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Brand image management: Perceptions of European tour operators in single tourism market concept

Abstract

Companies in any industry aim at responding to the expectations of different types of consumers. For this purpose, companies are eager to leave their mark on a specific field and set an impact on their products. The single market trend in all industries has caused an enormous market competition worldwide. One of the most notable results of this trend is branding and imaging projection. Depending on the industries' structures, these efforts could be either on product or on brand image. Consolidating the products' and brands' image with the single market concept has given rise to two more popular terms - global company and global product. The brand image in the tourism industry is a common issue since tourism shows service industry characteristics, such as intangibility and perishability. Furthermore, the profit margins in the holiday tourism market are diminishing constantly in the homogeneous-like market. Therefore, the larger companies in the tourism industry would like to extend their brand images in order to compete in ruthless market conditions. The aim of this study is to highlight brand imaging perceived by European tour operators (ETOs) which were categorized according to their working domains, branding and integration strategies. Significant differences were forthcoming from the results. This outcome emerged when companies were grouped into domestic-international, single branded-multi branded, non-vertically integrated, and vertically integrated. Although, in general, it seems that companies believe in brand imaging and its positive effects, some companies may keep applying traditional developing strategies according to their integration policies.

Keywords:

brand; image; tour operators; vertical integrations, horizontal integrations

Introduction

In many fields, brands coexist with other quality characteristics. A strong brand is one that projects its values and manages to segment the market according to its own standards. It seeks to impose these standards and to become a reference point. It therefore keeps its distance from collective means of segmentation (Kapferer, 1994). According to a well-known businessman (Sabah, 2004); "consumers requiring a product with its brand name signifies that the branding process has been completed". Nickerson and Moisey (1999) define branding as "what images people have of its formulation and what kind of relationship they share". Besides, the term brand equity is used to describe the value added to a product because of the brand associated with a particular product or

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the value of the branded product less its value as an unbranded product (Gregg, 2003). It is basically a reputation which cannot be bought or sold and is often one of the most intangible factors in an organization (Clifton & Simmons, 2003).

Indeed, nowadays, the terms brand and image are part and parcel of the business world. Their prevalence could be attributed to the improvements in communication technologies, the tendencies towards mergers – both among countries or companies – and globalization, which in itself have contributed to a shift in trading practices. Globalization itself has also created a couple of manipulating concepts: global firms and global products. It has to be underlined that global products do not necessarily signify a global brand. The transition from a global product to a global brand – in other words, to a single symbol – needs further discussion within the framework of the economy of symbols (Kapferer, 1994).

As an international industry, tourism has easily adapted to the globalization process thanks to its consumers and information circulation internationally. However, it took some time for European tour operator based conglomerates to adapt to new trends in the tourism industry. Incorporation of all suppliers, wholesalers, and retailers' representatives are some characteristics of the European tourism business. Therefore, the larger conglomerates of tourism business – which mostly deal with all sectors of the tourism industry – are basically companies of European origin. The developing strategies of these companies have been somewhat basic until the early nineties in the sense that they followed a pre-set formula: different brands in different countries, in different sectors, and as well as the same sectors all complied with horizontal and vertical integration patterns (Theuvsen, 2004). Esener (1997) defines the companies adopting this type of developing strategies as multinational ones. Touristik Union International, also known as the World of TUI, as a leading European travel company was also in the lead ten years ago and was integrated in many European tourist generating and tourist incoming countries. However, the TUI brand was barely known by consumers because of its multinational expanding policy and multi-branding policy. This was very much the same for the other leading European travel companies.

Along with other provision factors for the globalization process, the Maastricht Criteria, which came into force in 1993, including introduction of the common currency (the Euro) in 2002, common foreign policy and common justice policy have accelerated in the United States of Europe (USE) process (Sezgin, 2004). The new creations of Eastern European countries were the finalizing justification for multinational travel companies to reorganize their integration policy. Thus, brand imaging efforts have been one of the most important features of this reorganization period.

The purpose of this study is two-fold. On the one hand, it sought to identify the preparing factors for the branding process of European travel companies taking into consideration their point of view while, on the other hand, the aim was to identify the potential advantages of brand image on which travel companies agreed. The study may contribute to travel companies' brand imaging literature in two ways. First, the sample research population of this study includes the largest European travel companies of Europe whose applications could be followed by other developing travel companies. Second, at this point in time, no specific study related to travel companies branding can be identified in the literature. Therefore, the study could help researchers and other professionals for further detailed studies.

