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**Country and Destination Image –  
Similar or Different Image Objects**

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### **Abstract**

Country Image and Destination Image research exist as two parallel research tracks with almost no cross-references although the concepts refers to almost the same area of applied marketing, namely export products to international consumer markets. In this paper we aim to determine how Country Image and Destination Image refer to the same image objects. Concepts related to Country Image are organized in a hierarchical framework where country image is seen as an image pool for product related image concepts. Similarly Destination Image can be seen as an umbrella concept for different geographical units, which can be organized in a vertical framework. By combining these two frameworks we claim that there is substantial overlap between the two concepts with regard to the objects they refer to.

## **Country and Destination Image – Similar or Different Image Objects**

### **Introduction**

In this paper we aim to identify the image-objects related to Country Image and Destination Image. Since the two concepts obviously are related it will be useful to determine if they refer to the same object or objects. Such an exercise can be useful both from an academic and applied perspective. From an academic perspective it will help us determine whether research on country image in international marketing is related to destination image in tourism research. From an applied perspective it will be useful to determine to what degree destination image campaigns and country product image campaigns can benefit from each other or could be coordinated.

First we will organize the many concepts related to Country Image in international marketing according to the image object they refer to. With globalization the origin of products and services have become more complex. In response research in international marketing has come up with a multitude of origin constructs. We suggest an organizing framework for these constructs in order to determine the conceptual domain of Country Image and related constructs. Next we will do a similar exercise for Destination Image in order to determine the conceptual domains of Destination Image concepts according to the image object their refer to. In spite of obvious parallels between the concepts of Country Image and Destination Image there are few references between international marketing research and tourism research.

## Background

The use of country as the advertising or branding object is most visible in tourism marketing. The national tourist boards in many countries launch international advertising campaigns to raise awareness and to create an image of the country as a tourist destination. The World Tourism Organization (WTO 1999) has collected data worldwide on the budgets of national tourism administrations, which documents that countries all over the world spend very large amounts of money on country promotion.

**Table 1**  
**Top 10 NTA/NTO Budgets (US\$ '000) 1997**

Rank	US\$	Promotional budget
1. Spain	147.094	71.631
2. Mexico	103.169	-
3. Thailand	93.750	66.622
4. Brazil	92.288	23.614
5. Australia	87.541	65.228
6. Singapore	86.673	65.994
7. Puerto Rico	78.844	44.906
8. China, HK SAR	67.988	45.277
9. Korea Rep.	63.163	23.319
10. France	58.180	57.368

Source: World Tourism Organization, Budgets of National Tourism Administrations, Table 3. P. 60 and Table 9 , p.73, Spain 1999.

The largest share of the NTA/NTO budgets is spent on advertising and other promotional activities (WTO 1999, p. 25-30). Spain tops the list with both the largest total budget and the largest promotional budget. In 1997 Spain spent US\$ 77 million to promote Spain as a tourist destination. Thailand spent US\$ 67 million to promote their campaign “Amazing Thailand”. The WTO report documents that even smaller and relatively “poorer” countries spend substantial amounts on country image campaigns, such as Puerto Rico, which spent US\$ 45 million on country promotion in 1997.

The WTO report documents that most of the NTA/NTO budgets are funded by the country’s government. The amount of resources and efforts that are put into destination image programs by national tourist boards demonstrate that governments believe strongly in country image promotion. For this reason this is an important phenomenon to study.

### **Organizing the origin image constructs?**

In a brief count of origin constructs in international marketing research we identified fourteen different constructs (Nebenzahl, Jaffe and Lambert 1997, Martin and Eroglou 1993; Roth and Romeo 1992; Papadopolues and Heslop 1993; Thakor and Kohli 1996; Shimp, Samie and Madden 1993)<sup>1</sup>. In some studies several origin

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<sup>1</sup> Country of Origin (COO), Country Image (CI), Product Country Image (PCI), Country of Origin Image (COI), Made in Country Image (MCI), Origin of product line (OCIP), Designed in Country

constructs are used interchangeably and there is an extensive use of abbreviations. Varying definitions and conceptualizations of the same phenomenon is considered as one of the main problems impairing progress in a research field (Kollat, Engel and Blackwell 1970; Churchill 1979).

