

## AFFECTIVE TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE: THE CASE OF PORTOROŽ

Scientific paper

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to investigate perceptions of tourists regarding affective tourism destination image of Portorož.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Four semantic differential scales, proposed by Russel and Pratt, were used to for this study to measure pleasant/unpleasant, arousing/sleepy, exciting/gloomy and relaxing/distressing dimensions of affective tourism destination image. The survey instrument was a structured questionnaire. Data were collected across several locations in Portorož resulting in a sample of 417 tourists. Descriptive statistics is used in empirical research.

**Findings** – Portorož appears to be generally perceived as a relaxing and pleasant destination. On the contrary, it is perceived to be neither an arousing nor a sleepy destination and neither an exciting nor a boring destination. Perceptions of an affective tourism destination image in regard to the main motive to visit Portorož are also analyzed.

**Originality** – The paper enhances the slim body of knowledge on affective tourism destination image in the Mediterranean destinations.

**Keywords** image, destination, affective tourism destination image

### **1. BACKGROUND**

Tourism destination image (TDI) is “an amalgam of the knowledge, feelings, beliefs, opinions, ideas, expectations, and impressions people have about a named location” (Henderson, 2007, p. 262). Further, Henderson (Ibid) states that tourism destinations that have clearly delineated and appealing images are better positioned. Kotler et al. (in Costa Machado et al., 2012, p. 119) state that “the image of tourism destination is a subjective interpretation of reality that partially results from a process managed by promoters and administrators in tourism marketing”. Thus, the understanding of TDI is important because it has influence on satisfaction of tourists and destination loyalty (Chi and Qu, 2008) and tourism is, as argued by Elliot et al. (2011, p. 521), image-driven industry. Kotler (Kotler, 1993; Kotler, 1999) identified six place image positions: positive, negative image, weak, mixed, contradictory and overly attractive TDI. Gartner and Konecnik (2011, 473-474) state that TDI creates awareness, reduces risk about little known destination and TDI is used also for promotional purposes and to neutralize negative destination attributes.

Dimensions of TDI are complex and different models have been developed to evaluate it (for instance, Gartner, 1993; Echter and Ritchie, 2003). Garter (1993) developed a model of three components of TDI:

- cognitive that refers to beliefs and knowledge about a destination,
- affective that refers to feelings about a destination, and

- conative that refers to a combination of images developed during the cognitive stage and evaluated during the affective stage.

The model is widely accepted and there is a vast body of research in this area. Measurement of affective TDI, based on four affective characteristics, was firstly applied to destinations by Baloglu and Brinberg (1997). It was developed on Russell and Pratt (1980) affective responses to physical environment and places. The four proposed affective characteristics of destination used on semantic differential scales are: pleasant/unpleasant, relaxing/distressing, arousing/sleepy, exciting/gloomy; however, only two dimensions are needed to adequately represent the affective TDI: pleasant/unpleasant and arousing/sleepy or exciting/gloomy and relaxing/distressing. Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) argue that exciting is a combination of pleasant and arousing and relaxing is a combination of pleasant and sleepy. Other studies widen the dimensions of affective TDI including “fun” and “comfortable” dimension for ski destinations (Kim and Perdue, 2011) and “scary” dimension for gaming tourism destination (Kneesel et al., 2014).

Affective TDI is a subject of a great interest among academics. There are many pieces of recent research on affective TDI (for instance, Wang and Hsu, 2010; Kneesel et al., 2011; Prayag and Ryan; Kim and Perdue, 2011; Hung and Petrick, 2011; Chew and Jahari, 2014), but just few older pieces of research are focused on the Mediterranean destinations (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999, Assaker and Hallak, 2013). However, there is a lack of recent research of affective TDI in the Mediterranean destinations. Affective TDI is proved to be important destination positioning tool (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997) and has a significant impact on tourist loyalty (Zhang et al., 2014).

