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AN INTEGRATED CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF DESTINATION BRANDING – TOURISTMIND

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ABSTRACT

An assessment of the destination image which does not adopt a branding perspective is inevitably reductive, taking into account the competitive context of tourist destinations. Branding is perceived as fundamental to the conceptual development of destination branding, allowing the definition of a conceptual model to assess and monitor the destinations' performance as brands and the behaviour of tourists as consumers. The aim of this study is to understand the process of formation of destination branding, its dimensions and its interrelationship proposing a new conceptual model, through an integrated perspective which examines brand identity (brand associations), brand image, perceived quality, satisfaction and loyalty, through the development of scales that allow a better understanding and measurement of these constructs. This article aims at contributing to the progress in the conceptualization of the destination branding which is identified as a concept critical to the success of the marketing of tourist destinations.

Keywords: Destination branding, Brand identity, Brand image, Perceived quality, Tourist satisfaction, Tourist loyalty.

Contribution/ Originality

The paper`s primary contribution is the proposal for a new integrated conceptual model, with more consistent measuring scales, in order to contribute to the Destination Branding conceptual advance, and thus, making available an new assessment tool of the Tourist Destinations branding for the Destination Management Organisations.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2013 the international flows had already attained the 1087 million, 52% concentrated in Europe and 43% only in 10 countries (World Tourism Organization, 2014), which shows the high relevance of the tourist phenomenon and an important competition between destinations.

The tourist destinations (TD) mainly compete through the destination image (DI), because the image that tourists have of the destinations before the visit is a determining factor in the decision of buying the product "destination" (Buhalis, 2000). The DI, from a marketing perspective, is essentially related to the consumer's behaviour. The concept of DI is a complex one, however, there is unanimity in characterizing DI as a mental construct developed by the tourist as a consumer and an holistic impression made by the tourist destination (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991), which includes subjectivity in the perception (Bigné *et al.*, 2001) and the relevance of DI for the management of tourist destinations has allowed a strong focus on its conceptualization (Pike, 2002).The concept of "image" justified and still justifies, therefore, a considerable attention given by researchers and professionals of the tourism industry. The formation of DI includes three main components, the cognitive, the affective and the conative or behavioural (Gartner, 1993). For Martín and Rodríguez del Bosque (2008) the cognitive component is related to the attributes of the TD that can be functional/ tangible (for instance, cultural attractions), and psychological/ abstract (for instance, hospitality, weather). On the other hand, the affective component is related to the emotions that a TD is able to evoke (for instance, pleasure, excitement). According to Gartner (1993), the conative image is linked to the tourist's behavior regarding the visited TD. Dann (1996) concluded that the cognitive, affective and behavioural DI components are related to the levels of the intellect, motivation and experience, respectively. According to Anholt (2003), places have always been brands whose objectives have been growth, as in the case of tourism, and the search of a positive image, although marketing has only recently been considered important. However, this author notes that the *branding* of places is different from the *branding* of products, since places (like TD) represent more complexity than isolated products/ services. As stated by Pike (2009), the research related to the *branding* of TD is recent; indeed, the first articles published in scientific journals only appeared in 1998. The concept of brand image had little expression in the marketing literature until the beginning of the 1990 decade, so, it is not surprising that this *branding* approach of TD had been introduced later in the beginning of the new millennium Grönroos (2004). Hudson and Ritchie (2009) defined *destination branding* (DB) as an emerging and powerful marketing approach for contemporary marketers who focus on the study of TD, highlighting the importance of assessing the current situation of the TD brand, develop a brand identity and a brand promise, communicate the brand promise and measure the efficiency of the TD brand performance in the market. These authors referred as successful TD cases: India, New Zealand, Australia and Las Vegas.

