

Área temática: Marketing e Comunicação

São Paulo City Image as a Business Travel and Tourism Destination

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Resumo

O presente estudo mostra os aspectos que fazem parte da imagem da Cidade de São Paulo como destino turístico para negócios e lazer. Baseado na literatura sobre serviços e turismo existente, foi proposto um modelo conceitual para avaliar a imagem de um destino turístico usando alguns construtos cognitivo/perceptivos e emocionais. O modelo possibilitará a análise das inter-relações entre a imagem de um destino turístico, a qualidade e satisfação percebidas em relação aos recursos turísticos, serviços e infra-estrutura urbana existente e a intencionalidade dos turistas em relação a futuras viagens ou na promoção do mesmo através do boca-a-boca entre parentes e amigos. A partir de uma pesquisa exploratória entre associações que fazem parte do setor turismo, foi elaborado um roteiro de entrevista para conhecer as opiniões dos representantes das associações contatadas em relação à imagem da cidade de São Paulo, o perfil dos turistas que a visitam, os recursos e serviços existentes e o segmento de negócios. O resultado da pesquisa mostra a expectativa das instituições quanto à atividade turística na cidade, a sua imagem, face o estereótipo de principal centro de negócios do país e as deficiências em algumas áreas, como sinalização turística e treinamento da força de trabalho.

Abstract

The present study presents the aspects that are part of São Paulo City image as a business and leisure tourism destination. Based on current service and tourism literature, it was proposed a conceptual model to evaluate the tourism destination image using few cognitive/perceptive and emotional constructs. The model will allow the analysis of the interrelationships between tourism destination image, perceived quality and satisfaction related with actual tourism resources, services and urban infrastructure; and tourist intention for future travel or a word-of-mouth process to promote the destination between relatives and friends. Base on an exploratory research between tourism associations, it was elaborated a interview guide to know body representatives contacted opinions related to São Paulo City image, tourist profile, actual resources and services and the business tourism segment. The research results shows institutions expectations with city tourism sector, its image, considered the main country business center stereotype, and its pointed weakness in areas like tourism signaling and trained manpower.

Key words: Tourism, Destination and Image

1. Introduction

According to Gallarza et al (2002) state of the art study on tourism destination image, the first reference of the issue appeared on the 1970's. Since that time many researchers have contributed to explore the conundrum in relation to destination image conceptualization, formation and satisfaction (Chon, 1991; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Jenkins, 1999; Etchner & Ritchie, 2003; Beerli & Martín, 2004). Tourism destination image is understood as an:

“...attitudinal construct consisting of individual’s mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feeling and global impressions about an object or destination...The perceptual/cognitive evaluations refer to the beliefs or knowledge about a destination’s attributes whereas affective evaluation refers to feelings toward, or attachment to it” (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, p.870).

In other areas, like business management, image is considered an enhancing element on the relationship between an organization and its client. Addressing a positioning strategy based on service/product image requires the identification of it as an antecedent of the total perceived service quality (Grönroos, 1990) or as a consequence of consumption experience, where a pre-conceived image is modified by a new evaluation (Johnson et al., 2001). The premise of these two models is that image expectancy could be formed by a processing and assimilating information from non-touristic sources (organic image) or touristic ones (induced image) and as a consequence of individual experience (Etchner & Ritchie, 2003).

Its importance is analyzed in terms of tourists’ perceptions of destination communication and operation. It is one of the elements on expectation formation, improving communication strategies to reach client’s purchase intention and involvement on a word-of-mouth process. It is also a filter between perceived total quality and its functional and technical dimensions and for employees’ motivation to serve destination tourist or corporate clients (Bitner, 1992).

There’s a constant need for an understanding of image formation and evaluation dynamics. The identification of a model that incorporates multi-attributes’ influence on destination image is needed for tourism purposes, considering the possibility to evaluate current destination image and redefine it to gain national and international competence (Ahmed, 1991). All attributes involved in image evaluation are of cognitive/perceptive and emotional nature (Baloglu & McClery, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004), allowing the identification of evaluative antecedents that could influence intention and lasting relationship between client/visitors and the corporation/destination.