Multiple constructs to measure the same phenomenon are confusing for those who want to do research in this field. It is natural to ask questions such as: What are the construct domains? Are the constructs redundant, complementary or even competing? We will suggest a framework that organizes the existing origin constructs according to the image object they refer to. If we can agree on this we will make one step forward to a common understanding on how to use the many origin constructs in this research field.

### **Definitional domains of country of origin constructs**

The domain of a construct is a delineation of what is included in the definition and what is excluded. In measurement theory a measure is construct valid to the degree that it assesses the magnitude and direction of a representative sample of the characteristics of the construct, and to the degree that the measure is not contaminated with elements from the domain of other constructs or error (Churchill 1979). This is usually referred to as convergent and discriminant validity. In order to determine the conceptual domain of the different country image constructs we used the following two criteria: a) what is the common denominator for all the definitions of origin

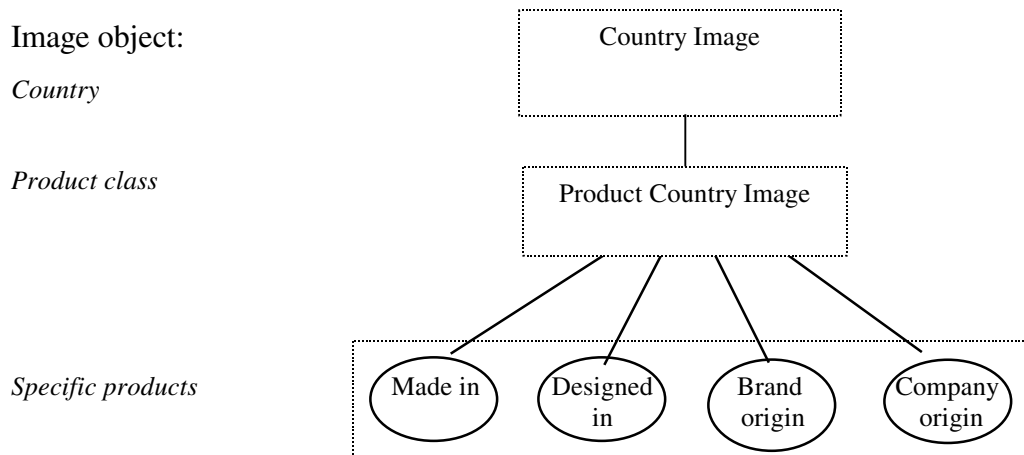
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Image (DCI), Product Image (PI), Brand image (BI), Country of Assembly (COA), Country of Productions (COP), Headquarter residence (HR), Country Equity (CE), Country Related Intangible

constructs (convergence), and b) and what is the discriminating characteristic in the concept definitions. The common denominator for all the definitions are associations related to country. A discriminating characteristic across the definitions was the focal image object, which can be classified at three levels, country, product class and specific product (See table A1 and A2 in Annex 1). These different image objects represent three levels with regard to inclusiveness and suggest that the concepts can be organized in a hierarchical framework.

**Figure 1**

***An organizing model of origin image constructs in international marketing research***



We will in the following argue how this structure fits the existing definitional and operational construct domains of origin constructs.

Country Image is the most generic construct in the model and is defined “the total of all descriptive, inferential, and informational beliefs about a particular country”(Martin and Eroglou 1993, p.93). The image object is the country and it is conceptualized as different from attitudes toward the products from a given country. According to this definition Country Image could be associated with objects, events or persons from a country in politics and culture as well as international business. International marketing is only one of many settings where this concept has relevance. Martin and Eroglu (1993) claim that this clarification is made in order to determine the construct domain and to be exact concerning what is excluded from the definition. By classifying country image as a generic construct that is not linked to any specific context suggests that this construct has many facets, which should be included in measurement scales. The Country Image concept is not only the common denominator but could also be described as the image source for product related country associations.

