

Theory into Practice

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The recent tribute to TTRA's 50th Anniversary from the Journal of Travel Research (JTR) made 22 selected papers available for free to highlight the collective wisdom and forward progress of destination management and marketing research. After perusing the article titles and abstracts, I counted seven that focused on destination image including many of the earlier articles. Understanding destination image is also a critical part of the market research conducted by our state tourism office so my interest was piqued.

The Measurement of Destination Image: An Empirical Assessment by Charlotte M. Echtner, J.R. Brent Ritchie (April 1993) establishes a conceptual framework for measuring destination image that holds up nearly 30 years later. Through a review of previously conducted studies they identified different aspects of destination image across a spectrum from functional to psychological characteristics, specific attributes to the gestalt of a place, and common versus unique. The article continues to detail refinements to methodology like developing good attribute lists, asking the right open-ended questions (a relatively new approach at the time), using the correct scale, and analyzing the data all of which made me thankful for the many TTRA partners that are experts in putting this theory into practice!

This article is a great example of adding rigor to evolving research methodologies, which is at the core of TTRA's mission to improve the travel industry by supporting quality tourism research. There was definite value to me in thinking through the conceptual framework and applying to current research projects. Thanks to JTR for highlighting the collaborative work done by the TTRA community and making this resource available to all of us!

Editor Note: The study the author is reflecting upon is available free to the public until September 2021 as a part of the Tribute to TTRA's 50th anniversary from the Journal of Travel Research.