So far, some pieces of research have been made on affective TDI in relationship to tourists' characteristics, travel and perceptions (for instance, Haubl, 1996; Orbaiz and Papadopoulos, 2003; Elliot et al., 2011). Motivations to visit a destination has been researched in the context of affective TDI by Beerli and Martin (2004) who found that some motivations (knowledge and relaxation) are related to affective TDI, while other motivations (entertainment and prestige) are not.

The main aim of the study is, firstly, to analyze the affective TDI based on the perceptions of tourists in the Mediterranean destination Portorož and, secondly, to analyze the affective TDI in relation to the main motive to visit a destination. The study is limited to the low season during autumn and winter.

## **2. RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHOD**

The present paper investigates affective TDI in general and in relation to the main motive to visit a destination. Portorož, a small destination in Slovenia, is undertaken as a case study. It has tried to develop a modern concept of a seaside destination and attract different segments of tourists (Nemec Rudež et al., 2013). The research question is:

How is perceived affective destination image of Portorož and how is it perceived in relation to the main motives to visit a destination?

Based on this question, the research suggests using four semantic differential scales developed by Russel and Pratt (1980) and applied to measure TDI by Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) and Baloglu and McCleary (1999). It includes four scales measuring the following destination perceptions of affective TDI: pleasant/unpleasant, relaxing/distressing, arousing/sleepy, exciting/gloomy. Although two dimensions only are needed, as discussed in the previous section, we decided to include all the four scales to compare the findings. Tourists were segmented in regard to their main motive to visit a destination. Affective TDI of the largest three segments of tourists is additionally explained.

Structured questionnaires were used to interview the tourists in selected locations in Portorož during the low season. A face to face survey was undertaken in hotels, tourist information centre and campsite between November 2011 and January 2012. The sample structure was designed in order to be comparable to the structure of tourists in accommodation establishments during the low season. Statistical data of months in the previous year were used.

The sample size consisted of 417 respondents. There were 223 (53.47 %) of women and 194 (46.52 %) of men included in the survey. The average age of respondents was 44 years. Three quarters of respondents (319) stayed at the hotel, 64 (14.7 %) in apartment, 38 (8.7 %) in private room, 3 (0.7 %) in pension, 1 (0.2 %) in campsite and 6 (1.4 %) respondents stayed in other accommodation facilities. The sample included 217 or 49.8 % of Slovenian tourists, 112 or 25.9 % of Italian tourists, 44 or 10.1 % of Austrian tourists, 44 or 10.1 % of German tourists, 4 or 0.9 % of Croatian tourists and 19 respondents from other countries.

### 3. RESULTS

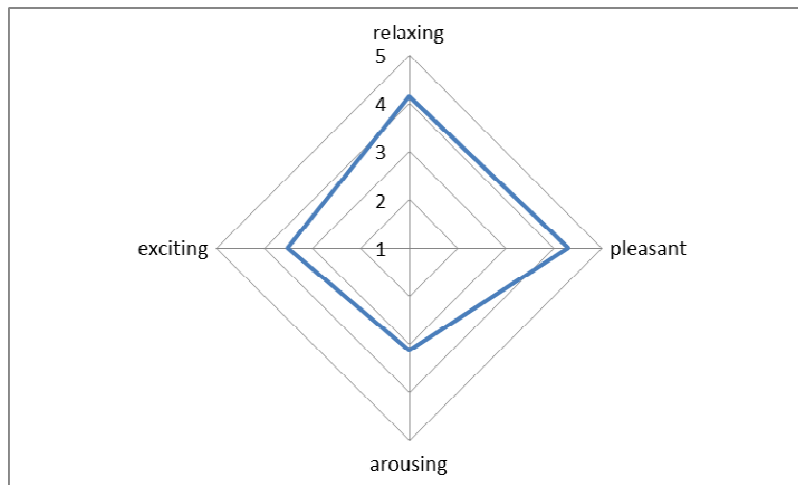
Portorož is perceived as a pleasant and relaxing destination according to its tourists (Table 1). In fact, 208 or 71.4 % tourists perceive Portorož to be a relaxing or a very relaxing destination. Similarly, 321 or 77.4 % of tourists perceive Portorož as a pleasant very pleasant destination.

