

RESEARCH NOTE

RESIDENTS' PLACE IMAGE: PLACE TO LIVE VERSUS TOURIST DESTINATION

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Despite growing attention given to the notion of place, research focusing on the resident perspective is still fragmented, with some studies exploring the image of a place as a place to live in (city image) and others as a tourist destination. Aiming to bridge existing streams of research, this study explores the capacity of established image dimensions to predict residents' image of their place as a) a place to live in and b) a tourist destination. Data were collected from a sample of 368 residents of Eilat, Israel. Findings suggest that the social environment, natural environment, and accessibility were the most important antecedents of residents' city image, whereas social environment, amenities, and attractions were the most important determinants of residents' destination image. The findings advance knowledge on place image conceptualization, offering practical insights for developing a place both as a place to live in and as a tourist destination.

Key words: Place image; City image; Destination image

Introduction

Central to the competition among places to attract tourists, new residents and investors is the notion of place image (Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011; Sahin & Baloglu, 2011). Developing a successful place image in such a highly competitive environment is a challenging and demanding activity (Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006). Within the tourism context, the vast majority of researchers have

focused on place (country or city) image formed by tourists, known to play a critical role in the competitiveness of tourism destinations (Kozak & Baloglu, 2011; Liu, Li, & Fu, 2016). A few other studies have examined places from the perspective of tourism business operators (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001; Burgess, 1982; Papadopoulos, Elliot, & Szamosi, 2014) or local residents (Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2011; Stylidis, Sit, & Biran, 2016). Local residents commonly have a more complex image

of their place than tourists, because a place serves to them as a setting where they work and socialize (Hudson, 1988). Understanding this image is invaluable for urban planning and development, which commonly involve an attempt to enhance a place and make it more attractive to its wider audiences (Line, Runyan, Swinney, & Sneed, 2016; Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). Additionally, empirical evidence suggest that residents' place image exercises a significant effect on their levels of support for tourism development (Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2011) and their willingness to recommend their place to others (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanz, 2005), both being critical for the sustainable development of tourism.

Despite a growing attention given to the notion of place, research on place image from the resident perspective is still fragmented, with some studies exploring the image of a place as a place to live in (city image) and others as a tourist destination. This article aims to fill in the gap and bridge these two streams of research by examining the capacity of established image dimensions to predict residents' overall/global image of their place as a) a place to live in, and b) as a tourist destination. The outputs of this study advance current theoretical knowledge on the conceptualization of place image, and offer practical insights for successfully developing a place both as a place to live in and as a tourist destination. This is of importance, as people nowadays can work and reside almost anywhere, abandoning deteriorating places for others offering greater opportunities (Kotler & Gertner, 2004). The article now moves to present the relevant literature on residents' place image, followed by an explanation of the methods used for data collection, the findings, and a discussion/conclusion part where the contribution of the article to tourism theory and practice is discussed.

Literature Review

Destination image is commonly defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993). Nowadays it is recognized that image consists of two components: cognitive and affective (e.g., Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1993). The cognitive component refers to the individual's

knowledge, beliefs, and evaluation of the perceived place attributes (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Pike & Ryan, 2004). The affective component is concerned with individuals' feelings and emotions about a place (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004). The study of image has attracted the attention of many researchers, considered critical for destination competitiveness (see Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). To improve the competitiveness of a place an in depth understanding of the process of destination image formation and its determinants is needed (Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011).

Destination managers have increasingly recognized in the last decade the role local residents play in the promotion and sustainable development of tourism, and thus there are calls for engaging locals more in the promotional and development activities of a tourist place (Stylidis et al., 2016). This is particularly relevant nowadays with the active involvement of local residents in social media platforms, and the role of the latter in shaping the image of tourist destinations (Palmer, Koenig-Lewis, & Jones, 2013; Tamajón & Valiente, 2017). The few available studies in tourism on residents' place image can be classified, along with their focus, in two streams of research: a) studies that have captured residents' image of their city as a place to live in (Merrilees, Miller, & Herington, 2009; Stylidis et al., 2016) and/or linked it to their level of support for tourism development (Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2011; Stylidis, Biran, Sit, & Szivas, 2014); and b) studies that have captured residents' image of their place as a tourist destination and compared it to the image held by other stakeholders such as tourism business operators (Sternquist-Witter, 1985) or tourists (Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996; Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa, & Tanner, 2006).

