A STRUCTURED LITERATURE REVIEW ON DESTINATION BRANDING THROUGH IN-FLIGHT MAGAZINES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research note is to investigate the literature on the identification of brand identity elements of tourist destinations in airline magazines distributed in flight. The methodology followed concerns a relevant literature review for the years 2008-2023. Academic journals with a citation score of 1.0 or higher in the field of tourism and marketing were initially selected from the Scopus database. As the effort did not bring results, a search was carried out in the entire Scopus database, without the above criteria. The keywords used are inflight magazines, in-flight magazines, destination brand, destination branding, destination image, destination identity, however the search resulted in a very small number of articles (27) of which only four (4) were considered as relevant to the subject under consideration. Thus, any criteria that could be used for the review process were re-examined and the search was conducted on a less 'rigorous' basis, Google Scholar, in order to enrich the data and generate a comprehensive discussion of the research question. Finally, only nine (9) articles were collected for analysis (content and textual), while the findings further highlight the research gap that exists in the literature and the need for further research.

KEYWORDS

in-flight magazines; destination branding; tourism destination; airlines; promotion; destination identity

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism literature well discusses destination branding in terms of definition and context. Pereira et al. (2012) postulate that destinations provide tourists with an integrated experience through the consumption of an amalgama of tourism products and services, under the brand name of the destination. Undoubtedly, each destination provides a different tourist product, which is also composed of the individual characteristics of each place, in terms of climate, natural beauty, architectural landscape and culture of the local inhabitants (Urry and Larsen, 2011). If the destinations offered the same product, then consumers would not seek for a different destination on each trip. Evidently, destinations strongly pursue the revisit, precisely because they know that tourists usually seek different experiences on each trip (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021), to enrich their knowledge and images since they carry the primordial quality of the traveler. In fact, tourists tend to develop a destination image driven by previous experiences, advertisements, common beliefs, media and word of mouth, setting expectations that will or will not be met during their stay at the destination (Moustaka and Constantoglou, 2021). To this extend, Buhalis (2000) asserts that a destination is a perceptual concept which differs for each consumer based on specific factors such as travel experience, purpose of travel and cultural background, as well as on demographic and psychographic characteristics.

Having the above in mind and given that in-flight magazines usually present, through extensive articles and photo galleries, destinations related with their network, it is worth investigating the influence that these presentations have in the overall perception of a potential tourist toward a destination. That is to say, how in-flight magazines contribute to destination branding and place image. Before proceeding with this main research question, it is worth mentioning the four elements of destination branding (Figure 1) as developed by Hankinson (2004) who asserts that a) relationships with visitors, b) primary service relationships, c) media relationships and d) brand infrastructure relationships, shape destination branding as a term. All these elements are driven by the core brand of the destination which is composed of personality, positioning and reality. Therefore, the authors consider media relationships as an element of destination branding that should depict the personality (local culture and landscape) of a destination, its positioning within tourism market, by choosing to represent and promote (through images and/or personas) destination's reality.
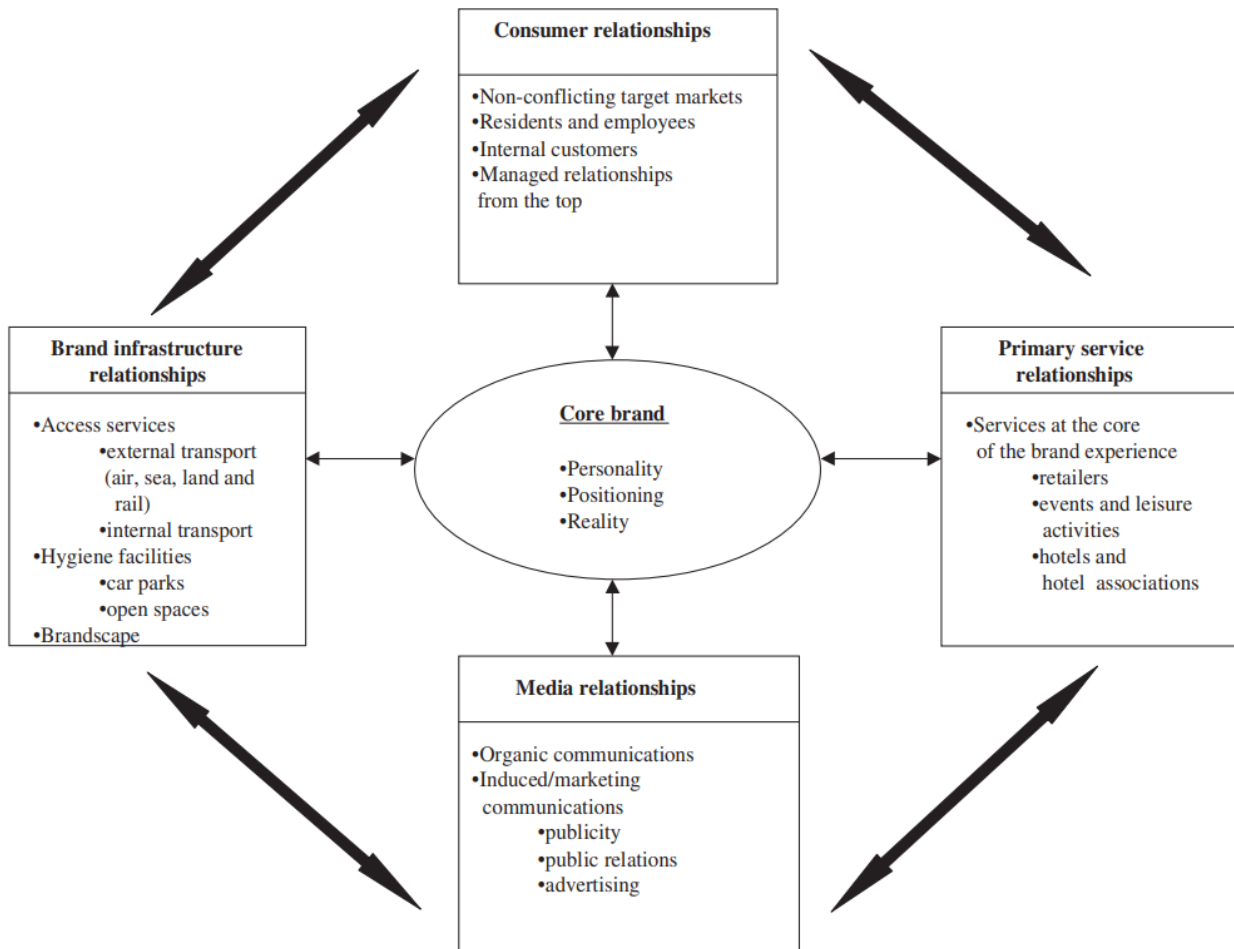
Figure 1. The four elements of destination branding

