

HOW SRI LANKA HAS BEEN PROMOTED AS A TOURIST DESTINATION? AN EXPLORATION OF THE PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS OF SRI LANKA TOURIST PROMOTIONAL AUTHORITY OF SRI LANKA

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Abstract

In a highly competitive tourism environment, a destination must be favourably differentiated from its rival destinations and positively positioned in the minds of the potential travelers; and a key component of this process is the creation and management of a distinctive and appealing image of the destination. The recent strategic tourism plan of the country (2017-2020) aims at positioning Sri Lanka as an attractive tourist destination through the capitalization of natural advantages of having the highest bio-diversity in Asia along with a strong culture, historical artifacts, exotic beaches, green environment and friendly people. Hence, it is vital to undertake a periodic diagnosis of the current images of the country both from suppliers' point of view i.e. projected images and the visitors' perspectives i.e. perceived image. This study examined the images of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination as projected by Sri Lanka Tourism Promotional Bureau (SLTPB) through its official website, promotional brochures and advertisements. A content analysis was employed along with two theoretical frameworks i.e. cognitive-affective framework and three-dimensional framework put forward by Echtner and Ritchie (1991) to gauge the image. The findings revealed that Sri Lanka is promoted on eleven experiential themes in the website and other promotional materials, which mostly portray cognitive, functional and attribute-based images of the country. The emphasis placed on projecting holistic, affective and unique images is relatively weak, and this needs more thoughtful intervention by SLTPB and other authorities related to Sri Lanka tourism.

Keywords: Destination, destination images, cognitive-affective images, three-dimensional framework

Introduction

With the expansion of the global travel and tourism industry, the competitiveness among destinations to attract more and more tourists is increasing. Hence, it is believed that a favorable differentiation from the competing destinations is required to influence the tourists' decision regarding the selection of a destination to travel (Daye, 2010; Hunt, 1975; Pearce, 1982). In order to gain such a positive positioning in the mind of the tourists, the importance of creating and managing a distinctive image regarding the particular destination is well recognized by both scholars and practitioners (Calantone et al, 1989, Chaulagain, Wiitala and Fu, 2019; Goodrich, 1978; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989; Puh, 2014).

Thus, having a strong destination brand that is built upon a positive perception or image held by the tourists regarding Sri Lanka as a tourism destination is becoming a seemingly important factor given the increasingly heavy reliance on Tourism as a major sector that enhances the economic growth. The recent tourism strategic plan of the country (2017-2020) of Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) emphasizes more on a focused and prioritized approach to deliver a more competitive, sustainable and inclusive tourism sector in the country. Towards this end, Sri Lanka had gained a highly favorable and advantageous position compared to the other competitive destinations in the region due to the fact that the country has the capacity to make the visitors gain unique as well as diverse travel experiences.

However, given this background, it is important to develop a consistent destination brand and at the same time to understand the image held by the tourists towards the destination. It has been identified that the visitors' evaluation of a destination is affected by the congruence between previously held images and the actual reality encountered at the destination (Chon, 1990). In such efforts, initially, it is important to re-visit and examine the images that have been projected by the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotional Bureau (SLTPB) to potential tourists and this serve as a diagnosis of current destination marketing efforts of the country. Thus, the insights gained through this study could make a vital contribution to the success of Sri Lanka's current and future destination marketing efforts as well as in their effort in creating an appealing destination brand. Therefore, this study attempted to investigate the images of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination that are projected (induced image) by the country's national tourism authority. As a diagnostic research into images projected by the official tourism authority in Sri Lanka, the study attempted to investigate the issue in a comprehensive manner by employing different theoretical lens. This is significant due to the fact that many of the destination image studies have relied only on cognitive-affective framework. The present study employed cognitive-affective framework and three dimensional framework suggested by Echtner and Ritchie (2003) in order to obtain more accurate insights, and it also explores the suitability of adopting a holistic approach in investigating the destination image construct.

The paper is structured in the following manner. First, review of the key literature related to destination image construct and its significance, then the conceptualization of the construct

and destination image formation process is presented. Second, the methodology adopted in this study is briefed. Next, the findings will be presented and finally, the implications of the study are discussed.

Significance of Destination Image in Tourism

Image is a set of believes, ideas, and perceptions about a subject or phenomenon (Kotler, 2003). Gallarza et al. (2002) revealed that the images of intangible products are more important than tangible products as customer' perceptions encourage them to purchase rather than their realities. In recent times, tourism research has focused on theoretical issues more explicitly to explore the unexplored areas of tourism issues in rapidly changing global economy. In the context of tourism marketing, the image tourists have of a tourist destination is an element of major importance (Tasci and Gartner, 2007; Wang and Hsu, 2010; Siriwardana et al., 2019). Many tourism researchers have discussed the reasons why people travel. They have studied the travelers' behavior; and found that the image of a tourist destination is so much critical (Chon, 1990) and this perception has also impact on tourists 'satisfaction (Prayag and Ryan, 2012; Veasna et al., 2013; Puh, 2014). Hence, destination branding and managing destination image tend to play a critical role in destination marketing efforts, especially to influence travelers' decisions about destination choice, because destination image influences tourists' decision-making on where they should spend their vacation and money (Hunt, 1975; Pearce, 1982). In order to successfully promote in the targeted markets, a destination must be favorably differentiated from its competitor destination, or positively positioned, in the minds of the consumers; and a key component of this process is the creation and management of a distinctive and appealing perception, or image of the destination (Calantone et al. 1989; Chaulagain, Wiitala and Fu, 2019). Destinations with strong, positive images are more likely to be considered and chosen in the travel decision process (Goodrich, 1978; Woodside and Lyonski, 1989; Lee, 2009).

Destination Image Formation Process

Investigations into destination images have explored how images are formed at different phases of the travels through various information sources. According to Tasci and Gartner (2007, p.414), the image formation process is a "construction of mental representation of a destination on the basis of information cues delivered by the image formation agents and selected by a person" (Tasci and Gartner, 2007, p.414). Accordingly, the destination image is formed by visitors as a mental construct based on a few impressions chosen from variety of information sources, which include *promotional materials*- advertisements, travel brochures and posters, *the opinions of others*- family/friends, travel agents, and *the general media* - newspapers, magazines, television, books and movies (Reynolds, 1965).

Phau, Shanka, and Dhayan (2010) noted that information sources of tourists have a significant influence on the perceived destination image and destination choice intention since information sources that individuals are exposed to influence the forming of destination

perceptions prior to visiting a particular destination (Um and Crompton, 1990). This claim is further affirmed by Stepchenkova and Li (2014), asserting that the destination image is influenced by tourists' prior knowledge, experiences, commercial and non-commercial information sources, in today's media environment and the content generated by tourists themselves. The influence of these various sources of information and their role in destination image formation in different stages have been elaborated by Gunn (1988), and in today's context, the influence of social media and user generated content on customers' decision-making process have also been well acknowledged in the literature (Jalilvand, Esfahani and Samiei, 2011).