Pike (2009) reviewed 74 studies about DB from 1998 to 2007, and identified potential gaps for research, and referred to the need to develop more research in the following aspects: in the evaluation of DMO's branding policies; in the knowledge of the implementation of the TD umbrella brand that links in synergy and strategy the stakeholders; about the TD's ability to create strategies for the positioning of the brand to answer the needs of different markets; in the

assessment of the brand performance (marketing campaigns), from the consumer's perception; in the way the relational marketing with the client is used to stimulate loyalty; in the efficiency of brands' slogans and logos and in the measurement of TD's brand performance throughout the years. Pike and Page (2014) have highlighted that the complexity of the offer and the articulation for the TD's brand promotion need more research to assess the synergies and critical relations that exist between business and DMO, supporting the idea that more research in this domain may be useful to the DMO to monitor the path in the management functions and in the role of leadership in the TDs management aiming at improving the business performance in TDs. These authors referred to the existence of limitations in explaining the relationship between the constructs of the notoriety of the brand, brand associations and loyalty to the brand, and the scales used to assess the constructs have a limited number of items, which may explain, partially, another gap that they identified among the academic research and its limited practical application for the benefit of TDs.

The requirement of the DB approach is explored in this study, through a proposal for a new conceptual model.

2. DESTINATION BRANDING

Knowing the brand (brand knowledge) does not refer to facts about the brand, it refers to all the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences and all that may be linked in the consumers' mind (individuals or organizations). These pieces of information are groups of associations of the brand in the consumer's memory (Keller, 2009). Kotler (1991) defined brand as a name, a term, design, symbol or any other characteristic that identifies a product or service of a company as different from other competitors' products or services. Keller (1993) has defined brand image as the perception the reflection of different kinds of association of the brand kept in the consumer's memory. According to Aaker (1996), the identity of the brand confers sense, finality and meaning to the brand, which is essential to the strategic vision of the brand and stimulates associations of the brand and represents for the brand its "heart" and "spirit". According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2007), contrary to the image of brand which is receptive, the identity of the brand is aspirational. To put it differently, the identity of the tourist brand of the territories is the way the managers of the brands want them to be perceived by tourists. According to Keegan *et al.* (1995), the concept of branding is linked to a process of creation of an identification system and of a image of the product in the consumer's mind, with the attribution of the power of the brand to a company, that may persuade the consumers with an added value of a product and a higher price, that may make easier the expansion of the brand, obtain business cooperation, help the consumers identity and differentiate the products, work for the development of the brand image (recognition and perception, acceptance, preference and loyalty).

Pike (2009) considered that the delimitation of the most consistent DB concept is Blain *et al.* (2005) who integrated the result of theoretical and empirical studies. Blain *et al.* (2005) defined destination branding as "the set of marketing activities that support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word, mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; that consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk. Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice". The success of tourist destination marketing depends on an effective strategic positioning (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991), that is why the importance of including brands in an adequate process of TD planning and management is supported, despite the complexity of a high number of stakeholders. In the context of tourism, the "logo" of the TD's brand may facilitate the DMO marketing in the process of identification and perception of the brand image, according to the identity of the promoted brand. As consumers may choose among thousands of destinations, the "logo" of the brand may stimulate the search and influence the behavior in the destination choice, as long as it is communicated in the aimed segments, and it symbolizes the spent tourist experience, and so, it allows to keep a relationship with the brand that may be important for the loyalty (Blain *et al.*, 2005). The advances in the study of TD's brand have been achieved through studies which focused in the value of the brand from the consumer's perspective, replicating models of study of other sectors (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993) in tourism (Cai, 2002; Konecknik and Gartner, 2007; Pike, 2007; Prayag, 2009), but that couldn't still make the necessary advance in conceptualization from the DB's perspective (Pike, 2002; Konecknik and Gartner, 2007; Pike and Page, 2014; Stepchenkova and Li, 2014), particularly due to an insufficient definitions of constructs, their relationship, and the construction of consistent assessment scales of constructs (Pike and Page, 2014) that could better explain the brand image and this way assess the TD's performance, the behaviour and the attitude of tourist's loyalty towards the TD.