Source: Hankison, 2004

Given the aforementioned, the authors seek to identify these particular attributes of media relationships as an element of destination branding and place image focusing on in-flight magazines.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for the development of this research note is a structured literature review, summarizing and synthesizing the selected literature applying content and textual analysis techniques while reviewing. By presenting a comprehensive background of the literature regarding the studied fields, theoretical and conceptual frameworks were developed, the authors aim at highlighting the international experience (Poulaki et al., 2022) on destination branding through in-flight

magazines. All the presented information was gathered from official scientific databases for the years 2008-2023. Academic journals with a citation score of 1.0 or higher in the field of tourism and marketing were initially selected from the Scopus database. As the effort did not bring results, a search was carried out in the entire Scopus database, without the above criteria. The keywords used are inflight magazines, in-flight magazines, destination brand, destination branding, destination image, destination identity, however the search resulted in a very small number of articles (27) of which only four (4) were considered as relevant to the subject under consideration. Thus, any criteria that could be used for the review process were re-examined and the search was conducted on a less 'rigorous' basis, Google Scholar, in order to enrich the data and generate a comprehensive discussion of the research question. Finally, only nine (9) articles were collected for analysis, highlighting the research gap that exists in the literature and the need for further research.

When it comes to the content analysis, as a review technique, Neuendorf (2017) lists several definitions that have been formulated from time to time. Two of them concerns Berelson's definition, according to which, "content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the content of communication" and Krippendorff who argued that "content analysis is a research technique through of which valid and verifiable conclusions are drawn from the texts within the general framework used". In conclusion, the method in question is an attempt to condense and standardize the verbal and non-verbal messages transmitted by each transmitter to each possible receiver.

Moreover, textual analysis as a literature review technique refers to a qualitative research form using specific tools, focusing on the underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of a text. It is widely used within the field of communications as it is a trans-disciplinary method that is also present in a number of the social sciences and humanities, while it may complement other qualitative methods within these disciplines such as content analysis (Arya, 2020). In this paper, textual analysis tool is used as a complementary material for the assessment of qualitative data, such as their main topics and most frequent words, exactly as it used by Albuquerque and Gomes Dos Santos (2023) in the identification of the most frequent terms, which includes the presentation of illustrative word clouds.

3. FINDINGS

According to the methodology followed, the authors perform the analyses seeking to identify those messages documenting that the existing literature on the contribution of in-flight magazines to destination branding.

