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Behavioral Responses of 3S Tourism Visitors: Evidence from a Mediterranean Island Destination

Abstract

This empirical research deepens current knowledge of tourism destination image by conceptualization of image of sun, sand, and see (3S) tourism and investigates its impact on tourist attitude toward 3S tourism. This research project also examines the impact of attitudes toward 3S tourism on visit intentions and word-of-mouth intentions as two behavioral outcomes. The study focuses on the mental representations of 3S tourism by tourists, where tourism products and experiences dominate the formation toward the whole destination. Destination image (mental representation of destinations) can be defined, operationalized, and measured in a variety of ways; this study investigates the image and attitudes held by tourists toward 3S tourism in Cyprus, along with desired behavioral responses. 410 survey questionnaires were administered to tourists during the summer of 2017. The results revealed that image of 3S tourism had a positive impact on tourist attitudes. Visit intentions and word-of-mouth intentions were enhanced by improving tourists' attitudes toward 3S tourism.

Key words: 3S tourism; image; attitudes; visit intentions; word of mouth; north Cyprus.

1. Introduction

Tourism destination image (TDI) have received ample attention from researchers in the field of tourism studies (Baloglu and McKleary, 1999; Camprubí et al., 2013; De Nisco et al., 2015; Govers et al., 2007; Mossberg and Kleppe, 2005; O'Leary and Deegan, 2005; Silva et al., 2013; Yang, 2016; Hunter, 2016); however, research on specific resources related to 3S tourism is relatively scarce (Tasci and Gartner, 2007). This mode of tourism is dominant in most island destinations and embodies unique biogeographic characteristics that dominate the motivations of these tourists (Koutra and Karyopouli, 2013); therefore, it is worthy of careful analysis.

While the term 'image' embodies various perceptions pertaining both to consumers, and producers or suppliers (Gunn and Var, 2002), such analysis is germane to the tourism industry and its relationship to tourism consumers.

3S tourism is at the core of the tourist experience where "indeed it is the creation and interpretation of image that are purchased, anticipated and consumed by the 'experience hungry' tourists of the 21st century" (as cited in Trauer and Ryan, 2005, p. 482). Therefore, TDI is made up of components of a package (i.e., an experience) and 3S tourism captures a large portion of that experience (Vainikka, 2013). In cases such as north Cyprus and other similar island states, 3S tourism will remain the main attraction motivating tourists to visit. Thus, the tangible and intangible dimensions of this particular attraction demands an understanding of tourists' perceptions as crucial information for destination planning, coastal zone management, environmental concerns, and measures of protection (Garrod, 2008).

The authors embarked on this topic in response to their extended interaction with the case in question and their observation that policy makers and other stakeholders were not directing appropriate attention to it as they managed 3S tourism resources. Therefore, to shake policy makers out of their complacency, this research began by focusing on the demand side, as an initial impetus toward further investigation and implication. The epistemological basis of this study is aligned with Jenkins' (1999) sound claim that:

> Destination image is hence a compound representation that is mutable over time and between contexts. It also depends on people's actual experience of the destination; as people become more familiar with it, their image tends to become more realistic, complex and differentiated (as cited in Garrod, 2008, pp.384–385).

The authors have also been immersed in Urry's (2000) classic theorization of tourism as a social phenomenon, which is prone to manipulation by the industry. The question

remaining is the nature and purpose of such manipulation. To ground the development of realistic policy guidelines, this study focuses on tourists' perceptions of 3S tourism products in north Cyprus where because 3S tourism is the main attraction and key **tourism** resource in north Cyprus and Mediterranean islands (Trias et al., 2014). Without 3S tourism the whole tourism profile of this island can change. 3S tourism attribute is irreplaceable resource. Rtichie and Crouch (2003) considered 3S attribute as the core resource which is fundamental aspect of physiography and climate that constitute a factor that dominates other factors of competitiveness. Taking this resource for granted is manifest in coastal overdevelopment and beach erosion (Trias et al., 2014), not to mention the violation of principles of 'quality of fit' due to lack of tourism planning and uncontrolled development (Gunn and Var, 2002).

2. Theoretical framework

Tourism destination image may also be labeled a 'destination mental representation' (Kano Glückstad et al., 2017); while this phenomenon has been studied by various authors; little attention has been given to its role in 3S tourism. The present study addresses this gap and offers an original contribution through this analysis. Out of 142 papers published concerning destination image between 1973 and 2000, only two papers addressed issues related to beach tourism (Pike, 2002). Thus far, three sources of image formation have been identified: (i) supply side or destination agents, (ii) independent or autonomous agents, and (iii) demand side or image receivers as agents (Tasci and Gartner, 2007). This study focuses on the third category and has obvious implications for the first.

Tourists' responses to a TDI, whether negative or positive, depend on the attitudes they have formed toward environments or places based on both perceptual/cognitive and affective

components. Beerli-Palacio and Martin-Santana (2004a, p. 658) have suggested that most of recent studies have understood destination image to be formed by "reasoned and emotional interpretation as the consequence of two closely interrelated components: perceptive/cognitive evaluations referring to the individual's own knowledge and beliefs about the object." With respect to previous studies on the issue, our research aligns with Beerli-Palacio and Martin-Santana's (2004b) emphasis on cognition, the evaluation of the perceived attributes of the object, and the importance of affective appraisals related to an individual's feelings toward the object.

As Beerli-Palaci and Martin-Santana (2004a) indicate, the properties creating the image of a destination include natural resources, public infrastructure, tourism infrastructure, tourism, leisure facilities, social and political factors, culture, history, the natural and social environments, space, and place. For a study carried out on the perceptions of beach quality, coastal areas demand consideration in relation to their cleanliness, the quality of facilities and management, their peaceful atmosphere, scenery, etc. These features can play an important role in various decision-making processes, as well as for tourists recommending the destination to others and their re-visit intentions.

