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Influence of nationality on the interpretation of Ireland's tourism destination imagery

Murphy-Underhill, Catriona

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University of Plymouth

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The Influence of Nationality on the Interpretation of Ireland's Tourism

Destination Imagery

by

Catriona Murphy-Underhill

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfilment for the

degree of

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Candidate's Name: Catriona Murphy-Underhill
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Abstract:

This thesis investigates the influence of nationality on the interpretations of the tourism destination imagery of Ireland, drawing in particular on the views of tourists travelling from Britain. It involved an assessment of the influence (if any) of the nationality of the tourist and the nationality of the place on pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected images, as well as an evaluation of the implications of such influences on Ireland's image as a tourist destination. By means of empirical research applied to the same sample of tourists travelling from Britain to Ireland via Shannon airport, the factors that contribute to the formation of respondents' perceived destination images were analysed, and the degree of image modification was assessed using pre- and post-visitation questionnaires. Meanwhile, the intended projected image of Ireland was determined by means of a semi-structured interview with a representative of Tourism Ireland, and a semiotic and content analysis of brochure material was undertaken to assess the projected and actual image projected. The results of the pre- and post-visit questionnaires demonstrated the need to use nationality and national identity together as both constructs have limitations when applied separately. It was also revealed that images measured over two points in time can vary through the influence of such factors as actual travel experiences with a destination, the nature and extent of information or promotional efforts that the respondents are exposed to, and changes in the economic and social environment. In addition, other factors were also found to mediate the perceived image of a destination and included the perceived national identity held by visitors, the nationality of passport held, levels of destination familiarity, the purpose of trip and travel intensity. Also, the results of the analysis of the intended image indicated that the intended image portrayed of Ireland was one of a natural environment populated with friendly people in an idealised landscape out of time. Collectively, the study identified a number of image gaps between the projected and perceived destination image and highlighted the need for an overall image modification strategy based on a combination of national identity and nationality as an important discriminating variable.

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Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

Relevant seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was presented and external institutions were visited for consultation purposes.

Presentations and Conferences Attended:

January 2004 – Hospitality Management Conference, Waterford Institute of Technology.

June 2004 - State of the Art Conference 2, Glasgow

Nationality and interpretations of destination imagery: implications for the study of tourist behaviour

October 2004 – Hotel Managers Conference, Cork.

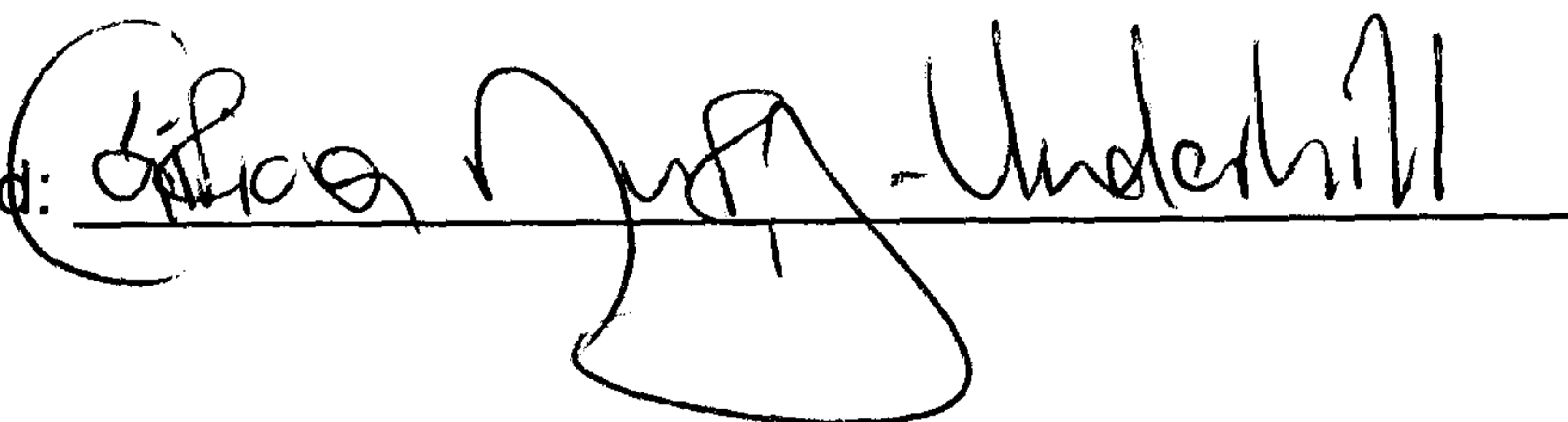
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.0 Introduction

With the emergence of tourism as a major growth sector in the global economy, national governments have become increasingly aware of the role this industry can play in enhancing a country's trade performance. Many destinations including Spain (Gallarza, Gil Saura and Garcia 2002) have thus sought to improve their competitive position with respect to the international tourism market by either increasing funding allocations to their existing national tourism administration (NTA) or establishing and funding such bodies (Faulkner 2003). Given the number and diversity of private sector concerns involved in the delivery of the tourism product, such organisations in general have placed a considerable emphasis on developing a coordinated approach to promoting their destination abroad. For example, following the multi-party talks and the constitutional settlement under the 'Good Friday' agreement, tourism in Ireland has now been included as an area of co-operation in which tourism development and marketing will principally be the responsibility of a publicly owned limited company, Tourism Ireland Ltd, jointly established and monitored by the Northern Irish Tourist Board (NITB) and Bord Failte (BF) (Greer 2002). This trans-jurisdictional tourism partnership has been allocated a total of over €34 million in 2004 to market the island of Ireland as one destination internationally (Henry 2004). The fundamental objective of this process, and the main parameter by which its performance is ultimately judged, is to increase the country's market share beyond that which might otherwise have been achieved.

The scope of tourism marketing, therefore, is enormous for all destinations and extends into both the public and private sectors of the economy. Large amounts of money are being allocated to tourism marketing research although the amounts are still viewed as inadequate at the corporate level (Rovelstad and Blazer 1983; Go and Haywood 2003). This increased commitment of many governments to tourism marketing research,

according to Faulkner (2003), has coincided with a general trend toward greater fiscal restraint in the policy environment. As a consequence, NTAs are under increasing pressure to carry out more systematic and rigorous research of their activities so that investment of public funds can be fully justified in terms of outcomes and competing priorities (WTO 1994). The stakeholders in this process are not just the government and the general public to whom they are ultimately accountable, but also industry partners with whom the NTA is working.

In one sense, tourism research can be constructed as a tool for ensuring accountability in the use of public resources at a national level and in this respect, it is in the NTAs' interest to develop credible methodologies for demonstrating their contribution simply because continued funding depends on them doing so. However, continued research has an important role to play by virtue of the contribution it can make to the organisation's ongoing planning and management process. Research as a routine component of an organisation's activities, provides a framework for planning, monitoring and assessing performance with respect to the environment within which it operates and a rational basis for the identification of priorities and allocation of resources. Research keeps the tourism industry in touch with changes in its environment and its performance with respect to this environment and is thus an essential prerequisite for responsiveness, competitiveness and adaptability (Cooper 2003). Tourists are a key stakeholder in tourism and thus the need to understand the tourist is fundamental to improving and/or sustaining a destination's competitive advantage. According to Krippendorf (1987) and Poon (1993), tourists are becoming more discerning and responsible in their travel options and behaviour. Consequently, destination marketing has become increasingly necessary in the modern travel and tourism industry as places seek to be distinctive and attractive, aiming to establish a favourable position, and sell themselves in a highly competitive environment (Henderson 2000). Thus, understanding tourist motivation and behaviour is important both in business and academic circles.

1.1 Tourist motivation and behaviour

The study of tourist behaviour is complex and wide ranging as it is an extension and part of motivation (Shaw, Agarwal and Bull 2000). A number of approaches have been posited for understanding tourist behaviour (Plog 1974; Dann 1977; Mayo and Jarvis 1981; Witt and Wright 1992; Ryan and Glenon 1998; Qui and Lam 1999; Mason 2003). Considerable attention has been placed on the factors that influence tourist behaviour and several have been identified which relate to the individual and to the destination. The former includes gender (Carr 1997), social class (Seaton 1992; Thurot and Thurot 1983), age (Shaw and Williams 1994) and nationality (Reisinger and Turner 2003; Barham 1989; Kozac 2002), while the latter includes the characteristics of a destination (Hanefors and Mossberg 1999; Mason 2003) and tourism destination imagery (Echtner and Ritchie 1991, Ross 1993a, 1994; Gartner 1989). Thus, the importance of these factors in the context of tourist behaviour has been universally acknowledged, since it affects the individual's subjective perception and consequent behaviour and destination choice (Chon 1990, 1992; Echtner and Ritchie 1991; Stabler 1988).

The traditional focus of tourism destination image studies has been promotion and since the 1960s there has been growing research interest in destination image promotion and its implications for successful destination management (Foster and Jones 2000). As a result, there has been relatively little synthesis between factors that relate both to the individual and the place. Consequently, little is known about the associations (if any) between factors relating to individual tourist behaviour and those that relate to the destination. This knowledge is important as a greater understanding of the tourism consumption-production nexus may help to safeguard and enhance a destination's popularity. According to Hughes (1992), the tourist-orientation of a place occurs when places are 'marketed' as tourist destinations, but surprisingly there is a lack of recognition that a destination, like any other entity, is open to perception by a range of observers across a tourism system. This range of perceptions may result in the occurrence of

differences between the intangible, abstract images in the minds of both the product providers and consumers.

However, the majority of research considers the projected and perceived images separately including Beerli and Martin (2004a), Ahmed (1991), Gaffey (2004) and Ruiz, Olarte and Iglesias (1999). As a result, it fails to consider the extent to which perceptions influence the way in which projected images are interpreted or the extent to which projected images influence perception. In addition, the extent to which the intended projected image corresponds with the actual image projected as well as the degree of influence the place itself has on the image projected warrants investigation. Potential differences may have marketing implications for the variety of media-based representations or identities of the destination used in its promotion such as reduced tourist demand or increase in customer complaints. Thus, it is suggested that appreciating how stakeholders perceive and interpret representations of a place as well as how that place is projected and represented is imperative if destinations are to be successfully marketed. However, this is a complex task as destination imagery is multi-faceted and multi-dimensional as it is not only tourists who hold images of tourism places; intermediaries such as travel and advertising agencies, the destination state (governments and authorities); and the indigenous population may all have differing images of the same destination. Consequently, it is necessary to consider the role not just of the tourist but of the image creator and the meaning systems that inform the creation of destination imagery. This, in turn, will reinforce particular ways of imaging or seeing the world. Hughes (1992), Said (1991) and Urry (1990), have drawn attention to the evolution of predominant ways of seeing the world over time and in this sense there are commonly held views which underpin the construction of images, myths and clichés of places and people. But, Kent (1989) argues that the social group within which an individual moves greatly influences perceptions. Thus, destination images are influenced by a much wider spectrum of information sources beyond those produced by tourism agents and to ignore such historical and social processes is to obscure the mutually

dependent and symbiotic nature of culture on the one hand and tourism destination marketing on the other.

1.2 The study of tourist behaviour and nationality

The production and consumption of tourism images in all its forms is one of the most important and pervasive cultural factors influencing and intruding into everyday life. Such images operate by establishing a relationship between a type of consumer and a type of product (place) and by seeking to promote differentiation between products. As such, the tourist gaze is moulded by professional marketers who are themselves products of certain societies and social groups. The resultant behaviour echo the referent systems, the cultures and ideologies, together with the dreams and fantasies of their particular social groups. According to Morgan and Pritchard (1998), people from particular social groups or societies make sense of the world in similar ways and such representations help individuals understand the world by communicating or signifying meaning. This process Hall (1997) suggests, is evidenced in the commonly held perceptions amongst groups of people which results in similar ways of seeing other people and places and thus, ultimately, in the creation of stereotypes. Therefore consumers are as much the products of their own societies, as are the product providers, whose attitudes have been shaped and formed not only by their experiences, educations, cultures, social values and histories, but also by the products to which they have been exposed. Thus, segmenting markets into distinct and homogeneous groups in terms of geographic, socio-demographic, psychographic and/or behavioural characteristics has long been recognised as a useful technique in tourism literature (Yuksel, Kilinc and Yuksel 2004). Such classifications include nationality, national identity, social class, tourist role, and, benefits sought with nationality being the most controversial segmentation variable included (Pizam and Sussmann 1995).

The debate as to the relevance of nationality and national identity for market segmentation and for understanding cross-cultural differences centres on the issue as to whether or not

there is a long-term global trend towards homogenisation or differentiation in cultures (Mykletun, Crofts and Mykeltun 2001). For example, Wishard (1999) argues that economic convergence associated with the formation of the European Union (EU) has made nationality a less than useful segmentation construct. In contrast, Wierenga, Pruyn and Waarts (1996) note the usefulness of cross-cultural studies highlighting the significant differences in consumers' spending patterns, values and lifestyles among EU countries. Irrespective of such contributions, Reisinger and Turner (2003) acknowledge in a review of cross-cultural studies, that the major findings of these studies is that national cultures have a moderating effect on tourist behaviour. Despite the fact that meanings are neither universally shared nor uniform, it is not unrealistic to suggest that nationality, identified by Reisinger and Turner (2003:15) as a 'subculture community', may have a moderating influence on determining tourist behaviour. Therefore, if nationality is an influencing variable on tourist behaviour, to what extent does nationality and/or national identity influence the presentation and interpretation of destination imagery by the image creator and the image consumer? In other words does nationality and/or national identity matter?