Theoretical framework

Brand and image related studies in tourism, draw extensively on destination countries' branding and imaging efforts. This has been the focus of many studies carried out by a number of academicians throughout the years. Gallorza, Saura and Garcia (2002) framed the academic papers related to tourism destination image. The said authors have unearthed 65 researches in the process. The first paper was written by Hunt (1971) and the last was penned by Ruiz, Olarte and Iglesias (1999).

Gartner and Bachri (1994), based on the study of US tour operators, discussed the image of Indonesia. They found that the image of Indonesia among the US tour operators was strong in terms of attractions and hospitality while it was poor on its service efficiency and the overall experience. Another study, also of the US based tour operators, was conducted by Baloglu and Mangaloglu (1999). They examined the images of four Mediterranean tourist destination countries (Turkey, Greece, Italy and Egypt) by taking the participants' ideas into consideration. Comparing the perceptions of companies with reference to four destination countries' images, Baloglu and Mangaloglu (1999) found significant differences. The structured and unstructured images which the authors defined helped to identify common and unique characteristics, as well as strengths and weaknesses of specific countries. Baloglu and Mangaloglu (1999) claimed in their article that the results provided some important directions for the governments and tourism authorities of Turkey, Greece, Italy and Egypt.

Baloglu and Mc Cleary (1997) emphasized how perceptions of a destination are conceived on the part of tourists. As a result, the authors claimed that the study provides important implications for strategic image management and can aid in designing and implementing marketing programs for creating and enhancing tourism destination images. The researchers also added that the sample for the study was homogeneous in terms of characteristics. Therefore, the findings related to age, education and socio-psychological motivations in the model were to be viewed under this limitation.

According to Cai (2002), destination branding can be defined as selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish it through positive image building. Starting from conceptual model of destination branding, Cai (2002) developed five hypotheses and used two multidimensional scaling methods. The author suggested that, as a result of the study, cooperative branding results in a consistent attributes based on image across multiple rural communities as perceived by tourists. Conversely, building stronger linkages of the image to the brand identity and more favourable attitudes are based on brand associations for a region rather than individual communities.

Hui and Wan (2003) examining the image of Singapore, asked participants to describe in their own words the unique aspects of Singapore. They found significant differences among gender, age, and educational level categories. Hughes and Allen (2005), on the other hand, investigated the key agents in the image formation process role. The authors conducted their study with the tourist board representatives of Central and Eastern European countries. As a result, they accepted that cultural tourism was seen very positively and it was of significance to all, but it was seen in the market framework rather than in political terms. Chen and Uysal (2002), analyzing the market positions of nine US states, have either determined the competence among the states with their tourism potentials or investigated the image creation capability of the states. Beerli and Martin (2004) have defined the factors influencing destination image as *primary* and *secondary*, whereas Dahles (2002) discussed tourist guides' attitudes for image management in Indonesia.

Apart from the destination branding and imaging related studies, there are limited studies about corporate branding and imaging in the tourism industry, and these are mostly related with the restaurant sector. Naming the strategic partnership between recognized hotels and restaurants as "co-branding", Boone (1997), in her study, aimed at establishing whether there were qualitative and quantitative value designed for both a hotel and restaurant when co-branding occurs as compared with what each entity could achieve independently of the other. The author suggested that co-branding offers many opportunities for hoteliers and restaurateurs to increase revenues, profits, customer loyalty, and operating efficiencies when properly implemented. Although this study was based on a very small sample (N=5), the results revealed that the average increase in restaurant net profit after replacement with branded concept was 220%. Muller (1999), on the other hand, proposing a restaurant brand model, claimed that there are three key components for brand: the provision of quality products and services, a guarantee of flawless execution, and the accomplishment through the creation of symbolic imagery and meaning. Finally, there is a marginally relevant study of Guerrero et. al. (2000), who examined consumer attitudes towards store brands. Their results indicated that consumers have clear beliefs about store brands, but probably in supermarkets they behave in ways which do not necessarily correspond with their beliefs.