3. HYPOTHESES RESULTING FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2007) the brand identity is a set of brand associations that imply a promise from a specific organization to its customers, and the identity is the one that leads all the efforts of the brand construction. The central identity is identified as the most important element in the brand identity, the one that have to allow the differentiation in the market, which may include as elements for instance: confidence, emotional positioning, innovation and the value for money. The expanded identity includes concise elements of the brand, like, the creativity to protect the brand, the personality of the brand and the brand symbols. The essence of the brand is the icon of the brand, highlighting the dimensions of the central identity that

reflect the vision of the brand, an idea that has to conquer the "soul" of the brand. The essence of the brand must focus on what the brand is (functional benefits) or what it does to the customer (emotional benefits), and communicate with energy the identity (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2007). Keller (1993) classifies the brand associations in three main categories: attributes, benefits and attitudes. The attributes are the characteristics of a product or service, what the consumer thinks that the product or service is, or what is involved in its acquisition or consumption. The benefits are the value of a product or service associated to the attributes of this product or service, which represent what the consumer thinks the product is or what the service may do for him or her. The attitudes are defined as a global assessment of the brand, and are important because, usually, they are the key part for the consumer's behavior (for instance, the choice of the brand), resulting the association of attitude of "highlight" of the brand. These are associations of attributes integrated and benefits of products and services for the consumer and the judgment of the consumer related to these associations. Aaker (1996) supports that there should not be an exclusive setting of the identity of the brand in the attributes of the product, explaining that a brand is much more than a product, and the attributes of a product are not the only key elements in the customer's decision, since the brand includes other potentially relevant associations, for instance the brand personality, and the relationships brand-customer. According to Aaker (1991) brands can become symbols of auto-expression of a person. Therefore, a brand can give the person a possibility to communicate his or her self-image (for instance: his or her beauty or confidence) through the use of brands that stimulate the meeting between the brand and the customer. Konecknik and Gartner (2007) proposed that more image dimensions, in a separate manner and highlighting the personality of the brand be integrated in future studies. Aaker (1997) defines the brand personality of as a group of human characteristics associated to the brand. Ekinci and Hosany (2006) had already suggested that the personality of the TD brand can be used as a viable metaphor for the construction of the brand of the TD to understand the visitors' perceptions and to create a unique identity for the TD. Nam *et al*. (2011) confirm the congruence between the image of the tourists and the image that the tourists have of the tourist destination, that is, the self-image. Gartner (1993) suggested that usually the affective image becomes operational in the phases of the assessment of the process of the choice of TD. According to Aaker (1991), without the memories of the emotion that a brand evokes, the brand would be nothing more than a commodity, ie a useful or convenience object. The perspective of the brand as a strong symbol may proportionate cohesion and structure to a brand image, benefitting the recognition, and the remembrance of the brand in the consumer's mind. The existence of a symbol may mean a fundamental component for the development of the brand and its inexistence may constitute a substantial deficiency. A symbol represents to the identity the symbolism of its potential power. A brand with a set of powerful associations generates a strong brand image. According to Keller (1993), the associations of the brand may be characterized by a strong

connection to the brand node, which depends on the way the information enters the consumer's memory (ie encoding) and also on the way it is kept and stored (storage) as a brand image. The relationship between brand associations determines the cohesion of the brand image. If the brands associations are favorable as a whole related to the brand, there is a more favorable image of the brand, and if the brand associations don't show cohesion, the brand image will be confuse, less strong or not favorable. If the brand associations don't constitute an image which results from the construction of a set of positive associations, they will be easily affected by the market competition. This means that a greater consumer's favorability to the brand, a greater strength of the brand in the consumer's mind, and a greater singularity of the brand compared to others strengthens a more favorable attitude from the tourist to the destination. For Grönroos (2004), a brand cannot be created and cannot exist without the perception of the customer, considering that a brand as a concept is always an image. The brand is based on the continuous development of customers' relationships with a brand, on which the costumer forms a differentiating image of a material good, a service, with basis on all kind of contacts with the brand to which that costumer is exposed. This author also highlights the role of brand image as a filter of the communication and recommendation effects, to the extent that a positive image leads a to a wider receptivity related to the information and recommendation about a specific brand, as well as a negative image has a similar effect in the contrary direction. Cai (2002) refers to *destination branding* as a construction of a positive image that identifies and differentiates a tourist destination from another, through associations of the brand identity. However, the brand associations have been insufficiently studied, which means without testing the several associations simultaneously in order to understand what the ones that better explain the perception of the brand image. The conceptual model of *destination branding* by Qu *et al.* (2011) related the brand associations with the components of the image (cognitive, affective and unique, this one introduced by these authors) studying their relationship with the global image, being the image the mediator between the brand associations and the future behavior of tourists. Brand associations focused on the attributes of the product, including in them the evaluation of the quality of the experience, these authors having concluded that more brand associations must be included in the studies. Another recent case by Veasna *et al.* (2013) was suggested for future researches: the use of brand associations to assess the DI's influence in the tourists' behavior, in the satisfaction and loyalty to the destination.