The image formed during the first stage is referred to as the 'organic image' by Gunn (1988) where the image formation is primarily based upon non-touristic, non-commercial data sources, such as the general media (news reports, magazines, books, movies), education (school courses) and opinions of family/friends (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). Such non-commercial information sources are powerful and have a significant impact on the destination image formation. 'Organic image' is then modified by an 'induced image' based on further information via commercial sources of information, such as commercial print and television advertisements, magazines articles, travel agents, travel brochures and travel guidebooks. As Gunn (1988, p. 24) asserts, induced images are formed with a "conscious effort to develop, promote, and advertise" and destinations have a great deal of control over induced images portrayed of the destination. The significance of the modified-induced image, which comes from visitors' actual experience of a particular destination, becomes of specific importance given that, because of visiting the destination, images have a tendency to be more realistic, complex, and separated (Chon, 1987). In accordance with Kladou and Mavragani (2015), image development must be based on reality; otherwise, the destination will not succeed in satisfying the tourists, which will in turn have a negative impact on the image that will be transmitted by WOM. Thus, visitors to a particular destination bear a mixture of images backed by both organic and induced informational sources before visiting the destination.

Conceptualization of Destination Image Construct

A plenty of scholarly efforts are found in the literature related to conceptualizing and measuring destination image construct. Generally, it has been stressed that destination image is a complex, relativistic, multi-faceted and constructed concept (Gallarza et al. 2002; Lai Li, 2012; Tasci and Gartner, 2007). According to Baloglu and McCleary (1999), destination image is an individual's overall perception of a place, which is the sum of beliefs and ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination (Crompton, 1979). More recently, destination image is defined as a compilation of beliefs and impressions based on information processing from various sources over time that results in a mental representation of the attributes, benefits, and distinct influence sought of a destination (Zhang et al., 2014, p. 215). Tasci, Gartner and Cavusgil (2007) further assert that destination image is an interactive system of thought opinions, feelings, visualizations and intention towards a destination. According to Lawson and Bovy (1977), image of destination is an expression of knowledge, impressions, prejudices, imaginations and emotional thoughts for the general image of a destination and some authors

suggest that these two (cognitive and affective) components determine whether that general image will be a positive or negative assessment of the destination (Bluglu and McCleary, 1999).

Cognitive images refer to the beliefs or knowledge about a destination attributes evaluation (Wang et al, 2011). In other words, the destination image is the appraisal of physical features of environments linked to physical and experiential factors such as: natural attractions, climate, culture, tourist sites, nightlife and entertainment, infrastructure, accommodation, shopping facilities, cleanliness, safety and costs/price level, etc. (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). Affective images refer to the values that individuals attach to the quality of the environment of the destinations based on motivation (Hanyu, 1993; Stepchenkova and Mills, 2010), characterized by the affective impressions or feelings that an individual possesses of a particular destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Tessitore et al., 2014). Russell et al. (1981) developed a model of assessing images tourists develop in relation to the destination. The model contains bipolar dimensions unpleasant-pleasant, sleepy arousing, distressing-relaxing and gloomy-exciting factors widely used in measuring affective destination images (Konecnik, 2002; Prayag, 2010; Moon et al., 2011).

Mostly, destination image is assessed by the characteristics of its resources and attractions (Stabler, 1995) which make tourists interested in revisiting that destination (Beerli and Martín, 2004). For example, the influence of push and pull factors tourists perceive on the way to the destination give an idea about why tourists adopt specific behavior (Kassean & Gassita, 2013, p. 2). Most push factors are intrinsic motivators, such as the desire to escape, rest and relaxation, prestige, health and fitness, adventure and social interaction whereas pull factors emerge from the attractiveness of a destination, including beaches, recreation facilities and cultural attractions (Woodside & Martin, 2008, p. 18) which are related to destination image perceptions.

However, Echtner and Ritchie (2003) call for more comprehensive frameworks and methodologies to capture the full picture of the destination image construct arguing that many of the destination image studies have failed to capture the complexity of the concept. Accordingly, destination image studies should capture the construct in a more coherent manner by taking three dimensions into consideration i.e. functional-psychological, attributes-holistic and common-unique (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991). Functional images are the directly observable and measurable elements such as attractions and facilities whereas the psychological images are characterized by the aspects that cannot be directly measured e.g. friendliness of local people and quality of service etc. With reference to the second dimension, attribute based images are formed through the information on individual features or attributes of destinations, but scholars argue that 'imagery processing' depends upon more holistic, or gestalt, methods of representing information thus, it is necessary to assess holistic images as well (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003, p. 39). Third dimension refers to what extent destinations have in common and unique image elements, which have been widely overlooked in destination image studies.

Methodology

Having adopted a qualitative approach, three data sources were used for the study namely the contents of the official tourism website of SLTPB, promotional brochures and the advertisements used by SLTPB to promote Sri Lanka as a tourist destination. Content analysis was performed for the purpose. Content analysis could simply be defined as a research method used for subjective interpretation of content in a systematic and an objective manner (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) and the content analysis is adopted to analyse written, verbal or visual communication messages (Cole, 1988). The contents gathered in this study (i.e. SLTPB official website, the official brochures and marketing videos) were analysed to identify the main themes associated with the images projected by SLTPB and how such themes are captured in the cognitive-affective framework and the three dimensions' framework put forwarded by Echtner and Ritchie (1991). As such, textual and visual content that was presented under these themes were analysed to determine how these contents were presented as per these models. Data analysis was facilitated by MAXQUDA v12 qualitative data analysis software.

Findings

The below section presents the key findings derived from the content thematic analysis as described above. Images of Sri Lanka as projected through the promotional materials of the SLTPB are presented below:

Images Projected Though the Website

The official Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) website can be reached using the <http://www.srilanka.travel/> URL. To anyone visiting the website, an enchanting picture of Sri Lanka's up-country is displayed with the words "Welcome to Sri Lanka" along with eight themes of experience right below i.e. 'Wild', 'Thrills', 'Bliss', 'Essence', "Festive", 'Scenic', "Heritage", and 'Pristine'. Overall, the content of the website implicitly promises the tourists of the availability of a wide range of experiences within the island. The way the content has been presented, effectively portrays the country as an experiential and memorable destination blessed with wildlife, adventure, bliss, festivities and scenic beauty in addition to highlighting the key attractions (i.e. attributes) within the country. Each theme is described below.

It is full of Wild life

The content highlights the diversity of the wildlife experiences available for visitors including both inland and in the ocean surrounding the island such as the blue whales, sperm whales and dolphins. It appears that the contents overwhelmingly project cognitive images but less emphasis was given on projecting affective images associated with the theme. When applying the framework of Echtner and Ritchie (1993), the content mostly projects functional attributes and experiences available, but no psychological aspects have been captured. It

highlights the specific attributes that the tourists could experience by visiting Sri Lanka by featuring different species of animals such as mammals, cetaceans, birds and amphibians. This finding can be supported using the following extracts from the description under the ‘Wild’ Theme of the website.

... Sri Lanka is home to large families of cetaceans including the mighty blue whales, sperm whales and lively dolphins.