Methodology

SAMPLE

The sample data of the study consists of the top 150 European Tour Operators (ETOs) ranked according to companies' total turnovers in the year 2003 (FVW International, 2004). It was not an easy task to reach such a consolidated ranking list of ETOs. The German tourism magazine FVW International announces the top 150 ETOs ranking annually. However, some of the companies which were on the FVW list are actually integrated with some other companies which were also on the same list. Acquisitions among tourism companies still exist in the EU travel market in the same way as other industries. On the other hand, these integrated companies are working in different markets and sometimes in different fields of tourism (e.g., Thomson Holidays was the second largest British tour operator, now integrated with TUI and it is cited as "TUI UK" in the list). Unfortunately, one of the shortcomings of this particular study is that within the framework of the Volkswagen Group Company, Seat, Skoda and Audi brands are also incorporated.

Notably, the top 20 ETOs are significantly integrated conglomerates operating in every sector of the tourism industry across Europe and even worldwide. The total turnover of the top 20 ETOs was approximately 77 billion euros in 2003, while the following 130 ETOs have had approximately 27 billion euros turnover (less than a half of the top 20 companies) in the same year. One interesting figure about the ETOs' turnover emerges when comparing the world's total tourism receipts for the same year. The world's total tourism receipts for 2003 was almost 437 billion euros (WTO, 2004) and the top 20 ETOs' share in that amount was 18% while the top 150 ETOs share was 24 %.

The other significant characteristic about the companies according to the FVW's report is that 43 companies out of 150 are German while 29 are Italian, 14 Swiss, 13 French, and 10 British. Since the companies are situated all around Europe, the process of data collection took a considerable time. Furthermore, some companies (e.g. My Travel-Great Britain) declared that they do not respond to questionnaires since it is the company's policy. As a result, 41 out of 150 top ETOs' directors (the directors' positions show differences according to their companies, as some were from the central company while some were from the Turkish branch of those companies) have agreed to participate and the response rate for the study stands as 27.3 %.

MEASUREMENT

The three-page questionnaire included 22 questions. The questionnaire was either administered through face to face interviews (applicable for the ETOs which have branches in Turkey) or sent to respondents by fax or e-mail. The questionnaire was developed based on the available literature on the topic and then piloted with 10 Turkish domestic tour operators in order to test the comprehensibility of the items embodied in the questionnaire. These 10 companies were not the subjects of the study, and their responses were not taken into consideration in data analysis. The respondents were asked to answer three types of questions which covered multiple choice questions, rank order questions and 5-point scale questions.

As indicated in Table 1, the companies are classified, for the purpose of further analyses, along three dimensions – working domain meaning whether they are domestic or international, branding in terms of having single or more brands and their level of integration, distinguishing here between those operating in single domain versus those operating in more than one sectors. Most of the companies responding to the survey are international, multi-brand companies that operate in multiple sectors. Since the responding companies are mainly institutional representatives, as Table 1 shows, almost 75 percent of the ETOs in the sample are international and multi branded companies which are integrated in more than one sector of the tourism industry.

Table 1

PROFILES OF ETOs PARTICIPATING IN THE SURVEY

Type	Characteristic	n
Working Domain	Domestic	9
	International	32
Branding Strategies	Single Brand	10
	Multi Brands	31
Integration Strategies	Single Sector	10
	Multi Sectors	31
Total n		41

Rank-order questions pertained to four issues – advantages of brand image, creating and developing factors of brand, reasons that consumers prefer certain brands and the factors damaging the brand image. Five items were presented for the first three and eight for fourth issue. The respondents were asked to rate them in order of importance within each of the issue category. The rank of these items (ranked as 1) with their frequencies and percentages are shown in Table 2.