Table 1: Frequencies, means and standard deviations (SD) of affective image of Portorož on four semantic differential scales

Dimension of affective TDI	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	N	Mean (SD)
Stressful (1) – relaxing (5)	0 0 %	17 4.2%	102 24.4%	106 25.4%	192 46.0%	417	4.13 (0.92)
Unpleasant(1) /pleasant(5)	1 0.2%	10 2.4%	83 20.0 %	93 22.5 %	228 54.9 %	415	4.29 (0.881)
Sleepy (1) – arousing (5)	23 5.5%	86 20. %	169 40.6%	90 21.6%	48 11.6%	416	3.13 (1.041)
Boring (1) – exciting (5)	4 0.9 %	36 8.6 %	188 45.1 %	120 28.8 %	69 16.6 %	417	3.51 (0.897)

Portorož is perceived as neither an arousing nor a sleepy destination (mean = 3.13). In fact, 109 or 26.2% of tourists perceive Portorož as a sleepy or a very sleepy destination (giving grade 1 or 2). Besides, according to the mean value (mean = 3.51) and standard deviation (SD = 0.897), Portorož is perceived to be neither an exciting destination nor a boring destination. Mean scores of the four semantic differential scales are shown also in a polar graph (Figure 1).

Figure 1: A polar graph for affective TDI of Portorož



Based on the mean scores, it can be derived that the perception of exciting dimension of Portorož reflects a combination of pleasant and arousing and relaxing dimension reflects a combination of sleepy and pleasant like these combinations are already argued by Baloglu and Blinberg (1997).

Tables 2-5 show the perceptions of tourists according to their motives to visit Portorož. In regard to the main motive to visit Portorož, tourists are divided into separate motivation segments. The largest segment is represented by “relaxers” whose main motive to visit Portorož is relaxation, followed by “entertainment segment” whose main purpose is to entertain and get new experience and “business tourists” with the main motive is related to business and education. Besides, there are also “wellness tourists” related to wellness and well-being motives and “VFR tourists”<sup>1</sup> who come to Portorož to visit friends or relatives.

Table 2 shows that 188 or 84.68 % of “relaxers” perceive Portorož as a relaxing (grade 4) or a very relaxing (grade 5) destination. Besides, more than half of “entertainment segment” (50 or 52.96 %) perceive Portorož to be a relaxing or very relaxing destination. On the other hand, only 33 or 42.86 % of “wellness tourists” perceive Portorož as a relaxing or very relaxing destination. It can be derived that the motive to visit Portorož is related to the perception of stressful/relaxing dimension.

<sup>1</sup> VFR stays for visiting friends and relatives.

**Table 2: Stressful/relaxing dimension of affective TDI on a five-point Likert-type scale according to the main motive of tourists to visit Portorož**

Main motive to visit Portorož	N	Answers on Likert-type scale					Mean (SD)
		1	2	3	4	5	
Relaxation	222	0 0%	2 0.9%	32 14.4%	51 2.9%	137 61.7%	4.45 (0.770)
Entertainment, experience	95	0 0%	6 6.3%	39 41.0%	29 30.8%	21 22.1%	3.86 (0.890)
Wellness, well-being	28	0 0%	2 7.1%	14 50.0%	29 28.5%	4 14.2%	3.50 (0.839)
Visiting friends and relatives	15	0 0%	1 6.6%	7 46.6%	8 13.3%	5 33.3%	3.73 (1.033)
Business and education	48	0 0%	4 8.3%	10 20.8%	2 25.0%	22 45.8%	4.08 (1.007)
Transit	1	0 0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 100%	0 0.0%	4.00
Health and rehabilitation	8	0 0%	2 25.0%	0 0.0%	3 37.5%	3 37.5%	3.88 (1.246)

Table 3 exhibits that 192 or 87.1% of “relaxers” perceive Portorož as a pleasant or very pleasant destination (giving grade 4 or 5). Lower mean value gave “entertainment segment” since only 64 or 68.1 % of them perceive Portorož to be a pleasant or very pleasant destination. Lower mean values have “wellness tourists” and “VFR tourists”.