This is also the nature of several constructs used to evaluate satisfaction and loyalty, like, quality, price, involvement, delight, engagement, commitment, between others (Oliver, 1980, Brown et al., 1995; Johnson et al, 2001; Bigné et al., 2001; Lee, 2003). Few studies analyzed the interrelationship between this constructs and there are no consensus in relation with the predictive significance of them all to explain the attitude, intention or future behavior of a tourist in relation with the destination already visited (Bigné et al., 2001; Lee, 2001; Rodrigues, 2004; Chi, 2005).

For business destination purposes, there is no attend to analyzed destination image and its influence on tourist loyalty because tourism literature points out that business tourist doesn’t decide the destination to be visited or his return (Lage & Miloni, 2001). Even though business tourist have no autonomy to decide his return, it is possible that s/he actively engage on a word-of-mouth process to promote the destination visited to relatives and friends.

This article aims at presenting the development of destination image antecedents and the behavioral consequences, resumed on a conceptual model based on tourism destination and consumer satisfaction theories. The background used to design the model and an exploratory research are presented. For this purpose it was performed an in-depth interviews with tourism bodies’ representatives. Their opinions are being used to prepare a questionnaire for a future survey with business travelers visiting São Paulo City fairs.

2. Background

2.1 Tourism destination

A tourism destination is a set of attraction sites, tourism services, accommodations and gastronomy, and urban infrastructure to attend visitors' needs. It also should have conditions to effectively promote tourist access and mobility to its different micro-destinations (convention centers, museums etc.) with comfort (Cooper et al., 2001; Kotler et al., 2003). Tourism planners use to observe changes on visitors' likes and preferences in terms of travel motivations and destination choices that will mostly influence tourism offer (Carvalho & Vasconcellos, 2006), because, as occurs with products' life cycle, destinations could be perceived as going into decline (Kotler et al., 2003), diminishing its competitive position within national or international environment (Acerenza, 2003).

As tourism activities influence local communities' development, any offer should be restrained by physical, political, social and psychological destination loading capacity (OMT, 1998). The identification and analysis of a whole set of tourist resources should be performed by the destination planners, to recognize its potentialities and definition of public policies to stimulate visiting and enhance city image (Lage & Milone, 2000). Kotler and others (2003) defend the proper management of the destination resources, pointing out that it could be seen as an opportunity to establish a relationship between the city and its visitors. Based on this relationship marketing approach, city tourism planners could enhance the flux of tourists throughout the year and face competition, by promoting its local, regional and global attractions (Fyall et al., 2003).

In terms of tourism segmentation, most destinations are planned to attend an array of tourist motivations (Middleton, 2002). There are destination options for sport and adventure activities, cultural and historical sightseeing, and rural and urban business activities (Bramwell & Rawding, 1996; Richards, 2001; Melián-Gonzales & García-Falcón, 2003; Hsu et al., 2004) that could be highlighted by their authenticity and availability; however, there are some factors that influence destination perceptions such as:

- violence, political and social instability, catastrophes and lack/poor tourism infrastructure (Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002; Kotler et al., 2003);
- destination life-cycle (Cooper et al., 2001);
- use of urban and tourism infrastructure by local citizens and visitors (foreign and national – Page 2001);
- public and private tourism service ownership, causing differences in operation and, usually, with no communication between them (Cooper et al., 2001); and
- price impact on visitors' income (Dwyer et al., 2000; Gallarza et al., 2002; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002).

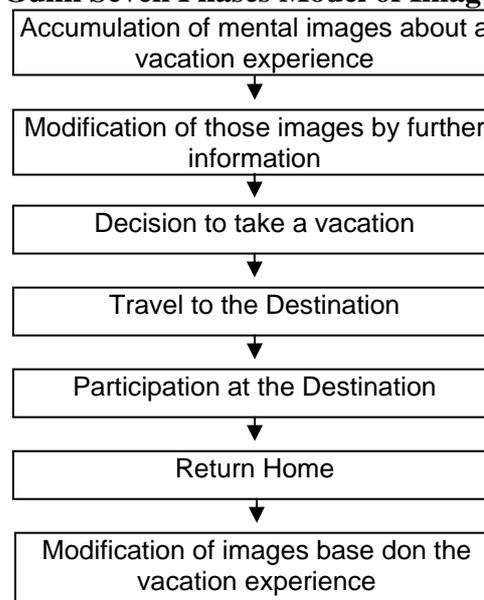
According to Swarbrooke & Horner (2002), a business destination offer is not different compared to other destination; although, business tourist is defined as a demanding person in relation to a safety and friendly environment, efficient and confidence services and business opportunities. Their travel experience to several destinations made them critical user of hotels, air transportation operators and car rentals agencies (Middleton, 2002). In addition s/he values her/his day-time schedule (Barretto, 1996) and are almost always under pressure (Mattila, 1999), barely accepting any failure service that could mess it and/or made their stay uncomfortable.