Products are excluded from the definition of Country Image, but Country Image can be associated with specific products. This is the next level in the model – Product Country Image. Roth and Romeo (1992) claim that there is a relationship between consumer preferences for a country’s products, and perceptions of a country’s culture, economy and politics and that consumers’ evaluations of a specific



product from country X are based on the match between product and country. They suggest the concept *Product-Country Image* to capture matches between country image associations and specific product categories. German cars is a favorable product class - country image match. A consistent and favorable product-country match would occur when the perceived strengths of the country are important product benefits or features. Roth and Romeo (ibid.) claim that it is very useful for a marketer to understand the country image at this level as it can vary in degree of favorableness across product categories. Papadopoulos and Heslop (1993) also promote the use of the term Product-Country Images. According to them the PCI concept is broader than the concept of country of origin. The image unit or object related to a Product Country Image is a product class from a specific country, which can be perceived as a sub unit of a country's general image.

The next level in the framework represents concepts that are related to specific products. In this framework the term "country of origin" is defined as the "made in" country of a specific product. This is in line with how the term was used in the first generation of country of origin research (Bilkey and Nes 1982). The made in cue has become very unclear due to global sourcing. Hybrid products are a challenge in the understanding of the country of origin phenomenon. This has been solved by introducing new origin constructs for each stage in the value chain or production process.

In this framework concepts such as made/manufactured/produced in, headquarters' residence, and brand origin refers to the sourcing country of a specific stage in the value chain for a specific product. Each individual product can have

multiple sourcing countries. A recent study (Li et al. 2000) finds that design origin evokes the deepest associations regarding the image of a product. Where a product is manufactured does not seem to affect the image of the product. An illustrative example is the US brand NIKE, which has most of its production in low costs, Far East countries. In spite of this the NIKE brand has strong US connotations. In this case headquarter residence and brand is determining which country is perceived as the sourcing country. Thakor's and Kohli's (1996) classification of brand origin as a descriptive demographic attribute support the placement of brand origin as a value chain specific origin cue.

Organizing the Country Image constructs in this hierarchical manner according to the inclusiveness of the image object help us determine the domain of each individual origin construct and how they are related. Since country image is defined as all beliefs and associations of a country it can be seen as a *pool* of a multitude of associations, which can be used for marketing purposes. Some countries have a rich association base while other countries have a very scarce association base. Shimp, Samie and Madden (1993) introduce the term Country Equity to describe "that portion of consumer affect toward a brand or product that is derived purely from the product's associations with a particular country". Country Equity can also be understood to describe the potential for a country's association base to add value to products and brands from the country. The more commercially relevant associations there are within the Country Image, the higher the Country Equity. Both Country Equity and country related intangible assets could be defined as a sub-unit of a general country image.

If we agree with this model the concept of Country Image can be perceived as a generic pool of associations, which is not linked to any particular context. Country Image is simply all associations linked to a country. It is therefore natural to proceed to the concept of Destination Image since so many nations are promoting their countries through destination image programs.

### **Defining destination image**

If we look at the definition of Destination Image it is quite similar to the definition of Country Image. Crompton suggests a Destination Image as "...the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination." (1979:18). Um and Crompton recognized the formation of overall image from evaluation of an object "The image of a place as a pleasure destination is a gestalt. It is an holistic construct which, to a greater extent, is derived from attitudes towards the destination's perceived tourism attributes" (1990:432-433). MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997:538) claim that "A destination's image is a composite of various products (attractions) and attributes woven into a total impression." In this regard Destination Image can also be seen as an umbrella construct for different product and services. The image object is the destination and according to the definitions it holds both generic and product specific dimensions.