Resulting from the presented arguments, the following hypothesis are formulated:

H[1a]: The set of brand associations determines in a significant manner the brand image of the tourist destination Porto e Norte of Portugal.

H[1b]: There is a significant and positive association between the personality of the brand and the brand image of tourist destination Porto e Norte of Portugal.

A positive brand image is the result of a set of associations that are favorable to the brand (Aaker, 1991) and are strong and unique (Keller, 2003). But Aaker (1991) highlighted that an association and an image may reflect or not an objective reality, and that the quality that is a brand association independent from other brand associations by the active that represents to the brand, being essential in the extent that it allows consumers to confirm the value of the brand, and agree or not to buy it, being, consequently, a factor of differentiation of the brand in the market. To Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2007), the credibility of the brand is proportional to the possibility to achieve the promise from the perspective of the offer part and the level of acceptance by the market. According to Grönroos (2004), the assessment of the quality perceived according to the customer's expectations represents obstacles in the measurement and validation, for the following reasons: if the expectations are measured after or during the experience of the service, what is really measured is not the expectation but something that has been changed by the experience, which means, there is a distortion in the judgment; it suggests that it makes no sense to measure expectations before the experience because the expectations that the customers may have, may not correspond to the specific consumption experience; the expectations are inherent to previous perceptions and the experiences are perceptions of the reality. For this author, the image has a filter function in the perception of technical quality (result) and functional quality (process). A brand is created by the continuous development of relationships with the brand in which the customer formulates a brand that differentiates a physical good, a service or a solution, including goods, services, information and other elements, based on all kinds of contacts with the brand to which that customer is exposed. Kastenholz (2002) highlights that the circumstances of the tourist visiting the destination for the first time or revisiting it is a relevant factor, since it provokes changes in the perception in terms of tangibility, as well as generates a degree of familiarity different among tourists with different relationships with the destination. Zabkar *et al.* (2010) studied the perceived quality and the satisfaction in tourist destinations as antecedents of a behavioral intention, admitting, as limitation, the need to study the influence and interaction of other factors, suggesting for that the image. That conclusion may be understood according to what was supported by Aaker (1991), when the author refers that most functional benefits incorporate emotions which is related to brand associations. According to Pike (2002), the majority of the studies on DI includes the dimension of quality. In studies with DB approach, the quality is measured as an independent construct (Konecknik and Gartner, 2007; Nam *et al.*, 2011; Kladou and Kehagias, 2014) as integrated in the construct of the image (Tavitiyaman and Qu, 2013), as not being integrated in the studies but it is suggested in future researches (Aguilar *et al.*, 2014) which shows the conceptual uncertainty related to the quality construct for DB.

Hence, we formulate the following hypothesis:

> H[1c]: There is a significant and positive impact between the quality perceived and the brand image of the tourist destination Porto e Norte of Portugal.

Salazar (2008) demonstrated that quality comes before satisfaction and not the other way round, which corroborates what had been suggested by Cronin and Taylor (1994). A tourist's satisfaction related to the experience in an TD is considered a highly important dimension for the assessment of the DI. Constituting a post-consumption assessment, we consider the existence of satisfaction when a tourist perceives an effective correspondence between his or her initial expectations and the experience in the destination (Song *et al.*, 2013). Recently, Tavitiyaman and Qu (2013) who studied the DI and the satisfaction in the intention of a future behavior, confirm that quality is an important variable in the influence of tourist satisfaction, and that satisfaction, in itself, has a positive effect in the behavioral intention. Zabkar *et al.* (2010) demonstrated that perceived quality from the tourist experience allows to know the cognitive aspects of behavior, while tourist satisfaction allows to know, in a global assessment, the cognitive as well as the emotional aspects of behavior. This suggests that quality has a positive impact on satisfaction, justifying a segment of the cognitive perception. The perceived value is considered as key in the assessment of the brand value (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). The value is intimately linked to quality, adding the dimensions of singularity and price. Singularity refers to the perception that customers have from the distinction of the brand from the others competing brands, and price refers to the customer's perceptions concerning the relationship quality – price and to the availability to pay a higher price for the wished brand. The value of the brand is one of the strongest indicators of loyalty to the brand (Aaker, 1996). Pike (2012) suggests the development of scales to measure the performance perceived in the context of tourist consumption, which surpasses the need of consistency in the scales that work for each construct, which means that, an assessment with scales that theoretically complement each other, like perceived quality and perceived value.