Despite the mighty elephants and rare amphibians found in the country, the birds are the glory of the Sri Lanka’s wildlife.

Further analysis of the content revealed the reference to the uniqueness offered in terms of the wildlife experience that could be gained by visiting Sri Lanka. It refers to the third dimension of the Echtner and Ritchie’s (1993) model in which “unique” refers to the unique features that could lead to unique perception of a destination. The reference to the rarity of certain species and the existence of endemic species highlights this uniqueness.

Sri Lanka boasts of one of the highest rates of biological endemism in the world.

Boasting nearly 433 bird species of which 233 are residing in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has 20 endemic species while another 80 species have developed distinct Sri Lankan breeds.

Further, under the ‘Wild’ theme, at the bottom of the page, a series of photos are published highlighting the various wild animals in the country as part of the wild-life experience that is offered. Hence, the functional and attribute-based image is further reinforced through the images while some of them project the uniqueness emphasized in the description.

Overall, the ‘Wild’ theme featured in the website projects images that are directly observable, attributes (i.e. functional attributes) which are of cognitive nature in general. However, certain aspects are projected as unique wildlife experiences offered in Sri Lanka whereas psychological and holistic images are not adequately captured.

Place for Thrill

As per the content analysis, the description portrays Sri Lanka as a place for a variety of adventure activities highlighting the experiential nature of such activities. The listed activities are snorkelling, scuba diving, surfing, white water rafting, kayaking, canoeing, hiking and trekking. It appears that the content mostly projects cognitive images and less attention has been paid with regards to associating such experiences with affective emotions. With reference to the functional-psychological dimensions, the emphasis on the opportunities for adventure in the description has led to the projection of the psychological nature (i.e. experiential) of the ‘Thrills’ theme in addition to functional attributes (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993), for instance;

Today, with the oceans filled with coral gardens, multitude of exotic fishes and ancient wrecks, Sri Lanka offers one of the best diving experiences in the world.

Experience the thrills of crumbling rocks beneath the feet, head spinning heights and the earth expanding beneath when conquering many mountains of Sri Lanka...

The content also suggests that Sri Lanka is a tiny island, but is compact with a variety of activities adventurous in nature, thus predicting a psychologically holistic picture in the travellers' minds (i.e. an adventurous destination). Further, the description slightly projects the unique nature of the adventure experiences through the repeated emphasis on the compact nature of Sri Lanka as an island and the wide variety of activities it offers to the tourists despite being a small island, which is something unique to the country.

With varying climates and geography packed into a small island Sri Lanka offers a range of adventures from the top of the mountains to the depths of the ocean.

With many adventures packed within a few miles of each other, Sri Lanka is an adventure itself waiting to happen.

A Blissful country

“Bliss” theme is focused on the physical and mental well-being that a tourist can attain by travelling to Sri Lanka. Thus, the theme projects psychological images by highlighting the revitalizing and blissful experiences that can be gained by engaging in blissful activities such as Ayurvedic treatments, meditation, Sri Lankan cuisine and shopping experiences. However, this projected image by the ‘Bliss’ theme has apparently focused on individual experience that can be gained by engaging in these activities, thus projecting an attribute-based image.

The country's native healing system, Ayurveda has been perfected over more than five thousand years.

Meditation plays a huge role in maintaining a perfect mental health.

However, the following statements depict a holistic image in terms of the ‘Bliss’ theme i.e. as a divine island having healing powers.

Many who set foot on the island had considered it a part of a divine existence, Sri Lanka continues to wrap its charm around its visitors, capturing their imagination with sights, sounds and flavors.

It is also obvious that such information in the content has not highlighted any unique experiences thus failed to project unique images of Sri Lanka under the “Bliss” theme. The video posted under the “Blissful” theme appears to be projecting the same identified image as the above, which is psychological, attribute based, common image based on the model put forward by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). The video similar to the description delivers a

psychological image followed up by an attribute based image which describes various blissful activities that can be experienced in Sri Lanka.

The Secret of Essence

The “Essence” theme appears to highlight the core experiences that tourists can witness by travelling in Sri Lanka such as people, Sri Lankan tea, gems and cricket. The theme appears to project both functional and psychological aspects (Echtner and Ritchie 1993) through the description of various core experiences that a tourist can gain by visiting Sri Lanka. More emphasis has been placed on the ‘people of Sri Lanka’. Further, this theme has projected an attribute-based (Echtner and Ritchie 1993) images by discussing each core feature of Sri Lanka individually throughout the description. This is supported by the quotes below.

...despite its fame as a resplendent island and a leading tourist destination, the secret of Sri Lanka's attraction lies with its people.

The spice addicted, cricket crazy and tea drinking people of Sri Lanka are famed for big smiles and a bigger heart.

With a culture enriched with three thousand years of knowledge, Buddhism and many colonial traditions, the Sri Lankan society is a potpourri of different religions and races yet similar in many ways.

Introduced to the country in the 19th century by the colonial British, Ceylon tea is the best in the world while Sri Lanka has also been known for its high quality spices since time immemorial.

Towards the lower part of the “Essence” themed webpage, a short video and a picture/image gallery have been posted to support the description that is presented under the theme. The images included in the gallery support, the image projected by the description as the images highlight the attribute based as the core features or the core experience being offered by Sri Lanka as a tourism destination. Further, the short video posted under the theme, projects the same image of psychological and attribute based images regarding Sri Lanka by focusing on the core experience that could be gained by visiting Sri Lanka.

The very essence of this nation, the warm hearts and the friendly faces embrace and welcome all who step on this soil.

The crafts, the keepsakes and the gems studded trinkets, distinctive to the Lankan handicraftsmen will always remind you of this aesthetic island.

It is noteworthy to inform that the content of the “Essence” theme has recently been altered by SLTPB. Today, the theme mostly projects images associated with food and culinary experiences in Sri Lanka, particularly the variety of food options available for visitors highlighting the essential elements of food experiences such as rice and curry being spicy, colourful and hot. The description appears to project both functional (i.e. list of food) and psychological attributes and experiences. To a certain extent, food experiences have

been associated with feelings such as happiness and amazement thus, projecting affective images as well;

Filled with aromatic spices and vibrant colours, Sri Lankan food leaves you feeling happy, warm, and content.

While spiciness is essentially a defining feature of Sri Lankan food, curry is most definitely another. Various different curries made with a multitude of different vegetables, meats and spices are abundant in Sri Lanka.

... Sri Lankan foods such as indiappa (string hoppers), appa (hoppers), pittu and roti that pair amazingly well with the different curries and sambols.

Despite the description, it has failed to promote holistic images in terms of food and culinary experiences, but the content has managed to capture the unique images to a certain extent, as supported by the quoted excerpts below.

Sri Lankan food is like no other.

One of the reasons why Sri Lanka is an ideal destination for travelers and food enthusiasts is the multi-cultural nature of the country. Sri Lankan cuisine is a culmination of diverse food items from various cultures in the country. Each ethnic community in Sri Lanka offers their own unique contribution to Sri Lankan cuisine.

