leask, & Fyall, 2007), with destinations building their branding strategy on and around major attractions (Weidenfeld et al., 2016). On the other hand, "Activities" were scarcely mentioned by very few participants during the interviews, appearing to overlap to a great extent with attractions; thus, the consideration of activities as a fundamental component of a tourist destination as suggested by Buhalis (2000) was not empirically supported in this study.

The second most important dimension of destination image disclosed by the majority of participants was termed "Amenities", as it referred to accommodation, entertainment, catering, and shopping opportunities available. Amenities are often approached as the support facilities and services (Cooper et al., 2008). Tourists commonly seek for *"nice accommodation, entertainment opportunities, and good food"* (36-year-old Greek male). These results are in line with previous destination image studies that have considered the key

role amenities play as an integral component of destination image and an agent shaping destination choice (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Lin et al., 2007; Tasci & Holecek, 2007).

Attractions and amenities were also considered by many participants as relevant dimensions of their image of a place to live in, as testified by a 33-year-old Greek female: *“to have very good food, culture, theatres, to offer opportunities to do things, activities, and to have friendly locals,”* and by a 26-year old Greek male *“to offer a variety of options, an interesting city with opportunities to do things.”* These findings are in line with Turksever and Atakik's (2001) study, which concluded that opportunities for leisure are critical for residents, but their role has scarcely been confirmed in this context.

Local people constituted the third dimension of a tourist destination as identified by most interviewees, termed “Social Environment.” A 73-year-old Greek male, for example testified: *“The taste, the food, the culture and the people who live there ... in general the way of life. The everyday life, what they eat, their coffee places ... all together.”* Local residents and their hospitality are a core element of a destination and its image, determining visitor satisfaction and repeat visitation (Woosnam et al., 2020). The social environment was found equally important in shaping peoples' image of a place to live in: *“The peacefulness, so that everyone would be nice to each other, that there would not be rivalry”* (60-year-old Czech female). Similarly a 34-year-old Greek female noted: *“The lifestyle, the people who stay there, the social environment.”* The prominent role of the social environment and of people living in the area has also been validated in the study of Sirgy et al. (2000) and Potter and Cantarero (2006), largely contributing to overall community satisfaction. As the results of this study suggest, local people are a key ingredient of non-residents' image of a place to live in and to visit.

Another dimension of destination image identified in this study by several participants was termed “Aesthetics”, denoting the appeal of a tourist place (scenery, architecture, weather). A 73-year-old Greek male describes this as: *“The aesthetics, to be attractive; like buildings, architecture.”* Likewise, another interviewee (29-year-old Greek female) noted *“A beautiful place, picturesque, the architecture and mainly the old buildings.”* Natural environment and climate were also considered critical, as disclosed by a 33-year-old Greek male *“The environment, both natural and built, I want to see interesting places with a lot of green, nice buildings.”*

Such attributes of the physical environment are highly valued by tourists determining destination selection (e.g. Chi & Qu, 2008; Lin et al., 2007). Kirillova, Fu, Lehto and Cai (2014), who studied aesthetic judgement in the context of nature and urban based destinations, noted that this spans across nine themes ranging from abstract (uniqueness) to concrete ones (sound). The value of an attractive and aesthetically pleasant and warm environment was equally recognized by a number of the study's participants with regards to their image of a place to live in. For example, a 28-year-old Greek female noted: *"Beautiful, natural environment, normal rhythms of life ... and nice weather ... I would like it to be nice and warm, nice architecture. The human and build environment, to have an aura easy going and relaxed."* Similarly, a 30-year-old Czech female argued: *"the greenery is very important, the parks, forests, where one can go to."* These findings are in line with previous studies suggesting that people generally appreciate an aesthetically appealing environment including climate, architecture, and scenery, affecting the population growth of a place (e.g. Florida, Mellander, & Stolarick, 2011; Glaeser, Kolko, & Saiz, 2000).