While no scale to measure TDIs has yet achieved universal acceptance (Beerli-Palacio and Martin-Santana, 2004b), we assume 3S tourism to be a determining or amplifying factor that overwhelms the formation of a TDI, especially in the case of an island destinations. Therefore, the issue of destination image can take a different trajectory if it is to be understood holistically. Thus, this study aligns with Beerli-Palacio and Martin-Santana's (2004a) claim that:

> The selection of the attributes used in designing a scale will depend largely on the attractions of each destination [e.g., 3S], on its positioning, and on the objectives of the assessment of perceived

> image, which will also determine whether specific or more general attributes are chosen (2004a, pp. 659–60).

Our emphasis is on factors that generate a positive image of a destination, which may not be explained by previous normative models. In fact, few studies have addressed this issue at all (Martín-Santana et al., 2017). Most of the studies on TDI have been confined to normative models of destination image, even though the concept of image formation also contains many other, unexplored attributes or dimensions. For instance,

> an exploratory study which indicates that the image tourists have of a destination is dynamic and continuously evolving throughout their trip during several key moments (pre-trip, upon arrival, halfway through, on departure, and post-trip), and that various incidents during the trip could have an impact on it (as cited in Martin-Santana et al., 2017, p. 14).

In line with this account, the present study assumes that 3S tourism experiences, as one form of product or attraction, can influence the overall image of a destination. Managers and planners in the context of island destinations must therefore focus on this attribute, especially where this product is a major amplifying factor for the particular destination. Furthermore, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) have elaborated a model, indicating that TDI can be measured by focusing on three continuums: (i) attribute–holistic; (ii) functional–psychological; and (iii) common–unique. In our study, the 'common-unique' attribute is associated with 3S tourism, which also can be elaborated in the context of the assertion by Echtner and Ritichie (1993) that the "destination image should be composed of perceptions of individual attributes (such as climate, accommodation facilities, friendliness of the people)" (p.2).

At any rate, conventional 3S tourism has entered a phase of general decline (Aguiló et al., 2005); in response, some destinations have restructured their 3S tourism to inject the principles of sustainable development. In the meantime, 3S tourism should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon. According to Prebensen et al. (2010), its 'body' dimension is

constituted by sun and *warmth,* while the 'mind' dimension is made up of two main constituents: *escapism* and *culture/nature*. Tourists' satisfaction is highly dependent upon tackling with such complexity (i.e., body and mind-related motivations).

"Understanding and measuring individuals' mental destination representations [*destination images*] is one of the most frequently studied topics in tourism research" (Kano-Glückstad et al., 2017, p. 3). However, 3S tourism image and their specific impact on the perception of island destinations as a whole have not been conceptualized. Competing definitions of TDI have complicated these issues further; "theory has been inconclusive with respect to the elements incorporated in the concept" (Michaelidou et al., 2013, p. 790). Many other researchers have also testified to such inconclusiveness (Calderón García et al., 2004 King et al., 2015; Ryan and Cave, 2005; Tkaczynski et al., 2015). In this context, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) assert as follows:

> Common agreement is that this depends on a cognitive evaluation of objects and the affective responses are formed as a function of the cognitive responses. An overall image of a place is formed as a result of both perceptual/cognitive and affective evaluations of that place (1999, p. 870).

It has been argued in related literature that tourists process different attributes of a destination in different ways; however, all the attributes packaged in one lump (i.e., experience), which forms an overall 'mental picture' of the destination. Consequently, the holistic image of the destination formed by tourists consists in "both cognitive (attribute-based) and affective component[s]" (Michaelidou et al., 2013, p. 790). While market segmentation has received ample attention, the role of 3S tourism, especially for island destinations, has been under-studied notwithstanding its relevance as an attraction for these destinations. Notwithstanding the numerous definitions of TDI offered by different scholars, the role of 3S tourism might be embedded in the context of third dimension of destination image known as 'conation' or

'conative' elements (Pike and Ryan, 2004). "The conative image is analogous to behavior since it is the intent or action component. Intent refers to the likelihood of brand purchase. Conation may be considered as the likelihood of visiting a destination within a certain time period" (cf. Pike and Ryan, 2004, p. 334).

In this study, the 'uniqueness' attribute of 3S tourism is assumed to play a significant role in the mental representation of the whole destination, following Echtner and Ritchie's (2003) formulation. Put differently, 3S tourism is a unique attribute that, in combination with climate and calm seas, characterizes the totality of sun, sea, and sand tourism in certain island destinations. This study suggests that as these destinations are complex systems, complexity theory could shed some light on the interrelationships between the TDI and a broader spectrum of attributes composing the system. The aim is not to test the theory, but it might contribute to understanding how tourists come to pursue key attributes of a destination and their ramifications for tourists' mental picture of the destination as a whole. As stated by Farrell and Twining-Ward (2004. p. 277):

> In order to understand complex systems, it is essential to review progress in fields such as ecosystem ecology, ecological economics, and complexity theory. In the 70s, fieldwork by a group of pioneering ecologists led to new understanding that systems are more than frameworks, rather they are integrated, interacting entities displaying unpredictable behavior.

3S resource as an attribute of north Cyprus can be theorized within the cognitive-affective behavioral pattern of beach lovers which means consumers' deepening relationships with product (i.e. destination) (Aro et al., 2018). 3S plays a significant role in such deepening process. At the same time, the complexity of 3S tourism lies in its own exclusive sub-attributes. Sub-attributes of 3S tourism are the carrying capacity implementation to avoid congestion, cleanliness, compatibility of development (i.e., quality of fit) (Gunn and Var, 2002), beach erosion, pollution, presence of unfinished sites, and abandoned buildings. These sub-attributes

have not been understood in the context of overall profile of the beach and even the coast. To strengthen the argument, 3S resource is the DNA (Gunn and Var, 2002) of north Cyprus that may generates positive emotion and attitude toward destination. In the other hand 'emotions felt toward a tourist destination form a diverse combination of feelings about both the destination and the destination brand" (cf. Aro et al., 2018, p. 72). Thus, formulation of desired attitude and behavior toward a destination is based on the destination's own DNA as its history, nature, and landscape.