In line with the first stream of research, there are strong linkages between residents' city image and their support for tourism. For example, Ramkissoon and Nunkoo (2011) and Stylidis et al. (2014) examined the link between residents' city image, their attitudes toward tourism impacts, and support for its development. Both studies conclude that residents with more positive city images are more likely to perceive the impacts of tourism favorably and to support tourism development. Understanding how hosts' support for tourism is formed is imperative for the sustainable development of a tourist destination

(Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2010; Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2011). Although a positive relationship has been established between residents' perception of place and the influx of tourists, this should be interpreted with caution as many cases have been recorded where residents' negative images are associated with the presence of tourists (Jutla, 2000). Along with the second stream of studies, local residents commonly hold different perceptions of their city in contrast to tourists. For example, Henkel et al. (2006) reported that Thai residents appreciate different aspects of Thailand (e.g., friendly locals) than the international tourists (e.g., nightlife, exoticism), and Sternquist-Witter (1985) noted that local retailers assess the destination image of Traverse City, Michigan more favorably than visitors. These findings have significant implications, as a positive relationship appears to exist between destination image and residents' intention to recommend a place to others (Bigne et al., 2005).

In sum, the aforementioned studies consistently indicate the significance of understanding residents' place image, especially as image offers key insights to the local council and tourism authorities in relation to urban planning and tourism development (Bandyopadhyay & Morrais, 2005). Second, it is practically notable that the place attributes/characteristics utilized across studies in both streams of research are largely identical, including climate, physical environment, entertainment facilities, etc. (Stylidis et al., 2016). Previous studies on city image have commonly employed the attributes originally compiled for the tourists, with little modification. Therefore, building on previous research and aiming to expand existing knowledge on the conceptualization and operationalization of place image from the resident perspective, this study is using established place image dimensions (i.e., attractions, amenities) to explore their capacity to a) predict residents' overall image of their city as a place to live in, and as a tourist destination, and b) understand the relative importance of each image dimension in explaining the variance on the two types of overall place image studied.

Research Methods

Eilat (population 47,500), Israel was selected as the setting of this study, given its suitability for

testing the aforementioned relationships and the fact that limited research has been conducted on the image of places located in the Middle East region. Eilat is Israel's most highly developed sea, sun, and sand resort. International tourists spent 1,084,000 hotel-nights and domestic tourists 5,671,000 hotel-nights in Eilat in 2011, making it the most popular destination for domestic tourism in Israel. In 2012, the city provided 10,956 hotel rooms, almost one quarter of the total hotel room supply in Israel (Israel Ministry of Tourism, 2012). The number of jobs directly generated by tourism in Eilat is large (7,700) and tourism is a major contributor to the local economy, accounting for about 50% of local GDP. Eilat is significantly remote from other cities in Israel. The city is artificially divided by the local airport into two zones: a residential quarter and a tourist area located along the shoreline. Historically Eilat has had a rather transient population, with about 70% of the population living in Eilat for less than 10 years. Numerous young people who find themselves in a period of transition between military service and the return to civilian life are attracted by Eilat's liminality and obtain work in the hospitality industry.

Following the data collection process of C. C. Chen, Lin, and Petrick (2013), a self-administered questionnaire in Hebrew was distributed by four research assistants who were set up in a single location each time. Respondents were approached mainly in selected public areas (i.e., shopping areas and neighborhoods, ensuring that all the key neighborhoods of the city were selected, to achieve a balanced representation of residents) using a random day/time/site pattern (every fifth person passing by the researchers) between November 2012 and March 2013 (Bonn, Joseph, & Dai, 2005). The questionnaire involved 35 items and took on average 10 min to complete. The final sample comprised 368 Eilat residents and the response rate was 63%, with a number of nonresponses (12%) attributed to the ineligibility (nonresidents) of the people approached to participate in the study.