Furthermore, in addition to presenting a variety of food and cuisines (i.e. *features or attributes*) food and culinary *experiences* promoted in the content project psychological images, for instance;

Given the countless assortment of flavours and textures of Sri Lankan food, there is no doubt that Sri Lankan cuisine is a phenomenal, gastronomical adventure. From fine dining establishments to roadside eateries and street food vendors, Sri Lanka offers a unique and flavorsome food experience to all travelers.

Overall, under the “Essence” theme, the key highlights are the ‘friendly locals’ and ‘unique Sri Lankan food experiences, which capture both functional and psychological features and experiences. In contrast to the themes discussed previously, this theme has captured unique and affective images to some degree.

Full of Festivity

The ‘Festive’ theme as the name suggests appears to highlight the cultural and religious celebrations carried out in Sri Lanka. Thus, the richness of the local culture and the religious influence appear to be the basis of the image projected through this theme. It is apparent that the “Festive” theme mostly projects attribute-based cognitive images regarding Sri Lanka as the description focuses on explaining different cultural festivals that are celebrated in Sri

Lanka. A short description is presented for each cultural festivals celebrated by the locals along with the emphasis on the significance of each.

With a population composed of many a races and religions, Sri Lanka is never short of festivals and celebrations. Every month brings a celebration of either religious or cultural importance, making Sri Lanka one of the countries with a higher number of celebrations and holidays.

The Kandy Esala Perahera or the Dalanda Perahera is the largest cultural parade in the world and showcases the best of Sri Lankan dancing and music...

The Sinhala-Tamil New Year festival in April is the most important cultural festival in the country.

The May full moon poya day also known as Vesak is the most important religious celebrations in Sri Lanka, where Buddhists celebrate the nativity, enlightenment and passing away of Lord Buddha with many celebrations.

The lower part of the page under the “Festive” theme displays a gallery of images along with a video, which further portrait the different festivals celebrated throughout the country.

The festive glow that enlightens us all is present all year around in this little island.

Celebrating religion, tradition and art, the very love of the country’s social fabric, festivals come alive creating a dazzling cultural fusion that has its’ roots in far back in antiquity.

Hence, a functional, attribute based images are further reinforced by these pictures and videos. However, the content implicitly projects a holistic image of Sri Lanka as a culturally rich destination to visit with plenty of festivals and celebrations throughout the year. This is highlighted by the emphasis on the yearlong festivals celebrated in the island and the three main bases, which are religion, tradition and art, around which the festivals celebrated have emerged and based upon.

With a population composed of many a races and religions, Sri Lanka is never short of festivals and celebrations. Every month brings a celebration either of religious or cultural importance, making Sri Lanka one of the countries with a higher number of celebrations and holidays.

However, not much emphasis has been placed on portraying the unique nature of festivals and affective emotions associated with such experiences in the descriptions.

Full of Scenic Beauty

In the website, the “Scenic” theme is accompanied with an image of the sun-filled skies over the mountains, which is a common sight that can be experienced in Sri Lanka. The

description has continuously focused on drawing a picture about the scenic beauty, which can be witnessed while travelling in Sri Lanka.

The central highlands of the island are filled with pictures of stirring mountains carpeted with lush green tea gardens, roaring waterfalls mingling with the clouds and landscapes shimmering in sunlight and disappearing under the rising mist.

The east of the island is home to lush paddy fields, spectacular sunrises, and a quieter more rural pace of life.

The dusk and dawn and many human activities connected to these times of the day create a vibrant picture along the coasts of Sri Lanka.

It seems that the description mostly projects attribute-based cognitive images of Sri Lanka, but eventually portraying Sri Lanka as a beautiful island (i.e. a holistic image) with a diverse collection of landscapes and sceneries, for instance;

Despite being a relatively small island, Sri Lanka is endowed with a diverse collection of landscapes, climates and natural features.

However, it could be found that certain parts of the content seem to be less consistent with the ‘Scenic’ theme since the description presents aspects such as heritage and culture:

On the western coasts of the country is Colombo, the capital city of the island, which is steeped in a rich colonial heritage.

A potpourri of races, religions and cultures, Colombo parades the best and worst the country has to offer.

Towards the lower part of the page with the “Scenic” theme, a video and a gallery of images are available similar to the other theme pages. As emphasized above, the video has projected the functional images by highlighting the individual characteristics of the scenic beauty while contributing towards the creation of mental images regarding the scenic beauty that can be experienced in Sri Lanka. However, what is unique to Sri Lanka under the “Scenic” theme and ‘affective emotions’ (i.e. affective images) that could arise from such cognitive images have not been projected adequately in the description and the gallery.

Full of Heritage

The “Heritage” theme which is accompanied by an image of the Dambulla Cave Temple on the web page tends to project the richness of the cultural heritage in Sri Lanka as a tourist destination. The following are some of the excerpts from the description under the theme:

... Kingdom of Anuradhapura. Sri Lanka's third and the longest serving capital and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world is also one of the most sacred cities of World Buddhists.

Sigiriya, a fifth century AD fortress and a water garden displays some of the most futuristic elements of landscaping and some of the oldest murals recorded in the country.

The description mostly emphasizes on the individual characteristics, which make up the heritage experience, by focusing on individual cities that hold substantial significance in terms of the historical value that they represent. Thus, the content generally projects cognitive, attribute-based and functional images:

*Polonnaruwa, the second most ancient kingdom of the country boasts Irrigation systems that are far superior...
After being burned and ravaged more than thrice by the invading Portuguese, the Kandyan Kingdom still holds beautifully carved and built houses, palaces and temple preserved for nearly 500 years.*

The gallery of images and the video available on the page under the “Heritage” theme further portray these functional and attribute-based images regarding the heritage of Sri Lanka thus, have not been able to project psychological images around heritage experiences. The images in the gallery highlight images of the unique sculptures and buildings that were largely influenced by the teachings of Buddhism. This extended influence of Buddhism on creative thinking of the local people was also highlighted by those images. However, the narrator of the video attempts to project a psychological holistic image of Sri Lanka in terms of heritage experiences in addition to functional attribute-based images, for instance, “Age old heritage sites that have stood the test of times with its’ iconic monuments are symbolic of *mysticism and the serenity* that surrounds this paradise island”, but functional heritage attributes are dominating the projected image regarding ‘heritage’. Nevertheless, the full content appears to implicitly project Sri Lanka as a destination, which is rich and significant in culture and heritage in the world (i.e. a holistic image).

Enjoy the Pristine

The “Pristine” theme highlights the beaches and beach experiences available in Sri Lanka projecting the country as an ideal destination for beach related experiences. The word “Pristine” is used to communicate the unspoiled nature of the beaches that the country offers to visitors. The content provides information about different beaches and beach related activities that visitors can indulge in, such as windsurfing, kayaking, yachting, water skiing, scuba diving.

With nearly 1600 km of palm fringed pristine coastline surrounding the country, Sri Lanka is the ideal destination for beach bums worldwide. Be it windsurfing, kayaking, yachting, water skiing, scuba diving or jut lazing around for the perfect tan, Sri Lanka offers it all.