2.1. Conceptualizations, model and hypotheses

Drawing on cognitive-affective model, this study tries to develop and test a conceptual model indicating tourist attitude and behavioral responses toward 3S tourism. cognitive-affective model is used in tourism studies as theoretical underpinning of the research model that predict tourist behaviors (e.g., del Bosque and San Martín, 2008; Jiang et al., 2018; Han et al., 2019; Oliver, 1993; Olya and Mehran, 2020). For example, del Bosque and San Martín (2008) extended expectation-disconfirmation model of Oliver (1993) by inclusion of destination image (i.e. cognitive factor) and emotion (i.e. affective factor) as predictors of tourist loyalty. Mehran and Olya (2020) tested a conceptual model that investigates effects of overall image as cognitive factor and emotion as affective factor to predict recommendation intention of canal boat tour participants.

In marketing field, image improves loyalty of consumers (Paul and Bhakar, 2018). Review of tourism literature also supports significant and positive impact of image (including destination and overall images) on tourist satisfaction and desired behaviors. For example, Alcaniz et al. (2009) explained how image of destination significantly boost tourist intentions to revisit and

recommend. Another study by Toudert and Bringas-Rábago (2016) revealed that satisfied and loyal cruise passengers has strong destination image. Han et al.'s (2019) study reported that overall destination image increases intentions of tourists to revisit and recommend a destination to others. Mehran and Olya (2020) also found significant and positive impact of overall image on participant satisfaction and emotion of canal boat tour in France. With this realization this study proposes that image of 3S tourism as cognitive image affecting tourist attitude. Hence, following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Image of 3S tourism have a significant and positive effect on attitudes toward 3S tourism.

Attitude is appeared as a significant predictor of consumer behavior (Paul and Bhakar (2018). Lee (2009) showed tourists attitude directly increase satisfaction and indirectly affect future behaviors of tourist visited Taiwan. Alrawadieh et al. (2109) discussed attitude toward a destination could improve loyalty of tourists. However, Jiang et al. (2018) found that attitude to natural soundscapes has not any significant impact on tourist loyalty in the context of nature-based tourism. In the case of wine tourism, tourists with positive attitude toward wine tourism expresses their intention to visit a wine region (Pratt and Sparks, 2014). This study attempts to investigate how attitude toward 3S tourism influence revisit and recommendation intentions of tourists. Thus, following two hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 2: attitudes towards 3S tourism have a significant and positive effect on visit intentions.

Hypothesis 3: attitudes towards 3S tourism have a significant and positive effect on word of mouth intentions.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the conceptual model for this study consists of four variables of image of 3S tourism (cognitive factor), attitudes toward 3S tourism (affective factor), visit intentions, and word-of-mouth intentions (two behavioral responses).

Place Figure 1 here

3. Materials and method

3.1. Study context

North Cyprus, also known as the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC), refers to the northern partition of the island of Cyprus, which also contains the Republic of Cyprus, known as South Cyprus (see Figure 2). Since the 1974 partition, the northern enclave has enjoyed a *de facto* status as an independent political and economic entity (Akgün, 2010).

Place Figure 2 here

The geographical location of north Cyprus makes it an attractive destination for the European and Middle Eastern travel markets. Its climate, notably its long dry seasons, place the island in a competitive position among Mediterranean destinations (Koutra and Karyopouli, 2013). With nearly 3,547,930 arrivals in 2015, the tourism sector is a dominant economic activity in north Cyprus. In the same year, the ratio of net tourism income to the trade balance reached 43.4 percent, and net tourism income registered $746.7 million US. Over 12,000 jobs in north Cyprus were attributed to the tourism sector (Ministry of Tourism and Environment, 2015; see also Table 1). According to tourism ministry of north Cyprus (2017), arrival of tourists who enjoy 3S tourism in the island is 1,459,318. Size of domestic tourism market which includes Turkish citizens is 1,105,265 and number of inbound tourists is 354,000 tourists.

Place Table 1 here

The island as a whole is popular for its sun, sea, and sand tourism; however, the most attractive and suitable beaches for the purpose of 3S tourism are located in north Cypress. Also, most of the beaches and coastal areas in the north have remained immune from overdevelopment, in contrast to the southern part of the island. The 3S tourism image of north Cyprus is expected to be a fundamental factor in motivating tourists to revisit the island, and is also influential in forming the island's image on both cognitive and affective levels. Prebensen et al. (2010) have argued that 3S tourism is a powerful factor in tourists' motivation conceptualization. They believe that 3S tourism is a multidimensional phenomenon, and have suggested two body-related and two mind-related constructs embedded in 3S tourism. Therefore, 3S tourism offers warmth, fitness, and health (body-related), along with culture, nature, and escapism (mind-related). On this basis, the present study has focused on surveying tourists' image of 3S tourism in north Cyprus.

Even though north Cyprus is well known destination for its 3S resource in the European market, the tourist profile is also changing. For instance, nowadays, new emerging markets such as Russia is also attracted to north Cyprus. Secondly, if 3S, which is the DNA of north Cyprus, is not understood for its vulnerability due to anthropogenic impact (e.g., coastal second home development), it will lose its natural quality. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) discussed this under the 'microenvironment' (e.g., 3S), in their sustaining destination competitiveness model. They believe destination mangers should not be complacent to microenvironment 'because of its proximity and greater sense of immediacy' (p.66). Notwithstanding the 3S resource endowment of north Cyprus, there are competitors including southern part of the island (known as republic of Cyprus), Turkey and north African resorts.