The next dimension of destination image, "Ancillary services" including security and health care services was also mentioned by approximately half of the interviewees. For instance, the interview with a 36-year-old Greek male disclosed that: *"Generally, it is important to be in a place with high quality, there are indexes that measure quality of life, criminality, the environment, the transportation system, quality of service."* In line with some respondents, "Accessibility" is another significant dimension of destination image, mainly in the form of *"cheap ticket to go there, to be easily accessible"* (45-year-old Greek male). The importance of ancillary services and accessibility seemed to elevate when people considered a locale as a place to live in. A 35-year-old Greek male explained: *"Good means of transportation/infrastructure, to be clean, the environment and the city... And last but not least to have a well organised health system."* Similarly, a 28-year-old Czech male stated: *"the quality of life there; work opportunities, level of health, the school facilities"* and a 73-year-old Greek male added: *"The transportation system... The health system, what do they provide, it is important. The infrastructure, in general, how do you move from one place to the other; to have peace and quiet."* Safety and security of a place seem to be equally important, as described by a 40-year-old Greek male: *"To be quiet, safe and without crime, especially for my child, to be quiet, how to say it .... a high standard of living."* Such findings are unique within the tourism literature, as ancillary services have rarely been perceived as relevant to the tourism context. Beyond tourism, Grzeskowiak et al. (2003) and Sirgy et al.

(2000, 2008) also reported community supporting services to be related to residents' evaluation of a place.

Lastly, the one element of place that clearly reflected a place to live in but not a tourist destination was that of "Economic." A large majority referred to the provision of employment opportunities as a critical dimension of a place to live in: "*The most important issue is the financial one: Job opportunities, a good salary*" (26-year-old Greek male). This dimension serves as a clear line dichotomizing the two perceptions of a place, with an emphasis on economics being placed when people consider a locale as a place to live, but not when they approach it as a place to visit. This is in line with the study of Potter and Cantarero (2006) on community satisfaction which also identified an economic dimension of a place.

Drawing on the results of the first stage of analysis the seven image dimensions identified include: Attractions, Amenities, Social Environment, Aesthetics, Ancillary services, Access, and Economic Environment, showcasing the wealth of associations pertaining to a place. The relative importance of each one of these for the two image domains is displayed in Table 2. The first six were commonly reported across the two image domains, whereas Economic appears to be a distinct dimension of peoples' perceptions of a place to live in.

Insert Table 2 Here

#### **4.2 Identity salience and mental associations of the two image domains of London**

To explore the interlinkages between the two place image domains, the study's participants were invited in the second stage of the interviews to discuss about their visit to London, which helped them to elaborate on the interlinkages between the two images of London as a place to visit and to live in, with the vast majority clearly differentiating between the two. For some, key conceptual differences exist in peoples' identities that guide their thinking and perceptions of the image domains of London. A clear line was drawn, for example, by a 63-year-old Greek female between the identity of a resident and that of a tourist: "*It is definitely not the same, because you must work to live. Then you have to deal with issues related to your job, etc., and you need to have a certain amount of money to survive. One thing is to be a tourist and another thing to be a resident.*" This is further illustrated in a 35-year-old Greek male's account: "*It is another thing, it is completely different. I think it is much more joyful*

*and less stressful to visit a place as a tourist and go to all the attractions, whereas the everyday routine and to stay in a place permanently, for sure it includes other things, other images and another way of life. If you perceive it as a place to live, there is much more stress, you have to do with very high buildings, meetings, your time is not devoted to exploring the city ...you are involved in other things.”*

Few interviewees moved beyond specific image dimensions, declaring differences in a holistic image. This is well-reflected in the following quote by a 31-year-old female Czech: *“for me it is definitely more a place to visit than a place to live in, if that makes sense.”* Previous studies have also discussed the notion of an overall image, which denotes the holistic impressions of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). This overall image is often more decisive for attracting tourists who often rely on that rather than on specific image characteristics (Akama & Kieti, 2003).

Additionally, changes in peoples' perception of the very same place attribute were observed, as a result of one identity (tourist) becoming salient over the other (resident). This point can be best illustrated using a 33-year-old Greek male's account: *“I see this as something completely different. I believe that when you are relaxed (during holidays) you do not care if you will be late, there is no stress for commuting, no stress related to everyday life. When you live and work at a place, this stress is present. So, I might perceive things differently, things which might be the same, but I would see them from a different angle.”* To this end, a 59-year-old Czech male explains how his perception of the high cost of living in London fluctuates accordingly: *“So, for example, if I would go for holidays, it is fine, because I can always pay for a few days, even for someone who does not have great finances ... but for those who do not have money, it is very difficult to live there.”* Equally, an interview with a 29-year-old Czech female was very informative of the mental processes taking place, leading to a differentiation of the two seemingly similar images: *“They are not that different, but if I go there for a short period while on holidays, my attitude is different; I do not worry about it too much, for example I do not worry about the stress of the everyday life, as I just go there to enjoy. So the images become actually different.”*

A further outcome of identity salience was the reported variations in the prioritization of image dimensions. The following personal account (39-year-old Czech female) clearly reflects this change: *“To visit, I would not be interested in the employment, in the work, in*



*healthcare; as a place to visit, I would be interested in where can I eat well.*” This and previously reported findings suggest that although the two image domains might have fundamental similarities in terms of constitutional attributes/dimensions, a clear prioritization is evident confirming that identities provide lenses through which people make sense of the world and connect meaning and action (Ramarajan, 2014).