3.1   Content Analysis

The content analysis refers to a structured literature review give in tabular form as follows tables 1,2.

Table 1. Structured Literature Review

Qualitative Analysis	Authors	Year of publication	Research Methodology	Research Aim
Content Analysis	Thrurlow and Jaworski	2003	72 aviation magazines reviewed Issues from June/July/August 2001 Regions: Asia and Australia (14), Africa and Middle East (11), Americas and Caribbean (17), Europe (32)	The aim was to identify the global nature of in-flight magazines. This is expressed through: a) Use of English Language; b) Use of world-famous cities and celebrities; c) Show global route maps.
	Small, Harris and Wilson	2008	Seven issues of Air New Zealand magazine (February 2005 to August 2005). Five issues of Qantas: The Australian Way (February, April, May, July and August 2005). Analyzed the content of 1009 ads	Inflight magazine advertising audience research. 260 ads related to travel and tourism. 104 of these involved individuals.
Content Analysis and Visual Analysis	Subotić	2017	The complete archive (252 issues) of JAT Review (in-flight magazine of Yugoslav airlines).	Tracing the reconstruction of the identity of Yugoslavia identity over time.
Visual Analysis	Martikainen and Adriani	2022	The cover images of two in-flight magazines—Ulisse (Alitalia) and Blue Wings (Finnair): 90 cover images published between January 2016 and February 2020	Cover images and visual rhetoric as an image shaping strategy. 11 of the 13 covers depicted dreamy destinations as the in-use effects created dreamlike qualities. Analysis of the

				characteristics of Blue Wings cover images depicting people.
	Lawson	2013	73 pages of real estate advertisements in five magazine issues were randomly sampled from in-flight magazines on domestic flights between May 2008–December 2009.	Representations of real estate as a means of capturing environmental and social views in China during the period 2008-2009. Its purpose is to investigate how well rhetorical texts communicate and influence relevant ethical views on environmental protection and social equality.
Comparative Analysis	Vlassi, Deirmentzoglou, Agoraki, Papatheodorou	2023	Comparative analysis between Blue inflight magazine (6 issues from 2019 and only 3 from 2020) and Vogue Greece magazine (12 issues in total).	This chapter attempts to highlight the interdependence between fashion and elements of destination identity by focusing on how destination attributes are portrayed in in-flight and fashion magazines.

Table 2. Suggestions for future research found in the Literature Review

Authors	Questions for Future Research
Martikainen and Adriani (2022)	How customers perceive in-flight magazine cover images?
Subotić (2017)	International relations - How states present themselves to international and domestic others – both visually and textually – can give us information about their priorities, concerns, and desires, which can then help us guide their actions in a more detailed political context?
Small, Harris and Wilson (2008)	Investigating consumer response to dominant messages – Understanding in-flight readings of magazine advertisements.
Vlassi, Deirmentzoglou, Agoraki, Papatheodorou (2023)	Examining the interaction between fashion and tourism to identify how it affects potential visitors' destination selection process and behavior. Qualitative research is proposed through interviews with four different audiences, fashion and in-flight magazine editors, fashion magazine readers and airline passengers.

3.2   Textual Analysis

Further to the above, a textual analysis aims at crosscheck the main purpose of the selected papers related with the destination branding through in-flight magazines. As mentioned in the methodology section, the keywords of the research in academic databases were:

- inflight magazines
- in-flight magazines
- destination brand
- destination branding
- destination image
- destination identity

Textual analysis for the research of *Vlassi, Deimertzoglou, Agoraki and Papatheodorou (2023)* indicates in descending order the words:

destination
fashion
tourism
brand
magazine
branding
Greece
Images
vogue
Marketing
Indeed, the text brings up "inflight" and "Aegean" (airline) but it seems that destination branding through in-flight magazines is not the core subject in this paper.

Additionally, textual analysis for the research of *Thurlow and Jaworski (2003)* selects the words in descending order as follows:

- Magazines
- Flight
- Global
- Airlines
- International
- English
- World
- National

while the words travel, tourism and destinations appear in a lower ranking indicating that destination branding through in-flight magazines is not the core subject in this paper.

Furthermore, textual analysis for the research of *Small, Harris and Wilson (2008)* ranks in descending order the words:

Magazines
Tourism
New Zealand
In-flight
Qantas
Advertisements
Travel

while airlines, global, people, discourse, travelers and business, are words that have been lower ranked. The terms brand, branding, destination, image or identity are not met in this specific textual analysis. Consequently, destination branding through in-flight magazines is not the core subject in this paper.