This thesis will explore the influence of nationality as a discriminating variable in relation to individual tourist behaviour by considering the influence of the nationality and national identity of the tourist on interpretations of destination imagery. More specifically, this research will focus on the investigation of the influence of nationality on interpretations of Ireland's destination imagery, drawing in particular on the views of tourists travelling to Ireland from Britain. It recognises that little attempt has been made in the tourism literature to understand the relationship between the nationality of the place itself and its influence on the construction and representation of the destination in and through tourism imagery. Given that the tourist and the place are central to tourism consumption, an understanding of tourist behaviour is to realise not just the importance of the nationality of the tourist in influencing the interpretation of destination imagery but also to appreciate the significance of the nationality of the place itself. Thus, this research addresses this theoretical lacuna by exploring the influence of nationality in two contrasting ways. First, it is contended that the nationality of the visitor is important to investigations of this nature

and second it highlights the significance of the nationality of the product. In doing so, this thesis provides a detailed assessment of the link between nationality and interpretations of tourism destination imagery in the context of Ireland.

1.3 Aims and objectives of the research

Three aims and nine objectives guide this investigation and are listed below:-

1. To investigate the influence (if any) of the nationality of the tourist on pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's destination image from the perspective of tourists travelling from Britain,
 - a. To identify tourists perceptions of their nationality;
 - b. To ascertain the pre- and post-visit perceived image of Ireland;
 - c. To determine the pre- and post-visit projected image of Ireland;
 - d. To assess the influence(if any) of the nationality of the tourist on pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected images;

2. To explore the influence (if any) of Ireland's 'national' place specific characteristics on pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's image from the perspective of tourists travelling from Britain,
 - e. To identify the intended projected image of Ireland;
 - f. To determine the influence(if any) of the nationality of the product/destination on pre-and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected images;

3. To examine the implications of interpretations of Ireland's destination image,

- g. To assess the implications of potential differences between the perceptions of Ireland's image, its intended projected image and the actual projected image of Ireland;
- h. To evaluate the implications of the influence (if any) of the nationality of the tourist for pre-and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected destination images; and
- i. To assess the implications of the influence (if any) of the nationality of the product for pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected destination images.

This study is primarily concerned with nationality as a determining variable in influencing the perceived and projected images of Ireland as a tourist destination as it exists in Britain. Specifically, it is suggested that tourism destination imagery not only reflects and reinforces, but also helps to constitute the nation. The nation, it is suggested, is not an objective concept, but is a power political construct in which certain subjects and objects are privileged while others are suppressed. This implies that similar power political dimensions determine what tourism images of a place are projected as well as how such place images are perceived and consumed. Therefore, this enquiry theoretically contributes to this field of study in a number of ways: Firstly, nationality and national identity are identified as two separate concepts each with its own limitations but contends that it is important to view both together because in reality both concepts can and do overlap. Consequently, as nationality and national identity are mutually constituted, this study reveals that combining both concepts provides a more accurate and complete understanding of the tourist. Furthermore, the passport held does not automatically represent the perceived national identity or nationality of the holder as the self-identification of respondents demonstrated. Thus, to rely solely on the nationality of the passport as a classification of one's identity is to disregard the significance of how the tourist views themselves. Thus, this exploration of nationality and interpretations of destination imagery contends that the nationality and national identity of the tourist is important to investigations of this nature. Secondly, this thesis acknowledges the

importance of the context in which images are created and consumed and reveals how Ireland as a tourist destination is a society which is constantly evolving and possesses a history with several layers of meaning. As such, the findings support the notion that the process of representation is informed by dominant socio-economic and historical practices by examining the extent to which tourism imagery influences, and is influenced by, a wide range of social, economic, political and historical forces. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of also considering the influence of the nationality and national identity of the destination itself.

In order to further understanding of projected and perceived representations of place in and through tourism imagery, it is necessary to first define the term 'nationality' and secondly come to terms with the fundamentally political idea of the 'nation'. In other words, the study is premised on the belief that the analytical point of departure for an appreciation of the construction and interpretation of destination imagery should be the imaged construct of the 'nation'. Thus, the ensuing chapter will concentrate on the significance of 'nationality', the 'nation' and 'national identity' with the main purpose being to encourage broader understanding of these constructs by highlighting the wider body of literature that exists within this field of study. However, before exploring the philosophical backdrop on which the research study is based, it is useful to outline the structure and content of the various chapters.

1.4 Synopsis of chapters

Chapter two is a Literature Review concerned with analysing the idea of 'place' and the 'nation'. Place is recognised as a socio-cultural construction rather than simply a physical location. Similarly, it is argued that the nation can be perceived as an entirely modern phenomenon and not an organic reality. This argument is elucidated through a brief analysis of some theories of the nation. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of a

discussion introducing the relationship between place, nationality, national identity and tourism destination imagery.

Chapter Three outlines the conceptual framework that underpins this investigation focusing specifically on the relationship between nationality and interpretations of tourism destination imagery. This provides the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings to the project and highlights this study's empirical and theoretical contribution to the wider body of knowledge that exists within this field of study.

The Fourth Chapter outlines the research instruments employed to achieve the study's objectives. This chapter proposes to address methodological issues as they relate to tourism destination imagery in the context of cross-cultural behaviour. It, therefore, presents a review of methodologies employed in tourism research highlighting existing and alternative research approaches used in researching tourism marketing phenomena. Such an approach will facilitate an assessment of the appropriateness of the research instruments used in this study.

In Chapter Five, the projected image of Ireland in Britain is identified to determine the constructed tourism representations and the intended projected image of Ireland in Britain. The discussion focuses on the context in which the tourism images of Ireland are produced and consumed before engaging with approaches to tourism policy in Ireland particularly noting the efforts of Tourism Ireland, the trans-jurisdictional tourism organisation responsible for promoting the island of Ireland abroad. This analysis is supported by the results of primary research which includes an in-depth interview with a representative from Tourism Ireland and a combined semiotic and content analysis of selected images. This approach determines the intended projected image, assesses the actual projected image, identifies the form and substance of the messages, the strategies of messengers and it anticipates the way the images are interpreted and consumed.

Chapter Six investigates the influence of the nationality and national identities of visitors from Britain to Ireland on interpretations of Ireland's destination imagery pre-visitation. This involved the implementation of a pre-visitation questionnaire which analysed the perceived and actual projected images of Ireland and which helped to elucidate the way and degree to which nationality influences interpretations of destination imagery. A total of 281 usable questionnaires were collected from tourists travelling from Britain, arriving in the baggage hall of Shannon airport between November 2003 and January 2004. Meanwhile, Chapter Seven discusses the results of the post-visitation questionnaire. The post-visit questionnaire investigated the post-visitation perceived and actual projected images of Ireland's image and enables a comparative analysis of pre- and post-visitation perceived and actual projected images to be undertaken. This is then followed by a discussion and analysis of findings in Chapter Eight. This chapter is designed to measure the image change (if any) between the perceived and projected image of Ireland pre-and post-visitation and to assess the degree of influence that nationality and national identity may have on image modifications.

Finally, Chapter Nine identifies the theoretical and practical contribution of the study in light of current academic and practitioner knowledge on the influence of nationality on interpretations of tourism representations. It is anticipated that this thesis provides an alternative approach to the study of tourism destination imagery (TDI) from both a methodological and theoretical perspective. It has aimed to provide a framework to encourage future research and it is hoped that this study has served to ignite interest and provide ideas for further research in the field of tourism destination imagery. In terms of practical contributions, a number of recommendations and future research strands are outlined which are expected to serve as an orientation for those organisations responsible for the promotion of tourist destinations.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the main constructs that are central to this examination of the relationship between nationality and tourist behaviour with particular emphasis on the influence of nationality on interpretations of tourism destination imagery. The chapter is organised into four sections. First, tourist behaviour is introduced highlighting motivational and determining factors that influence behaviour. Second, the main theories relating to nationality, the nation and national identity are outlined. Based on an assessment of the arguments presented by various scholars, the thesis proffered by this research, and on which this study is premised, is that the concept of the nation is a particularly modern phenomenon which emerged subsequent to state structures. This point is crucial as it stands decidedly opposed to traditional perspectives, in which the nation is projected and perceived as an innate phenomenon, immanent to the people, existing since time immemorial, apolitical and pre-dating the state. However, this thesis is not so much concerned with definitions of the nation or of the place or even with what a 'real' nation or place is or should be. Rather, it is concerned with understanding how the nation has emerged as an idea and as an entity as it is believed that this has important ramifications for understanding its relationship with the study of tourist behaviour and interpretations of destination imagery.

The third section discusses briefly the alleged challenge posed to the concept of the nation by processes of globalisation and it is suggested that today, globalisation does not represent a threat to the national idea, but rather, serves to reinforce it. In this context, a supporting example is drawn from the attempts by the European Union to achieve 'supra-nationality'. In the fourth section, the meaning and nature of tourism destination imagery is outlined, including the factors that influence interpretations of destination imagery. The

chapter concludes with a synthesis of the discussion, emphasising the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery.

2.1 Tourist Behaviour

Millions of tourists travel temporarily away from home to experience hospitality and explore the world around them, a fact supported by the growth in tourist numbers worldwide (WTTC 2003, WTO, 2003, 2004). As this movement generates demand and tourists participate in the purchase and consumption process of the tourism product, both the tourism industry and academic researchers realise the need to define, classify and categorise such phenomena so it can be analysed in a meaningful way. Cultural, social and personal factors that may influence tourist motivations and behaviour and assist in the definition of tourist types are therefore a central concern for many researchers in tourism. For example, Yuksel, Kiline and Yuknel (2005) recognise that many variables will influence the way consumption patterns differ and that such patterns will change based upon the different products available and the way individuals have learnt to purchase tourism products. The variations are complex and Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Shepherd and Wanhill (1998) view the fundamentals of tourist behaviour as a system made up of four basic elements, namely; energisers of demand, effectors of demand, roles and decision-making processes and determinants of demand. Based on these four elements the following section will summarise the factors which influence tourist behaviour.

2.1.1 Energisers and effectors of demand

Energisers of demand refer to the forces of motivation that lead a tourist to decide to travel, while effectors of demand suggest that tourists have developed ideas of a destination through the process of learning, attitudes and associations from promotional messages and information (Cooper *et al* 1998). A perusal of the literature reveals that motivation theory contributes to explaining why people travel (Yuan and McDonald 1990,

Plog 2001) emphasising that needs and motivations are interrelated (Goodall 1998; Witt and Wright 1992; Holden 2005). The existence of the former generates the latter. People may intend to take a trip to fill their physiological and psychological needs (Prentice 2004). With reference to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, leisure travel would not normally be related to basic physiological requirements, yet new friendships and prestige could be reasons for travelling. A variety of researchers therefore note that tourists' motivations are multiple (Mayo and Jarvis 1981; Ooi 2002) and people might have different reasons to take either domestic or international vacations. Thus, tourists have an opportunity to choose from a set of destinations offering a variety of products and services (Crompton 1992).

McIntosh and Goeldner (1994) summarise previous work on travel motivation into four categories: (1) physical motivators, including those related to physical rest, participation in sports, need for recreation at a beach and those motivations directly connected with a person's physical health; (2) cultural motivations concerning the desire to gain knowledge about other countries in terms of cultural activities; (3) interpersonal motivators, including a desire to meet new people, visit friends or relatives get away from the routine conventions of life or to make new friendships; and (4) status and prestige motivators, related to self-esteem and personal development. Thus, different factors for example age, income, personality, cost, distance, risk and motivation may have an influence on destination image. Of these, the tourism literature emphasises the importance of both push and pull factors in shaping tourist motivations and in influencing the choice of vacation destinations (Crompton 1979a). 'Push' factors are origin-related and refer to the intangible, intrinsic desires of the individual traveller, for example the desire for escape rest and relaxation, adventure health or prestige. 'Pull' factors are related to attractiveness of a given destination and include tangible characteristics such as beaches, accommodation and recreation facilities and cultural and historical resources (Uysal and Hagan 1992). The destination choice process might therefore be related to tourists' assessments of destination attributes and their perceived utility values.

Numerous attempts have been made to classify major elements of destinations in an effort to understand tourist behaviour (Gearing, Swart and Var 1974; Laws 1995; Sirakay, McLellan and Uysal 1996; Prentice 2004). Among these elements are climate, ecology, culture, architecture, hotels, catering, transport, entertainment, and cost. Destination-based attributes could be many and differ from one destination to another (Kozak 2002) as well as from one decision-making process to the next (Witt and Wright 1992). Preference sets and destination attributes can be matched to specific psychographic profiles of tourists. For example, the escape-relaxation group may prefer destinations where nightlife entertainment and water sports are provided, while the social status groups rate tennis, golf, fishing, shopping and gambling as important (Moscardo, Morrison, Pearce, Lang and O'Leary 1996). Equally, as destinations are often multi-products some might be visiting a destination in the summer season just to relax, but others, in the winter, may seek adventure. Thus, while motivation can be stimulated and activated in relation to the 'want' to travel, 'needs' themselves cannot be created. Needs are dependent on the human element through the psychology and circumstances of the individual. Subsequently, Cooper *et al* (1998) note that tourists can be characterised into different typologies or roles which exercise motivation as an energising force linked to personal needs.