A comprehensive literature review is made by Foster and Jones (2000) for the purpose to understand the nature and conceptualization of Destination Image. They identified three key elements integral to understanding Destination Image: the context

in which destination images are set; their structure; and their content. Concerning the context, it was recognized that Destination Image of an individual is situated within three broad contexts: “personal-specific”; “holiday-generic”; and “destination-specific”. The structure of Destination Image was recognized to be integral to the measurement of the latter, its content. According to the authors, it is common that researchers focussing on Destination Image are concerned with the content and fail to emphasize the importance of the context and structure.

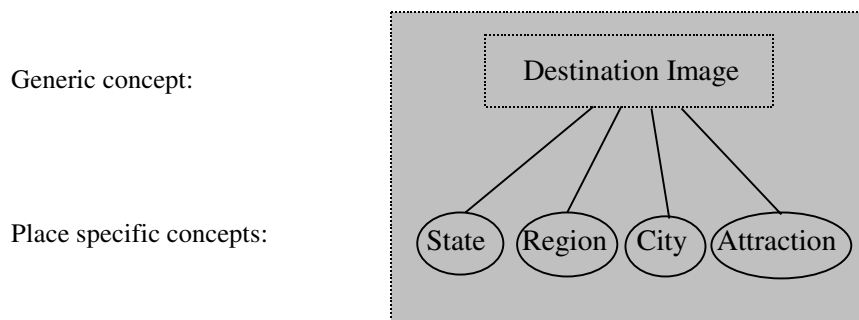
Lew (1987) summarizes previous research about tourist attractions in tourism literature and describes a three-sided framework for categorizing. Three approaches to the topic are identified: the ideographic perspective; the organizational perspective; and the cognitive perspective. The first perspective, the ideographic, is the most common one and refers to the general attributes of a place (e.g. any named site, climate, social customs and characteristics, and scenery). The second perspective, i.e. the organizational, relates to geographical notions with focus on the spatial capacity, and temporal nature of attractions. A spatial attraction can be anything from a small object, such as “Manneken Piis” in Brussels to a very large area as a country. Finally, the cognitive perspective encompasses a categorization of attractions based on tourist perceptions and experiences. The approaches cover general attributes of a place, geographical notions, and categorization of attractions. These components are in many ways similar to the ones, which can be found in the conceptual frameworks of Destination Image.

Much of the extant research on Destination Image has employed a place name, according to MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997) and studies have been carried out

both on large- and small scale environments. So far, a number of studies can be found at a *country level* (e.g. Crompton 1977; 1979; Pearce 1982; Haahti and Yavas 1983; Kale and Weir 1986; Richardson and Crompton 1988; Calantone et al 1989; Chon 1991; Javalgi 1992; Tapachai and Waryszak 2000; at a *state level* (Hunt 1979; Goodrich 1977; Crompton and Duray 1985; Gartner and Hunt 1987; Gartner 1989; Reilly 1990) at a *region or city level* (Phelps 1986; Joppe et al 2001...), and at a *tourist attraction level* in one particular city (Coshall 2000).

The work of Echtner and Ritchie (1993) is one of the few, which focus on the structure of Destination Image and their representation. They suggest that Destination Image may be represented using a generic structural framework. They identify three continua where six components of Destination Image are presented as bi-polar extremes; attribute-holistic; functional-psychological; and common-unique. This framework of Echtner and Ritchie (1993) is assumed to be applicable across a broad range of destinations. The framework of Echtner and Ritchie provides a representational tool to ease comparison between destination images and identities. The size and characteristics of the destinations can vary, as above studies show, and the organizing dimension is suggested here to be the geographical area.