Respondents were also presented with fourteen item scale to which they were asked to respond on a 5-point scale, from 1 that represents strong disagreement to 5 which means strong agreement. Mean scores of respondents' answers to fourteen items on the scale were compared by types presented in Table 1 ("*domestic-international*", "*single branded-multi branded*" and "*non-vertically integrated-vertically integrated*") and their relationship explored. To understand the relationships among these groups, the chi-square test method was utilised. Due to the small size of the study sample (Yazicioglu & Erdoğan, 2004) and the narrow reliability gap of the scale, Fisher's Exact Test (a non-parametric test) with 1000 iterations Monte Carlo simulation was applied. Seventy percent of the expected values have to be seen as either 5 or more than 5 values for these tables and the chi-square values under 95 % of reliability gap are shown in tables as significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Travel companies' responses to four different rank order questions are summarized in Table 2. To ascertain perceived advantages of brand image, five items were presented. The item considered the most important by the largest number of respondents was "easy to find place in new markets" which fourteen ETOs (34.1%) ranked as the number one. This is followed by the "Competitiveness" which was ranked as number one by twelve respondents (29.3 percent). Following the importance of brands, respondents were presented with five items pertaining to the factors important in the process of creation and development of brand. The most important here was the "product standardization" and "advertisements and promotions". What travel companies believe about consumers' brand preferences is shown under "Reasons for Consumers' Brand Preferences". According to the results, "Consumer reliance on the brand" item had an impressive score with twenty four respondents (58.5 percent) ranking it as the most important reason. The second most rated item here was "effective use of marketing channels", although only six respondents (14.6 percent) considered it as highly important. Finally, the respondents were presented with a list of eight possible factors that might damage the brand image. Here, most important factors related to the companies management - "frequent managerial staff circulation" that twelve respondents (29.3 percent) ranked it as the most important and "Inappropriate employment policies" which was considered the most important by ten respondents (24.3 percent). Among the top three reasons for brand failure is also considered, by nine respondents (22 per cent), to be inappropriate promotional policies.

Table 2

ETOs' RESPONSES TO RANK ORDER QUESTIONS

Description	Frequency*	%
1. Advantages of Brand Image		
Easy find place in new markets	14	34.1
Competitiveness	12	29.3
Scope Economies applicable	7	17.1
Credibility	6	14.6
Higher prices applicable	2	4.9
Total	41	100.0
2. Factors important in brand development (1-5)		
Product Standardization	12	29.3
Advertisements and Promotions	10	24.4
Image	8	19.5
Logo	8	19.5
Horizontal Integrations	3	7.3
Total	41	100.0
3. Reasons for Consumers' Brand Preferences (1-5)		
Consumer reliance to the brand	24	58.5
Effective use of marketing channels	6	14.6
Effective advertisements and promotions	5	12.2
Pricing Policy	4	9.8
Alternative payments	2	4.9
Total	41	100.0
4. Factors Damaging Brand Image (1-8)		
Frequent managerial staff circulation	12	29.3
Inappropriate employment policies	10	24.3
Inappropriate promotion policies	9	22.0
Dependence of tourism to external effects	4	9.8
Local scandals	2	4.9
Ignoring competition	2	4.9
Inappropriate government policies	1	2.4
International scandals	1	2.4
Total	41	100.0

*Number of respondents that ranked the item as the most important.

As already explained, respondents were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement, on a 5-point scale, to a battery of fourteen items tapping into the perception of the importance of brand and perceptions of branding. The response to those items were compared according to the characteristics of respondents presented in Table 1. Results of the comparison of responses according to the working domain (domestic v. international) are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ETOS' BRAND IMAGE PERCEPTIONS

Items	Domestic n=9		International n=32	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Globalization affects branding efforts	3.89	0.928	3.81	0.931
USE process affects branding efforts	3.33	1.118	3.44	1.366
European tourism conglomerates have accelerated their branding efforts in recent years	3.11	1.764	3.39	1.120
"A Single Market" concept has caused companies to think about "Single Brand" concept	3.11	1.269	2.69	1.120
Brand image is important for consumers' behaviour	3.22	1.093	3.94	0.840
Horizontal integrations such as franchising and management contract are effective for imaging efforts	3.78	1.093	3.47	1.016
A group of companies' single-branded vertical integrations in tourism industry is more effective than its multi-branded vertical integrations	2.56	1.130	3.00	1.344
Brand image is effective for companies' higher market value and higher credibility	3.67	1.414	3.91	0.893
Brand image has positive effect for companies' go on public	3.78	1.302	3.75	1.164
Single currency (Euro) process puts pressure on companies' branding efforts	3.44	1.014	3.63	1.157
* Brand image has positive effects on product pricing	3.89	0.333	4.28	0.813
** Brand image has positive effects for entering new markets	2.44	1.014	3.69	1.148
* Brand image has positive effects on reducing political and economical risk factors	2.33	1.118	3.44	1.014
Brand image provides advantages for less risky integration methods	3.33	1.000	3.72	0.958