Another tenable explanation of the reported differences among the two domains of image is that tourists often obtain only superficial images and lack more complex understandings of a place that residents typically develop over time: *“As a tourist you only see things not in detail, you do not stay there, you do not participate in... you do not see the problems that permanent residents of London have to face. As a tourist you go there for a week or ten days, you visit places, take the underground, the bus, you visit the attractions”* (72-year-old Greek male). This complex image was also emphasized by a 29-year-old Greek female: *“Within few days that you go on vacations you are not able to understand what’s really going on. When you stay permanently, you get to know the secrets of living there and of the people. When you stay in a place your image transforms ... and you do not see the same place in the same way.”* Local residents typically possess a multi-layered interpretation of the place where they reside and work, and where they mingle with other community members (Hudson, 1988).

For some participants like a 36-year-old Greek male, the difference in image is a result of spatial dichotomization, with the city centre being a tourist destination and the suburbs a place to live: *“somehow it is different: the centre is a tourist zone that you can benefit from [as a resident], sometimes.”* Similar views were expressed by others (36-year old Greek male), claiming that only the tourists stay in the centre, which is expensive, whereas residents stay in the suburbs: *“if you live permanently, you need to stay in some zones that are far away; you will not visit daily Oxford Street, Regent Street, Camden or Covent Garden, which are key tourist attractions. It will not be my everyday life routine to visit them, just an excursion from time to time. But I would feel the need to visit these places in order to realize that I live in a city like London with these types of attractions and size.”*

Despite a wider recognition of the inherited differences present in the two place image domains, for a handful of participants the two can match, under certain circumstances. For a 65-year-old Greek female this can happen *“when a place is nice, it has a positive impact on you and makes you feel good, it is relaxing, you gain from the place. Then, the two images*

*become the same.*” Positive feelings as such can reconcile differences between the apparently different image domains, which are then perceived as one. Lastly, some participants acknowledged that a vacation visit can serve as a pilot to pre-taste the place before taking a decision to migrate. For instance, a 28-year-old Greek female describes this as: “*you experience this more.. it is like a test, like an experiment. You go for a while to see it.*” This finding extends earlier research conducted on lifestyle migration, providing empirical support that migration is often initiated through tourism movement (Hoey, 2005). Overall, only a few participants stated that they would like to move to London, while the majority did not express any intention to do so. Clearly those in the first group had more positive images of London not only as a place to visit but also as a place to live, as compared to those who do not plan to move. However, even they mentioned that their decision will depend on the type of employment and amount of salary, being fully cognizant, as a result of their visit, of London’s high cost of living.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study's aim was to explore how the image of a place as a tourist destination and as a place to live in can co-exist and potentially interact in peoples' mind, whilst identifying their commonalities and divergences. To achieve its aim, 42 in-depth interviews with Czechs and Greeks were conducted. Destination image was found in this study to comprise six dimensions, that is, Attractions, Amenities, Aesthetics, Ancillary Services, Access, and Social Environment. These results corroborate to a certain extent previous models proposed by Cooper et al. (2008) and Buhalis (2000) for the necessity to include a) attractions (natural and man-made, tangible and intangible) as the first power of tourist destinations (Garrod et al., 2007), along with b) amenities including the availability of accommodation, catering and shopping facilities, c) accessibility (transportation system) and the d) provision of ancillary services (police, health, etc.) at the destination. Contrary to the model proposed by Buhalis (2000), however, the available packages were not connected to any mental association people have of tourist destinations in general, while activities overlapped to a large extent with amenities and attractions.