Considering this, for a business tourist there's a latent need to provide a service excellence and an attractive destination. As Mattila (1999) and Nishimura (2000) have shown, there already are accommodation services to satisfy this segment needs, with quality. A destination that is oriented to business activities will be attractive not only for its accommodations but, also, for the intermediate services that could facilitate tourist stay and day-time schedule and business opportunities. It is what is promoted mainly by local convention and visitors bureaus (Branwell & Rawding, 1996; Serson, 2000).

2.2 Tourism destination image evaluation

Taking into consideration all aspects above noted, a tourism destination selection process is based on the gathered information judgment of all attractions and infrastructure available on the destination. According to Etchner and Ritchie (2003) a selection process began with a first image of the destination to be evaluated. The authors quoted a former research where there is identified 7 phases (figure 1). The formed image is the result of a processing and assimilating information from non-touristic sources (organic image) or touristic ones (induced image) and as a consequence of individual experience.

Figure 1: Gunn Seven Phases Model of Image Formation



Fonte: Adapted from Etchner & Ritchie, 2003

The model presented in figure 1 shows that destination image is one of the most important aspects to plan a trip and to evaluate the experience after consumption. Image will be modified through various stages, previous to experience, during and after it (Vogt & Andereck, 2003). According to Caldwell and Freire (2004), all the resources available could be evaluated in terms of two main dimensions: functionality and emotional appeal. The combination of these two dimensions have an impact on the image of a country, although the city image is usually evaluated according to its functional dimension (op. cit., p.59).

Caldwell and Freire's (2004) assertion in relation to these two dimensions are observed in several studies (Joppe et al., 2001; Richards, 2001; Hui & Wan, 2003; García et al., 2004; O'Leary & Deegan, 2005). Richards (2001) and Hui and Wan's (2003) studies on Singapore and China noted that tourist perception seems to be similar, generalizing their culture as an Asian stereotype. This fact could be a strong element to promote those countries, considering their mystic environment; however, that could cause confusion between not well-informed

tourists as to cultural identities/image. On the other hand, O'Leary and Deegan (2005) Ireland's study showed that the country's landscape is an emotional motivator, but its cities are poorly evaluated mainly for their lack of tourism infrastructure.

Bramwell and Rawding (1996) and Kim's (1998) studies observed two examples of functionality dimension evaluation applied to cities. Main British cities, such as Birmingham and Manchester, are more positioned as Business Centers, considering the hard communication effort initiated by their local Convention and Visitors Bureau, while Korean cities, such as Cheju, Kyung-ju, Sulak, Haeundae and Yusung are mostly demanded for leisure activities. All collected opinions and information related to British and Korean cities showed that their tourism offers are displayed to attend visitors' specific needs.

Other studies observed the evaluation performed by tourist related with the tourist satisfaction perception (Gallarza et al., 2002) and its consequences for future attitude and or/behavior in relation with it (Oppermann, 2000). Their focus has been the casual relation between satisfaction, image and loyalty. These studies were base either on an expectancy disconfirmation approach (Oliver, 1980, Parasuraman et al, 1988, Bigné, et al. 2001; Lee, 2001; Chi, 2005) or on a performance one (Normann, 1984; Grönroos, 1990; Johnson et al., 2001; Rodrigues, 2004). A better understanding of the satisfaction→image→loyalty evaluation (or vice-versa image→satisfaction→loyalty) is presented in the next section.