2.1.2 Roles and the decision-making process

The initial idea of the tourist role developed from the work of sociological theorists such as Goffman (1959) who suggested that individuals behave differently in different situations in order to sustain impressions associated with those situations. As actors have different front and back stage performances, participants in any activity vary their behaviour according to the nature and context of that activity. Consequently, individual roles can be identified and managed according to social circumstances and theoretical studies focusing on the sociological aspects of the tourism role were developed in the 1970s through the work of Cohen (1972, 1974, 1984), MacCannell (1976) and Smith (1990a). The interaction of personality attributes such as attitude, perceptions and motivation allow

different types of tourist role to be identified. For example, Boniface and Cooper (1987) adopted Cohen's typology (1972) which uses a classification based on the theory that tourism combines the curiosity to seek out new experiences with the need for the security of familiar reminders of home. Such typologies of tourist roles attempt to identify ways in which the holiday market can be segmented into relatively homogeneous groups of consumers. Yet, segmentation of tourist types is problematic since such classifications are numerous and can and do overlap (Shaw, Agarwal and Bull 2000). Despite the difficulties relating to their use and the lack of empirical research to test their validity, Shaw and Williams (1994) note their continued importance in the tourism literature.

As a fundamental social unit of group formation in society, the role of the family in travel decision-making and the destination choice is important (Cooper *et al* 1998). Fodness (1992) and Lawson (1991) suggest stages in the family-life cycle were found to be reflected both in the information search and in the final decision. Thus, family participation in the process has implications for service providers and Lawson (1991) found that stages in the family life-cycle are reflected in the types of vacation taken and the financial expenditure outlined. The family acts as a composite buying unit with the different role patterns leading to particular forms of tourism product purchasing behaviour. For example, Ryan (1992) argues that children are an important catalyst in generating a family to visit an attraction, while Thornton, Shaw and Williams (1997) found that children influenced tourist behaviour either through their direct physical needs or their ability to negotiate with parents.

The notion of image is closely related to behaviour and attitudes which Cooper *et al* (1998) suggest have become established on the basis of a person's derived image and are not easily changed unless new information or experience is gained. An individual's awareness of the world is made up of experiences, learning, emotions and perceptions, or more accurately, the cognitive evaluation of such experiences, learning emotions and perceptions (Bigne, Andreu and Juergen 2005). Such awareness can be described as knowledge producing a specific image of the world. This image is critically important to an

individual's preferences, motivation and behaviour towards destinations as it will provide a 'pull' effect resulting in different demand schedules. Tourist behaviour both of individuals and groups depends upon their image of immediate situations and the world. It is therefore not surprising that studies of imagery are probably the best developed in the field of tourist behaviour (Walmsley and Young 1998) given that image assessment is crucial to the design of effective place marketing strategies (Reilly 1990). For example, various authors state that motivations influence the image forming process and the choice of destination (Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Stabler 1995). Dann (1996a) suggests that motivations exert a direct influence on its affective component. Insofar as affective images refer to the feelings aroused by a place, people with different motives may assess a destination in similar ways if their perception satisfies their needs. In the end as Gartner (1993) points out the affective component is the value that individuals attach to destinations based on motivations. Moreover, since the affective dimension influences the overall image (Beerli and Martin 2004b), motivations may also influence, either directly or indirectly that overall image.

As a result of the important role of image, there is an extensive literature which examines the relationship between, image, destination choice and tourist decision-making (Goodrich 1978; Bargeman and Van der Poel 2005; Seddighi and Theocheras 2004, Lam and Hsu 2005). Related to these issues, and equally well documented are those of travel satisfaction (Chon 1990), the image formation process (Gunn 1988), image modification and change (Pearce 1982), image measurement (Gyte 1987) as well as the relationship between image and tourism development (Hunt 1975). Thus, image in tourism covers a wide range of activities and agencies. Its role reflects that of promotion in general, which is aimed at influencing attitudes and behaviour of audiences in three main ways: first, to confirm and reinforce; second, to create new patterns of behaviour and attitude; or third, to change attitudes and behaviour (Seaton 1989). Tourism operators use images to portray their products in brochures, posters and media advertising; airlines, hotels and resorts do the same; as do destinations, attempting to construct an image of a destination that will force it into the potential tourist's evoked set, or destination short-list, leading to a

purchase decision. Whatever, the tourism product, its image is the public face of how it is marketed and the importance of image promotion in tourism marketing should not be underestimated (Morgan and Pritchard 1998). However, while extant work has concentrated on the images used to market destinations, particularly their accuracy, reliability and ability to satisfy or attract tourist demand (Dann 1996b), too few have gone beyond this to investigate what tourism marketing images reveal about societies' prevailing views and beliefs, and much of the mainstream tourism literature, particularly that interested in image and marketing, fails to recognise the existence of issues of power (Morgan and Pritchard 1998). According to Richter (1995), this is surprising since tourism is a subject fundamentally concerned with perceptions of image and identity.

In summary, motivation is a dynamic concept, as it may vary from one person to another, from one group to another, from one market segment to another, from one destination to another, as well as from one decision-making process to the next (Uysal and Hagan 1992; Prentice 2004). Thus motivating factors can be split into those which motivate a person to take a holiday and those which motivate a person to take a particular holiday to a specific destination at a particular time (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999). Consequently, Jang and Cai (2002) acknowledge that motivation is one of the most important but complicated areas of tourism research. Even though there is no unified perspective on motivations (Dann 1981), it has been generally accepted that examining the push and pull motives is effective in explaining travel motivations (Cha, McCleary and Uysal 1995). While previous empirical work on the push and pull factors established relationships between travellers' motivations to various facets of their trip behaviours and activities, they rarely explicitly link motivational factors with specific destination choices, although such linkage is conceptualised and assumed in many studies (Mansfeld 1992). Knowledge of people's motivation and its association with their destination choices are critical to predict future travel patterns.

For instance, such findings may be used for destination product development and for the formation of marketing strategies. Furthermore, it can be argued that the examination of

differences of motivations between sample populations representing different cultures is important to managers in understanding tourists' values, preferences and behaviour (Kim 1999). Depending upon the empirical findings, destination management would either promote attributes that best match tourist motivations or concentrate on a different market where tourist motivations and destination resources match each other. Laws (1991) and Chon (1989), for instance, suggest that the examination of benefits which are important to tourists is essential for promotion and planning studies at destinations. However, while Cooper *et al* (1998: 31) suggest that travel motivators do explain why people want to travel and explain the 'inner urges that initiate travel demand', the ability to travel will depend on a number of factors related to both the individual and the supply environment.

2.1.3 Determinants of demand

According to Cooper *et al* (1998) the ability to undertake a trip and the destination selection are determined by a wide range of interrelated factors which include income and employment, education, mobility, age and life cycle. These factors are termed determinants of demand and represent the 'parameters of possibility' for the individual (Cooper *et al* 1998 :40). Income and employment are closely linked and exert important influences upon both the level and nature of tourist behaviour. A fundamental distinction exists between those in employment and those unemployed. The impact of unemployment on the volume of tourism demand is obvious but the nature of demand is also changed by employment uncertainty. This encourages later booking of trips, more domestic holidays, shorter lengths of stay and switches of demand away from commercial accommodation to VFR reducing spending levels. Level of education attainment also has an important influence on travel propensity which according to Cooper *et al* (1998) increases awareness of travel opportunities and susceptibility to information, media, advertising and sales promotion.

Personal mobility has an important influence on travel propensity, especially with regard to domestic holidays. The car is the dominant recreation tool for both international and

domestic tourism providing door-to-door freedom, carrying tourism equipment (such as tents or boats) and has all-round vision for viewing. As such, Cooper *et al* (1998) suggest ownership of a car stimulates travel for pleasure in all but recessionary times.

The propensity to travel and indeed the type of tourism experience demanded, is also closely related to age. According to Knowles, Diamantis and El-Mourhabi (2004), age has been found to affect the consumption of products and services, and it influences the media individuals use, where they shop, how they use products and services, and how they think and feel about marketing activities, at different time periods. For example, Hawes (1988) found in a study of travel related lifestyle profiles of older women, that many older female travellers have the energy and desire to do active things. Though the conventional measurement is chronological age, Cooper *et al* (1998: 43) argue that 'domestic age' better discriminates between types of tourist demand and levels of travel propensity. Domestic age refers to the stage in the life cycle reached by an individual, and different stages are characterised by distinctive holiday demand and levels of travel propensity. Wells and Gubar (1966) have conceptualised the cycle of families in the USA, from the bachelor to solitary survivor stage and suggest that the distinctive pattern of demand found at each stage in the life cycle comes about for a number of reasons. As such, each stage can be thought of as having preoccupations which are the mental absorptions arising from motivations; interests which are feelings of what an individual would like to do, or represent the awareness of an idea or opportunity; and activities which include the actions of an individual. Cooper *et al* (1998) note that each stage in the life cycle is characterised by particular combinations of such factors. As an individual progresses through life the combinations of the factors, and the nature of the factors themselves, change. An example here would be having children. At this point in an individual's life, previous constraints and influences upon holiday taking are totally changed as holidays become more organisational and less geographical. However, such determinants do not exist in isolation but are conditioned by social factors such as gender, disability, self-image, lifestyle, social class, culture and nationality. Indeed, as Pizam and Manfeld (1999) agree many factors influence the way consumers behaviour. As such, we

are dealing with a complex reality which by necessity requires a complex analysis encompassing the totality of peoples' existence in order to fully understand tourist behaviour (Swain 1995). It is essential, therefore, that an analysis of tourist behaviour embraces social and cultural influences which imbue and underpin tourism.

2.1.4 Social influences

According to Robinson, Long, Evans, Sharpley and Swarbrooke (2000a) changes in social influences are linked with changes in tourist motivation and behaviour and demand for tourism products and destinations. Such social influences include a wide range of factors such as disability, self-image, lifestyle, social class, culture and nationality.

2.1.4.1 Disability

The number of people with disabilities is expected to increase as a result of increasing life-span, decreases in communicable disease, improved medical technology and improved child mortality. In the United States, for example, the number of people with disabilities is expected to double to around 100 million people by the year 2030 (Burnett and Bender-Baker 2001). Together with family and friends, they create a potentially significant, but often ignored market (McKercher, Packer, Yau and Lam 2003; Murray and Sproats 1990; Ray and Ryder 2003). However, little research has been published examining tourism and disability (Darcy 1998; Darcy 2002).

Existing literature tends to suggest that persons with disabilities face a number of barriers to participation (McGuire 1984; Murray and Sproats 1990), and that, because of these barriers, they enjoy less access to tourism opportunities than people without disabilities (Turco, Stumbo and Garncarz 1998). According to Yau, McKercher and Packer (2004), Smith's (1987) work represents the first and, to date, most comprehensive assessment of barriers and obstacles to participation identifying different types of barriers. These

included environmental barriers such as attitudinal, architectural and ecological factors; interactive barriers associated with each participant's own physical, psychological or cognitive functioning level. Of these, intrinsic barriers are felt to be the greatest obstacle (McGuire 1984). Feelings of incompetence in leisure activity may, over time, lead to feelings of generalised helplessness resulting in reduced future participation. It has also been suggested that the first tourism experience is a major hurdle and often determines whether an individual with a disability will continue to travel or not (Murray and Sproats 1990). However, the underlying assumption behind much work is that if barriers could be eliminated, participation rates would increase.

Over the past 20 years, much progress has been made in removing barriers, so that today the transport, accommodation, and attractions sectors are largely accessible. Yet, a disproportionately small number of people with disabilities participate fully in mainstream tourism (Darcy 1998). Consequently, the World Health Organisation's International classification of functioning argues that a linear, cause and effect relationship between disability and participation, based primarily on disability, is both incorrect and limiting (WHO 2001). Instead, it recognises that participation in life situations involves complex interactions including social attitudes, natural and man-made structures, family attitudes and policies, with disability being only one of many contributing factors and possibly not even the key one in people's ability to participate in daily activities and life situations such as tourism. Thus, the elimination of physical barriers to access may only address part of the issue. For example, Yau, McKercher and Packers (2004) in their study relating to travelling with a disability, conclude that being a tourist with a disability involves personal initiative, accurate evaluation of one's own capabilities, the ability to collect reliable information, managing the trip, manage oneself, and reflect on experiences. As such, self-image becomes relevant.