Despite some similarities, the findings extend previous research by empirically supporting the need to incorporate an aesthetic and a social dimension in the conceptualization of destination image. Although both of them have been implicitly discussed in the destination image literature, research focusing on understanding the aesthetics and the social dimension of a tourist destination is scant. Kirillova et al. (2014) highlighted the need to move beyond a single-item measurement of destination attractiveness (i.e. beautiful) and proposed nine themes for a comprehensive understanding of this complex construct. Echoing Kirillova et al.'s (2014) results, this study reveals unanimous agreement among respondents of the importance of the aesthetic qualities of a destination, including buildings, architecture, and natural environment, indicating a possible direction for future research. In a similar vein, the social environment manifested itself as a key dimension of destination image. Although a broad agreement in the literature exists on the importance of friendly locals/hospitality for a flourishing tourism industry, little empirical work has been conducted in providing an in-depth understanding of the role local residents play in shaping tourists' destination image. Overall, this study makes a contribution to the destination image literature, proposing the inclusion of these two dimensions in the conceptual understanding and operationalization of this complex construct.

Another contribution of the current study is the conceptualization of the image of a place to live in, which was reported here comprising seven dimensions: Attractions, Amenities, Social Environment, Aesthetics, Ancillary Services, Access/accessibility, and Economic Environment. Six of these dimensions overlap with the ones used in destination image, whereas the Economic Environment - including job provision, level of economic development, cost of life, etc. – is a unique component of the place to live image. The study as such is one of the few of its kind to provide a more holistic understanding of the image of a place to live as perceived by outsiders (non-residents), expanding recent research conducted by Stylidis et al. (2016) on permanent residents' image of their place. However, the uniqueness of the current study is that the image of place to live was examined from the tourists' perspective, which is distinct from that developed by local residents who are more familiar/experienced with and attached to their place. It is though acknowledged here that when evaluating another place to reside, non-residents often make direct comparisons of this locale to their own residential setting.

Research so far has linked destination image with product country image (Stepcheknova & Shichkova, 2017), denoting the existence of common ground and called for additional research on linking the various image domains of a place. In response to this call, the present study sheds some light on the associations and interlinkages between the tourist destination and place to live image domains. As indicated by the number of reported image dimensions, the wealth and diversity of associations were found to be higher in the image of place to live, as compared to those used in destination image reflecting the level of complexity of the two images. For most people there are conceptual differences between the two domains, with higher attention given to elements like jobs, cost of living and healthcare when people consider a place to live in, whereas the focus shifts on attractions, restaurants and relaxation when they assess a place as a tourist destination. Overall, both Czech's and Greek's mental associations of London related to the destination image domain appear to be more positive than those pertaining to the place to live domain.

Part of the originality of this research also stems from its qualitative nature in exploring destination image and image as a place to live in. The vast majority of studies on place and destination image in the past have adopted a structured approach in their measurement via dimensions and attributes widely available in the literature. Such approach though restricts

participants' expression of individual opinions, perceptions, ideas, feelings, and unique elements that shape their image. Furthermore, previous studies exploring image have been place-specific, generating lists of destination-bounded characteristics which have minimal application to other settings (e.g. attributes such as ski resorts, alpine climate, etc. do not correspond to the image of a seaside resort). To overcome this limitation, this research also explored the key characteristics people use to assess a place in general, both as a destination to visit and as a setting to live in. Such approach enabled and facilitated a discussion of the differences, similarities and interactions between the two image domains, which has not been possible in the past. Additionally, the use of samples from two nationalities (Greek and Czech) offered deeper insights into the different image domains explored and assisted in cross-validating the results.

Another contribution of this research is the application of the identity theory to explain differences in people's perceptions of the two image domains, thereby responding to previous calls for more theoretically sound research. It is argued here that identity salience decisively determines the importance and angle each place attribute is assessed and hierarchized. Several of the findings can be used to support this, including perceptions of attractions and ancillary services. Although for tourists, attractions were considered a key motivation to visit a destination and as such an inseparable component of destination image, their role was diminished in the context of place to live. Similarly, ancillary services were not highly associated to tourist destinations, but their level of significance increased when approached from the resident perspective. These examples illustrate that an identity/role shifting occurs when people evaluate a place; in line with the most salient role present, different perspectives of a setting are emphasized. The study thus extends the application of identity and social identity theory in the place image field providing empirical evidence for the necessity to recognize the identity lens through which a person perceives a place and its domains.