**Table 3: Unpleasant/pleasant dimension of affective TDI on a five-point Likert-type scale according to the main motive of tourists to visit Portorož**

Main motive to visit Portorož	N	Answers on Likert-type scale					Mean (SD)
		1	2	3	4	5	
Relaxation	221	1 0.4%	0 0.0%	28 12.7%	43 19.7%	149 67.4%	4.35 (0.748)
Entertainment, experience	94	0 0.0%	4 4.2%	26 27.7%	31 33%	33 35.1%	3.99 (0.898)
Wellness, well-being	28	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	12 42.9%	7 25%	9 32.2%	3.89 (0.875)
Visiting friends and relatives	15	0 0.0%	1 6.7%	6 40.0%	1 6.7%	7 46.6%	3.93 (1.100)
Business and education	48	0 0.0%	4 8.3%	10 20.8%	9 18.8%	25 52.1%	4.15 (1.031)
Transit	1	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 100%	5.00
Health and rehabilitation	8	0 0.0%	1 12.5%	1 12.5%	2 25%	4 50%	4.13 (1.126)

Only 72 or 32.4% of “relaxers” perceive Portorož as an arousing or very arousing destination (giving grade 4 or 5), meanwhile only 57 or 25.7% of them perceive Portorož to be a sleepy or very sleepy destination (giving grade 1 or 2) (Table 4). Portorož is not perceived as an arousing destination among “wellness tourists” (mean = 2.93) since 8 or 28.6% of them perceive Portorož as a sleepy or very sleepy destination (grade 1 or 2) and 14 or 50% of them perceive Portorož to be neither a sleepy nor an arousing destination (grade 3). However, Portorož performs better in regard to “entertainment segment” (mean = 3.36). Indeed, 46 or 48.9% of them perceive Portorož as an arousing or very arousing destination (giving grade 4 or 5).

**Table 4: Sleepy/arousing dimension of affective TDI on a five-point Likert-type scale according to the main motive of tourists to visit Portorož**

Main motive to visit Portorož	N	Answers on Likert-type scale					Mean
		1	2	3	4	5	
Relaxation	222	16 7.2%	41 18.5%	94 42.3%	46 20.7%	26 11.7%	3.11 (1.067)
Entertainment, experience	94	2 2.1%	21 22.3%	25 26.6%	33 35.1%	13 13.8%	3.36 (1.067)
Wellness, well-being	28	3 10.7%	5 17.9%	14 50%	3 10.7%	3 10.7%	2.93 (1.086)
Visiting friends and relatives	15	0 0.0%	2 13.3%	8 53.4%	2 13.3%	3 20%	3.40 (0.986)
Business and education	48	2 4.1%	14 29.2%	23 47.9%	7 14.7%	2 4.1%	2.85 (0.875)
Transit	1	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 100%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1.00
Health and rehabilitation	8	0 0.0%	3 37.5%	4 50.0%	0 0.0%	1 12.5%	2.88 (0.991)

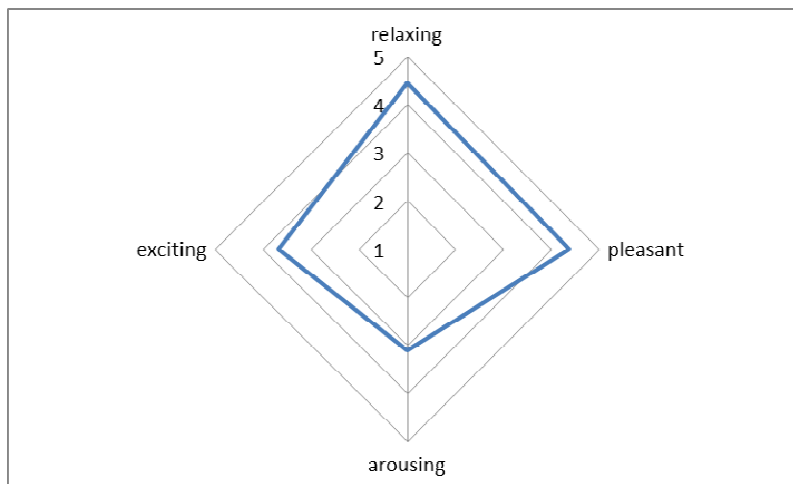
Regardless to the main motive to visit the destination (except transit), tourists perceive Portorož generally to be neither a boring nor an exciting destination. Portorož is not perceived as an exciting destination among “relaxers” (mean value = 3.68). Moreover, 11 or 73.3% of “VFR tourists” perceive Portorož as neither a boring nor an exciting destination (grade 3). Similarly, 17 or 60.7% of “wellness tourists” and 95 or 43.0% of “relaxers” gave grade 3 to this dimension.