The description includes details of specific beaches of Sri Lanka along with the details of various features that can be witnessed at each of the beaches. Thus, this has led to the projection of attribute-based functional images regarding the beach experience of Sri Lanka; not depicting any psychological nature of experiences.

... Tangalla, Beruwala, Mirissa, Bentota and Unawatuna with varying options including chic boutique hotels, glowing coral reefs, gentle sandbars and undiscovered corners of the paradise.

Once a mere rumor, Uppuveli beach is also open to the sun seekers after a three decade long civil war.

As per the description, a common image (Echtner and Ritchie 1993) is being communicated where the description does not emphasize any uniqueness of the beach experience that is offered. The gallery, which consists of images of different beaches, towards the lower part of the page, again projects these functional and attribute-based images of the beach experience offered by Sri Lanka. Further, the video available under this theme, projects a similar common and functional image regarding the beach experience of Sri Lanka. However it slightly projects the psychological components of the image, for instance, “The pearl of the Indian Ocean, the pristine, deep, aquamarine water together with its’ golden sands will *bathe your soul in tranquillity*”. Further, it projects a holistic functional image of Sri Lanka as a beach destination, for instance, “the perfect home for all beach lovers.”

Hence, cognitive, functional, attribute based and common images regarding the Beach experience of Sri Lanka appears to be projected as the narrator emphasizes on the generic nature of the offering, while claiming Sri Lanka is suitable for any type of beach lover as Sri Lanka has a combination of offerings that is already out there rather than anything unique in terms of the beach experience. The projection of psychological, affective and holistic aspects of the image projected in the website is not strong enough though.

New Updates to the Website

Recently, the website has added three other themes namely ‘Ramayanaya Yathra’, ‘Buddhist Places’ and ‘Wellness Tourism’. Under ‘Ramayanaya Yatra’, potential travellers, mostly Indian visitors, are reminded of the historical saga of Rama and Ravana and are invited to witness well-preserved places related to Emperor Ravana and his Kingdom highlighting the fact that there is something new to explore in Sri Lanka. Images of some of the iconic places such as Seetha Kotuwa, Rumassala Mountain and Hanuman Temple further pique the travellers’ interest in the experiences associated with ‘Ramayanaya Yatra’. The theme ‘Buddhist Places’ tends to project Sri Lanka as a spiritual and peaceful country to explore and visit, which depicts a holistic picture of Sri Lanka. When someone clicks the link, the person is directed to a page opening with a phrase ‘So Spiritual’. The text highlights the ethnic and religious harmony given that Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural society. In addition to that, the content portrays the country as a beautiful paradise island with a rich historic heritage, another holistic

image projected by the description. However, to a certain extent, the content overlaps with the content of the ‘Heritage Theme’ discussed before:

Sri Lanka, which is surrounded by the enchanting ocean, has a mild weather and environment. Sri Lanka is an attractive paradise for tourists with a historic heritage.

Sri Lankans are globally renowned for their hospitality and the country flourishes as one of the top countries in the list of world heritages.

This is a country where there is wonderful religious harmony, which is depicted through practices such as Buddhists visiting Christian churches and Christians visiting Buddhist temples.

The third new theme recently added is ‘Wellness Tourism’, which depicts Sri Lanka as a divine destination, an ideal place for visitors to enhance their well-being in terms of physical, psychological, or spiritual activities. The proposition is supported by providing additional information such as having a conducive natural environment, availability of Ayurvedic retreats, natural and traditional endowments and the traditions of the local community, etc., projecting both functional and psychological images of the country. The three new themes also project holistic images such as a paradise with a historic heritage; a spiritual, peaceful and a divine destination. However, only the ‘Ramayanaya Yathra’ theme has highlighted unique images of the country portraying Sri Lanka as the Kingdom of the Ravana Emperor.

Imaged Projected through the Official SLTPB Brochures

Brochures hold a significant importance in promoting a destination as they are a medium of information sought-after by both guests and the service providers in gaining and delivering information. Thus, the official promotional brochures developed by SLPTB were also analysed as a part of the measurement of the projected images of Sri Lanka as a tourism destination. The brochures have been developed under the same themes which have been described in the official website thus images projected through these brochures seem to be closely consistent with the images projected through the website. For instance, **the wild themed brochure** apparently projects an image that is similar to the image projected through the content under the “Wild” theme on the official Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) website. Hence, mostly, cognitive, functional and attribute-based images are projected by the wild themed brochure albeit unique elements, are also presented to a certain extent..

Sri Lanka’s varied forests abound with a dizzying assortment of other furry, scaled and feathered creatures.

For an island of such modest size, Sri Lanka is blessed with a truly startling diversity of physical features and wildlife, an ecological jewel, a nature lover’s paradise, truly a wonderful experience indeed

Similarly, the **“Thrills” themed brochure** provides information regarding a variety of adventure related activities that tourists can experience in Sri Lanka. A myriad of adventurous activities ranging from water rafting, canoeing, trekking and hiking to camping and jeep safaris have been highlighted along with substantial amount of details surrounding these activities, which highlight the best rivers for canoeing and the best surf spots around the island for surfing. As per the nature of the descriptions, cognitive, functional and attribute-based images are projected regarding the experience that can be gained by engaging in these different activities.

There is no better or more exhilarating way to discover Sri Lanka's spectacular scenery than white water rafting down a majestic river.
The experience of sleeping under the stars surrounded by nature in one of the island's national park is second to none.
The gentle swell of the Indian Ocean waves offers many opportunities for surfing.

The **bliss theme brochure** appears to have provided very specific amounts of information, which describe the process involved in Ayurveda treatments along with other important information that are targeted at enhancing the faith towards these rather unfamiliar treatment methods to the tourists. The emphasis on the specific details and various types of information such as the type of Ayurveda treatment offered, classification of food and various Ayurveda products, which apparently, do not project images of the country though.

“In each of us is a unique combination of these forces or Doshas [Vata (wind), Pita (fire), Kapha (earth)] that help define our nature.”

“In Ayurveda, food is classified into six taste categories: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent and astringent.”

However, psychological benefits are communicated using the statements such as *“What's more, you can enjoy the pleasures of Ayurvedic spa in some of the most tranquil and serene settings in Sri Lanka...”* projecting psychological and holistic images to a certain extent. Furthermore, despite the efforts to offer significant information regarding Ayurveda and the background of Ayurveda, emphasis on the unique nature of the Ayurveda experience offered in Sri Lanka appears to be lacking and this has led to the projection of common image regarding the Ayurveda experience offered. Moreover, affective images associated with “Bliss” theme have not been captured in the descriptions.

The **“Scenic” themed brochure** offers a description of the picturesque island and highlights the iconic scenic beauty that Sri Lanka is blessed with. The description offers information on a range of such attractions, which offers amazing scenic beauty to be experienced by visitors. Thus, similar to the contents presented on the website, the description projects cognitive, functional and attribute-based images of the country more strongly with relatively a less emphasis placed on projecting unique, holistic and affective images.