2.1.4.2 Self image and social class

The notion of self-image or self-concept, derived from Freudian psychoanalytic theory, pertains to the concept of what the consumer believes characterise him or her. Authors, such as Grubb and Stern (1971), deal with two levels of self-concept. Firstly, the actual self-image refers to the individual's global perception of the self including his or her descriptions and evaluations, and secondly, the ideal self-image is the person's perception of what he or she would like to be. Furthermore, Pritchard (2004) notes that vacationing and travelling are often elicited as part of the ideal self. In addition, they suggest that lifestyles are reflections of self-concept and which in turn offer insight into tourists' patterns of time, spending and feeling. According to Mayo and Jarvis (1981), different social classes display distinctive life-styles which are reflected in values, interpersonal attitudes and self-perceptions. Pizam and Mansfeld (1999) suggest, for example, that the Spanish Costa Blanca appeals to the lower middle class and the working class, searching for sea, sun and fun to escape the stress and greyness of everyday life. The Caribbean or the French Riviera are destinations where higher social classes gather and feel at home. Other places, such as Florida, attract people from all social classes, but the different classes tend to separate and segregate once they arrive. Such social groupings are the consequence of the division of society on the basis of status and prestige, with education and occupation being the basic factors that explain a belonging to one social class (Mayo and Jarvis 1981). Gender is perhaps one of the most general social groups. Indeed, tourism itself is a product of a gendered society and Rao (1995:30) contends that tourism processes 'are gendered in their construction, presentation, and consumption'.

2.1.4.3 Gender

There have been a number of studies that have considered gender differences in leisure participation (Firestone and Shelton 1994; Henderson 1994; Shaw 1994 and Jackson and

Henderson 1995; Hvengaard and Dearden 1998, Cliff and Carter 2000). However, only a small number of tourism researchers, have considered gender, as a basis for segmentation, in tourism (Norris and Wall 1994; Swain 1995). The general conclusion of these particular studies was that there were differences in travel behaviour between males and females, but there were also many similarities. Slavik and Shaw (1996) noted that this highlighted the importance of using gender as a variable to identify not only what differences exist, but also the degree of difference. For example, Henderson (1994) has shown how females adopt different strategies to overcome, cope with or submit to the constraints that might restrict the range of available leisure activities. However, could it not also be observed that males likewise develop coping strategies and hence the difference may lie not in the strategy developed, but in the circumstances to which it is applied? This may suggest that gender itself does not affect ones ability to partake in tourism, but rather it is the social construction of gender roles within a cultural framework that influences tourist behaviour. For example, Herold, Garcia and DeMoya (2001) note that female tourists seeking sex with beach boys have been described as actually seeking romance, rather than sex with as many partners as possible. These women are described as seekers of flattery, physical contact, and the opportunity to buy gifts for their 'lover'. As Kinnaird and Hall (1994: 5) suggest tourism is a process constructed out of gendered societies and 'all aspects of tourism related development and activity embody gender relations'. Later they suggest that women's and men's differential experience of various recreational activities, and the socialization of girls and boys to enjoy and participate in gender-specific activities, have an influence on motivation and behaviour. Kinnaird and Hall (1994) also point out that all societies, whether host or guest, embody a changing set of gender perceptions, stereotypes and relations, and articulate these as part of their individual notions of 'reality'. In so doing, Kinnaird and Hall (1994) have noted that in tourism brochures men are associated with action and power, while women are associated with passivity and availability. Pritchard (2004) claims that such representations may convey many potential meanings, one meaning tends to be privileged over others within marketing which is invariably male-orientated and heterosexual. Such tourism representations are mediated by cultural and ideological

structures and the advertising agencies that create them have long been male-dominated, privileging particular masculine scripts (Pritchard and Morgan 2000). According to Pritchard (2004: 321) it is therefore not surprising that despite the diversity of the market, the representations seen in the travel media privileges the 'male norm'. As such, Wright (2001) demonstrates that representations have been and continue to be stereotypical – typically attributing youth, beauty and sexuality to women, and power and activity to men. Moreover, despite the social, cultural and economic improvements in the position of many women worldwide the wealth of academic work exploring sex, gender and society, the essence or extent of these representations of gender division have hardly changed (Pritchard 2001).

Such divisions in society are defined by Sears, Peplau and Taylor (1991) as reference groups which are used by the individual as a standard for his or her own attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviour. Culture can be considered as a broad, impersonal reference group consisting of the knowledge, behaviours, customs and techniques socially acquired by individuals. It includes beliefs, values, norms, signs, habits and normative behaviour. Indeed, according to Pizam and Manfeld (1999) all these facets of the individual consumer are influenced by the social and cultural structure in which the consumer is embedded.

2.1.4.4 Cultural influences

As noted by Ryan (1997) tourist behaviour is multi-motivational and while based around a few essential motives, the expression of such behaviour is extremely diverse. As such, several approaches to defining market segments have been suggested in the literature which have long been recognised as useful techniques in the study of tourist behaviour (Yuksel, Kilinc and Yuksel 2004). This has involved dividing the market into distinct and homogenous groups in terms of geographic, socio-demographic, psychographic and/or behaviour characteristics. Notwithstanding the contributions of such extensive tourist behaviour research, very few cross-cultural studies particularly in terms of cultural

awareness and differences have been conducted (Prentice 2004; Yuskel and Yuskel 2001; Reisinger and Turner 1998; Chadee and Mattsson 1996; Bitner, Booms and Tetreault 1990). However, although such research is scant, understanding the characteristics of international tourists' behaviour and attributes in relation to the total attractiveness of overseas destinations has been addressed to some extent in the international travel literature, in an effort to facilitate the lucrative business of international tourism (Chen and Hsu 2000). For example, Reisinger and Turner (1997) identified eight dimensions that reflect the cultural differences between Indonesian and Australian populations that may be important between receiving destinations and international tourists. A broad based multi-cultural training for all tourism employees was recommended in order to enhance understanding of the international tourists from different cultural backgrounds to benefit both the host and tourist communities.

March (1997) conducted a qualitative research study on the travelling behaviour of Asians outbound markets and found that Asian tourists possess the following similarities; the tendency for group rather than individual travel; the general desire for luxury and brand name-shopping experiences; and the disinclination to give direct feedback to the service provider about service quality. Keng and Cheng (1999) conducted an exploratory study for Singapore vacationers where they identified that the growing number of Singaporeans visiting overseas destinations, was a reflection of affluence among the new generation who no longer, like their forefathers only worked hard and refrained from engaging in leisurely pursuits. Based on their findings, they argued that it was essential for marketers of tourism products to Singaporeans to have a better understanding of these changing motivations and behavioural patterns so that market opportunities can be better exploited to maximise the impact of the marketing expenditure. Yuksel, Kiline and Yuksel (2004) note that travellers from different countries may have different preferences and expectations and suggest that cross-national differences exist which may have a significant impact on the behaviour of both consumers and marketing decision-makers.

There is also debate, albeit in the context of tourist behaviour and tourist-host impacts, which concerns, the role of nationality and national cultures, (Tyne, Lawson and Tood 2005). Dann (1993: 109) notes that “generating and destination societies are no longer culturally uniform, if indeed they ever were” and suggests the use of other variables to assess tourism such as personality, culture, social class and lifestyle. However Shaw, Agarwal and Bull (2000) contend there are difficulties in examining such variables for little is known of their interaction with nationality. Consequently, the influence of national cultures and nationality warrants further investigation and the ensuing discussion highlights the relevance of nationality in the context of tourist behaviour.

2.2 The influence of nationality on tourist behaviour

The study of nationality and tourist behaviour is limited as focus has traditionally been placed on its influence on the choice of information sources used by travellers (Chen and Gursoy, 2000), on destination choice (Sheldon and Fox 1988; Richardson and Crompton 1988), and on tourist expectations (McCleary, Choi and Weaver 1998; Becker, Murrmann, Murrmann and Cheung 1999; Mueller, Palmer, Mack and McMullan 2003). Mattial’s (2000) study in the hospitality area provides strong support that customers’ evaluations of service encounters might be culturally bound while Yuksel and Yuksel (2005) identified significant differences among Turkish, Dutch and Yugoslavian tourists’ evaluation of their shopping experiences on holiday. Chadee and Mattsson (1996) identified cross-cultural differences when measuring lower levels of satisfaction from eating out experiences, sightseeing tours and accommodation. The managerial implication of such divergence is of great importance. Hospitality and tourism organisations might benefit from providing cultural training for their customer-contact employees (Mattial 2000). In summation, these studies suggest that the behaviour of members of the same culture might be predicted to a certain extent (Mykletun, Crotts and Mykletun 2001).

Several other studies (e.g. Pizam and Sussmann, 1995; Pizam 2000) indirectly investigate nationality by examining the perceptions that British, Israeli, Korean and Dutch tour guides

had of tourists of different nationalities on escorted motor-tours. These studies showed that nationality influences the tourist culture and that there was a significant perceived difference between the nationalities (Reisinger and Turner, 2003). Nationality however, has also been examined from the perspective of residents and entrepreneurs in tourist communities, and again these studies indicate the existence of perceived cultural differences between nationalities. For example, Brewer's (1984) study conducted in San Felipe, Baja, California and Mexico suggests that local residents have stereotypes of all Americans which lead to 'specific' stereotypes applying to American tourists. Boissevain and Inglott (1979) observe that the Maltese characterised Swedish tourists as misers, and French and Italians as excessively demanding, while Pi-Sunyer (1978) found that Catalans stereotyped English tourists as stiff, socially conscious, honest and dependable.

Despite these studies, there is widespread agreement that understanding of the influence of nationality on tourist behaviour is still lacking. For example, Plog (1990), Armstrong *et al* (1997), Munson and McIntyre (1979), Clarke (2000), O'Halloran and Hensarling (1991), McKay and Fesenmaier (1997), Hall and Mitchell (2000), Kim and Lee (2000) and Oh and Hsu (2001) all emphasise a lack of research relating to the cultural differences and similarities of tourists, and have suggested that the rapid globalisation of the tourist phenomenon and its international nature warrants a better understanding of the tourist. In particular however, there is a dearth of research of the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery. This is surprising given that tourism imagery is critical to the success of many destinations. Thus, with the exception of nationality, factors that influence consumer's perceived image of a destination pre- and post-visitation, and the influence of imagery on the behaviour of tourists has been comprehensively analysed (Ashworth and Goodall 1998; Mansfeld 1992; Chon 1990). However, to facilitate an enquiry of the relationship between nationality and tourism imagery, it is first necessary to articulate the meaning of 'nationality' in a tourism context to acknowledge the parameters that restrict our understanding of the influence (if any) of nationality on tourism destination imagery.

2.3 Nationality

Nationality and nation identity are in a sense separate but related concepts and it is never easy to discuss one without passing over the boundaries of the other (Palmer 1999). This shifting dichotomy highlights the first difficulty. That is the many, varied and complex theories of nationality, the nation and nationalism which have been proposed over the years with scholars such as Kedourie (1960), Seton-Watson (1977), Gellner (1983), Smith (1983, 1991) and Anderson (1991). However, it is not the intention here to enter into a lengthy debate about theories of nationalism generally, but rather to discuss those aspects that relate to the concept of nationality and national identity, how it develops, and how it is communicated and reproduced.

Nationalists around the world cling to a notion of bounded cultures that make them distinct from others. Indeed, Daniels (1993) argues that one effect of globalisation has been resistance in the form of increased nationalism to what is perceived to be the erosion of national cultures and that increased mixing of cultures is seen to pose a threat to the survival of such cultures. However, a fundamental flaw in nationalist ideology is the adherence to a notion of static culture that has been free from change, and its reliance on the mythical history of the origin of the nation. For example, English nationalists define Englishness as distinct, which is used to justify anti-immigrationist ideas and anti-Europeanism. Yet, England and indeed the whole of the British Isles have always been hybrid. Daniels (1993) describes the concept of hybridity (mixing) as a more progressive way of analysing cultures. It adheres to neither the 'melting-pot' nor the 'mosaic' idea of cultural mixing, but rather sees different cultures coming together and informing each other in different ways to produce something entirely new. Therefore, the idea of nationhood, based on fixed, bounded and unchanging cultures is an ideological creation that masks profound cultural divisions of gender, race, class and region within a nation state, and ignores the fact that, in reality all cultures and nations are hybrid and dynamic. Thus, the idea of the nation is relevant, and it is useful in reviewing the emergence and

growth of nations, as the concept of the nation underpins broader theories on which nationality and national identity are based.

2.3.1 The nation and the nation state

Two very broad and influential schools of thought on the concept of the nation can be discerned. At one extreme are those scholars who conceive the nation as steeped in antiquity, as timeless, natural and even universal. In this respect, nations are believed to be automatic extensions of kinship relationships with historical importance that might fluctuate, but which are nonetheless always present waiting to be discovered (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992:23). For these scholars, nations thus predate the emergence of state structures. At the other extreme are those scholars who advance a view of the nation as a particularly modern concept which emerged as a result of contingent political, economic and technological factors which exist only in modernity. The former group of scholars can be broadly classified as 'primordialists' and the latter as 'modernists' (Smith 1986).

However, outside of these two main categories, there are two other groupings. The first group is less radical than the primordialists, for whom nations are not natural outgrowths of human existence, but for whom nations are nevertheless viewed as immemorial, as steeped in antiquity and as old as history. These can be deemed 'perennialists' (Smith 1996, 1998). It is axiomatic that a primordialist is also a perennialist but the opposite does not hold. Finally, the second group seeks to straddle the chasm between primordialists and modernists by accepting the thesis that the nation is a modern reality but a reality which is nevertheless fundamentally based on immemorial ethnic group loyalties.