**Table 5: Boring/exciting dimension of affective tourism destination image on a five-point Likert-type scale according to the main motive of tourists to visit Portorož**

Main motive to visit Portorož	N	Answers on Likert-type scale					Mean (SD)
		1	2	3	4	5	
Relaxation	222	2 0.1%	9 4.3%	95 43.0%	68 30.8%	48 21.8%	3.68 (0.888)
Entertainment, experience	95	0 0.0%	12 12.6%	35 36.8%	39 41.1%	9 9.4%	3.47 (0.836)
Wellness, well-being	28	2 7.1%	1 3.6%	17 60.7%	6 21.5%	2 7.1%	3.18 (0.905)
Visiting friends and relatives	15	0 0.0%	1 6.7%	11 73.3%	2 13.3%	1 6.7%	3.20 (0.676)
Business and education	48	0 0.0%	10 20.8%	26 54.2%	4 8.3%	8 16.7%	3.21 (0.967)
Transit	1	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 100.0%	0 0.0%	4.00 (0.000)
Health and rehabilitation	8	0 0.0%	3 37.5%	4 50.0%	0 0.0%	1 12.5%	2.88 (0.991)

Affective TDI of the largest three segments of tourists is further analyzed. Polar graphs (Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4) show positive dimension of the bipolar scales for the three segments. Insight into the three largest segments shows that “relaxers” (Figure 2) perceive Portorož mostly as a relaxing destination which is in line with the aim of the destination positioning. Although relaxing would be a combination of exciting and arousing, following Baloglu and Blinberg (1997), relaxing dimension has higher mean scores than the other two dimensions.

**Figure 2: A polar graph of affective tourism destination image for “relaxers”**



“Entertainment segment” perceives Portorož mostly as a pleasant destination (Figure 3) although it would be more desirable that this segment would perceive Portorož as more exciting and arousing destination. It can be derived that Portorož has to put the efforts towards the design and promotion of tourism products related with arousing dimension to attract this segment.

Figure 3: **A polar graph of affective tourism destination image for “entertainment segment”**