The journey from Colombo to Kandy is a treat with fine views of the scenery afforded from the road or railway.

Among the most iconic vistas of the hill country are the rolling tea estates that carpet vast swathes of terrain in an emerald sea.

Damp, mysterious and teeming with life [Sinaharaja Forest Reserve], it is a must visit for those seeking an authentic jungle experience.

Equivalent to the website, the description on the “**Pristine**” themed brochure provides facts and figures of the beaches in Sri Lanka depicting cognitive, functional and attribute-based images. It elaborates on the various beaches categorized based on their location within the island while emphasizing on the distinctive characteristics and highlights of each beach.

Beaches totalling 1,340km fringe the island, from the long-established tourist destinations of the southern coast, to the vast beaches of the Deep South.

Unawatuna was voted among the top 12 beaches in the world and boasts excellent diving, a relaxed atmosphere and lively nights.

Arugam Bay (314km from Colombo), with its well established surfing scene and untouched beaches that stretch both to the north and to the south of the town.

The description presented under the ‘**Heritage**’ themed brochure emphasizes on the various attractions that hold significant historical value over the 2,000 years of recorded history and is based on the seven UNESCO world heritage sites that can be witnessed within a tiny island like Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka contains an astonishing seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites within its compact shores – the same number as the heritage packed Egypt. Dutch Fort at Galle..., has the distinction of being the best-preserved sea fort in South Asia.

Featuring some of the most ancient archaeological treasures in Sri Lanka, this vast heritage site [Anuradhapura] is an impressive reminder of an ancient civilization.

Thus, cognitive, attribute-based and functional images have been projected under the ‘Heritage’ theme in which various historically important attractions including directly observable stupas, dagabas, reservoirs, monuments and fortresses are highlighted throughout the description.

‘**Essence**’ themed brochure includes a description highlighting essential elements that a tourist can experience during their tours in the country, such as friendly people, delicious Sri Lankan Cuisine, Sri Lankan Arts and Dances, and Parade and Festivals. Under the “Cuisine” sub section, a variety of food options, some of them are unique to Sri Lanka are presented to

the readers (including a few images) inviting them to experience gastronomic delights in the country. The next, Arts and Crafts section starts with an image showing a native person engaged in producing handcrafts, and then presents the creativity and artistic skills of Sri Lankans manifested in the paintings, sculptures and architecture, which are inherent from the long standing Buddhist traditions and Indian culture. The “Song and Dance” section begins with an image of dancers of the Kandy Perehara (a religious procession) and then presents the information about three folk dancing traditions of Sri Lanka, such as Kandyan, Low country and Sabaragamuwa. Community Tourism section commences with two images showing tourists engaged in Stilt Fishing, which is unique to Sri Lanka and then presents the available options for tourists to experience the authentic local life and culture in Sri Lanka, particularly in the rural areas with the help of a few more additional images. The next sub section, “Shopping”, commencing with images of shops where Sri Lankan authentic creations and gifts such as handloom products are available, provide information for readers about shopping options of both traditional and other products such as clothing, bags, batik products, tea and cinnamon. The final section of the “Essence” theme labelled as ‘Gem Stones and Jewellery’, starts with convincing readers about the historical significance of Sri Lanka for gemstones and then provides information about various precious gemstones available in Sri Lanka highlighting that gemstones in Sri Lanka is the best in the world. Hence, these descriptions largely capture the cognitive, functional and attribute-based images. The emphasis on projecting holistic, psychological and effective images is relatively weak in this brochure too.

‘**Festive**’ theme brochure mainly informs readers about various festivals, celebrations and cultural parades related to different ethnic and religious groups that travellers can experience all year around in the country. A 64 page document provides information about each festival and celebration, such as Independence Day celebration, Navam and Esala Perahera, Sinhalese and Tamil New Year, Vesak Festival and other festivals which are culturally and nationally significant. The content apparently highlights cognitive and functional attributes and experiences related to festivals and celebrations of the country (i.e. forming functional and attribute based images), but less emphasis has been placed on projecting psychological and holistic images.

Recently, SLTPB have developed another three brochures namely, ‘Golf’, ‘Buddhist Excursions’ and ‘Brochure for Sri Lanka’. The new ‘**Golf**’ themed brochure promotes Sri Lanka as a place for golfing holidays for golf travel buffs. The readers can find information about the facilities available for playing golf and golf clubs in the island. The information thus mainly projects cognitive and functional attribute-based images, but the images embedded in the description and certain words such as ‘a treasured island’, ‘the emerald isle’, ‘beauty’ and ‘tranquillity’ attempts to form a holistic picture of the country as a beautiful, green and tranquil island, an ideal place for golfing. Nevertheless, the content is not imperative enough to form affective, psychological and unique images of Sri Lanka around the ‘Golf’ theme.

The ‘**Buddhist Excursions**’ brochure starts with the historical story of meeting between Sage Mahinda and King Thissa, then the ruler of Sri Lanka (276-235 BC) and how Buddhism was introduced to the country and became the main religion in the country since

then. Readers come to know that there are sixteen places that the Lord Buddha had visited in the island implying the significance of these places. A brief description is then provided about each of these 16 places followed by descriptions about two sacred cities; Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, highlighting the key Buddhist attractions within the two cities. Then the readers are taken to other significant places such as the Temple of Tooth in Kandy and Golden Temple of Dambulla. The content provides a fair amount of information of each place to the readers, the way the information has been presented, aids the readers to form cognitive, functional and attribute-based images of the country, but eventually the readers are given a holistic impression that this is a Buddhist country having many Buddhist places in it. However, no affective and psychological images (for example; a spiritual destination) are projected albeit the brochure extends over 40 pages with plenty of information. In addition to that, the content has not sufficiently projected the unique images of the country in terms of Buddhist Excursions.

‘Brochure for Sri Lanka’ is the final version of the brochure available for readers to know about Sri Lanka, providing an overall picture of the country by embedding information presented under different themed brochures i.e. eight brochures analysed previously (pristine, scenic, wild, heritage, thrills, festive, bliss, and essence). What is particular about this brochure is that the contents tend to provide holistic pictures of Sri Lanka instead of providing information of individual attractions and places, enabling readers to form holistic images of Sri Lanka. For instance, the brochure commences highlighting the diversity and variety of experiences available in a modest island in terms of diversity, natural scenes, historical riches, cultures, cuisine and other things to do; forming a holistic image of a beautiful island in which a diverse range of experiences are compacted for visitors. This diverse holistic image is further supported by a metaphor used: “the royal banquet, having dozens of different dishes, no two of which ever taste alike” implying that Sri Lanka as a tourist destination similar to the royal banquet, having different and changing experiences all over the island. Another similar excerpt is: “...Sri Lanka is just 345km long and covers a total area of only 65000km. Yet into this modest area, is concentrated an unfair share of the natural beauty and diversity of South Asia”. The brochure has used the “Paradise” metaphor to feature the beauty of the island.

Paradise Island. The Finest in all the World. Home of serendipity, whose very name in the ancient languages of the country means ‘beautiful’ or ‘resplendent’.