2.3 Destination Model Proposal

The conceptual model proposed recognizes the influence of cognitive/perceptive and emotional variables that influence image, as stated on Baloglu & McCleary's (1999) and Echtner and Ritchie's (2003) studies, and the behavioral consequences that result from this kind of evaluation, as stated by Bigné et al. (2001) and Chi (2005) researches. The model is baseb on a performance approach (figure 2), used in tourism studies by Rodrigues (2004), representing a different path from the expectancy disconfirmation approach (Oliver, 1980; Fornell, 1992; Anderson et al., 1994; Fornell et al., 1996; EFQM, 2002), mainly used in tourism destination studies.

Figure 2 – Conceptual Model of Tourism Destination Image Evaluation

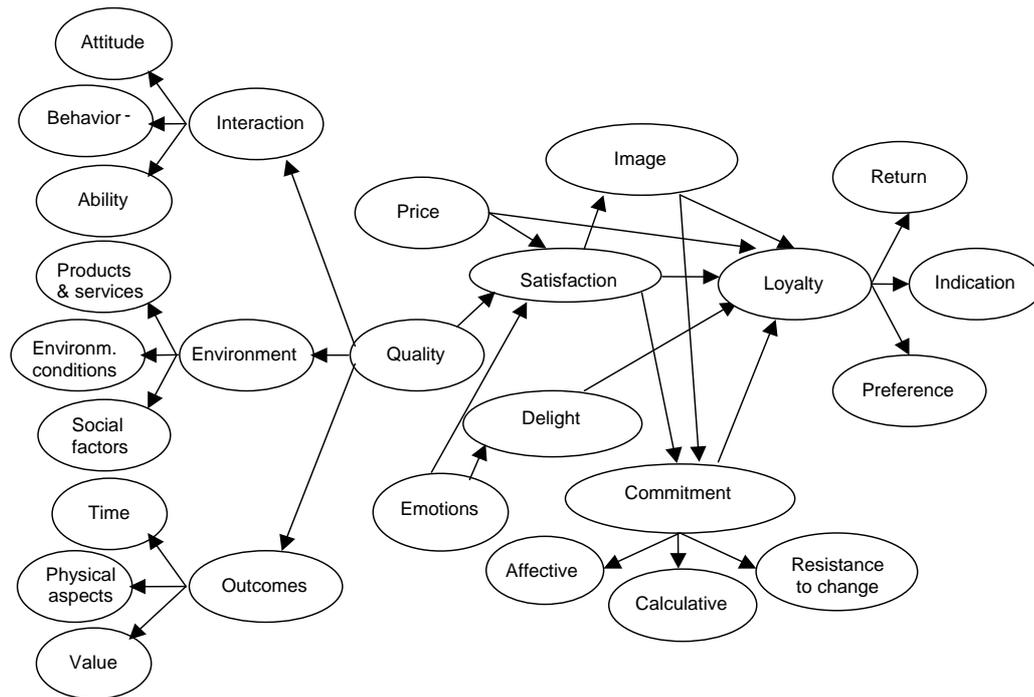


Image is the key concept of this model, as it is considered a filter between evaluative constructs, such as satisfaction, quality, price and delight, and behavioral consequences, like commitment and loyalty. In the service literature, image was previously considered an antecedent of perceived quality (Grönroos, 1990; EFQM, 2002) and satisfaction (Bloemer & Ruyter, 1998; Ruyter et al., 1997; Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998). In addition to the satisfaction impact on loyalty, it is also pointed out that image impact on loyalty is analyzed in terms of behavioral guidance to reinforce image and brand choice (Grönroos, 1990; Keller, 1992, Fournier, 1998; Aaker et al., 2004). Bigné et al. (2001) and Rodrigues (2004) tested all these interrelationships for tourism purposes with relative success.

It is important to note that the same discussion still remains for quality and satisfaction, being quality considered antecedent of satisfaction and vice-versa (Woodside et al., 1989; Bolton & Drew, 1991, Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Fornell & Johnson, 1993). Despite that, a key argument should be considered. As previously noted by Churchill and Surprenant (1982) and Tse and Wilson (1988), expectation is reconfirmed only after experience, resulting in a new expectation. Taking this as a premise, Johnson et al (2001) define that, even when consumers have a pre-image of an object, s/he will reformulate her/his opinion based on her/his experience with it and will have a new attitude towards the object. That is why it is considered the image as a filter between satisfaction and loyalty.