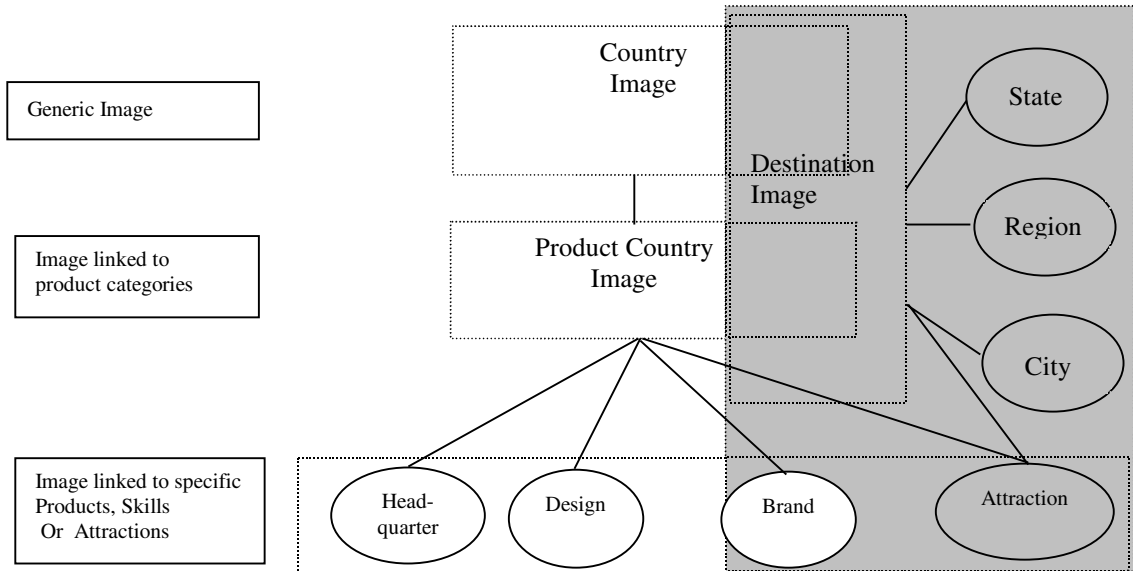
**Figure 2**  
**Organization of the Destination Image Constructs**



Country Image, as presented in Figure 1, can be perceived as a generic pool of associations, which is not linked to any particular context. The same can be said about Destination Image. The conceptual framework of Echtner and Ritchie (1993) is also generic and it is not linked to a particular context. However, the object in the latter does not have to be a country – it can e.g. be a region, state or a city (see Figure 2). Even if the object is not a country it captures matches between country image associations and specific destination (e.g. a city) attributes. In this way, the concept of Destination Image is similar to the Product Country Image concept. Champagne, for example, connects both to the drink, area and to France. The similarity to made/manufactured/produced in concepts is also obvious as both these and destination image refers to the sourcing country (destination) of a specific stage in the value chain for a specific product (attraction). The major difference between the two is that the marketing framework covers a number of origin constructs, which can be organized in an hierarchical order while the tourism one only covers Destination Image. Instead of the hierarchical order Destination Image can be organized vertically as the concept both has generic and product specific dimensions. The vertical structure of Destination Images overlaps and connects the three hierarchical levels of the Country Image constructs (see Figure 3). This can be illustrated by using Scotland as a case. The definitions of both Country and Destination Image are relevant. Scotland can for instance be perceived as green, clean and sophisticated in both the marketing and tourism framework. Both when referring to Product Country Image or Destination Image many would think about Scottish whiskey. Scotland can also be associated by specific whiskey brands. Brands like Macallen and Oban are

made/manufactured/produced in Scotland. Perceptions about one particular brand from the Loch Ness area might articulate the link to the tourist site (attraction) as well.

**Figure 3**  
*Integrated Model*



Examples of marketing a country as a brand for a wider range products are “The New Zealand Way” ([www.nzway.co.nz](http://www.nzway.co.nz)) and Taiwans Innovalue (<http://innovalue.cetra.org.tw/ci/index.htm>). The New Zealand way is designed and managed according to principles of brand building and brand management. Taiwan’s INNOVALUE campaign is a generic branding program to promote product excellence from Taiwan.