In addition to the ‘beauty and variety (diversity), the brochure further emphasizes genuine hospitality, friendliness and welcoming traits that are the inherent characteristics of Sri Lankans. These will surely be witnessed by any visitor regardless of their religion or ethnicity, as an essential part of their journey: “Visitors here find a welcome whose genuineness and spontaneity have not weathered with the centuries, a people who regardless of race or creed, are eager to open their houses and their hearts to a guest”.

The content also projects Sri Lanka as a beach destination surrounded by pristine beaches, a holistic nature of the image in addition to the provision of information about each beach and beach related activities individually, for instance, “The endless Coast: If a beach of your

destination, Sri Lanka offers literally hundreds –an endless golden coastline – an often the only footprints in the sand will be your own”.

The content also presents Sri Lanka as a destination where travellers can experience the authentic Sri Lankan life, particularly in the remote areas where there is an inherent wilderness, projecting a psychological holistic image in readers’ mind.

... the village tank or reservoir still presents peaceable scenes from the timeless rural world: wallowing water buffaloes, women bathing in colourful cotton wraps, small boys fishing from paddle-boats in the heat of the day. Despite its larger rural population, much of the island is [covered in] wilderness.

Another holistic image projected in the brochure is the ‘Land of many cultures’ promoting Sri Lanka as a destination rich in culture for the visitors to explore. Within the content, more information is provided for readers to gain an idea about different ethnic and religious groups and their traditions, festivals and cuisines including the influence of the Dutch people living in the country. The content also provides a picture of modern Sri Lanka as a multi-cultural, vibrant and fast developing country forming a holistic image as a destination filled with traditional and historical values, yet substantially modern and developed.

Additionally, the content of the brochure projects Sri Lanka as an ‘Island of Adventure’, another holistic image association by mentioning that *“It [Sri Lanka] still offers plenty of excitement and adventure for active thrill-seeking holiday makers.”* Furthermore, the content presents Sri Lanka as a destination filled with festivals and celebrations, for instance, *“Nearly all the world’s major religious denominations are represented in Sri Lanka. Adding to this is a plethora of ethnicities and social groups and the result is a crowded festival calendar”.*

Under the “Bliss” section, Sri Lanka is promoted as a place for physical and mental wellness triggered by the tranquil atmosphere of the country, highlighting the key facets of wellness tourism in Sri Lanka including meditation and yoga trainings. However, the content vastly provides information on the facilities and different treatment methods, thus projecting functional and attribute based images. Surprisingly, the content has not paid enough attention to form affective and psychological images despite the fact that the theme ‘Bliss’ can easily be promoted with psychological associations.

Overall, this brochure appears to pack all the key experiential themes into one document, thus attempts to project holistic images of the country, i.e. a beautiful and tranquil paradise surrounded by pristine beaches where a diverse range of experiences and tourist attractions are compacted. However, this brochure has also failed to project affective, psychological and unique images of Sri Lanka similar to the previous themed brochures.

Official Advertisements of SLTPB

Apart from the official brochures of SLTPB that were discussed above in the previous section, SLTPB uses video advertisements in promoting Sri Lanka as a tourism destination. Hence, it is worth analysing the content of such video advertisements in promoting Sri Lanka as a tourism destination, in understanding the Projected Images intend to be communicated by the SLTPB.

Sri Lanka: A Journey Awaits (Full Video) [Duration: 03 minutes]

This video contains the entire video shot under the promotional campaign, “Sri Lanka: A Journey Awaits”, and based on which a few other television commercials of 30 seconds have been created and promoted on international television channels and social media platforms. The video flows through in a story-telling setting in which the main characters change between a solo-traveller, a couple and a family. Hence, apparently this change of the main characters during the entire video suggests the suitability of Sri Lanka as a travel destination for everyone ranging from a solo-traveller to a family with children. The video flows through various attractions around Sri Lanka, which reveals that these attractions were selected to symbolize the eight themes that were used by the SLTPB in promoting Sri Lanka. The solo-traveller travels through tea bushes in the hill country and experiences religious diversity while the couple engages in a romantic getaway in Galle and through a Balloon Ride after which they celebrate a traditional Sri Lankan wedding that reflects local customs and beliefs. The family engages in a train ride through a picturesque valley and participate in the celebration of a local festival. All these scenes, to some extent, capture the diversity of the experience offered to the travellers visiting Sri Lanka.

The video seems to capture the emotions of all the tourists from the solo-traveller to the tourist family; their amazement, sense of togetherness, surprise, excitement and their joyfulness. Hence, affective images associated with Sri Lankan tourism experiences have apparently been covered in this video where the emotions are highlighted from the beginning to the end of the video. Further, the music, which has been used in this video, has been composed using a mix of traditional and contemporary music styles and plays a vital role in keeping the viewer engaged with the video. The music compliments the emotions that are being highlighted in the video and the message that is being communicated throughout the video.

Sri Lanka: A Journey Awaits (Galle) [Duration: 30 seconds]

This video is centred on a middle-eastern family travelling through the city of Galle to experience the touristy vibe offered by the city. The video contains beautiful scenes that highlight the uniqueness of Galle and is played with a narration, which apparently guides the focus of the viewer to grasp the experience that is being offered.

It's a glimpse of the past, old colonial history [visuals of family walking over the Galle Fort] and cool ways to run around [visuals of family riding a tuk-tuk], ancient alleyways full of unique shopping, the artisans and the

craftsmen whose faces tell the history [visuals of old craftsmen doing crafts while smiling warmly]... ”

Hence, it is apparent that the video projects images, which are effective, and psychological image this is attained by highlighting of the emotions of the family throughout the video.

Sri Lanka: A Journey Awaits (Hill Country & Dambulla) [Duration: 30 seconds]

This video again is centred on the Middle-Eastern family in which they emphasize on the experience offered in the hill country. A narration guides the viewers through the memorable experience that the tourists can gain through the rolling tea plantations and some unique accommodation experiences that are offered.

It's the little things; a leaf, a cup, a favourite drink... picked by us and a majestic tea factory disguised as a luxury hotel on a lush mountain of tea... a green hotel, a smile, a welcome embedded in the landscape of a glorious jungle... It's unforgettable... It's Sri Lanka.

Hence, apparently, this video projects attribute based functional (attractions) and psychological (experiential) images, which highlights the touristic experience surrounding the tea plantation and the availability of unique accommodation experiences that are being offered for tourists visiting Sri Lanka.

Table 1 and 2 provide summary results derived from the analysis of projected destination images of Sri Lanka in terms of the three dimensional framework and cognitive-affective framework.

Table 1: Summary of the results of projected destination images of Sri Lanka in terms of the framework suggested by Echtner& Ritchie (1991).