Quality was considered an antecedent of satisfaction because it is assumed that the first concept is more specific than the second one (Taylor and Baker, 1994; Parasuraman et al., 1994) and because satisfaction is an experience-based evaluation construct (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Zeithaml et al.; 1993; Olsen & Johnson, 2003). Brady and Cronin's (2001) quality dimensions are considered in the model developed in this study, which are a combination of Grönroos (1990) and Parasuraman's et al. (1988) service quality dimensions evaluation, to measure Overall Perceived Quality. Johnson et al. (2001) used Parasuraman's et al. (1988) service quality dimensions; however, the casual interrelation of assurance dimension did not perform well for the evaluated services, as it was also noted in other studies (Asubonteng et

al., 1996). It is also possible to develop specific quality dimensions with success, as can be seen on internet purchases (Baptista, 2005) and forest settings (Lee, 2003).

There is another variable that is used as a filter in relation to quality, satisfaction and loyalty. Price was not considered a part of quality to recognize its isolated impact on these variables. It is assumed that price serves as a parameter to some kind of transactions, where it has a greater influence on a customer than the quality an object may have or the satisfaction it gives (Bei & Chiao, 2001). In addition, it is expected that, for certain people, price could be an element of loyalty, influencing their re-purchase intention (Fornell et al., 1996). Meanwhile, Johnson et al. (2001) observed its low significance; it could be possible to reach a better and much richer explanation on this variable in relation to all construct use to explain consumer satisfaction and loyalty. For tourism purposes price is a prime aspect for tourist that visit the destination for the first time (Petrick, 2004) or have no effect, like in the case of business tourist (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001); but, it could be used as a mean of comparison between destination alternatives (Pechlaner et al., 2002)

For tourism purposes it is believed that experiences should be considered unparalleled/delightful to influence the intention to return to the destination. Based on psychological studies (Russell, 1980; Izard, 1991), some researchers are enhancing the understanding of delight as an element that affects future behavior in relation to an object (Westbrook, 1987; Derbaix & Pham, 1991; Oliver et al., 1997; Kumar et al., 2001). Delight is an emotional construct that has a rational process behind it, in terms of the associations that are constructed by a person to show an emotion to certain object (Izard, 1990).

It is highlighted that the experience should be considered unparalleled, positive and negative, and unexpected, the surprised component, included on Oliver et al. (1997) model. It is also observed as a short-term emotion. According to Derbaix and Pham (1991) and Kumar et al. (2001), a strong causal relationship is derived from strong and stable positive emotions.

Delight on destination studies is as challenging as destination loyalty. As such it is believed that most people do not necessarily decide to return on a short-term basis to a certain already-visited city. Lee (2003) study noted that it is possible that tourist experience could arouse a feeling, understood as an affective attachment to the place, which could influence loyalty. The delightful condition could be one of the elements that will influence consumer decision to return or, mostly, begin a word-of-mouth communication with friends and relatives. This is the case of business tourists (Lage & Milone, 2001).

In terms of behavioral consequences, two constructs are important to identify future repurchase/return intention. Loyalty is the most important concept in marketing. It is defined as a strong commitment on the part of the consumer to return (Oliver, 1999). It is mainly a rational process that is influenced by the customer satisfaction; although, depending on the customer involvement, it could be possible to address an emotional motive to continue experiencing the service and to strongly express his/her desire to return, considering the three main stages of loyalty, attitudinal (cognitive and affective), conative and behavioral.

As Auh & Johnson (2005) quoted, this construct is more stable than a certain satisfaction experience, because it represents an accrued evaluation process of all information gathered in previous experiences, in terms of importance of the service attributes and its assimilation to take action. This premise was also tested by Oppermann (2000); Lee (2001) and Lee (2003) in relation to destination loyalty.

The second construct is commitment, which represents satisfaction-repurchase intention relationship accountability (Geva & Goldman, 1991). This construct presents three approaches that support satisfaction and intention consistency. One of them is trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) that is a capital aspect in all kinds of relationships, even in visitor-destination ones (Iwasaki & Havitz, 1998; Lee, 2001; Lee, 2003). The other two are economic and psychological approaches (Brown et al., 1995; Bendapudi & Berry, 1997), which are represented by the analysis of cost-benefit performed by the costumer and costumer's belief and values in relation to the service s/he requested.