Moreover, textual analysis for the research of *Martikainen and Adriani (2022)* indicates the following words as leading ones in paper's subject matter:

- Management
- People
- Visual
- Image
- cover
- Impression
- Magazine
- Corporate

while travel, infight, airlines, destinations, depicted and celebrities are by far lower in word ranking. In any case, neither does this article explore destination branding through in-flight magazines as main topic.

In addition to the previous paper, textual analysis for the research of *Subotic (2017)* indicates in descending order the following words:

- international
- Yugoslav
- JAT (airline)
- Review
- State
- Yugoslavia
- National
- identity
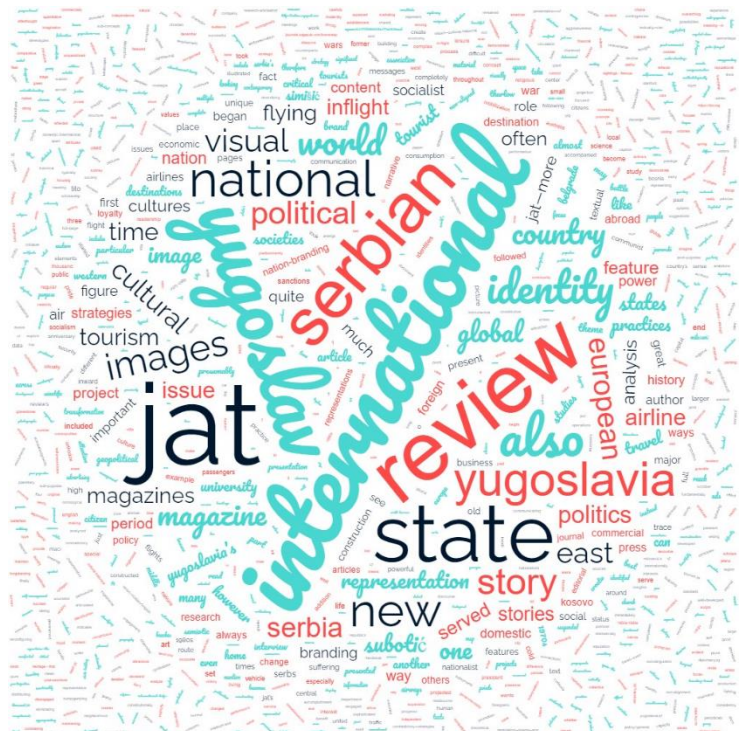
while it further depicts in a lower degree the words country, global, political, images, Serbia, showing that destination branding through in-flight magazines was definitely not the main subject of the paper.

Finally, textual analysis for the research of *Lawson (2013)* outputs a word cloud that highlights the words:

- Real estate
- Advertisements
- Environmental
- Development
- Chinese
- Urban
- Social
- Cities

while it also depicts marketing, nature, property and land in a lower level. In any case, another research on in-flight magazines does not cover destination branding despite that marketing essence of the paper.

Summarizing the findings of both analyses, they indeed indicate that airlines' in-flight magazines feature tourist destinations that are either served by their network or located near the airports where they operate. However, none of the papers indicate that destination branding constitutes the primer aim of these research efforts. Nonetheless, the methodologies resulting from the review do not accurately seek to capture important questions such as:

A) Are the characteristics and typology of the presented tourism destinations clearly captured?

B) Does the presentation of tourism destinations address specific target markets, or does it cover every type of tourist?

C) Do airlines ultimately seek the effective promotion of tourism destinations or the strengthening of the flights of their networks? For these research questions, the authors propose the methodological framework for future research, acknowledging the existing research gap.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Undoubtedly, there is a gap in the literature regarding destination branding through in-flight magazines. In fact, there are no research efforts on this topic which is indeed of particular importance given the significant rise in air travel coupled with the fact that the share of air transport in international arrivals reaches 58%, demonstrating the volume of passengers - potential tourists who have access to magazines and have time to read them during a flight. Thus, articles related with destinations constitute an information that will reach the receiver who is actually devoted to what they are reading. Therefore, this research note underlines that the role of in-flight magazines in shaping the identity of the tourist destination has not been extensively analyzed by the literature and in the future, in-flight magazine case studies should be carried out as well as more qualitative research in this direction. Furthermore, quantitative research should be implemented to identify the impact of in-flight magazine content on public perception of the destination. Undoubtedly, synergies in tourism are essential, as it is a combination of activities, while transportation in itself is not a product with demand, while transportation is required to reach destinations. Therefore, results of such research and studies could be a trigger for collaborations between tourism destination management organizations and airlines in order to present the destinations in an appropriate and targeted manner and also to enhance airline flights. Evidently, the knowledge of tourist destination management organizations regarding the characteristics and types of each destination can contribute to its perfect presentation to the large traveling public that is reached through airline flights.

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