Functional Attributes	Psychological Attributes	Functional Holistic (Projected Implicitly)	Psychological Holistic (Projected Implicitly)	Unique
• A lot of Scenery/natural attractions • Diverse landscapes • Varying climate and geography • Epic mountain ranges, • Tea plantations and tea factories • Scenic railway journeys	• Friendly, hospitable and welcoming people • Different and changing experiences all over the island/ all-round travel experience • Rural pace of life	• Beautiful island • Paradise island • Beach island	• A compact and diverse destination (The royal banquet/Ecological Jewel) • Destination with rich culture and heritage Holistic images weakly projected: • A welcoming/Accommodating destination	Verity in a small island (an implicit unique image) The highest rates of biological endemism in the world Delicious and unique local cuisine with exotic essence

• UNESCO world Heritage sites • Iconic Buddhist attractions • Historical cities • Colonial heritage • A wide variety of festivals and celebrations • Diverse architectures • Delicious local cuisine • Sri Lankan, arts, dances and crafts • A plenty of wildlife experiences	• Unspoiled wilderness • Authentic local life and culture • Opportunities for wellness tourism • Mental relaxation • Bliss of life through Ayurveda spa and meditations	Holistic images weakly projected:	• Adventurous destination • A tranquil and peaceful destination • Traditional as well as modern • Exotic island • Devine • Aesthetic • Spiritual	Places related to Ramayanaya.
• Rainforests and jungles • National parks and sanctuaries • Pristine beaches and sandy coastline • Beach related activates	• A phenomenal gastronomical adventure • Traditions and customs of local community			
• Opportunities for golfing	• Opportunities to engage in adventurous activities			
	• Reputation for world renowned gemstones			
	• Popularity of Best tea in the world			

Table 2: Summary of the Results of Cognitive and Affective Images Projected by SLTPB

Cognitive images	Affective Images
	(Weakly projected)
• Scenery/natural attractions • Diverse landscapes • Varying climate and geography • Epic mountain ranges, • Tea plantations and tea factories • Scenic railway journeys • Friendly, hospitable and welcoming people • UNESCO world Heritage sites • Iconic Buddhist attractions • Historical cities • Colonial heritage • A wide variety of festivals and celebrations • Folk dancing traditions • Religious mountains • Diverse architectures • Delicious local cuisine • Sri Lankan, arts, dances and crafts • Plenty of wildlife experiences (elephants, leopards and safari are the key highlights) • National parks and sanctuaries • Rainforests and jungles • Pristine beaches and sandy coastline • Beach related activities • Rural pace of life • Unspoiled wilderness • Authentic local life and culture • Opportunities for wellness tourism • Shopping opportunities • Opportunities for golfing • Cheap prices • Modern cities • A wide variety of attractions with proximity • Different and changing experiences all over the island/ all-round travel experience • A destination for everyone	• Thrill feeling • Amazement • Feeling happy • Bliss • Relaxing

Conclusion, Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the images of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination projected on the major commercial information sources used by SLTPB, i.e. the official website, promotional brochures and commercial advertisements given the fact that Sri Lanka is aiming to be an attractive tourist destination in the world tourism landscape, which has been envisioned in the tourism development plans of the country (2011-2016 and 2016-2022). The results of the study can be used as a diagnosis of the current destination marketing efforts of

the Sri Lanka tourism authorities including SLTPB. The study adopted both the cognitive-affective model and three dimensional framework suggested by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) to undertake a comprehensive analysis. The study revealed that strong images have been projected through the three data sources albeit more emphasis is needed on affective, holistic and unique image components in the contents of the three data sources.

Generally, the first impression of the website is highly appealing to a visitor with eye catching images of the eleven experiential themes. It is apparent that these eleven themes primary project Sri Lanka, as an experientially rich and a highly diverse destination to visit. However, much of the content presented under each theme has focused more on functional attributes of Sri Lanka thus projecting functional and attribute-based images in readers' minds. It could also be found that psychological attribute based images such as friendliness of locals, authentic local life, rich culture, etc. have also been captured to a certain degree thus, need further emphasis in writings. Destination marketing effort should also project holistic images of destinations in addition to features or attributes related images (Echtner& Ritchie, 1991). The examination of such holistic images revealed that such images had not been strongly and explicitly promoted on the website and in other promotional materials compared to the vast amount of information provided on attributes and features. Nevertheless, attempts to project holistic functional images of Sri Lanka as 'an island of scenic beauty', 'a paradise' and 'a beach island' were found in the contents occasionally, and these need to be further projected in the contents more vividly.

Holistic images can also be formed as psychological images, i.e. images that are not tangible and difficult to observe (Echtner& Ritchie, 1993; White, 2004). The examination of such psychological holistic images projected in the promotional materials show that there has been less emphasis on such aspects in the contents where the images have not strongly been promoted and highlighted. However, images such as 'a destination rich in culture and heritage', 'a tranquil, relaxing and peaceful destination', and 'an adventurous destination' were mentioned within the contents. Furthermore, in their contents under the eleven experiential themes, there seems to be an implicit projection of Sri Lanka as 'a relatively small island with many and a broad range of experiences packed into it. This 'compact and diverse' image needs to be further highlighted and projected more explicitly in the contents.

The weakest area of the projected images of the country is the unique attractions and experiences that a tourist can appreciate when travelling in Sri Lanka. The contents have failed to impress the readers by highlighting the uniqueness of Sri Lanka, at least in the South Asian region except for a few claims such as 'unique wildlife', 'Sri Lanka's unique cuisine' and 'places related to Ramayanaya story'. Nevertheless, the contents of the website and other materials implicitly convey the readers that the diversity itself is what is unique to Sri Lanka since visitors can experience an all-round travel experience in a modest sized island, including different cultures, ethnic groups, cuisines, heritage, landscapes, weather and wildlife etc. However, the promotional materials should contain more and explicit information about unique attractions and experiences available for visitors to Sri Lanka. Thus, there needs to be a serious

concern about this important element due to the pivotal role it always plays in attracting tourists because travellers usually prefer to visit new destination due to their desire for novelty seeking (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Kim, 2009). Therefore, designing and projecting unique images of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination is vital for a vibrant tourism industry, and this may need a thorough understanding about different target markets and competitive products.

Scholars have a general agreement that destination image can also be analysed in terms of rational (cognitive) and emotional (Affective) elements (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Lawson and Baud-Bovy, 1977; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015). It seems that much of the content under these eleven themes signifies the cognitive image elements i.e. scenic beauty of the country, rich culture, history and heritage, pristine beaches, friendly people, etc., but has not adequately spotted the affective components associated with such cognitive aspects of the country, which therefore requires more attention in content writing in the future. Hence, these affective images need to be better embedded into the contents to arouse positively feelings such as excitement and happiness in potential travellers' minds, which can significantly affect behavioural intentions (Jeong et al 2009; Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou & Kaplanidou, 2015; Tosun, Dedeoğlu & Fyall, 2015).

Limitations and Future Research

The scope of the present study was limited to the investigation of only the projected images of Sri Lanka. However, authors acknowledge that, to obtain a complete picture of the destination images, pre-visit images and post-visit images should also be analysed in addition to 'projected' images. Therefore, future research can be undertaken to compare the projected images against the pre-visit and post visit images of the country, which will be more insightful for future destination marketing efforts. In addition, periodic diagnostics are proposed since image perceptions can vary over time including the projected images by the tourism authorities.

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