The questionnaire was prepared following a comprehensive literature review on city and destination image and is based on established measurement tools in the field (see Andrades-Caldito, Sanchez-Rivero, & Pulido-Fernandez, 2013; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004;

C. F. Chen & Tsai, 2007). This stage was followed by a face validity exercise with a panel of 10 randomly selected residents (see Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). This exercise involved checking each item for clarity, deleting redundant items, and rewording some others. A multidimensional scale was used that covered 17 items measuring five dimensions of place image. Each of the five dimensions was captured using three to four items; that is, natural environment (scenic beauty, climate, beaches), amenities (restaurants, accommodation, shopping facilities, service quality), attractions (cultural/historic attractions, water-sports, tourist activities), accessibility (access, infrastructure, transportation), and social environment (safe, friendly, clean, value for money). Following Chi and Qu (2008) and Lee (2009), a 7-point Likert-type scale was used with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Besides the multidimensional scale, local residents were also asked to evaluate the overall image of Eilat: a) as a place to live in (i.e., overall city image), and b) as a tourist destination (i.e., overall destination image), on a 7-point scale ranging from *very unfavorable* to *very favorable* (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Wang & Hsu, 2010). A single measure was chosen because an average of the attribute scores is not commonly considered an adequate measurement of overall image (Bigne et al., 2005). Lastly, residents were asked to express their intention to recommend Eilat to others a) as a place to live in and b) as a tourist destination, on a scale from *very unlikely* to *very likely* (see Chi & Qu, 2008; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). A pilot test conducted among residents of Eilat confirmed the clarity, relevancy, and suitability of the survey.

Prior to testing the model, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to confirm the inherent dimensions of the place image scale and to reduce the complexity of the collected data (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014). Both Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sample adequacy (0.852) and Bartlett’s test of sphericity ($p < 0.001$) confirmed the factorability of the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The PCA (promax rotation) revealed the existence of five factors with the total variance explained of 60.53%, suggesting a satisfactory factor solution. All items, in particular, loaded on the predicted image factors (natural environment, amenities, attractions, social environment, and

accessibility). The eligibility of the factor solution was also supported by eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The following criteria were used to establish the validity of the five factors: a) items needed to have factor loadings higher than 0.40; b) no item that double loaded onto multiple factors with coefficients greater than 0.40 was retained; and c) internal consistency was confirmed by estimating the Cronbach α value of each factor (Hair et al., 2014). In all cases the Cronbach’s α value was above the recommended benchmark ($\alpha > 0.60$) (Peterson, 1994). Prior to commencing a regression analysis to test the relationships between the place image dimensions and the two types of overall place image, five composite variables were created based on the five image dimensions’ mean scores. These five composite scores were used in the subsequent regression analysis to reduce model complexity (Hair et al., 2014).

Findings

Women accounted for 57% and men for 43% of the sample. The majority of the respondents was single (59%), less than 34 years old (69%), and employed full-time (55%). Overall, based on the gender and age profile of Eilat residents (based on the 2003 census), it appears that the selected sample was generally representative of the city’s population. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to identify the relative ability of each of the five image dimensions to predict a) the overall image residents have of Eilat as a place to live in, and b) their overall image of Eilat as a tourist destination. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 1. The fit of model one (M_1) is satisfactory [adj. $R^2 = 0.30$, $F(5, 362) = 30.97$, $p < 0.001$], explaining 30% of the variance in overall city image. Equally, the fit of the second model (M_2) is quite good [adj. $R^2 = 0.28$, $F(5, 362) = 27.89$, $p < 0.001$], indicating that the second model explains around 28% of the variance in the overall destination image construct. Despite the predictive ability of the two models, the variability left unexplained indicates that there are other significant factors that might further explain the variance in the dependent variables.

The most important determinants of the overall city image are (in order of importance) the social

Table 1
Regression Analysis of Overall Destination Image and Overall City Image

Model/Predictors	Standardized Coefficient β	<i>t</i>
Overall city image ($R^2 = 0.30$; constant: 0.23)		
Natural environment	0.18	3.61*
Amenities	0.17	2.05*
Attractions	-0.05	-0.90
Accessibility	0.15	2.99*
Social environment	0.30	5.34*
Overall destination image ($R^2 = 0.28$; constant: 2.1)		
Natural environment	-0.10	-1.95
Amenities	0.23	3.97*
Attractions	0.16	3.12*
Accessibility	0.04	0.79
Social environment	0.30	5.19*

* $p < 0.001$.