The New Zealand Way Ltd. was established in 1991 and the idea for a national umbrella brand started from the country’s investments in building an image of New Zealand as a tourist destination. The slogan “The New Zealand Way” was the result of a collaborative effort between two of the country’s leading advertising agencies – Saatchi & Saatchi and Colenso. The core values was identified from focus group studies: 1) Quality Excellence, 2) Environmental Responsibility, 3) Innovation, 4) Contemporary Values, 5) Honesty, Integrity Openness, and 6) Achievement ([Http://www.tradenz.govt.nz](http://www.tradenz.govt.nz); [Http://www.nzway.co.nz](http://www.nzway.co.nz)). The concept of “The New Zealand Way” is to see it as a national umbrella brand for eligible products and services from New Zealand and the aim is to build a consistent image across economics sectors and products. In this regard “The New Zealand Way” is an appropriate example of the concept in figure 3 as it integrates both products from New Zealand and New Zealand as a tourist destination.

### **Implications for research in the two areas**

Since the 1960s there has been growing interest both in the consumer research area focusing on Country Image/ Product’s Country of Origin and in tourism research



on Destination Image. Research in Country/Product Image is published foremost in marketing journals and research in Destination Image appears in tourism journals. In the latter, the concept of image has been discussed within several disciplines. In the marketing publications there are few references to Destination Image and in the tourism journals the origin and image constructs in the marketing area are rarely seen. It is indeed surprising that there are two parallel tracks of research referring to almost the same area of applied marketing, namely export products to international consumer markets.

If two concepts refer to the same object and are based in the same theory (beliefs, attitudes) there should at least be cross-references between the two fields. A review that compared constructs, measurement, and findings across the two fields is much needed. By relating the constructs of Country and Destination Image this paper is an effort to bring the two fields together.

With regards to the implications for further research, there remain many challenging aspects of measuring Country Image, Product Country Image, Product Image and Destination Image. Methods developed in different areas could, combined, contribute to a better understanding and development of instruments. A challenge could be to develop a generic scale to be used for both Country and Destination Images.

## **Implications for marketing practice**

If we deal with the same image object one obvious consequence would be that image programs for nations and promotion programs for products from a country should be coordinated. Research in the tourism area shows that, in terms of tourist destinations, there is a basic schema according to which places are evaluated (Walmsley and Young 1998). People's appraisals of destination choices take a fairly standard form, according to the authors. An exception is at the local level, where direct experience cause evaluations to be made on a different basis from that used at the regional, national and international levels. This knowledge enables marketers to see how, for example the country, is viewed relative to competitors and can be used to either compete with rivals or to reposition a destination in people's cognitive imagery. Tourists are attracted to the country, region or city by the combination and variety of attractions, events, and services they have to offer. The country, region or city will be "multibought" or bought by many market segments simultaneously. Therefore, it must be "multisold" or sold as a product to these segments based on their need. The application of the Echtner and Ritchie framework provides the opportunity to identify promotional tactics to assist the design of effective destination marketing, which for example can be used for positioning. In Scotland, for instance, it would be relevant to focus on product-specific attributes, such as specific whiskey brands for certain market segments whereas other market segments may require promotion with a focus on holistic strengths, such as beautiful scenery and relaxing atmosphere. To connect well-known product categories or brands to a certain tourist destination can be an advantage. Hallberg (1998) has shown that tourism can have connections with consumers' attitudes and behavior toward products and country-of-origin-effects of tourism can emerge as a result of travelling. Tapas and paella as well as feta cheese

and mousaka, are examples of specialties that have spread around the Scandinavian countries during the last decades. Scandinavians frequent travelling to Spain and Greece has certainly influenced the demand for these dishes.

Echtner and Ritchie (1993: 12) argue that “Holistic and unique images are particularly important in determining how a particular destination is categorized (stereotype holistic impressions) and differentiated (unique attractions, auras) in the minds of the markets”. A product’s country of origin is a cue that is sometimes used to judge the quality of the product, or to categorize it. As stereotyped country images and images of products simplify a person’s judgements it is assumed here that products could be used as unique features (in the words of Echtner and Ritchie) in differentiating one place from another. One reflection is that food and drinks can be important cues as people in general often can mention local food and drinks when mentioning a certain country, especially if they have been to the country in question.

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