3.2. Data collection procedure

Scale items were derived from past studies in the field of the destination image and marketing. Seventeen items were adapted from studies by Alcaniz et al. (2009), Baloglu and McCleary (1999), Beerli-Palacio and Martín-Santana (2004a, b), Han et al. (2019), Pratt and Sparks (2014), and Lee (2009). A copy of questionnaire is provided in the appendix. Research process is illustrated in Figure I, appendix B. Different items regarding beach qualities that influence 3S tourism activities and the formation of image have been considered. Visitors' perceptions of scenery/natural attractions, cleanliness and hygiene, accessibility, environmental quality, quality of facilities, safety and security, sports, facilities and activities, climate, calm atmosphere, signage, design of facilities, degree of crowding, and the quality of fit of buildings and structures to the beach. In addition, coastal management, quality of service, and such characteristics of the host community's performance as the quality of the beach and appropriateness of land use in and around the beaches have been included. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) which is recommended over 3, 5, and 10 Likert scales (Olya & Al-ansi, 2018).

Four questions used in this study were derived from Pratt and Sparks (2014), to measure the respondents' feelings about 3S tourism. Four items for the measurement of visit intentions and two questions about word-of-mouth intentions have been extracted from Han et al. (2009). A sample of items used to measure visit intentions was "Going to the beach is one of my priorities when in north Cyprus," while a sample concerning word-of-mouth intentions was "I will say positive things about 3S tourism in north Cyprus." These six questions were measured using 5-point Likert scales that rated from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

To measure and conceptualize tourist responses to sun, sea, and sand (3S) factors, a cross-sectional survey was designed. Using convenience sampling technique, questionnaires were

distributed among tourists who selected north Cyprus as a destination known for 3S tourism. Prior to main data collection, scale items were checking using four experts: two from tourism industry and two from academia. Then a pilot study was conducted with 15 tourists to ensure the clarity, relevancy, and suitability of the research instrument. Aside from a few problems with the wording of questions, which were corrected, no substantial changes were needed. The pilot study enhanced both the validity of the instrument and the intelligibility of the questions (Malazizi et al., 2018). Questionnaires were written in English; however, one of the researchers was on hand if respondents had any difficulty understanding the language of the instrument. The measurement and research models were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM).

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first part measured the key variables for the study, namely the image of 3S tourism and attitudes towards 3S tourism in north Cyprus, as well as visit intentions and word-of-mouth intentions. The second section obtained demographic information for each respondent. Empirical studies targeted north Cyrus as their studies context is used to measure tourist demographics (e.g. Karatepe et al., 2014; Olya et al., 2016). The survey was conducted during a period of two weeks in July 2017. Since this study focused on 3S tourism activities, the sample was selected from the population of beach users who travel to north Cyprus. In total, 500 visitors were invited to participate, among whom 410 cases were extracted as valid and complete and were used for data analysis. This response rate is 82%, so no serious problem of non-response bias is expected. Demographic information for respondents is presented in Table 2.

Place Table 2 here

As Table 2 demonstrates, more than 50 percent of beach users were between 18 and 37 years of age, with progressively less participation by those 38–47 years old (21%), those 48–57 years

old (14.4%) and people more than 58 years of age (10.2 %). A slight majority of respondents were male (51.2%), and more than 50% of respondents were married.

3.3. Analysis of Data

There were less than 5% missing data across the sample which was computed using mean replacement technique. As Olya et al. (2018) indicated face-to-face survey improves response rate and collecting quality data. As Two measures of Skewness and Kurtosis were used to check normal distribution of data. The results show data are normally distrusted as values for both statistics for all items fall within recommended level of ±3 (Taheri et al., 2019). A two-step Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach was used. The first step was a measurement test employing Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), while the second step was to test the model using patch analysis. The fitness of both the measurements and the research model was checked using several indices of fit on the data collected, such as X^2/DF, CFI, NFI, PNFI, IFI, and RMSEA (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Bentler, 1990). These analyses were performed using AMOS. Reliability of the measurements was tested using Cronbach's alpha and Composite reliability (Cortina, 1993; Taheri et al., 2019). The means and standard deviations of the variables, as well as correlations among them, were calculated using SPSS.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model testing

The results of CFA are illustrated in Figure 3. In this approach, items of each variable must load significantly onto the relevant dimension. Furthermore, the magnitude of the factor loading should be more than .4. As shown in Figure 3, the values for all items were more than .45 and were significant at the .01 level. The model fit statistics were also satisfactory (X^2:

1319.897; df: 318; X^2/df: 4.151; CFI: .846; NFI: .807; IFI: .847; PNFI: .732; RMSEA: .088.; see Bentler, 1990).

Place Figure 3 here

Results for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) for each variable showed that all alpha coefficients were more than .7 (Cortina, 1993; Taheri et al., 2019), indicating a good degree of reliability. In terms of construct validity, average variance extracted (AVE) for all factors were larger than commonly accepted level of .4 as values of AVE for the 3S tourism image, attitudes toward 3S tourism, visit intention, and word-of-mouth intention were .46, .69, .62, and .80, respectively (Table 3). Results of descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 3.

Place Table 3 here

According to the correlation results, image of 3S tourism significantly correlated with attitudes toward 3S tourism (r=.47, P<.01) and word-of-mouth intentions (r=.12, P< .01), as presented in Table 2. However, no significant correlation was found between image of 3S tourism and visit intentions (Table 2). Meanwhile, attitudes toward 3S tourism significantly and positively correlated with both visit intentions (r=.25, P<.01) and word-of-mouth intentions (r=.68, P<.01).

4.2. Results of hypothesis testing

The second step of SEM is model testing. The results of hypothesis testing are illustrated in Figure 4. image of 3S tourism were shown to have a significant, positive effect on attitudes toward 3S tourism (β<. 50, P<. 001). It means that tourists holding positive image of 3S tourism, display more positive attitudes toward 3S tourism. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

As depicted in Figure 4, the regression coefficient for the effects of attitudes to 3S tourism on visit intentions is significant and positive (β<. 50, P<. 001). Visitors expressing a strong intention to visit north Cyprus reported a strongly positive attitude to 3S tourism, supporting Hypothesis 2.