* Chi-Square Test: significant difference at $p < 0.05$

** Significant difference at $p < 0.10$

Domestic and international travel companies' brand image perceptions are compared in Table 3. There is a tendency among both to agree that brand image has positive effect on product pricing, that brand image is important for achieving greater market value and higher credibility, as well as in attaining company's acceptance by the public in general. There is also a tendency among respondents to agree that globalisation affects branding efforts and that horizontal integrations are an effective way to manage brand

image. However, there are also slight variations in their opinion depending whether they operate internationally or domestically. While both agree that brand has an important positive effect on price of the products, it seems that domestic companies are even more strongly of the opinion that brand improves product pricing. Domestic companies are also more likely to consider brand as a factor that can insulate them from political and economical risk factors and also be helpful when entering new markets.

Table 4

SINGLE-BRANDED AND MULTI-BRANDED ETOS' BRAND IMAGE PERCEPTIONS

Items	Single Brand n=10		Multi Brands n=31	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Globalization effects branding efforts	3.90	0.876	3.81	0.946
USE process effects branding efforts	3.10	1.287	3.52	1.313
European tourism conglomerates have accelerated their branding efforts in recent years	2.80	1.317	3.42	1.232
* "A Single Market" concept has caused companies to think about "Single Brand" concept	3.80	1.033	2.45	0.995
Brand image is important for consumers' behaviour	3.30	1.059	3.94	0.854
Horizontal integrations such as franchising and management contract are effective for imaging efforts	3.80	1.135	3.85	0.995
A group of companies' <i>single-branded</i> vertical integrations in tourism industry is more effective than its <i>multi-branded</i> vertical integrations	3.30	1.059	2.77	1.359
Brand image is effective for companies' higher market value and higher credibility	4.20	0.789	3.74	1.064
Brand image has positive effect for companies' go on public	3.80	1.317	3.74	1.154
* Single currency (Euro) process puts pressure on companies' branding efforts	3.10	0.738	3.74	1.182
Brand image has positive effects on product pricing	4.10	0.568	4.23	0.805
Brand image has positive effects for entering new markets	2.80	1.317	3.61	1.145
Brand image has positive effects on reducing political and economical risk factors	2.80	1.135	3.32	1.107
Brand image provides advantages for less risky integration methods	3.50	1.080	3.69	0.945

* Chi-Square Test: significant difference at $p < 0.05$

When responses are compared between those companies participating in the survey that manage a single brand with those that have multiple brands, the differences in the perceptions were also minimal. Multi-branded companies do not readily agree with a proposition that "A single market concept has caused companies to think about 'single brand' concept" and are more likely to perceive that introduction of the Euro as a single currency has put more pressure on companies' branding efforts. "a single currency (the Euro) process put pressure on companies' branding efforts" items were significant at 0.05 level. It is fair to say that multi branded travel companies disagree with the item claiming single brand tendencies. Furthermore, these companies do not warm to the idea of vertical integrations under a single brand. Indeed, mean score on this item is 2.77. This signifies that "a group of companies' single branded vertical integrations in tourism industry is more effective than its multi branded vertical integrations" item.

Table 5

**NON-VERTICALLY INTEGRATED AND VERTICALLY INTEGRATED
ETOs' BRAND IMAGE PERCEPTIONS**

Items	Single sector n=10		Multi sectors n=31	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Globalization effects branding efforts	4.30	0.823	3.68	0.909
USE process effects branding efforts	3.40	1.578	3.42	1.232
* European tourism conglomerates have accelerated their branding efforts in recent years	2.00	0.816	3.68	1.107
"A Single Market" concept has caused companies to think about "Single Brand" concept	2.90	1.524	2.74	1.032
Brand image is important for consumers' behaviour	4.10	0.568	3.68	1.013
Horizontal integrations such as franchising and management contract are effective for imaging efforts	3.50	0.850	3.55	1.091
** A group of companies' single-branded vertical integrations in tourism industry is more effective than its multi-branded vertical integrations	3.80	1.229	2.61	1.202
Brand image is effective for companies' higher market value and higher credibility	4.10	1.197	3.77	0.956
Brand image has positive effect for companies' go on public	4.40	0.699	3.55	1.234
Single currency (Euro) process puts pressure on companies' branding efforts	3.20	1.033	3.71	1.131
Brand image has positive effects on product pricing	4.00	0.667	4.26	0.773
Brand image has positive effects for entering new markets	3.30	1.252	3.45	1.234
Brand image has positive effects on reducing political and economical risk factors	3.40	0.966	3.13	1.176
Brand image provides advantages for less risky integration methods	3.70	0.823	3.61	1.022