environment, natural environment, accessibility, and amenities. In contrast, attraction does not appear to predict this construct. On the other hand, the most important determinants of the overall destination image construct are the social environment, amenities, and attractions, while accessibility and natural environment are not reported to play a key role. To further explore the predictive ability of the models, the relationships between the two types of overall image and residents' intention to recommend Eilat to others were tested. Both relationships tested demonstrate high predictive validity, considering the strong correlation between overall city image and intention to recommend Eilat as a place to live in ($r = 0.78$) and between overall destination image and intention to recommend Eilat as a tourist destination ($r = 0.71$).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of residents' place image and enlighten its operationalization, by exploring whether residents use different characteristics when assessing their place as a place to live in, and as a tourist destination. The findings suggest that residents use some common and some unique characteristics in the formation of the two overall image constructs. Starting with the common attributes, the social environment and the amenities provided are critical elements of a place for local residents. Especially the social environment seems important for measuring residents' place image, focusing on

the intangible attributes of a place such as a sense of safety and friendliness of locals. This finding is consistent with previous place image studies focusing on tourists (e.g., C. F. Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008). It is also in line with previous results (Theodori & Luloff, 2000) on the tendency of the residents in smaller communities like Eilat to display stronger levels of solidarity than the inhabitants of larger cities.

The natural environment, on the other hand, seems to be of importance for local residents only when assessing Eilat as a place to live in and not as a tourist destination. Similarly, Glaeser, Kolko, and Saiz (2000) report that physical attributes such as weather, architectural beauty, and scenery significantly influence the population growth of a city. A tenable explanation is that Eilat is well known among tourists for the attractions and activities that it provides, rather than its scenic beauty. Third, the attractions dimension is pivotal for residents when assessing Eilat as a tourist destination but does not play an important role in their evaluation of Eilat as a place to live in. Attractions have been reported as a major dimension of place image and a key factor influencing tourism decision making (C. F. Chen & Tsai, 2007). This finding may reflect the incongruity between the "frontstage" presented by Eilat to tourists and its "backstage." Eilat is divided into two zones, a tourist and a residential one, with the frontstage constituting a "tourist ghetto" (Mansfeld, 1992). The "frontstage-backstage" division of the city and the diversion of the majority of council funding to the former might explain why attractions

are deemed less important by residents in their everyday life. Overall, the findings here further reinforce the notion that places are complex and multidimensional entities (Stylidis et al., 2016) and that residents do prioritize their needs when assessing a place to live in versus as a tourist destination. Eilat residents, at present, seem to be less interested in attractions, and are more focused on the city's social and natural environment.

By validating the applicability of the proposed image model to a sample of residents, the study sheds some light on the conceptualization and operationalization of image from the perspective of the local community. The study, in particular, expands current understanding on the relative role specific characteristics play in the conceptualization of place image. Evidence suggests that some place elements (i.e., natural environment) contribute to residents' overall city image but are less important in the development of the overall destination image. Additionally, the study contributes to existing destination competitiveness and sustainability frameworks (i.e., Ritchie & Crouch, 2003), adding another layer of complexity to the image/awareness determinant, as the same place attributes can be approached differently by people, based on the domain of place image under investigation (place to live vs. tourist destination). The reported results further contribute to the operationalization of place image, providing a list of image dimensions/attributes to be included in the measurement of each type of global place image. The findings also have practical implications for the management and marketing of a place. Given that the model tested revealed the relative importance of each image dimension on two types of overall place image, it can be used by destination marketers as a framework for the design of marketing communications aiming to enhance the image of a place perceived by local residents. The study, in particular, calls for the development of targeted promotional activities—that is, focusing on the attractions dimension when aiming to improve residents' destination image or paying attention to accessibility or natural environment while attempting to ameliorate the city image. Additionally, complimentary or reduced entrance fees for residents to local attractions should be initiated, followed by social media competitions inviting residents to propose

their favorite local attraction, further cultivating residents' destination image.

This study is not free from limitations. First, analyzing destination and place image within the same framework poses challenges; this research should be perceived as a first exploratory attempt to enhance our understanding of overall place image. Similarly, the set of items included in the measurement tool may not be totally relevant or complete, but a common measurement tool was deemed necessary to allow for comparisons across the two types of overall image studied. Within this realm, it is possible that the use of the term "attractions" instead of "community amenities or resources" have impacted the way local residents assessed this dimension. Future research should also consider additional items on the measurement of image including its affective component. Third, respondents were randomly selected in various Eilat neighborhoods. While this pattern is useful in achieving a balanced composition of respondents, it may limit the generalizability of the findings to other destinations. Fourth, the dataset was translated from Hebrew to English; although every effort has been made in this process, some bias might have been introduced in the data analysis. Next, although the predictors used do account for changes in the dependent variable, additional variables must be looked at, such as place attachment. Future research should also explore if destination image attributes are similar to city image attributes in tourists' mind and, lastly, carry out more studies of this type for different types of destination (urban, rural, etc.).

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