Considering the existence of all these interrelations, that determine a new attitude in relation to an object, represented by the image, and the consequences derived from the judgment of a costumer's experience, becoming an intention to return and/or repurchase, the following section presents main opinions on the Image of São Paulo City, its visitors and tourism segmentation. Before that, an overview of São Paulo City's resources is presented to familiarize the reader with the object being studied.

3. São Paulo City Infrastructure

It is important to note that Brazilian tourism sector has been in transformation, thus creating its own Ministry and even electing 2006 the international year of tourism. The country has a great variety of destinations, most of them with the basic motivator concept, "beach, sun and fun". One city is considered, due to its functionality, the Business Center. As shown by the São Paulo Convention and Visitors Bureau Tourism Marketing Plan (SPCVB, n.d.), the inventory of the available resources demonstrated that, in terms of business tourism, São Paulo is the Latin American Business Capital and the fourth largest city in the world. It is the richest Brazilian city in terms of business opportunities, and cultural, gastronomic and entertainment options. As to business opportunities, almost 15 million people are gathered every year at congresses, conventions, forums, trade fairs and exhibitions (Table 1).

Table 1 – Main Trade Fairs

Trade Fair	Period	Expositors*	Visitors*
International shoes and sportsgoods and leathersgoods	January	905 (10 foreign)	55.000
International trade fair for Craft, Arts and Hobby Creative Suppliers	March	200 (25 foreign)	67.725
International Beauty, hair and Esthetic Fair	April	350 (6 foreign)	49.500
Intermodal South America – International Exhibition on Transport and Foreign Trade	June	300 (50 foreign)	39.437
International Autoparts Equipment and Services Trade Fair	July	717 (491 Foreign)	76.783
International Shoes, Fashion, Accessories, Machines and Components Fair	July	850 (26 Foreign)	50.000
International Computing and Telecommunication Exhibition	August	380 (70 Foreign)	70.000
International Fair of Equipment, Products and Services for Hotels, Condo-Hotels, Motels, Restaurants, Fast-Foods, Bars, Snack Bars, Industrial Kitchens, Hospitals and Related	September	932 (82 Foreign)	47.837
Exposition Technological Innovation	October	400 (100 Foreign)	85.000
New Business Trade Fair	October	350	85.000

* estimated 2004

Source: UBRAFE, 2005

In terms of gastronomy, accommodations and entertainment, the city has many options for any kind of business travelers. Almost 46 different types of international cuisine are offered, from Italian pizza to Indonesian, Spanish and Japanese food. The traveler also has the opportunity to taste Brazilian regional cuisine.

The hotel network offers an international standard service, including top international hotel chains, such as Hilton, Accord Hotels, Holiday Inn, between others. 80% of all accommodations are related to hotels, flats and apart-hotels, and almost 60% of them are located downtown and in the south region of the city, where the third Central Business District – CBD – is located. The first CBD is located downtown and the second one is at Paulista Avenue.

In addition, the city has varied cultural options, with exhibitions, open-air shows, Broadway productions and sport competitions. The situation is the same for event and fair facilities. The main event facilities visited by participants of business fairs and related activities are: The Anhembi Convention and Fair Center and the Expo Center Norte Shopping Center. These two facilities are near one another and are located in a region that has the best access to the main Interstate Bus Terminal and International Airport.

The number of flights and bus connections, arrivals and departures to these two main terminals is unparalleled. It has been estimated to approximately 21 million, of which, however, only 6,5 million of tourists. While many of the city's resources are overused, there are others that are underused, even considering its business profile. SPVCB (n.d.) observed that the most important motivations to visit São Paulo are: Visiting friends and relatives, day and night sightseeing, participating in several kinds of indoor and outdoor events, visiting thematic parks, dancing and practicing sports. All these activities represent 87% of the resource usage. Those who are involved in the São Paulo City Tourism Sector are aware of the problems, the visitors' profile and the city image. This assertion is based on an exploratory study made by the author in August 2004, revealing institutional perception of the city's potentialities. A summary of it is presented in the following session.