Place Figure 4 here

Results for the third hypothesis indicated that attitudes toward 3S tourism have a significant and positive effect on word-of-mouth intentions (β<.45, P<.001). As for visit intentions, tourists with strongly positive attitudes toward 3S tourism express a stronger intention to recommend 3S tourism activities in north Cyprus to their friends, family, and relatives, supporting Hypothesis 3. The value of R^2 is .20; meaning that 20 percent of the variation in word-of-mouth intentions is explained by attitudes toward 3S tourism. Meanwhile, statistics for goodness of fit revealed that the model proposed has a tolerable level of fitness to the empirical data (X^2: 1536.316; df: 321; x^2/df: 4.786; CFI: .812; NFI: .775; IFI: .813; PNFI: .709; RMSEA: .096.). To sum up, all three hypotheses proposed were supported (Figure 4). The following section offers additional discussion, conclusions, policy implications, and suggestions for further studies.

5. Discussions and conclusion

This empirical study helps to fill a gap in the literature regarding specific activities, whereas most studies about destination image measure tourists' perceptions based on collective attributes. Each specific attribute, however, may hold a particular affect; therefore, all the attributes making up a TDI cannot be placed on an equal footing. This study focused on one fundamental attribute that plays a decisive role in attracting tourists to such island destinations

as north Cyprus. Further investigation of this subject would require a comparative analysis of the role and effect of many attributes to highlight the strength of influences of each of them.

The significance of image of tourism destinations has been researched and discussed widely; the literature has acknowledged the importance of tourists' subjective perceptions and their attitudes toward products and activities, as well as concerning destinations as a whole. This cognitive and affective process eventually influences the visitor's choice of what product to purchase or what destination to visit (Gallarza et al., 2002; Paul and Bhakar, 2018; Mehran and Olya, 2020). However, when it comes to tourism destinations, the product and provision of the product is not as precise within the marketing spectrum as for many non-tourism products. TDI poses a formidable challenge to tourism planners, marketers, and destination managers; because TDI is complex and multidimensional, a multidisciplinary approach is required.

"The Mediterranean region is, by far, the leading tourism destination in the world, receiving more than 330 million tourists in 2016. This tourism is undertaken mostly for seaside[3S] holidays and during the summer season concentrates between 46% and 69% of the total international arrivals" (Tovar-Sánchez et al., 2019, p. 316). This signifies and demonstrates the role of 3S tourism and its ramifications for the sustainability as well as marketing and competitiveness of the destinations in the Mediterranean in general and north Cyprus in particular. While the most visited countries are those with coastal areas around the Mediterranean Sea that also benefit economically; environmental implications are undeniable (Misic et al 2011). However, environmental impact cannot be isolated from marketing and competitiveness (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). Therefore, 3S tourism not only in the case of north Cyprus, but for the wider Mediterranean destinations captures a unique positioning and

branding role that demands the (re)evaluation of marketing policies as well as destination planning processes.

The 3S attribute is the foundation and DNA of north Cyprus's tourism product. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) believe that these type of resources are the main attributes that the rest of tourism system builds upon and they are paramount to sustaining competitiveness. Aguilo et al (2005) argued that 3S attribute is also highly vulnerable to overuse and overdevelopment. At the same time, they are taken for granted because of their attraction and persistence to draw visitors. This process witnessed in the case of Balearic Islands (Aguilo et al., 2005), and is showing the same processes in north Cyprus, especially due to lack of coastal management system and uncontrolled coastal development.

In this study, 17 items concerning the image of 3S tourism in north Cyprus were adapted for a survey questionnaire; the resulting data can be used as a helpful guideline to improve tourism marketing in north Cyprus. This research hopes to draw attention to the need to address specific components of the destination image, which might require a concentration on certain attributes that would catalyze a stronger image for the whole destination. The findings of the study revealed that destination managers should take into account that visitors' overall impression can depend on certain attributes, such as those involved in 3S tourism, which might overshadow other attributes due to its power over both image and affective impressions.

The attributes of 3S tourism play a decisive role in TDI for island destinations, as a major factor attracting tourists. Characteristics of the climate of north Cyprus (Olya and Alipour, 2015) contribute to the quality of 3S tourism, especially for the European market with its short summers and long winters. Therefore, an investigation into the image held by tourists in relation to 3S tourism is crucial; the present study is a step toward this end. The results of this

analysis have revealed that positive image of 3S tourism in north Cyprus are positively associated with affective attitudes. Effective promotion of 3S tourism would be helpful to north Cyprus, which is highly dependent on the image of and attitudes toward these activities.

This empirical study revealed that positive attitudes toward 3S tourism significantly and directly affected the behavioral intentions of tourists. If visitors have positive attitudes toward regarding 3S tourism in north Cyprus, their intention to visit increases. Similarly, tourists express the intention to recommend north Cyprus as a wonderful destination for 3S tourism activities if they experience positive feelings and attitudes. These results are in line with findings of Chi and Qu (2008) and Hui et al. (2007) for other destinations.

This study therefore concludes that destination loyalty (as expressed in revisit and word of mouth intentions) is triggered by image as well as attitudes toward 3S tourism at a particular destination. Previous studies regarding destination image have focused on the destination as a whole, while little empirical research has concentrated on a destination in relation to such specific tourism activities as 3S tourism. This focus is important for north Cyprus, where 3S tourism is the main activity of the tourism sector. More efforts are therefore called for to improve image and affect toward 3S tourism in north Cyprus. Overall, this study is one more proof that destinations with 3S tourism will become more competitive if they understand the relationships between motivation and image. As Beerli-Palacio and Martin-Santana (2004, p. 677) have noted: “therefore, it is essential for a destination in a similar position to be directed towards those market segments whose motivations are linked to the utilitarian function of rest, relaxation, stress relief, and escape from daily routine.”

