MAPPING AFFECTIVE IMAGE OF DESTINATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Following Baloglu and Brinberg (1997), who advocate that the affective image space may be used as a tool to positioning tourism destinations, the main purpose of this paper is to introduce latent class factor analysis (LCFA) to map the affective space of environments, namely tourism destinations. Twelve European cities, marketed as short-break destinations for Portuguese travelers, were appraised by a sample of 140 respondents on 20 indicators of affective qualities, taken from Russell and Pratt (1980). The affective qualities attributed to the destinations were successfully reproduced by LCFA on two bipolar latent dimensions, positive or negative valence and high or low arousal. Each of the 20 indicators relates as expected with the poles of the latent dimensions. Considering the variable destination as a covariate, its categories (i.e. the destinations) are depicted in the affective map and tend to cluster in the four quadrants, allowing to easily identifying each destination's positioning.

KEYWORDS

Destination image, Affective image, Positioning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Positioning a destination in a target market requires an analysis of cognitive and affective images held by potential visitors. Pike and Ryan (2004) suggest that affective positioning theming may be aimed at previous visitors, since affective images may trigger affective memories of past experience, thus increasing the intention to revisit. Nevertheless, affective destination image is important to new as well as to previous visitors, because intentions also depend on expectations about potential affective consequences of experiencing the destination and most notably on anticipatory feelings of that experience (Cohen et al., 2008). Following Baloglu and Brinberg (1997), who advocate that the affective image space may be used as a tool to positioning tourism destinations, the main purpose of this paper is to introduce latent class factor analysis (LCFA) (Magidson and Vermunt, 2001) as a tool highly indicated to map the affective space of environments, namely tourism destinations and thus supporting positioning decisions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW (CAPITALS, GARAMOND BOLD, 11)

Walmsley and colleagues (Walmsley and Jenkins, 1993; Walmsley and Young, 1998) presented perceptual maps of destinations based on personal constructs, i.e. attributes elicited by respondents on a categorization task, and related the resulting maps with the circumplex model of affective qualities of places (Russell and Pratt, 1980), arguing that this "basic schema" (Walmsley and Young, 1998: 68) is a fundamental marketing tool for segmentation and positioning. Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) were the first to publish research on affective reactions to destinations explicitly adopting the circumplex model

of affect, reporting that the image of 11 countries varied on the items used in the analysis, actually the four bipolar scales that Russell and Pratt (1980) measured with 10 indicators each.

Since Baloglu and Brinberg article, a considerable number of studies combining the analyses of cognitive and affective images of destinations have been published, asking respondents to rate the affective image directly on the two basic dimensions of affect (Beerli and Martín, 2004; Pike and Ryan, 2004), on the four bipolar dimensions used by Baloglu and Brinberg (Baloglu, 2001; Baloglu and Love, 2005; Hernández-Lobato et al., 2006; Li et al., 2010; Lin et al., 2007; Phillips and Jang, 2010; San Martín and Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008), and on other similar bipolar items (Edwards et al., 2000; Vaughan and Edwards, 1999). A striking fact from all these studies is that they treated affective image very differently from cognitive image, the latter being measured by a principal components analysis (PCA), while the former is directly assessed on the latent dimensions. This paper gets back to the indicators of affective image proposed by Russell and Pratt (1980), but proposes the use of LCFA instead of the original PCA to map not only the indicators, yet also the places, destinations in this case.

3. METHODOLOGY

Twelve European cities, marketed as short-break destinations for Portuguese travelers, were appraised by a sample of 140 respondents on 20 indicators of affective qualities, taken from Russell and Pratt (1980, Table 4). The indicators of the qualities exciting, relaxing, gloomy, and distressing were chosen on the basis of theory indicating that these quadrants (Russell and Lanius, 1984) and not the underlying dimensions (pleasure and arousal) are involved in the motivation to consume (Carver, 2001; Rossiter and Percy, 1987; Watson et al., 1999). Alternative maps were produced by correspondence analysis, multidimensional scaling, and LCFA, but only the results from the latter are reported here.

4. MAIN RESULTS

The affective qualities attributed to the destinations were successfully reproduced by LCFA on two bipolar latent dimensions, positive or negative valence and high or low arousal. Each of the 20 indicators relates as expected with the poles of the latent dimensions. Considering the variable destination as a covariate, its categories (i.e. the destinations) are depicted in the affective map and tend to cluster in the four quadrants, allowing to easily identify each destination's positioning.

5. CONCLUSIONS

LCFA proved to be indicated for mapping the affective image of competing destinations. From a theoretical point of view, LCFA has the advantage of allowing for dichotomous latent variables, which is most appropriate for this situation, given the bipolarity of the dimensions (Russell and Pratt, 1980). On the other hand, the LCFA model with two dichotomous latent variables may be interpreted as a latent class model with four clusters, each corresponding to the quadrants proposed by Russell and Lanius (1984). The identification of the quadrant to which a given destination is attributed is of paramount importance for positioning analysis and for subsequent (re)positioning decisions.

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