* Chi-Square Test: significant difference at $p < 0.05$ ** Significant difference at $p < 0.11$

Finally, responses were compared in terms of the level of their integration. Although differences in perceptions were minimal according to the level of companies integration, the largest differences were in relation to branding efforts of larger European tourism conglomerates. Those operating in multiple sectors tended to agree with a proposition that these conglomerates have accelerated their branding efforts in recent years, while those operating in the single sector tend to disagree with this statement. There was also slight difference in the opinion in regards to effectiveness of the single versus multi-branded vertical integrations, where those respondents operating in the single sector were more likely to agree with the proposition that the single-branded vertical integrations in tourism industry are more effecting than multi-branded.

In general, responding travel companies believe in brand image and its necessity. However, some significant differences emerged when companies' structures had been classified. The results showed that domestic and international ETOs' responses differed in relation to the positive effects of brand image on product pricing and reduction of the risk factors. On the other hand, single-branded and multi-branded ETOs demonstrated a different line of thought when it comes to the relation of "single market" and "single brand" concepts. Finally, ETOs working in "a single sector" and "multi sectors" held different views about the item which claims that "European tourism conglomerates have accelerated their branding efforts in recent years".

Conclusion

Brand and image terms intersect tourism at two points. The first one is more or less related to the main tourism product. This product could be either a destination country itself, such as an eye-appealing historical building which has its own consumer attraction (e.g. the Blue Mosque, Big Ben or Eiffel Tower) or any memorable object, such as double decker bus (Great Britain) or Gondolas (Italy). Circuit tourism and touring tourists are the subjects for these images and there is a heterogeneous market for this kind of tourism. The second point, on the other hand, is related to the firms operating in tourism. Holiday tourism is tied with this point where the market is more likely to be homogeneous with its uniform sandy beaches and holiday villages. When the market is more homogeneous, an aggressive competition between suppliers is unavoidable. Consumers in holiday tourism travel in great numbers and seek reliable travel companies to perform the necessary arrangements. These companies have been involved in travel for almost fifty years in Europe and they have been changing in the process in the same way that the environmental, political and technological factors evolved.

This study emphasizes the European travel companies' perceptions on brand imaging in a changing tourism market. It is clear today that similarity in services given by hospitality companies and technological developments have caused narrowing profit margins in the travel sector. Therefore, the competition among travel suppliers has become ruthless over the last decade. For years, to achieve economies of scale, companies have merged, both by the vertical and horizontal integrations, to attain a larger market share. Finally, USE processes in Europe and globalization have pushed travel companies to seek new markets, different products and basically higher profits. Today's travel company professionals accept that consumers are more conscious, selective and require safe holidays with prestigious companies. The tourism professionals also know that sometimes distinguishing details are defining market leadership where brand image is one of the most important elements.

This study has questioned the branding efforts of travel companies by examining their perceptions. The results indicate that ETO's are aiming at entering new markets with the help of a brand image and they believe product standardization is the leading creating factor for companies' branding. The companies choose frequent managerial staff circulation and inappropriate promotion policies as the two most important damaging factors for brand image. Moreover, some of the companies which are insisting on vertical integrations are not defending the single brand policy. Therefore, the findings reveal that 'the single market' tendency is not apparent enough for some companies since they prefer integrating with different brands in different markets.

This study has two limitations. One refers to base of the sampling – the ETA list which was already discussed. Secondly, the small number of respondents precluded more ambitious statistical analysis such as reducing the number of items through factor analysis and testing the reliability of scale. However, achieving greater sample size might be difficult to achieve, giving that large tour-operators are not particularly responsive to surveys of such nature and, in the future studies of this nature, the new and novel methods of data-collection and sampling might be tested out.

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