Finally, the findings of this study have implications for destination planners and managers, as well as practitioners in tourism and land use policy. The specific image of 3S tourism and its

role in among attractions and tourism products can provide awareness and direction to pursue improvements for a tourism destination. Such research can help practitioners visualize the strength of each attribute within one location's image, in comparison to its competitors (Perpiña et al., 2017). Furthermore, 3S attributes play a unique role among the spectrum of attractions at island destinations. Its power to draw tourists is indisputable; at the same time, it represents a part of a unique landscape endowment that cannot be replaced. This reality should concern policy makers and destination planners and motivate them to design rigorous strategies for sustainability of these resources. Destination managers can benefit from the findings of this study to identify practical approaches to uphold the value of 3S tourism in destinations highly dependent on such resources.

We acknowledge this phenomenon is not unique to north Cyprus, but also relevant to Mediterranean destinations with the same attribute (Cirer-Costa, 2017; Drius et al., 2019). Therefore, the implications of this study is commensurate to other island states which are highly dependent on 3S tourism to attract visitors. 3S tourism cannot be isolated from coastal problems. One of the threats to 3S tourism, which has marketing implications, is the quality of the coastal (Matellini et al., 2018) areas that encompass the beaches for sun lovers. 3S tourism product is an output of combination of beach, sea and climate factors. The future 3S tourism destination as north Cyprus and other Mediterranean suppliers of the same product need to apply a superior value and careful planning to sustain the quality of this type of tourism and its market. As Wesley and Pforr (2010, pp. 774-775) eloquently stated that "while coastal tourism can deliver favorable socio-economic benefits, it is also widely acknowledged that it can also undermine the social-cultural and ecological systems of the place. The negative consequences of an ever-increasing commodification of the coast are, however, not appropriately considered in the planning and management of many coastal areas". The 3S tourism attribute as a dominant

attraction of the destination provides several important in implications for tourism managers who want to understand the role of particular attribute in their destination in the context of tourists' perception which triggers a positive behavioral intention. Based on the findings of this study managers can appreciate the role 3S tourism plays, and it should not be taken for granted as it is the foundation for tourism structure. Furthermore, 3S attribute, in the case of north Cyprus and other similar destinations, is a force for strengthening the association of image and tourists.

This study has a number of limitations, offering opportunities for further research. A longitudinal study might reveal a deeper insight into aspects of destination image. Another more pragmatic limitation of this study was the limited number of sites subject to data collection. It would be highly valuable to target more than one or two sites for data collection. In addition, qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and projective techniques could be combined with quantitative approaches to enrich the results of the investigation. In studies of destination image, there is always a risk of inadvertently forcing respondents to establish differences between tourism destinations whether they perceive them or not, which can lead them to report forced rather than real image and attitudes (Carballo et al., 2015). 3S tourism offers memorable tourism experience (MTE) (Zhang et al., 2018), which may influence revisit intention through mediating effect. Further research can model experiential facet of 3S tourism.

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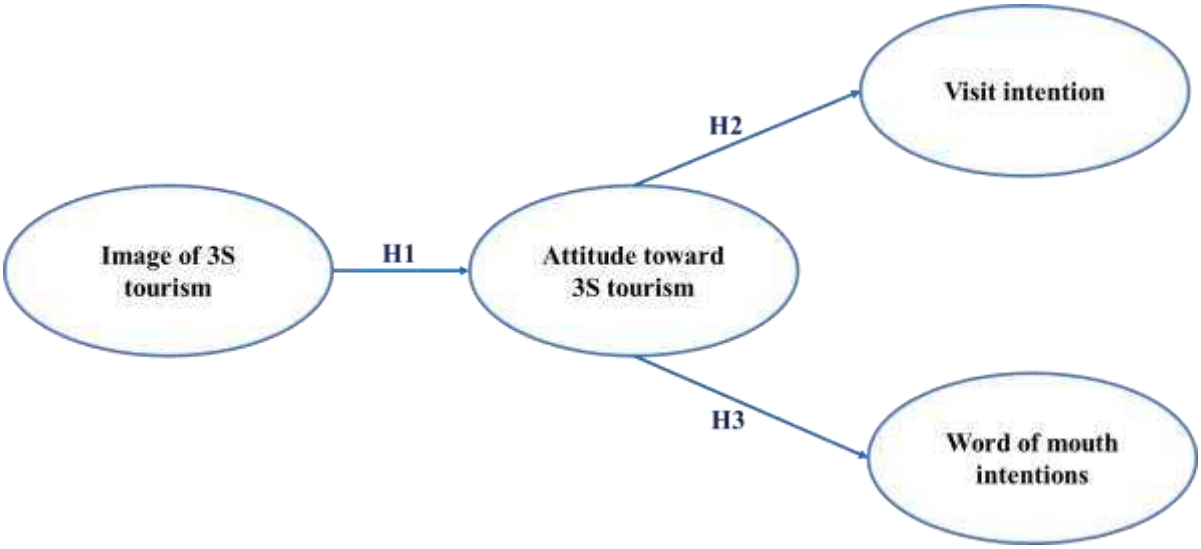