4. Perceptions on São Paulo City as a Tourist Destination

Based on previous researches related to tourism destination image, satisfaction and loyalty (Bigné et al., 2001; Lee, 2001; Rodrigues, 2004; Chi, 2005) and on destination image formation literature (Baloglu & Mc Cleary, 1999; Gallarza et al., 2002; Etchner & Ritchie, 2003) a questionnaire was developed to perform in-depth interviews with some of the local agencies involved with the tourist sector, in the gastronomy area, travel agencies, car rental, among others. The questionnaire structure was planned to obtain body representatives opinions of: Brazilian and foreign destination attractions and competitive positioning, considering country and city destinations; São Paulo City image and tourism resources, services and infrastructure; quality, satisfaction, price, commitment, delight and loyalty of São Paulo as a destination; and the business tourist profile. The transcripts of the interviews were summarized and distributed by topics and will be presented in the followings subsection.

4.1 National and international destinations

Representatives of local entities interviewed stated that Brazil has multiple options in terms of tourism destinations, which satisfy all kinds of segments, such as sports, leisure, business, adventure, historical and culture, among others. Nationally, the Northeast region of the country has leisure destinations (sun, beach and fun), such as Salvador, Natal, Recife and Fortaleza, which combine local culture and natural environment. Three of the most important

Brazilian cities, Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, are in the Southeast region, where business activities are also concentrated in innumerable convention and trade fairs. The South region also offers options for leisure activities. Local travel operators made huge investments to promote other cities, such as Serras Gaúchas (Gramado and Canela – Rio Grande do Sul) and Bonito (Mato Grosso do Sul), which are two examples of tourism interventions to explore natural beauty, transforming it into a successful entrepreneurship.

Internationally, destinations are evaluated in two levels: country and isolated cities. Countries that are most visited are United States of America, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Peru. As Caldwell and Freire (2004) noted, functional and emotional dimensions are used to define country-destination visiting. European countries access is a key element on visitors' decision. Tourist could travel in/between different countries. The emotional dimension is represented by their culture and history; however, even when all countries have a historical legacy, it seems that the European history is associated with glamour and charm.

On the other hand, cities are mostly perceived by their functionality. Cities mentioned include Santiago de Chile, Barcelona, Lima, Buenos Aires, Rome and Paris. The world most visited city is Paris for its glamorous and traditional environment. Another city mentioned is Barcelona, which is associated with renewal, considering the infrastructure built for the Olympic Games. It seems that destinations' promotion still focuses on sun, beach and fun sights (like Rio de Janeiro) and, in some cases, cities combine their natural resources and local culture (Bahia). There are also destinations that are reinforcing their position with relative success; for example, São Paulo has identified its tourism resources to promote its diversity. Despite the efforts, its business destination image prevails.

Destinations' attractiveness raises a question in relation to tourist preference and comparative potentiality. Brazilian cities are a good example. The existence of different cultures in only one country will not allow a comparison in terms of emotional appeal, but of its tourism infrastructure availability and the motivation that brings tourist to visit a certain destination. In that sense, it is important to evaluate what resources are available in a city to promote it to potential visitors.

The same situation is observed in international destinations. The Brazilian culture is seen as unique. Even when the Brazilian historical heritage is not massively promoted, as the European is, local destinations should recognize their ability to become an international destination reference in other areas and not only for leisure activities. When compared to international destinations, Brazilian ones mainly lacks on a strong institutional structure and authorities commitment with the tourism sector.

4.2 São Paulo City's image and infrastructure

Local entities' representatives were asked to imagine São Paulo city as a human being and invited to describe the characteristics it would have as such. The words used to describe the city were: dynamic, multifaceted, shelter, rich and grown-up. Its dynamic profile is represented by all the activities that are part of the city agenda, from business fairs to gay parades. It's multifaceted considering that many cultures share city spaces, from foreign cultures to Northeast region festivities and food. It is a shelter because it is racism free, "all people are welcome". It is rich in financial resources and knowledge and it is grown-up because it is capable of being creative and, also, survives.