However, the idea of the nation is a highly complex phenomenon and it is difficult to place the mentioned theoretical approaches into these neatly defined taxonomies as will become apparent in the ensuing discussion.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that if it is agreed that the nation is politically determined and is an interpretative construct, then it becomes difficult to continue to discuss theories of the nation outside of the fundamentally political doctrine of nationalism

(Arnason 1990). This is because nationalism is a philosophy which 'holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent' (Gellner 1983:1). In nationalism, it is believed that each state (the 'political unit' or the formal constitutional structure) must necessarily have its own nation. Those who adhere to the doctrine of nationalism can therefore see no logical distinction between the nation and the state. In other words, a nation is a state and a state is a nation (or at least for nationalists this should be the ideal state of affairs). Indeed, the doctrine of nationalism has become so widely accepted that the hyphenated term 'nation-state' has become commonplace.

According to Chambers (2003), the most extensive writings on the idea of the nation and nationalism emanate from writers who subscribe to the modernity of these concepts.

Modernist theories of the nation stand firmly opposed to primordialist perspectives and less radical perennialist variants. The modernist approach is anti-historicist and rational and criticises primordialist and perennialist arguments for their essentialism (i.e. the belief that the nation is based on a fundamental common core) and their naturalism (i.e. in the case of the primordialists, the belief that the nation is immanent to human existence).

However, in answer to these criticisms, it must be noted firstly that Anderson's use of the term 'imagined', contrary to Smith's claim, should not be equated with ideas of fabrication or falsity. Rather, 'imagined' in this context denotes creativity and invention. In other words, when Anderson claims that a nation is an 'imagined political community', he is not making any ontological statement about whether nations actually exist in a real world. It would be spurious to deny that there are entities which can be described as nations, but the 'reality' of their existence does not address the crucial issue of whether what exists is the result of organic or created processes. What Anderson is in fact suggesting, is the inventive nature of the nation. In other words, Anderson suggests that nations are an imagined reality. Indeed, Anderson himself repudiates his critics for equating 'invention' with 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than with 'imagining' and 'creativity'. He suggests that criticisms intimate that:

'True' communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations. In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness but by the style in which they have been imagined (Anderson, 1991:6).

Secondly, this researcher agrees that Anderson arguably equated the emergence of the nation with the development of print capitalism. McCrone (2001) suggests that print capitalism refers to the control of media (oral, visual or audial) by small groups of influential people within a given society to distil a particular idea. In the context of the emergence of the nation, it may be argued that print capitalism was not as influential outside of Western Europe, and it might indeed be that print capitalism did not, by itself, lead to the development of the national idea. However, whatever the media used, it is still plausible to assume that the media would have been propagating an idea that was created by a small elite who were usually the only grouping to have at their disposal the means and political authority to disseminate mass messages. Thus, this study supports Anderson's 'imagined political community' and suggests that the nation did not represent the spontaneous explosion of some natural or organic, widespread, commonly shared, cultural consciousness.

Yet, there is still an important question that remains unanswered. If one subscribes to a wholly modernist perspective on the development of the nation, does this imply that nations are (and were) created out of thin air? Does the nation, in fact, possess any kind of 'reality' outside of the way it has been 'imagined' and represented? Renan (1990) describes this essence as a soul, a spiritual principle whereby a nation is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice and devotion; a grand solidarity of members who wish to live a communal life. Connor (1994) maintains that conceptualising a nation is difficult because the essence of a nation is intangible. Yet it is this essence, this psychological bond that joins a people while at the same time differentiating them from all others. This idea of community is taken further by Smith (1991) who argues that a nation is first thought of as a community of common descent behind which certain beliefs about

what constitutes a nation, as opposed to any other type of collective cultural identity. Is there not some inherent 'truth' in Smith's (1991:159) argument that:

It may be possible to manufacture traditions and to package imagery, but images and traditions will be sustained only if they have some popular resonance, and they will have that resonance only if they can be harmonised and made continuous with a perceived collective past. All those monuments to the fallen – ceremonies of remembrance, statues to heroes, and celebrations of anniversaries – however newly created in their present form, take their meaning and their emotional power from a presumed and felt collective past.

While it is debatable whether there is indeed an 'actual' history as Connor (1994) has suggested, what is relevant in his argument, is the privileged role that is played by subjective factors such as perceptions and feelings in the formation of the nation.

Thus, what is important here is that individuals come to identify themselves in relation to a nation composed of people with similar ways of behaving, communicating and thinking: what Gellner (1983) refers to as a mixture of loyalty and identification leading to a willed adherence to the rules of the group. In other words, this willed adherence consents to the existence of the nation as a large scale solidarity to which they choose to belong (Renan 1990). For Smith (1991) this national will is important because a nation can only exist if everyone accepts the aspirations, sentiments and goals of the nation. This does not mean that different interpretations cannot be accommodated, but that the 'raison d'être' of the nation must be accepted by all: what Rousseau has called 'the national character' (Smith 1991). This pride, this sentiment, this character, are arguably what make a people a nation, what endows them with national symbols, ceremonies and customs of a nation. They are the concepts that make the nation visible and distinct for every member and which help to communicate the nation to others:

They include the obvious attributes of nations – flags, anthems, parades, coinages, capital cities, oaths and museums of folklore, war memorials, passports, frontiers – as well as more hidden aspects such as national recreations, the countryside, popular heroes and heroines, fairy tales ... all these distinctive customs, mores, styles and ways of acting and feeling that are shared by the members of a community of historical culture (Smith 1991: 77).

Such elements help to construct a national identity. A nation is all these things, and it is through these symbols that the 'deep horizontal comradeship' is communicated and translated into what can be termed a sense of national pride (Anderson 1991:7).

Nevertheless, what constitutes national identity can change over time and as Clifford (1989) illustrates 20th Century identities no longer presuppose continuous cultures as traditions. Everywhere individuals and groups improvise local performances from collected pasts, drawing on foreign media, symbols and languages. Likewise, multiple identities can and do exist along side each other (Eade 1997). However, if the nation is the result of a creative imagination, logical questions should include – who has imagined the nation? For what purpose(s) has the nation been imagined? The answer it is proposed, can be found in the power politics of the state. Again, one is able to discern the analytic importance of understanding a perspective which sees the state as preceding the nation.

Yet, if a nation is a construct created within relationships of power, if the nation is indeed 'imagined', what explains the deep emotional attachment that people feel for their nation? It is suggested that the answer to this might be found in the nature of the psychological construct of identification (McCabe and Stoke 2004). Spencer and Wollman (2002) suggest that group identity in particular necessarily involves some kind and process of categorisation in order to distinguish those who are in the group and those who are outside. Such categorisation is as Billig (1995: 89) states inherently divisive because categories segment the world, dividing 'us' from 'them', 'insiders' from 'outsiders'. This raises the issue then of how boundaries are constructed, whether they are primarily imposed from without or chosen from within, and to what extent the sense of being included, of sharing a given national identity, is self-determined or imposed by others.

2.3.2 National identity

According to Collini (1979: 15), national identities are built around three 'essentially contestable' terms; people, land and history. In the context of pleas for statehood, nationalism describes a people, a territory and a historical justification for the exclusive use of the territory by that people. The stories of ethnic primordialism that buttress these claims are often mythical or even fictional (Smith 1986). Traditions are invented to diffuse and sustain the stories (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983). Print culture may be a crucial prerequisite for the success of these nationalisms (Anderson 1983). Land has received less attention from scholars of nationalism but the territorial dimensions and integrity of the putative nation-state are central claims in most nationalism (Smith and Williams 1983). The stories that nationalism tell about land are many and various. They include broadly environmentalist arguments that connect a particular culture to the unique environment that produced it, primordial arguments about first occupancy, blood-and-soil arguments about the sacrifices made to humanise a particular landscape, and colonial arguments about loss and dispossession. (Kearns 2001). These discourses are rarely self-critical but they are often effective (Dean 1994). In Kearns's (2001:888) study on Irish nationalism what influences this discussion which is described as a 'historico-graphical debate' is not just modern politics, but also the dilemmas of dealing with national identities organised around extreme situations. Kearns (2001:888) contends that there is:

A moral black hole to trauma sucking in nuance and leaving only extremism beyond its pull. Irish history lends itself to apocalypse because Irish identities must negotiate the Famine, the mass emigration and the partition.

Cleary (2000) argues that it is only with its passing that a trauma explicitly impels itself upon a consciousness that returns obsessively to unfinished business. A first step towards understanding and living with a traumatic history is to acknowledge it and its effects. Anderson (1991) who it will be recalled initiated the concept of the nation as an 'imagined community' sought to address the question as to why it is that people become attached to an invention of their imaginations. Anderson (1991:144) suggests that the nation inspires positive and not negative feelings of intense love which are often

demonstrated in the 'cultural products of nationalism – poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts'. The language used by these cultural products implies that the nation is natural and immanent to the people and can command intense loyalty from the people. Anderson states this point thus:

For most ordinary people of whatever class the whole point of the nation is that it is interestless. Just for that reason, it can ask for sacrifices... dying for one's country, which usually one does not choose, assumes a moral grandeur (1991:144).

Thus, what seems evident is that the need to identify is an inherent human drive, the absence of which can lead to 'identity crises' at the personal level. Freud noted that:

The mutual tie between members of a group is in the nature of an identification ... based upon an important emotional quality; and we may suggest that this common quality lies in the nature of the tie with the leader' (1991:137).

It may follow from Freud's argument that if the idea of the nation plays the leading role, then the individual, already imbued with a psychological need to identify, will first identify with the symbols of the nation, and then only secondarily with his/her fellow citizens. This may explain why it is that symbols and various ways of representing the nation prove so powerful particularly at times when a national idea is evoked (for example The Olympics).

Thus, a national identity is a personal concept as individual's draw upon the differing identities available to them in order to construct their own sense of who they are and how they fit in. Available identities are influenced by the state (Palmer 2005) and according to Bloom (1990:73) while there may be competing identifications with the nation-state, "the nation-state controls an array of communications and functions which bear down heavily on citizens". There is the suggestion here that through processes of socialisation, the state ensures that identification with the nation is accepted and internalised by the people within its geographical terrain. In fact, it has already been noted that it is virtually impossible for the individuals of nations to be in contact with each other such that identification ties can develop. Successive generations share this identification with a particular nation through socialisation. In this way, the idea of the nation is perpetuated

and continuously repeated. Billig (1995) coined the term 'banal nationalism', to indicate how the nation is constantly 'flagged' in everyday life through certain rituals and symbols which come to appear as natural and immemorial. Thus, individuals construct identity with places and associated graphic images of places and objects. Identity is fundamental in everyday life: all places (nations) have identity. According to Relph (1976: 61), "Identity of place is comprised of three interrelated physical features of appearance, observable activities and functions and meaning or symbols". Both tangible or physical identity and intangible identity related to existential distinctiveness and human experiences are inextricably interwoven with place meaning and significance. They affect the way individuals picture places and objects and commodify them for all sorts of purposes including tourism. In this way stereotypical signs are encoded with invented or assumed traditions (Taylor 1999).

The discussion so far has privileged the thesis that the concepts of nationality, the nation and national identity are closely interconnected, perceived in an Andersonian sense as imagined political constructs each of which is immanent to human existence, rather than being obtained since time immemorial. The nation as an imagined community is predicated, however, not only on spoken and written languages but also on a wider range of cultural fictions (Bennington 1994). As Sharp explains (1996:98):

Each drawing of maps of nation state territory, each playing of the national anthem or laying of wreaths at war memorials, every spectatorship of national sports events and so on represents ... [a] daily affirmation of national identification.

In particular, banal acts such as the singing of a national anthem or the victory of a national sports team represent an experience of simultaneity. At such moments, people who are unknown to each other sing the same words or celebrate the same event, aware that others whom they do not know and cannot see or hear, are doing so too. In such ways, members of a nation often experience a sense of union with their fellow citizens even though nothing connects them at all but an imagined sound or image (Anderson 1983). As such, Donald (1993:167) agrees that 'a nation does not express itself through

its culture: it is culture that produces ‘the nation’. Thus, nationalism is a belief that the world’s people are divided into nations and that each of these nations has the right to self-determination, either as self-governing unites within existing national states or as national states of their own (Ignatieff 1994). As such, nationality is a ‘relational term’ (Parker, Russo, Sommer and Yaeger (1992:5) referring to a nation’s imagined community while national identity refers to ‘the extent to which people may be seen or see themselves as members of a given nation’ (Spencer and Wollman 2002) ‘determined not on the basis of its own intrinsic properties but as a function of what it (presumably) is not’. Consequently, national identity is invoked, constructed and reproduced within ones perceived nationality which Giddens (1985) sees as the psychological dynamics of nationalism. Thus, nationality refers to this perceived homogeneity which is communicated to individuals via the symbolic content of the nation’s institutions, values and beliefs while individual’s experience of Giddens’ conceptual community refers to ones perceived national identity (Giddens 1985). In other words, national identities have been shaped and formed much more on the basis of nationalist imaginings than by any inherent or fixed features of a reified culture. Thus, although nationality and national identity are separate constructs their meaning are inter-related and in order to fully understand each construct it is necessary to consider both in tandem.

However, Hall (1991) argues that such concepts are weakening and that the process of globalisation augurs the demise of notions like the nation and national identity. According to Hall (1991:26-27):

One of the things which happen when the nation-state begins to weaken, becoming less convincing and less powerful, is that the response seems to go in two ways simultaneously. It goes above the nation-state and it goes below it. It goes global and local in the same moment.