Figure 1. Research Model

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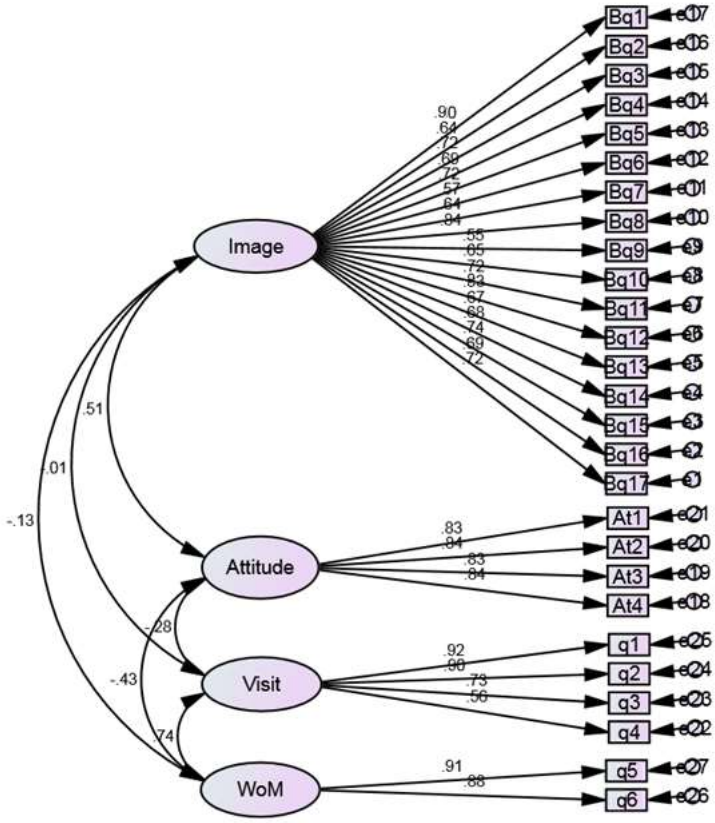

Figure 3. Results of confirmatory factor analysis

Note: Image stand for the image of 3S tourism; attitude is the attitudes toward 3S tourism; the visit is visit intention, and WoM is word of mouth intention. X^2: 1319.897; df: 318; X^2/df: 4.151; CFI: .846; NFI: .807; IFI: .847; PNFI: .732; RMSEA: .088.

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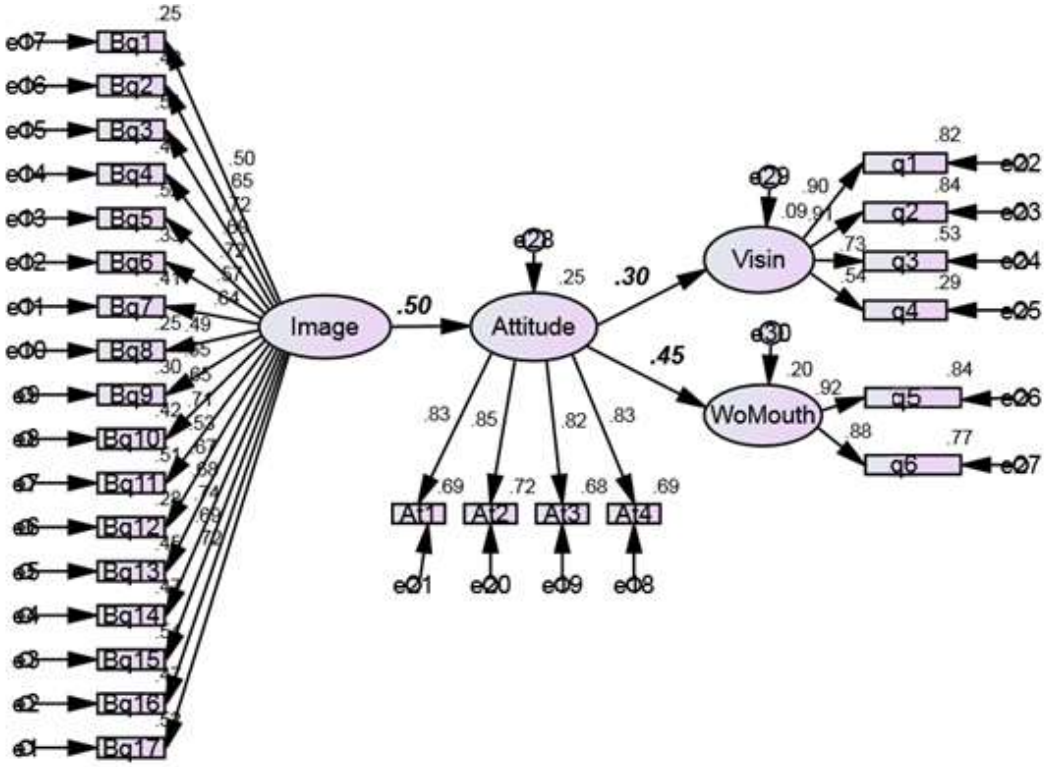

Figure 4. Results of model testing

Note: Image: image of 3S tourism, Attitude: attitude toward 3S tourism, Visin: visit intention, WoMouth: word of mouth intention. Fit statistics: X^2: 1536.316; df: 321; x^2/df: 4.786; CFI: .812; NFI: .775; IFI: .813; PNFI: .709; RMSEA: .096.

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Table 1. The role of tourism in the north Cyprus economy.

Year	Net tourism income. (million USD)	Ratio of net tourism income to the trade balance
2006	303.2	23.2
2007	381.0	26.2
2008	383.7	24.0
2009	390.7	31.1
2010	405.8	26.9
2011	459.4	29.7
2012	571.9	36.1
2013	613.4	38.9
2014	679.4	41.2
2015	746.7	43.4

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Environment (2015).

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Table 2. Demographic information for beach users

Variable	**N**	**%**	**Variable**	**N**	**%**
Age			*Educational Level*		
18–27years	117	28.5	Primary school	3	.7
28–37 years	106	25.9	Middle school	16	3.9
38–47 years	86	21.0	High school	55	13.4
48–57 years	59	14.4	College	79	19.3
>58	42	10.2	University	257	62.7
Total	410	100.0	Total	410	100.0
Gender			*Marital Status*		
Male	210	51.2	Single	180	43.9
Female	200	48.8	Married	230	56.1
	410	100.0		410	100.0
How often do you been travel?			*Purpose of Travel*		
Monthly	27	6.6	Business	38	9.3
Seasonally	121	29.5	Leisure	262	63.9
Yearly	262	63.9	Other (visiting family or friends, etc.)	110	26.8
Total	410	100.0	Total	410	100.0
Income level (Per month/in USD)					
$0 up to $1,000	77	18.8			
$1,000 to $2,000	114	27.8			
$2,000 to $3,000	118	28.8			
over $3,000	101	24.6			
Total	410	100.0			

Note: (N) represents frequency.