Hence, we formulate the following hypothesis:

> H2a: There is a significant and positive impact of the quality perceived in the satisfaction of the destination Porto e Norte of Portugal.
>
> H2b: There is a significant and positive impact of the perceived value and quality in the satisfaction of the destination Porto e Norte of Portugal.

A direct and positive relationship between DI and satisfaction has been confirmed (Prayag, 2009; Moreno *et al.*, 2012; Tavitiyaman and Qu, 2013) satisfaction is relevant in the context of the role of comprehension of brands, because managers need to know if the satisfaction perceived by customers is in conformity with the compromise towards the customer's satisfaction. Kladou and Kehagias (2014) adopted for the first time, in studies on the value of the brand of TD, the dimensions of the brand associations, image, quality, loyalty and cultural heritage in the studied destination. The model was validated, but the integration of satisfaction in further studies on brand assessment was recommended to better explain one or more DB dimensions.

Hence, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H²ᶜ: There is a significant and positive relationship between the brand image and satisfaction related to the destination Porto e Norte of Portugal.

Keller (1993) supported that the brand image is the main dimension of the brand. However, Aaker (1991) considered loyalty the central dimension of the brand value, since it is expected that loyal clients generate a predictable profit, since keeping clients has very inferior costs compared to the cost of conquering new customers, because fidelity creates a barrier to competitors and because loyal clients may recommend the brand and augment the number of clients. The brand associations are the basis to the brand image but also they are the basis for the purchasing decision. A brand association may represent an important support to the differentiation of the brand. According to Bandyopadhyay and Martell (2007) loyalty may be considered under two perspectives: behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Behavioral loyalty refers to the frequency of repetition of the purchasing, and attitudinal loyalty refers to the psychological commitment that a client makes at the moment of the purchasing, like the intention to buy, the intention to buy again and the intention to recommend a brand to other people. To Chen and Gursoy (2001) the approach of a loyalty attitude is more appropriate to study the loyalty to the brand in tourism than the behavioral perspective, because tourists may be loyal to a destination even if they do not visit it. For these authors, considering just the repetition of visit as loyalty is a limitation of the concept, because tourists may have a positive image of a TD and do not repeat the visit just because they have other motivations to visit a destination or because they want to diversify their tourist experiences. However, they may recommend the visited TD to other people. Keller (2003) highlights the linking attitude of the consumer to the brand, defining it as a positive attitude, because even if the client does not choose always the brand, this one will be among his or her main options. This means that loyalty integrates in a wider concept, the one about relationships. Martín and Rodríguez del Bosque (2008) state that loyalty is not solely judged by satisfaction, but also by a pre-conceived image that independently of the level of satisfaction may represent future intentions to go back and to recommend. The contrary effect may also take place; this means that the perception of satisfaction does not necessarily guarantee a favorable future intention. In the study by Yoo and Donthu (2001), loyalty to the brand is studied as a tendency for the client to be loyal, which is expressed through the intention to purchase the brand as a first choice. The existence of a positive and direct relationship between the image and the tourists' attitudes of loyalty is confirmed (Bigné *et al.*, 2001). Qu *et al.* (2011) highlight that a strong and unique image is the essence of the destination brand that will make the difference among the competitors, and that a positive image of the TD brand allows to create in the consumer a favorable and differentiated perception of a brand related to other brands in the market, this means that a unique and positive image generates loyalty to the brand.