In this light, the discussion will now seek to briefly address the possible effect of globalisation on the continued viability of a national concept. It is important to note that there is a vast body of literature on the subject of globalisation. Therefore, the following discussion does not presume to give a comprehensive review of the issues or arguments

surrounding this process, but instead touches briefly on some of the issues pertinent to this investigation. As the central focus of this research is the degree to which (if any) nationality influences tourist behaviour, this study is concerned not with what will be the end result of globalisation, but how the concept of the nation has adapted in the context of the globalisation of the tourist gaze.

2.3.3 Globalisation

It is generally agreed that globalisation involves what Harvey (1989:10) terms this sense that life is speeding in 'time-space compression' which has had significant impact on the economic, political and cultural relationships between nations (Bauman 1990; Robertson 1990; Robins 1999; Hall 1999; Salazar 2005). However, while there is wide agreement about the generic features of globalisation, there is not such agreement on its impact and consequences, particularly with regard to the nation. Two main interpretations dominate the discussion. The first highlights the global aspects of change which suggests that it is possible to identify a common culture – the idea that everywhere is becoming the same – dominated by the USA and most easily recognised in terms such as 'Coca-Colaization', 'McDonaldisation' and 'Hollywoodisation' (Cochrane 1995:250). This cultural globalisation involves the movement of people, objects and images around the world with no historical equivalent of this global reach and volume of 'cultural traffic' (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton 1999; Waters 2001). The second interpretation places emphasis on the local and localisation of people's everyday lives and experiences. Instead of homogenisation, stress is placed on the diversity of culture, on the ways in which global icons are reinterpreted locally so that they take on different meanings in different places. As Appadurai (1996:295) states: "The central problem of today's global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation". Thus, the evolution of multinational companies has been characterised by growing conflict between the advocates of the convergence and divergence hypotheses (Pizam 2000). Proponents of the philosophy of global organisations, products and brands (convergence) such as

Levitt (1983), state that economies, organisations, and markets are becoming more and more homogeneous.

Arguments that support the convergence process are based either on the contention that some normative systems of economic structure, organisation design, managerial processes, and marketing processes are universally superior, or that they are technologically indispensable. These individuals argue that convergence is a process induced by industrialisation, which is based on science and technology, two supranational processes, which are independent of governmental forms and national cultures. Through trade, immigration, economic aid, and military channels, there is a worldwide diffusion of industrial technology from developed to developing nations (Pizam 1993). The worldwide diffusion of technology creates a 'logic' of industrialism, since it sets up a range of tasks and problems. The pressure toward efficient production will ensure that the most effective ways of tackling these common tasks will be adopted worldwide. As this process continues, organisations tackling the same tasks, in whichever culture, will become more and more alike (Open University 1985). Researchers supporting the convergence hypothesis argue that individuals, irrespective of culture are forced to adopt industrial attitudes such as nationalism, secularism and mechanical time concerns in order to comply with the imperative of industrialisation (Okechuku and Yee 1991). Customers have common preferences; differences are disappearing. Hence companies do not have to look for differences among the desires of customers but for commonalities (Levitt 1983; Ohmae 1989).

Scholars who support the divergence process argue that economies, organisations and markets have always been, still are, and always will be culture bound (Pizam 2000). For example, Douglas and Wind (1987) consider convergence in consumer behaviour across countries to be just a myth. Despite the fact that some companies target global customer segments, numerous other companies adapt their product lines to the specific characteristics of individual markets. Advocates of this view claim that divergence

remains both in the demand and in the supply of services. Also this divergence is based on the cultural differences in the countries across the world (Douglas and Wind 1987).

Child (1981) summaries the convergence-divergence debate suggesting that the debate is often due to the level of analysis of the studies. Studies concluding convergence focus on macro level issues such as the structure of the organisation and its technology, while research concluding divergence analyse micro-level issues such as behaviour of people within a specific place. Pizam (1993) agrees with Child (1981) concluding that in the hotel sector, national culture has little impact on the organisational structure but significantly affects the behaviour of its people. In other words, products may be globalised, but it does not follow that they are consumed and translated in the same way the world over. This investigation argues that processes of globalisation and nationalism, while they appear to be contradictory tendencies, when examined closely, are not substantially different. Smith (1991: 169) already identified as a prolific writer on nations and nationalism declares that:

Contrary to much current thinking, it is the very political configuration of states into wider regional systems that helps to entrench the power of the nation and fan the flames of nationalists everywhere.

Further, sceptics argue that central to the concepts of the nation and nationalism are issues of exclusion and inclusion and it is clear that even within the context of globalisation there is still a great deal of “attention paid to the question of who is part of the collective [and] what the criteria for membership or exclusion should be” (Bhabha 1999:12). DuGay (1997:20) notes that ‘whatever the progress of cosmopolitan orientations, the warm appeal of national affiliations and attachments remain tenacious’. Additional support for this argument is provided by Hall (1999), and Robertson (1990) while Billig (1995:8) claims that even within the global context, “nationhood is still being reproduced; it can still call for the ultimate sacrifices and daily its symbols and assumptions are flagged”.

While supporters of the convergence debate may contend that the European Union (EU) is a prime example of a supra-national organisation which is rendering the nation-state irrelevant, it is nonetheless apparent that the EU has been significantly influenced by the national concept. According to Clarke (2000), the European Union has a programme to construct and promote a European culture and a European identity, while Shore (1993:786) contends that the European Commission (EC) has tried to develop a shared 'European identity' as a "tool for promoting the EC's political legitimacy as well as the goal of ever closer union". Thus, the EU is working towards 'ever closer union' in a political sense and hence perceived the creation of a common identity, as a requirement for continued political integration. This reinforces the need to recognise that it is states that make nations and also reiterates the degree of creativity involved in the development of the national concept. This presents according to Penrose (2001), difficulties with assuming or asserting an identity between nation and state. Penrose (2001) argues that states should be defined by democratic rather than by demotic principles. For example, Lloyds (1999) finds a hidden anarchist tradition in some versions of Irish nationalism, and assuming too readily the identification of nation with state, can for Penrose, leave minority rights ignored and for Lloyds, can obscure the strong critique of statism offered from within the nationalism tradition. In addition, it demonstrates the power politics involved in the national imagination as certain groups, though existing within the geographical parameters of the nation, are treated as 'Other' and excluded from received interpretations of the nation.

In the context of tourist behaviour, such issues are relevant, particularly in the study of destination imagery, when ascertaining if disparity exists when tourists are presented with the same place imagery as a consequence of perceived nationality and national identity. Similarly, the extent to which the projected image relies on nationality and national identities to represent the place is relevant. To expand this line of enquiry, introducing a review of the literature as it relates to tourism destination imagery is appropriate before concluding with a discussion of the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery.

2.4 Tourism destination imagery (TD1)

Imagery is one of the most researched aspects of tourism marketing and there is a broad agreement regarding the influence of the content of tourism images on the behaviour of individuals (Ashworth and Goodall 1998; Mansfeld 1992). Since tourism image is defined as an individual's overall perception or total set of impressions of a place (Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Hunt 1975; Phelps 1986) or as the mental portrayal of a destination (Alhemod and Armstrong 1996; Kotler, Haider and Rein 1993; Middleton 1994; Milman and Pizam 1995; Seaton and Bennett 1996), it is logical to think that it will exercise some influence over tourists' behaviour (Cooper *et al* 1998). Thus, tourists' behaviour can be expected to be partly conditioned by the image that they have of a destination. Tourist destination images are important because they influence both the decision-making behaviour of potential tourists (Mayo 1973, Crompton 1979b) and the levels of satisfaction regarding the tourist experience (Chon 1992). As Mayo (1975) suggests the image of a destination area is a critical factor in a tourist's destination choice process. Whether an image is a true representation of what any given region has to offer the tourist is less important than the mere existence of the image in the mind of the person. Whyne-Hammond (1985) develop this idea further, suggesting that perceptions of foreign countries and their inhabitants may be wildly inaccurate.

However, probing destination images is an immensely important exercise because action proceeds on the basis of such subjective reality (Mercer 1971). Consequently, destination image has been studied by researchers in psychology, geography, marketing and tourism, recreation and leisure. Such studies indicate that destination images are subject temporally and culturally-specific, although few studies have successfully tackled a definition of destination image. Indeed, Pearce (1988:162) has commented that "image is one of those terms that will not go away, a term with vague and shifting meanings". Yet, it is evident that destination image is multi-faceted and multi-dimensional, and it is not only tourists who hold images of tourism places, although Morgan and Pritchard (1998) suggest that such studies focusing on tourists' perceptions have dominated. Tourist

intermediaries such as travel and advertising agencies (often based in the tourism generating region), the industry (suppliers in the destination), the destination's state (governments, states and authorities), and indigenous population (often neglected, but key stakeholders in terms of tourism development) all have differing images of the same destination. The tourist image is therefore highly inter-subjective.

This multi-faceted role of image makes its analysis extremely complex – for instance, it has to consider the role of their image creator and the meaning systems which informs their creations, which in turn reinforces particular ways of imaging or seeing the world. Morgan and Pritchard (1998) for instance, cite an example of how a Madison Avenue advertising executive sees tourism in Fiji or the Seychelles as probably far removed from how the indigenous population would see their own 'reality'. Similarly, the way a New Yorker perceives tourism in Ireland may be very different to how the Irish see themselves and their country. The implications of this are felt far beyond a difference of view since, the former has the authority to represent the latter and thus contribute to the reinforcement of a particular ideology (Morgan and Pritchard 1998). While there is clearly an element of subjectivity in place definition, authors such as Hughes (1992), Said (1991) and Urry (1990) have drawn attention to the evolution of predominant ways of seeing the world over time, and in this sense there are commonly held views which underpin the construction of images, myths and clichés of places and people. Critics may argue that all of us have differing expectations and perceived realities of destinations. However, this is to deny the pervasive influence of social, historical and cultural processes such as stereotyping. Similarly, the social group within which an individual moves greatly influences perceptions (Kent 1989). Thus, understanding the differing images that visitors and non-visitors have of a destination is invaluable, enabling the salient attributes of the naive image and the re-evaluated image to be incorporated into tourism marketing planning (Selby and Morgan 1996).

Marketers are interested in the concept of tourism destination image mainly because it relates to decision-making and sales of tourism products and services. According to

MacInnis and Price (1987) imagery pervades the whole consumption experience. Before purchase, vicarious consumption may take place through imagery. During consumption, imagery can add value and increase satisfaction. After consumption, imagery can have a reconstructive role in which a person relives the experience via memories and vacation souvenirs. According to Johnson and Thomas (1992) destination images have an influence right from the time tourists choose their holiday destination. Dann (1996a) agrees with the importance of image to destination selection and offers an extensive discussion on the degree to which destination images control and determine the behaviour of tourists. The influence of tourism image on the choice of holiday destination has been considered by various authors who developed decision-making models (Crompton and Ankomah 1993; Gartner 1989; Goodall 1998; Kent 1990; Mathieson and Wall 1982; Stabler 1990) and these models predicate the notion that destinations with strong and positive images experience higher demand from tourists. Woodside and Lyonski (1990) for example demonstrate a clear relationship between positive perceptions of destinations and positive purchase decisions. Although these perceptions may not be based on 'fact' or first-hand experience, they nevertheless exert a vital influence on a potential tourist's decision to visit a destination. Similarly, negative images, even if unjustified, will deter potential tourists and result in a decision not to purchase. According to Ross (1993b) in the absence of knowledge or prior experience, image fulfils an important function insofar as destinations with strong, discriminatory and recognisable images have more probability of being chosen. But, it is not only the pre-visit perceived image that is important. Perceptions of the destination's image post-visit also influences tourist behaviour as repeat visitation often depends on the destination's capacity to provide experiences that correspond with the tourists needs and which fits the image they have of the destination (Joppe, Martin and Waalen 2001).

2.5 Factors which influence interpretations of destination imagery

Among the numerous image studies, some have found differences in image perceptions between pre-visitors and post-visitors (Chon 1991); before and after trips (Andreu, Bigne

and Cooper 2000); before and after advertising campaigns (Perry, Izraeli and Perry 1976); between first-time and repeat visitors (Fakeye and Crompton (1991); between visitors and non-visitors (Hu and Ritchie 1993); before and after internationally significant political events (Gartner and Shen 1992); and between ideal and actual images (Botha, Crompton and Kim 1999). Irrespective of such research contributions, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) and McKay and Fesenmaier (1997) point out there have been very few empirical studies aimed at analysing which forces influence an individual's image of a given destination, and there is little research into those, which influence the formation and structure of this image. However, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) propose a general theoretical model of image-formation factors which differentiates between stimulus factors (information sources, previous experience and distribution) and personal factors (psychological and social). This will assist in providing a comprehensive review of the factors which influence interpretations of tourism imagery as it involves both information obtained from different sources and the characteristics of the individual.