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Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha, and correlations matrix of study variables

Variable	**Mean**	**SD**	**α**	**CR**	**AVE**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
1. Image of 3S tourism	3.220	.695	.923	.862	.467	1			
2. Attitude toward 3S tourism	3.690	.882	.901	.861	.697	.478**	1		
3. Visit intention	3.923	.925	.851	.852	.626	.015	.251**	1	
4. Word of mouth intention	3.824	.991	.892	.785	.801	.128**	.387**	.689**	1

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed test). Reliability is measured using α Cronbach's alpha. SD represents the standard deviation.

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Appendix A: A copy of questionanrie

Part I.a:
For each of the statements below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

The response scale is as follows:

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Undecided or Neutral
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

Lable *	#	Item	1	2	3	4	5
q1	1	Going to the beach is one of my priorities when in north Cyprus					
q2	2	I am planning to spend time on 3S tourism related activtities as much as possible when in north Cyprus					
q3	3	3S tourism playes a significant role to decide to travel to North Cyprus.					
q4	4	For the purpose of 3S tourism, I travel here at least once a year.					
q5	5	I will encourage my friends and relatives to try 3S tourism when traveling to North Cyprus.					
q6	6	I will say positive things about 3S tourism in North Cyprus.					

Note: * lable was not appeared in the original sample of questioannrie. It shows in this version to help readers to macth each question with results of factor analyisis (Figure 3). Visit intention is measured using q1-14 and word of mouth intention is measured using q5-6.

Part I.b Below is a list of scales that can be used to describe your attitude towards 3S tourism. Evaluate 3S tourism in Northern Cyprus on each word set by checking the appropriate box.

At1	Really dislike	1	2	3	4	5	Really like
At2	Very unfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	Very favorable
At3	Very bad	1	2	3	4	5	Very good
At4	Very unappealing	1	2	3	4	5	Very appealing

Part I.c Listed below are some attributes that determine the quality of 3S tourism image in North Cyprus. Please rate these attributes for North Cyprus by circling the appropriate number.

Lable	#	Item	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Very Good (4)	Excellent (5)
Bq1	1	Scenery/natural attractions					
Bq2	2	Cleanliness and hygiene					
Bq3	3	Accessibility					
Bq4	4	Environmental quality					
Bq5	5	Quality of facilities					
Bq6	6	Safety and security					
Bq7	7	Sports facilities and activities					
Bq8	8	Climate					
Bq9	9	Calm atmosphere					
Bq10	10	Signage					

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Bq11	11	Design of facilities					
Bq12	12	Crowdedness					
Bq13	13	Buildings/structures fit the beach environment (quality of fit)					
Bq14	14	Coastal management					
Bq15	15	Quality of service					
Bq16	16	Performance of the host community's culture					
Bq17	17	Appropriateness of land use in and around the beaches.					

Part 2.

Age (year)
18-27 ()
28-37 ()
()
38-47 ()
48-57 ()
58-67 ()

Educational Level
Primary school ()
Middle school ()
High school ()
College ()
University ()

Gender
Male ()
Female ()

Marital Status
Single ()
Married

How often have you been traveling?
Monthly ( )
Seasonally ( )
Yearly ( )

Travel Purpose
Business ( )
Leisure ( )
Other (family/friend visit, etc.) ( )

Your average income (Per month/in USD):
0 up to 1000$ () 1000 up to 2000$ () 2000 up to 3000$ () up to 3000 ()

Thank You for your Valuable Contribution

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Appendix B. Research design

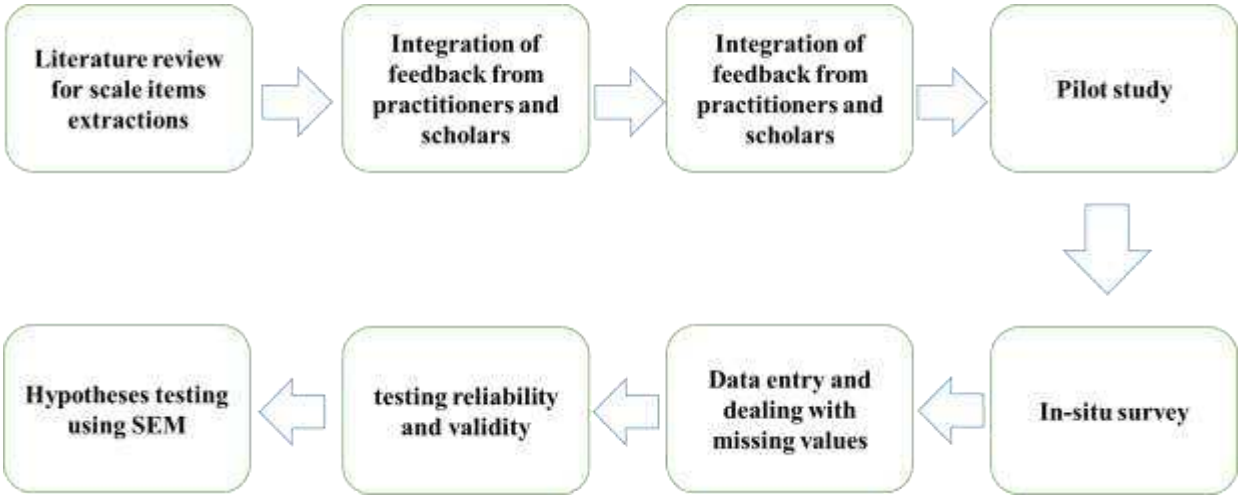

Figure I. Research process