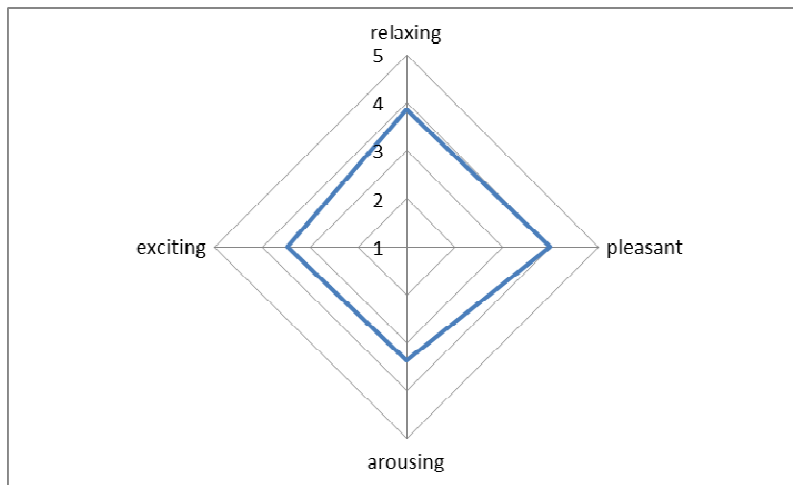
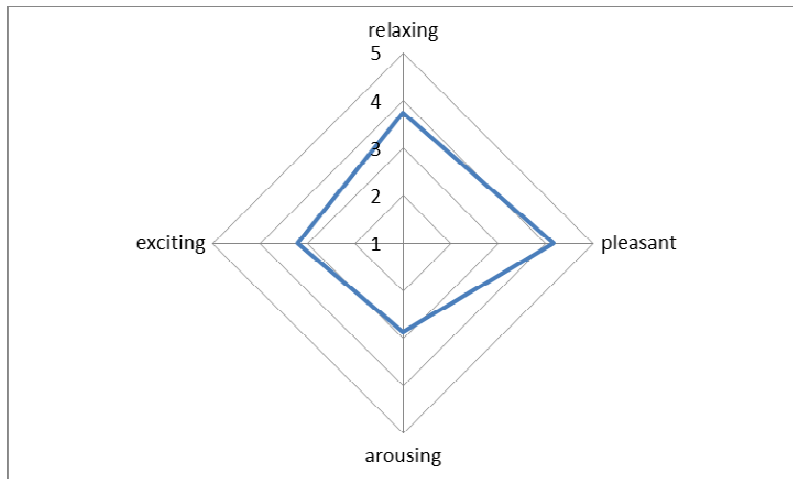


Figure 4: **A polar graph of affective tourism destination image for “business tourists”**





Compared to other two segments, mean values of “business tourists” are lower (Figure 4). However, “business tourists” perceive Portorož mostly as a pleasant destination. Since more and more tourists combine business visits with pleasant vacations and, thus, prolong their stay in destination, it would be advisable to develop tourism products that would enhance TDI in the view of “business tourists”.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The paper has attempted to provide empirical evidence of affective TDI among tourists of Portorož. Using a descriptive statistics, identification of affective TDI of Portorož is derived. It is indicated to be a pleasant and relaxing tourism destination but neither an arousing nor an exciting one. Notwithstanding, following Kotler’s classification of destination image, it can be derived that Portorož has a positive affective TDI. Findings indicate that perceptions of affective TDI might be having an influence on overall destination perceptions.

The findings emphasized the diversity of affective TDI among tourists with different motive to visit Portorož. Excluding the smallest two segments (related to the main motive of transit and health and rehabilitation), “wellness tourists” gave in general the lowest grade on the bipolar scales (except for sleepy/arousing dimension). “Relaxers” gave the highest grade to all dimensions. Considering the mean values, it can be derived that “relaxers” perceive Portorož better than other tourists. However, this conclusion comprises a limitation that no dependent-samples t-test was undertaken and such comparisons are made only on mean value comparison. Regarding the largest three segments, the most efforts should be focused on tourism products that would increase the perception of arousing dimension of TDI and to “business tourists”.

The findings can assist tourism managers, tourism marketers and destination policy makers to gain an understanding of affective TDI. The study suggests, firstly, to put efforts to develop tourism products and promotion that would enhance affective TDI of Portorož mostly in direction to develop and/or better express arousing and exciting dimensions, and, secondly, to include TDI research in the design of destination strategy. Notwithstanding, any attempt to enhance affective TDI will reposition the destination only in the long term period.

#### **5. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

A few limitations of this study should be addressed. Firstly, since every destination is unique, the results are specific to the given destination and the applicability of the affective TDI to other destinations is not possible. Secondly, as already noted above, analysis of results is limited to descriptive statistics not making possible to reveal statistically significant differences between tourists with different motives to visit destination. Thirdly, the findings are based on the affective TDI in the low season between November and January when the study was undertaken. So, the findings are not intended to be generalized since other seasons might reflect different affective TDI.

Although the present paper sheds some light on affective TDI, there is still required further research to fully understand TDI of Portorož. There is a need for longitudinal research of affective TDI. Moreover, a more detailed investigation can to examine potential factors that influence affective TDI. Further research that would include cognitive and conative TDI of Portorož, could equip tourism managers and destination policy makers with the holistic understanding and knowledge on TDI.

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