Hence, we formulate the following hypothesis:

> H[3a]: There is a significant relationship between the brand image and the attitudinal loyalty to the tourist destination Porto e Norte of Portugal.

The majority of the studies on DI includes the dimension of quality, as Pike (2002). However, several studies on DB did not integrate quality as construct (Cai, 2002; Prayag, 2009; Martínez *et al.*, 2010; Usakli and Baloglu, 2011; Wheeler *et al.*, 2011; Aguilar *et al.*, 2014; Santos and Campo, 2014; Stepchenkova and Li, 2014), dimension which is considered fundamental (Aaker, 1991) to understand the value of the brand. Prayag (2009) chose to not include the constructs of quality and the perceived value to study the relationship with DI and the loyalty because he considered that in previous researches they did not seem relevant, despite integrating the cognitive attributes the items quality (quality of services). Martínez *et al.* (2010) used satisfaction, a global image, and a previous visit to assess the relationships between the constructs and their impact in the tourists' intention to visit again, suggesting for futures researches the inclusion of new variables, like for instance the perceived quality, to predict in a stronger manner the behavioral intention. Konecknik and Gartner (2007), in a research on DB, studied the relationship between the notoriety of the brand, the image, the quality and the loyalty and a positive relationship between quality and loyalty was confirmed. Kladou and Kehagias (2014), including in their research on DB the constructs of notoriety, image, quality, cultural attractions and loyalty, quality was the most determining construct in the attitudinal loyalty (intention to visit again and recommend). Aguilar *et al.* (2014) recommend the perceived quality for future researches on DB. While loyal consumers are usually satisfied consumers, satisfied consumers are not always loyal consumers (Oliver, 1999). But the authors of more recent studies suggest the existence of a significant relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intentions in the tourism sector (Prayag, 2009; Zabkar *et al.*, 2010; Moreno *et al.*, 2012; Guliling *et al.*, 2013; Song *et al.*, 2013; Tavitiyaman and Qu, 2013).

Hence, we formulate the following hypothesis:

> H[3b]: There is a significant relationship between perceived quality/ perceived value and attitudinal loyalty in the destination Porto e Norte of Portugal.
>
> H[3c]: There is a significant relationship between satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty in the destination Porto e Norte of Portugal.

The limitation in the conceptualization of DB mentioned by several authors (Cai, 2002; Pike, 2002; Park and Petrick, 2006; Pike, 2009; Pike and Page, 2014) reveals a lack of consensus related to the constructs that may better explain loyalty. Image, quality and satisfaction are constructs with demonstrated relationships with loyalty, and that structure the proposed conceptual model, consequently, its integrated assessment is suggested, formulating therefore the following hypotheses:

H³ᵈ: Brand image, quality and satisfaction explain in a significant and positive way the attitudinal loyalty in the destination Porto e Norte of Portugal.