Despite some compositional differences discussed above, destination image appears to serve as a platform shaping peoples' impressions and images of a locale as a place to live in, providing them the opportunity to familiarize themselves with issues such as cost of living, transport, etc. It was also noted that only people who had developed positive images were keen to consider moving to London, but even in those cases respondents were acknowledging the fact that they will not have the same experience as tourists have; they will most probably stay in the suburbs, experience stress and commute long-distances to work every day. They all

also seemed to recognize that their experience would greatly depend on their level of income. Overall, it seems that destination image is only partially likely to activate the nodes of migration in the decision making process.

Are the two image domains a subset of a generic place image – a multitier structure - as proposed by Mossberg and Kleppe (2005)? Building on Mossberg and Kleppe (2005) and Stepcheknova and Shichkova (2017) work, it can be argued that a generic place image can consist of a general country image at the top level, followed by a product-country image at the second tier, a place to live image at the third tier and a tourist destination image at the last tier. The last two levels though can include different scales of a place including country/state, region, city, or a particular location or attraction. As a result it should be considered that different scales of place might reach differing conclusions (Stepcheknova & Shichkova, 2017). Some overlapping might also occur as various associations pertaining to a place will be common among the various tiers (i.e. an attraction), with role salience being also decisive in guiding peoples' thinking. When people approach a place as a tourist destination, for example, certain dimensions will become salient such as attractions, while when a place is perceived from the perspective of a resident the economic aspect becomes dominant. Overall, the study contributes to place image theory by providing a better understanding of the place image domains and their inter-linkages importing key theories from marketing and psychology in the tourism field.

The findings of this study can be of value to place managers, urban planners and destination marketers. What poses the greatest challenge for place marketing is the identification of the characteristics of a place that are unanimously recognized by tourists and residents alike to be incorporated in place marketing communications strategies, enabling a more efficient allocation of resources. Given that generic country image is probably placed at the first tier of a multi-layered place image, significant effort should be made in creating a positive holistic 'umbrella' image of a country first. Links to specific tourist destinations (i.e. London), well-known attractions (i.e. Big Ben) or popular country products (i.e. English tea) might be useful at that stage. Next, the impact of identity salience implies that the targeted consumers can have several perspectives of the same place/destination, with images fluctuating accordingly; providing a better match between place characteristics and peoples' identity along with placing an emphasis on affective connotations can be a second step of actions. As the study reveals, there are various types of associations that seem to be relevant when people assess a

place as a tourist destination vs. a place to reside. Promoting the uniqueness and abundance of attractions, aesthetics, social environment along with amenities provided seem to be critical in influencing overall attitudes towards a place.

In the case of London, effort should be devoted in reinforcing aspects of its image like the abundance of greenery and parks, excellent transportation system, top-class museums and inclusive culture that apply to both parties. To attract new residents and high-skilled employees, place managers should place an emphasis on the economic and social environment along with the ancillary serviced offered. As a step further, welcome information centres for new/prospective residents – similar to tourist information centres - can be developed, assisting and guiding people (i.e. visa, housing) who would like to migrate to London. Last but not least, the results of the study support that place marketers must understand multiple stakeholders' perceptions to enhance the attractiveness of a place among its various audiences (Hankinson, 2004). Place marketers, in particular, need to be aware of the incongruences in the different types of images, emphasizing on the need to reconcile differences and minimize conflicts in perceived image domains. As a means to achieve this target, the study suggests involving a broad range of stakeholders in the city and tourism planning and marketing process, bearing in mind their identity salience shift.

A limitation of this study is the sample size and composition of Czech and Greek residents; the findings as such need further verification among larger populations and people from various cultural backgrounds, as culture can be influential in image formation. Next, the study focused on two specific place image domains and on the resident/tourist identity; future avenues for research could expand this to include the image of a place to invest or to study, incorporating the identities of investor and student. Another limitation of this study was the use of people who are not residents of the destination and also did not openly express clear intentions to migrate; however, they were purposefully selected to explore whether tourist visitation opens up new opportunities for mobility and assists in developing more complex holistic images of a place that go beyond destination image. A more thorough discussion/comparison between those who intend to move to a place vs. those who do not, could be the scope of a future study. Lastly, it would be useful to further explore the interlinkages between these image domains and peoples' behaviour including decision to migrate, to visit, to study, etc. not only in urban but also in rural settings.

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**Table 2. Relative importance of the image dimensions**

<b>Image Dimensions</b>	<b>Destination Image</b>	<b>Place to live in</b>
Attractions	high	low
Amenities	high	medium
Social Environment	high	medium
Aesthetics	medium	medium
Ancillary services	low	high
Access	low	high
Economic Environment	-	high