Considering this set of perceptions positive aspects of the city, they recognized that it also has some deficiencies, which could be a burden for promotion purposes. They think that São Paulo needs an icon, showing its diversity and trying to change its old business city image (as New York with its apple icon). It is important to note that Brazil now has a new icon with a frame of colors: yellow representing sun and beach; red representing culture; green, eco-tourism; blue, sports; and grey, business and events. Another negative aspect mentioned was the city infrastructure. Although with a good hotel and restaurant chain, the city does not have an updated information system related with resources and tourist demand, it has an inefficient communication network between institutions and poor signaling and information gazeboes

São Paulo seems to be a chaos because of its traffic and security problems, but what matters is that tourists can do business in fairs and local business enterprises, be well served in hotel chains and restaurants while keeping their own cultural identity – one of the interviewees said that people from São Paulo can be recognized by the way s/he dresses and behaves. If a tourist can do all he had planned previously to her/his visit, it means that he relied in all services he hired. According to the representatives' perception as well as a research performed on an international fair by the municipal tourism management office for the hotel and gastronomy industry, tourists acknowledge the city's accommodation and gastronomy quality, being happy with them (SPTuris, 2005).

4.3 Business travelers and tourism

According to interviewed representatives' perception, business travelers visit the city from Monday to Friday alone or with colleagues. S/he works all day and has no time to spend on other activities. The dynamics of the activities they perform in the city causes stress, being time a key variable, as noted by Barretto (1996) and Mattila (1999). Whenever possible, they go to the cinema, theaters, restaurants or night clubs, being that the time when they are able to have some contact with the city's infrastructure and services. They have, as a whole, high standard preferences for hotel accommodations and shopping activities. When they are not part of a multinational corporation, they usually demand low-cost alternatives, like the French hotel chain Accord, of low cost, high standard and minimum room service accommodations.

As the cited example, there are many alternatives for the business segment, but it is important to give him what he values most, in order to conquer his preference and to avoid stressful situations. If possible, the city should be an alternative for everything he found in the hotel, like food, beverages and entertainment. It could result in a future return with his family and friends and on a word-of-mouth communication process with relatives and friends. His/her loyalty will be a result of her/his perception of service organization and comfort, even if this is almost impossible to reach in the tourism sector.

5. Key Conclusions

São Paulo City has been consolidated by a functionality image (Caldwell & Freire, 2004), the main Brazilian Business Center. Both marketing and tourism literature have defined key concepts on image evaluation, which were develop based on cognitive/perceptive and emotional elements that are part of evaluative antecedents, such as quality and satisfaction, and behavioral consequences, like commitment and loyalty (Bigné et al, 2001; Lee, 2001; Rodrigues, 2004; Chi, 2005). The utility of these models is expected in the process of strategic and operational tourism planning to improve tourism infrastructure, service and attractions that are relevant to enhance destination image (Ahmed, 1990; Oppermann, 2000). Until now, on quality and satisfaction pools, the city obtained good scores (SPTuris, 2005).

The city is a national and international reference for business purposes, and it has an array of tourism opportunities in many segments, e.g. leisure, shopping, culture, sports and eco-tourism. In that sense, many organizations should be committed to promote the city and to participate in the planning process (Mastrobuono, 2003). The business segment will be always a challenge because it represents a reference for the other segments in terms of service quality and satisfaction. Business tourists are time-bounded and their activities are stressful, this being the reason why they are demanding. They need aspects/services to ease their permanence on the destination (Mattilla, 1999).

City efforts in terms of segmentation diversification are part of SPCVB's (n.d.) marketing plan, to place the city in a competitive position, without trying to compare it with cities like New York. This means that with the recognition of its potentialities, considering the formal preparation of a resource inventory, city planners should elaborate a plan that is closely related to competence and resource availability (OMT, 1998). It is not reasonable to define city image competence in terms of international models, for the city has its own dynamics, no other city being functionally and emotionally comparable to it (Middlenton, 2002).

This study shows the first results of a study that is being developed as part of a post-doctoral project. The next stage will be a survey with business travelers that participated in São Paulo's most important business fairs. The results will be analyzed with multivariate statistics to estimate the significance of the cause-effect relationships quoted in the model presented on section 2.

Note:

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