4. CONCEPTUAL MODEL TO BE TESTED

This model presents an integrated approach, structured with constructs identified as important and linkable (brand identity, brand image, quality, satisfaction and loyalty), to try to advance in the conceptualization of the brand image of TDs and assess with depth the performance of TDs. New and consistent scales to assess the constructs of the model have been developed with the aim to strengthen the gathering data tool with the objective to get more reliable data. Testing the model in the tourist destination "Porto e Norte" the demographic profile and the behavior of tourist consumption are going to be identified with the aim to characterize and segmentation of the demand, data are going to be obtained related to the brand association, brand image, to the quality of services and other sides of the demand, to the tourist experience and to the loyalty of tourist to the TD. The results are going to be shared with DMO and TD and their stakeholders. The hypothesis (grounded in section 3) of the model aim at testing the validity and scientific relevance of the conceptual model, with the objective to be a tool to fulfill identified gaps and to assess the DB and TD on which the model is going to be tested, Porto e Norte in Portugal and other TDs. Considering that no DB studies have been published with all the constructs included in the proposed model (figure 1), this could be a contribution to the conceptual development of DB, as it represents the proposal of a model that includes a solid and diversified set of brand associations, thus not ignore the relevance of perceived quality and satisfaction to better try to explain the relationships between brand image and loyalty, and considers the multidimensionality of tourist loyalty towards TD.
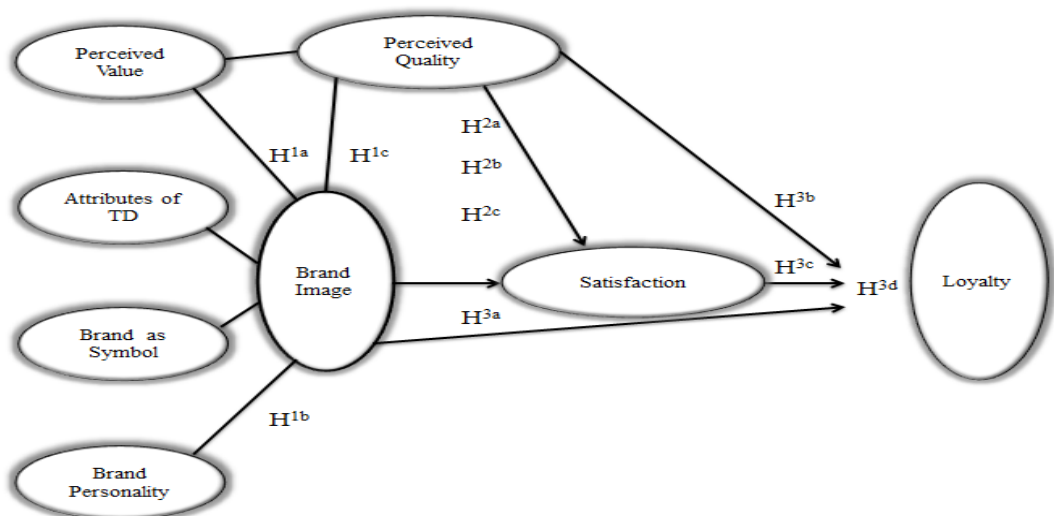

Figure 1. Integrated Conceptual Model *Tourist*MIND

5. METHODOLOGY TO TEST THE MODEL

A structured questionnaire will be used in the method of direct gathering of data, in the Porto airport. The aimed respondents will be tourists in a post-consumption situation. Due to logistics limitations we belived that we can only use a non-probabilistic convenience sample.

The type of scale that is mostly used in this kind of researches of DI is the adaptation of the Likert's scale (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Pike, 2002; Stepchenkova and Mills, 2010). In recent studies (Pike, 2009; Prayag, 2009; Chen *et al.*, 2013; Song *et al.*, 2013; Tavitiyaman and Qu, 2013; Veasna *et al.*, 2013) on assessment of DI, authors followed the intervals of Likert's attitudinal scale expanded to 7 points. To measure, we are going to choose a scale with only in the extreme points 1 "totally disagree" and 7 "totally agree" in order to avoid verbal bias. To measure the brand associations/brand images, the satisfaction and the attitude of loyalty we chose to use a Likert scale that goes from 1 "totally disagree" to 7 "totally agree". Only perceived quality will use a different scale (from 7 "very good" to 1 "very bad" is chosen).

We are going to try to put more consistency to the scales, building them based on adaptations of tested scales, and in some cases, from more than one author, which is what many other authors suggest to do (Pike, 2002; Pike, 2009; Stepchenkova and Mills, 2010; Qu *et al.*, 2011; Veasna *et al.*, 2013) namely the need to develop scales with more items to measure the tourists' perceived performance related to TD in a consumption context. The construct of brand identity includes 4 dimensions/ brand associations of the brand (attributes of the tourist destination, perceived value, brand personality and brand as symbol) adapted to the brand associations suggested by Aaker (1996).