2.5.1 Information sources

Information sources also known as stimulus factors (Baloglu and McCleary 1999) or image forming agents (Gartner 1993) are the forces which influence the forming of perceptions and evaluations. They refer to the amount and diverse nature of information sources to which individuals are exposed, including destination information acquired as a result of pre-visitation. From the perspective of behaviour in the choice of destination, various authors (Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Mansfeld 1992) have proposed models that attempt to explain this behaviour. For example, Gartner (1993) believes that the image forming process can be regarded as a continuum of different agents or information sources which act independently to form one single image in the mind of the individual agents or information sources which act independently to form one single image in the mind of the individual. He classifies the different agents as (a) overt induced found in conventional advertising in the mass media, from information delivered by the relevant institutions in the destination, or by tour operators and wholesalers; (b) covert induced,

using celebrities in the destination's promotion activities or destination reports or articles; (c) autonomous, including mass-media broadcasting news, documentaries, films, television programmes about the place, (d) organic, involving friends and relatives based on their own knowledge or experiences; and (e) a visit to the destination itself, the end point of the continuum.

The image formed by organic, induced and autonomous sources of information is basically perceived before experiencing a destination which Phelps (1986) classifies as secondary. In contrast, the primary image is formed by actually visiting the place in question. Insofar as choice of destination involves a certain risk, the secondary sources of information play a relevant and essential role in forming images of the alternative destinations to be considered in the decision-making process. Mansfeld (1992) demonstrates that there is general agreement, although not based on empirical evidence, that the secondary sources of information fulfil three basic functions in destination choice: first, to minimise the risk that the decision entails, second, to create an image of the destination and third, to serve as a mechanism for later justification of the choice. However, the information acquired through personal experience, which forms the primary image, may differ from the secondary image. Indeed, Gartner and Hunt (1987) point out that when individuals actually visit a place, the image formed post-visitation tends to be more realistic, complex and different from the one formed through secondary sources of information.

Fahey and Crompton (1991), emphasise that there is a lack of agreement among researchers about the influence or impact of the visit on the image. Echtner and Ritchie (1993) suggest that those more familiar with the destination have images that are more holistic, psychological and unique, while those less familiar have images based more on attributes, functional aspects and common features. A number of empirical works including Baloglu and Mangalolu (2001) and Chon (1991) demonstrate that familiarity with the number of visits to, and the length of stay at a destination, all influence the perceived image. Visit intensity in terms of tourist involvement according to Beerli and

Martin (2004b) varies in line with tourists' experiences, although no research work has as yet discovered the effect of visit intensity on the image. Therefore, the primary source of information formed by personal experience or visits will influence the perceived image depending on the number of visits and their duration, or on the degree of involvement with the place during the stay. However, Um and Crompton (1990) suggest, that while beliefs about the attributes of a destination are formed by individuals being exposed to external stimuli, the nature of those beliefs will vary depending on the internal factors of the individuals.

2.5.2 Personal factors

An individual's personal characteristics, or internal factors, also affect the formation of an image as the perceived image is formed through the image projected by the destination and the individual's own needs. Individuals therefore, build their own mental picture of the place, which in turn produces their own, personal perceived images (Ashworth and Voogd 1990; Bramwell and Rawding 1996). From the perspective of consumer behaviour, personal factors refer to those that are internal to individuals (gender, age, level of education, family lifecycle, place of residence, nationality), as well as those of a psychological nature (motivations, values, personality and lifestyle). These personal factors affect one's cognitive organisation of perceptions, thus also influencing the perceptions of the environment and the resulting image.

Many of the decision process models for destination choice (Stabler 1995; Um and Crompton 1990) show that personal characteristics such as gender, age, occupation, education and social class, are internal inputs that influence the perceptions of places. A number of empirical works have attempted to identify differences in the perceived image depending on socio demographic characteristics presenting contrasting results. For example Calantone, Di Benetton, Hakam and Bojanic (1989) and Walmsley and Jenkins (1993) found some differences in the perceived image depending on gender, age, level of education, occupation, income, marital status and country of origin, while the work of

Baloglu (1997) found no such differences in the cases of gender, level of education and income. However, in the literature little attention has been paid to the influence of culture and more specifically there is a dearth of research in relation to the influence of nationality and national identity on interpretations of destination imagery.

2.6 The influence of nationality and national identity on the interpretations of destination imagery

The influence of culture is one of the most important factors likely to influence the way a traveller makes decisions and which sources of information he/she utilises to make the decision (Gursoy and Chen 2000). Several researchers suggest that culture determines the forms of communication that are acceptable and the nature and degree of external search a traveller utilises (Enel, Blackwell and Miniard 1995). As the culture of a society can be defined at different levels such as national, regional and professional culture (Trompenaars 1998), the influence of nationality and national identity on both the interpretation and creation of tourism representations is significant. Yet, in an era of the 'globalising of the tourist gaze' (Urry 2002: 161) where 'commoditisation' of cultures (Greenwood 1978) is central to the international tourism industry, few image studies have concentrated specifically on cross-national interpretations of imagery and the importance of the nation as a constituent of that image.

Tourism industries construct and communicate images of the cultural, ethnic and national identities of host populations, images which are reproduced in brochures, guidebooks and in the language of tour guides and holidays programmes. Such representations are attempts at attracting foreign visitors to holiday destinations by portraying these as exotic, mysterious or in other ways different from the every-day lives of potential travellers. In doing this, however, tourism imagery also creates a sense of 'otherness', of difference between the intended audience, the tourists and the people and culture of the destination. Irish tourism imagery can be seen as a discourse on Ireland and Irish identity, which it constructs by selectively representing certain features of Irish culture, while dismissing others. Therefore tourism destination imagery can provide individuals with another

means by which they can both define themselves and the places they visit. Thus, it is proposed that the nationalistic 'messages' of tourism imagery have an impact on how individuals conceive their own personal identity and how the nation is constructed and perceived by others.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, tourist behaviour and the factors which influence behaviour were introduced to stimulate a discussion on the relationship between nationality, national identity and tourism destination imagery. The concept of nationality, the nation and national identity were briefly outlined. Nationality is considered a socio-cultural construction, while it was suggested that the modernist interpretation of the nation is the most cogent and coherent, because it provides a convincing argument for the way the nation has emerged and developed. Convinced of the logic of a modernist interpretation, it was argued that the nation could be perceived in an Andersonian sense as an imagined political construct. Indeed, it is contended that it is through the construction of the nation, that the state is able to maintain its political legitimacy and to ensure the cohesion of disparate parts. Thus, nation and state are inextricably linked, while also recognising that one must appreciate the analytical importance of recognising that the state precedes the nation, for this possibly explains how it is that people come to share the same national idea. Indeed, the concept of a 'national' identity has important power political connotations, because the identity presented as 'national' is necessarily selective, and often reflective only of the cultures, mores and values of a particular elite group who have the means and political authority to disseminate a common national idea. Important to a national idea is therefore in the invention of traditions, symbols, images and a long historic past which are successful only in so far as they can be projected as 'real'.

It was also suggested that globalisation does not represent a transcending of the national concept but rather serves to reinforce it. However, this is not to say that the nation as an idea and an entity will continue to dominate the global scenario for this would be a

reductionist argument. Rather, it is suggested that it is important to understand how the nation can and will adapt to the changes occasioned by globalisation. Questions such as 'who are we?' and 'where do we fit in' are becoming increasingly common in today's world. Shifting boundaries, loyalties and spaces are evident in conflicts and disputes that have arisen since the end of the Second World War (Palmer 1999). Around the world an increasing number of nation states are under threat from nationalist movements, which threaten to dissolve them from below. Likewise, processes of globalisation and the emergence of supranational and transnational organisations are alleged to have made the boundaries of nation states increasingly irrelevant, and therefore to be threatening the sovereignty of nation states from above. The growing importance of social identifications such as gender and ethnicity also stand accused of undermining citizens' attachments and loyalty to the state. As a result of these trends, and of the recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependence of nations, various international regimes of governance and new nations of global citizenship are emerging.

This is not to suggest, however, that a 'nation' is a natural and timeless spatial entity, a product of the inherent relationship between a group of people and a particular place (Valentine 2001) but rather it is a social invention, one whose boundaries and very existence can be fluid and contested. However, the seemingly timeless rituals of traditions and institutions often obscure the production of national identity to such an extent that it is taken for granted as 'natural' or inherent (Sharp 1996). In this light, it is suggested that the development of a national identity influences and is influenced by the ways in which tourism destination imagery is constructed and understood and hence is partly responsible for lending legitimacy to the nation and national identities. Yet, images serve many functions at many different levels and in tourism, images are used in a number of practical ways to convey ideas and messages. Firstly, images communicate messages about places and products, and secondly they can be used to redefine and reposition such places and products. Thirdly, images can be used to counter negative and enhance positive, perceptions of products, places and peoples. Finally, images can be used to specifically target key market areas, especially in an age of highly targeted and

sophisticated market segmentation. Yet, Morgan and Pritchard (1998:3) argue that such images are at work on a much deeper level. In an era when images are the “currency of cultures”, marketing images create identities which represent certain ways of seeing reality, images which both reflect and reinforce particular relationships in societies.

Promotional images not only reflect the prevailing cultural values of a society, drawing upon current images and stereotypes, but also play a vital role in shaping these values through their contribution to the process of socialisation. However, as there are many factors which influence image creation and consumption, exploring the relationship between the image creators and the image consumers will assist in uncovering some of the strains which are articulated within the image creation/consumption process. Since it is culture which provides the stock of knowledge upon which the tourism advertisers and consumers draw upon when constructing their views of the world, this investigation necessitates a review of the symbiotic relationship between tourism and culture. In doing so, the relationships and tensions which underpin how the images are created and consumed will be examined from a cultural perspective.

In the next chapter the link between nationality, national identity and tourism destination imagery will be explored and developed. Nationality and national identity will be examined to assess their significance in the study of tourist behaviour while specifically highlighting their implication in the creation and interpretation of tourism destination imagery. Finally, limitations within this field of study as well as omissions in the literature will be identified.

3.0**Introduction**

Within this chapter, nationality and national identity is explored further in relation to interpretations of destination imagery. In particular, the influence is examined of the nationality of the tourist and the nationality of the place on interpretations of destination imagery. This is because discussion on nationality and tourism destination imagery is based on the premise adopted in the Literature Review that the nation is not an objective reality but is politically constructed. It thus becomes apparent that understanding how it is that the nation influences and is influenced by the construction and interpretation of such imagery, is significant in the study of tourist destination imagery and its resultant impact on tourist behaviour.

To explore the influence of nationality on tourism destination imagery, this chapter is divided into five sections. The first section provides a general overview of the relationship between nationality and interpretations of destination imagery. Section two concentrates on the influence of the nationality of the tourist on interpretations of destination imagery while the third section considers the influence of the nationality of the product on interpretations of destination imagery. The projected image is discussed in the fourth section and a conceptual framework of the factors that influence interpretations of both the perceived and projected images of a tourist destination is proposed. The final section summarises the main findings and highlights a number of research strands that have emerged.

3.1 Nationality, national identity and interpretations of destination imagery

Investigations of destination imagery and tourist behaviour largely ignore the potential role of nationality (Pizam 2000). Because tourism image relates to an individual's overall perception or total set of impressions of a place that results in its mental portrayal (Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Hunt 1975; Kotler, Haider and Rein 1993; Phelps 1986, Milman and Pizam 1995; Seaton and Benett 1996), understanding the influence of nationality and national identity on interpretations of destination imagery is crucially important for destination management. Overall, it may inform the design of more effective market positioning and segmentation strategies, as on the one hand, it enables a visitor profile to be constructed from which patterns of national similarity may be identified. On the other hand, it enables the identification of specific 'national' characteristics that a destination may use to attract tourists. Ultimately, the study of cultural differences across nations may help to solve controversy over the degree to which marketing should be standardised globally. However, what becomes abundantly obvious here is that the influence of nationality and national identity on interpretations of destination imagery requires an investigation from two different perspectives: first in terms of the nationality and national identity of the tourist and second with respect to the nationality and national identity of the destination.

3.2 Tourist nationality and national identity and interpretations of destination imagery

Given that nationality and national identity has been credited with influencing the behaviour of tourists, it is logical to assume that it may also potentially influence the way in which destination imagery is interpreted. Interpretations of destination imagery are closely associated with perceptions, which Samovar and Porter (1991) define as the process by which stimuli are selected from the external environment and interpreted into meaningful internal experiences. Such perceptions can be created without experience and

knowledge of the destination, and as such their meanings are subjective (Reisinger and Turner 2003).

3.2.1 Perceptions of destination imagery

In the absence of experience, the destination image is assessed on the basis of knowledge gained from promotion instead of first-hand experience. However, the perception of destination imagery does not merely depend on promotional activities and other external stimuli including economic and social influences, but is shaped also by internal environmental factors such as demographic, psychographic and behavioural characteristics. Thus, the way people learn to perceive the world is influenced by the stimuli exposed to them. Precisely which stimuli reach awareness and influence the judgmental aspect of perceptions and the attachment of meaning to the stimuli, depends wholly upon culturally determined perceptual processes (Samovar and Porter 1988). While people respond to stimuli that are important to them, culture determines which stimuli and criteria of the perceptions are important. According to Reisinger and Turner (2003), people of similar cultures are exposed to similar experiences and respond to similar stimuli, while in different cultures people tend to expose themselves to dissimilar experiences as people respond to different stimuli and their perceptions of the external world vary. Thus, cultural variations can explain differences in perceptions and Reisinger and Turner (2003) suggest that only a knowledge and understanding of cultural factors can facilitate social interaction across cultural boundaries. The reality is that tourism is a cultural process as much as it is a form of economic development (Ateljevic and Doorne 2004), and the destination of the tourist and the inhabited landscape of local and national culture are now inseparable to a greater degree (Ingold 1994).