In the attributes of TD, the attributes of product/ home region and the tourists' benefits were included in one scale with 11 items, adapted from Aaker (1996). In the perceived value two scales were combined, Aaker (1996), with 2 items, and Netemeyer *et al.* (2004), with 2 items. In the association of brand personality, despite Jennifer Aaker (1997) had conceptualized with success the human characteristics of the brand, that is why we adapted 10 items from her scale, we also adapted 1 item from David Aaker (1996), to assess the relationship consumer-brand. In the brand as symbol, which Aaker (1996) included in the brand identity system without separating it from the brand image as Keller (1993) did, not being possible to study the notoriety through visual images and visual metaphors, since subjects are going to answer the questionnaire after consumption, we adapted a scale of 4 items from the awareness/ brand association by Yoo and Donthu (2001). To assess the brand image we adopted, besides 1 item of global assessment of the brand from the scale of 1 item by Prayag (2009), which study revealed that only 1 item of measurement is not enough to explain the construct (the author got a R^2 of only .09), more 1 item adapted from the scale of the singularity of the brand by Netemeyer *et al.* (2004) and from the scale of brand differentiation by Aaker (1996), and 1 item adapted from the scale by Nam *et al.* (2011), to assess the self-image. This toughening of the scale of the brand image aims at assessing

to what level the brand of the TD is different and stands out from the brands of others TD that the tourist may know, as well as assess to what extent the brand results to be favorable to the tourist's self-expression, referred by Aaker (1991). The scales with intervals of the attitude of the perceived quality has been developed based on Grönroos (2004), taking into account the author's model of quality of services and what resulted from his reflection based on previous studies about quality perceived in services.

The scale that is considered more adequate to measure satisfaction (4 items) has been adapted from Fornell *et al.* (1996) and from Deng *et al.* (2013), having these two authors concluded that perceived quality is the most determining dimension for satisfaction, and that satisfaction is an important antecedent of loyalty. The dimension of loyalty is sometimes studied with only 2 items in tourism (intention to return and recommend) which is not enough when loyalty is multidimensional (Konecknik and Gartner, 2007). Thus, a scale of loyalty with more solid items has been developed. We want to assess with more depth the tourist's attitudinal intention related to the visited TD, adding to the intention of recommendation of the TD to relatives and friends, with 1 item adapted from Aaker (1996), and to the intention to visit again the destination in the next opportunity, with 1 item adapted from Bigné *et al.* (2001), the intention to visit again the destination in the next 12 months, with one item adapted from Pike (2009), and the level of tourist preference related to the visited TD among the different options of TD that the tourist may have in mind, in a more precise manner to what extent the TD that the tourist has tried would be his first choice, with an item adapted from Yoo and Donthu (2001).

6. CONCLUSION

The advances in the research of the TD brands have been developed mainly through models of value applied to diverse sectors in tourism (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993) replicated in tourism (Cai, 2002; Konecknik and Gartner, 2007; Pike, 2007; Prayag, 2009), but that have not allowed yet the necessary advance in the conceptualization in the perspective of DB (Pike, 2002; 2009; Konecknik and Gartner, 2007; Pike and Page, 2014; Stepchenkova and Li, 2014), with gaps been identified, namely an insufficient definition of constructs, lack of justification of their relationships, as well as a pressing need to build consistent scales to assess the constructs (Pike and Page, 2014) that may better explain the DB and thus assess the TD performance, the tourist's behavior and attitude of loyalty related to the TD.

The integrated model proposed in this paper aims at fulfilling those identified gaps mainly by Pike (2009), who has reviewed 74 studies in academic publications about DB from 1998 to 2007, and that has been mentioned by Pike and Page in 2014. The proposed model is going to integrate the constructs (brand identity with several associations including besides the brand attributes, the perceived value, the brand as symbol, the brand personality; the brand image; quality; satisfaction and loyalty to the brand) considered relevant to the study of DB, which being tested in recent DB

studies they have not been found in a sole model to test and understand their effect in terms of conceptual model. Scales have been developed for each construct with a toughening of the number of items (brand associations, 30 items and 3 items for brand image; quality, 15 items; satisfaction, 14 items and attitudinal loyalty 4 items).

The proposed model aims at: i) better explain the relationship between constructs, ii) better assess the performance of TD to present to DMO, iii) present to stakeholders of the destinations in general an evaluation of DB that allows giving feedback concerning the implementation of the umbrella brand, iv) understand the effects of marketing campaigns and the efficiency of slogans and logos, v) guide the TD to a positioning of the brand in the segments of the identified markets, vi) provide relevant information for the improvement of management and leadership for the TDs. This model aims at having a practical application that benefits TD branding, considering as well a tool to gather data (structured questionnaire) that will allow getting complement information about the effects of TD marketing and about tourist's profile and behavior.

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