Foster and Jones (2000) argue that in order to examine the nature and conceptualisation of destination images, three key elements need to be identified as integral to understanding place image: (1) the context in which destination images are set; (2) their structure, and (3) their content (Foster and Jones 2000). These three components are

significant in this investigation as they help to demonstrate the need for an analysis of cross-national interpretation of image representation in the field of tourist behaviour. In addition, they emphasise the fact that researchers are overly concerned with the content of place image and fail to take into account the importance of context and structure. Content refers to the production, re-production and re-enforcement of images (Oakes 1993). These images serve to project the attractiveness and uniqueness of the 'other' into the lives of consumers, and if successful, assist in the construction of a network of attractions referred to as a destination (Hughes 2000).

Thus, destination imagery is concerned with producing tourist space, a product of 'interventionist strategies' that are intended to be 'spatially differentiating' (Hughes 2000: 24). Hughes (2000) examines four genres and draws attention to the degree of autonomy attached to each genre. The genres include the guidebook, the advertisement, the tourist brochure and the tourist trails. In each case, the significance of the structure is evident, and the genre is reported to have responded to a paradigmatic struggle over the conventions which govern its design. Not only has it been possible to address four such genres of place representation, but in each, attention was drawn to the ways in which considerations about the genres production could be seen to influence its presentation. Thus, place imagery places a significant role in the lives of people that intersect with, or live in, the destination, as it mediates the formation of local identities and cultural patterns of behaviour and communication. Through their attitudes and activities, visitors, residents and the tourism industry work out values and goals in destination communities to create inscribed landscapes and places that represent how people interpret and define the experience of living through tourism (Hughes 2000). Thus, to conceive the destination as a stylised vignette of history, rooted in time and space, and lacking the dynamic conditions necessary for change, is to render mute the actions, motivations and values of local and visiting participants in the ongoing social construction of their place.

Through representations, a wealth of social and psychological information, both informed and sensed, is revealed regarding the destination as an attraction and habitat, and the

emotional degree in which that space is individually humanised through direct experience and intimacy (Hughes 2000). Anderson and Gale (1992: 4-5) suggest that in the course of generating new meanings and decoding existing ones, people construct:

Spaces, places, landscapes, regions and environments. In short, the construction geographies ... They arrange space in distinctive ways; they fashion certain types of landscape, townscape and streetscape. Human geographies are under continuous invention and transformation by actions whose underlying fields of knowledge are themselves recreated through geographic arrangements. Peoples' cultures and their geographies intersect and reciprocally inform each other ... in process, in time.

As such, the significance of context and structure in particular, has heralded a challenge and research agenda, one that seeks to show how peoples' frames of mind and actions are situated within the cultural worlds they inhabit. This ideology permeates tourism literature, and as Berno (1996) claims greater focus on the context in which tourism occurs is necessary, as all too often tourism research places primary focus on the content and not the context of the research objectives. Consequently, the social processes of cultural construction are inherently geographic in nature (Milne and Ateljevic 2001), and the varied intersections of scale and intensity have implications for destination marketing management. This leads Hughes (2000) to suggest that tourism researchers must become sensitive to the multiple realities of social groups residing in, as well as travelling to, diverse places and developing under different physiographic regimes and historic conditions, who experience, interpret and articulate the values and meanings of image in a variety of different ways. If it is agreed that the nation is not an organic reality but a social construction, then any particular nationality is a type of social grouping. Given the significance of context, to understand the way a place is imagined, produced, contested and enforced is to understand the culture in which nationality is embedded. Thus any investigation of the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery must be undertaken within a broader context of culture.

3.2.2 Cultural similarities and differences

Helman (1990: 2-3) defines culture as:

a set of guidelines (both explicit and implicit) which individuals inherit as members of a particular society, and which tells them how to view the world, how to experience it emotionally, and how to behave in relation to other people, to supernatural forces or gods, and to the natural environment.

Keesing (1974:89) suggests that culture is not:

a collection of symbols fitted together ... but a system of knowledge, shaped and constrained by the way the human brain acquires, organises, and processes information and creates internal modes of reality.

Thus, at its most basic level, culture shapes the delivery and interpretation of verbal and non-verbal messages. Perhaps one of the most influential studies of national-culture and its impact on attitudes and values was completed by Hofstede (1980) who identified five cultural dimensions (power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty, avoidance and confusion dynamism) which shaped the emergence of common beliefs, attitudes, customs, meanings and behaviour norms (Triandis 1972), and which characterised people of the same culture.

Power distance refers to the amount of respect and deference between those in superior and subordinate positions. In a high-power distance culture, society values obedience, conformity, authority and supervision. In contrast, in a low-power-distance culture, society believes that people are equal and values independence and competition (Reisinger and Turner 1998). Cultures scoring high on power distance have higher expectations for services (Crotts and Pizam 2003) and report higher satisfaction when the company apologises and/or when people in authority interact during the recovery process.

Masculinity-femininity is defined as the relative emphasis on the achievement and interpersonal harmony which characterises gender differences in some national cultures. Masculinity is defined as a situation in which the dominant values in society are success, money and material.

Meanwhile, femininity is defined as a situation in which the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. *Uncertainty avoidance* refers to the degree to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations, while *Individualism-collectivism* defines one's identity either by personal choices and achievements, or by the character of the collective groups to which one is more or less permanently attached. For example, in an individualist society, everyone is expected to take care of himself or herself, whereas in collectivist society strong family and extended family ties exist. Lastly, *Confusion/Work Dynamism* is the extent to which particular values apply in the country in which a population reside. For example, the extent to which Chinese values apply in the country in which they live (Long-term Time Orientation). The influence of these differential value structures is expressed through lifestyle, work, leisure and consumer behaviour patterns (Richardson and Crompton 1988); therefore it would be expected that the manner in which people view images of a destination is mediated by cultural background. Strong cultural relativism suggests no agreement preferences or aesthetic preferences or judgments due to cultural traditions and learning processes (Berlyne 1977).

McKay and Fesenmaier (2000) note that attribute identification in tourism image research has concentrated on tourists' perceptions of the destination name rather than a visual representation of the destination. Independent of this destination attribute approach to image evaluation, photographic images of landscape scenery have been judged according to elements, such as colour, landform, texture and sense of openness (Kaplan, Kaplan and Brown 1989). Cross-cultural research on landscape preference using photographic images has supported both agreement (Zube and Pitt 1981) and difference (Kaplan and Talbot 1988; Saarinen 2004) across cultures. Although these findings appear contradictory, attractiveness/preference for natural settings may be mediated by the degree of tourist infrastructure included in the advertisement (Kaplan and Talbot 1988). Still, culture is purported to have an influence on how people experience an environment (Kaplan, Kaplan and Brown 1989; Moscardo, Pearce, Green and O'Leary 2001). McKay and Fesenmaier (2000) cite an example in terms of humankind's relationship with nature, and suggest that Eastern cultures are more likely to be concerned about a harmonious

relationship with nature, whereas Western cultures are not as likely to be concerned. These relationship structures reflect Hofstede's (1991) feminine (nurturing) versus masculine (dominating) cultural values previously noted. It is therefore contended that different cultures have different aesthetic tastes and McKay and Fesenmaier (2000) argue that symbols, for example, the landscape, can have different interpretations and image evaluations across cultures.

3.2.3 Limitations of using nationality and national identity as a segmentation variable

However, a number of difficulties may be encountered when using nationality to ascertain interpretations of destination imagery. Dann (1993) and Peabody (1985) highlight the limitations of using nationality and country of residence as segmentation variables in tourism research. They both suggest that tourism is now well and truly a global phenomenon and generating and destination societies are no longer culturally uniform. Dann (1993) argues that many tourists possess multiple nationalities and that not all people who have the same nationality and were born in the same country have identical cultures, while many nations are pluralistic in their cultures. Similarly, national identity and belonging are complex and contested concepts over-laden by discourses of power and control. Dominant groups in society frequently construct definitions of identity to serve their own ends. This can result in competing and contradictory definitions designed to exclude as well as include, and which maybe employed to actively discriminate against particular individuals or groups (Hall 1996; McCrone 2001; Pink 2001). On an individual level, a person may draw upon more than one identity depending upon their personal circumstances. These interweaving identities can be changed to suit both the occasion and the mood of the person (Driscoll 2003; Howard 1994; Iver 2003). Therefore, identity is not a neutral concept and it is always necessary to ask who is doing the defining, on what basis, and for what purpose?

These observations bring Dann (1993: 109) to the conclusion that “it becomes appropriate to employ alternative approaches to the analysis of tourism”. He therefore proposed alternative factors with which to differentiate tourists, namely; personality, lifestyles, tourist-roles, social-class and culture. While Dann’s observations about the difficulties with national cultures is reasonable, one can also concur with his suggestion that national cultures should not be used as a sole discriminating variable. At the same time, however, the very existence of the variables that Dann (1993) identifies, such as social-class are questionable. Also, if accepting Dann’s view that many tourists possess multiple nationalities and national identities, it may indicate that tourists adopt particular identities when visiting a particular place. Thus, even though society is in the process of ‘globalisation’ or ‘convergence’, national characteristics and identities should not be totally discarded in favour of the five segmenting variables which Dann has proposed (Pizam and Sussmann 1995).

3.2.4 Stereotyping

The study of nationality on tourists’ interpretations of destination imagery may also be complicated further by the influence of stereotyping. Stereotyping refers to the attribution of certain traits, labelling and perceptions of people on the basis of common characteristics. Jandt (1988) referred to stereotyping as judgments about others on the basis of their ethnic group membership, while Scollon and Scollon (1995) note that stereotyping is simply another word for overgeneralisation. Stereotypes and clichés are significant in the study of social exclusion and the peripheralisation of peoples and places as they play a powerful role in classifying people and places according to particular traits and roles. The role of stereotyping reduces people to certain traits, exaggerating and simplifying them, producing caricatures which are resistant to change. In such ways stereotyping “sets up a symbolic frontier between the ‘normal’ and the ‘deviant’; the ‘acceptable’ and the ‘unacceptable’, what ‘belongs’ and what does not or is ‘Other’, between Us and Them” (Hall 1997: 258).

Batra, Myres and Aaker (1996) point out that many consumers tend to utilize images and stereotype objects in order to minimise their mental load and thereby avoid complex analyses. In this sense, the perceived images of different destinations tend to be simplified in the minds of the tourists themselves, and are formed by the information they possess. Such images are incorporated in marketing destinations reinforcing (and perhaps creating) a genre of myths and expectations that influence how nations are perceived and interpreted (Selwyn 1996). What tourists see, experience, and learn about cultures they visit are often conditioned by existing structures of image representations and interpretation of cultural others, which can re-affirm stereotypes rather than break them down. Urry (1990) suggests that the tourist gaze is socially organised and systematised. Although many exist based in different societies and historical periods, each gaze is constructed through difference. That is, it is 'constructed in relation to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness' (Urry 1990:2). Furthermore, tourists gaze upon places that are expected to provide 'intense pleasures' and are 'out of the ordinary' (Urry 1990:2-3). According to Laxson (1991) interviews with tourists suggest that pre-existing stereotypes are not dismantled by actual experiences, but instead serve as standards against which the visited culture is evaluated. Indeed, 'stereotyping can be so strong that it can lead a tourist to see something that is not there' (Laxson 1991:373).

The tourism image both creates and reinforces stereotypical depictions and it is not enough to dismiss them as evidence of lazy thinking, rather such "Cliches are the common-sense everyday articulations of the dominant ideology" (Fiske 1989:118). Pizam and Jeong (1996) argue that this is especially true in the case of perceived nationality differences where residents or tourist-entrepreneurs tend to hold specific stereotypes of tourists based on their nationalities, regardless of their country of birth, ethnic background or country of origin. It would appear that what is important is our perception of these fantasies (image) that shape contemporary tourism marketing and represent a constructed reality rather than the reality itself. Thus, tourism is presented as a form of symbolic consumption whereby tourists display their identity and social roles through the

destinations they choose (Echtner 1999) and that tourist places represent specific symbolic experience. In the context of nationality, the goal of tourism marketing is to portray the symbolic experiences of the consumption of the signs and symbols, which are perceived as the essence of the nation. Further research is required, however, to demonstrate if stereotypes are indeed central to images of national difference and to what extent does the tourist rely on, and or is influenced by stereotypes in the interpretation of tourism destination imagery.

3.3 The nationality and national identity of the place

There are many studies on the experiential feature of geography such as those on the experiences of places, spaces and landscapes (Billinge 1977; Seamon 1979, Tuan 1993 Valentine 2001; Cartier and Lew 2005). These experiences are the substance of the involvement in the world. This world is a 'life world'; the sum total of a person's first-hand involvement with the world in which the person typically resides (Buttimer 1971). This 'life world' theme also embraces the core of Tuan's studies (1973) on experiences of spaces, places, surface phenomena and aesthetic experiences of nature and culture. As such, the concepts of space and place are understood as sites which are not only inhabited, but which are actively constructed and invested with meaning reflecting the degree to which individuals are differently empowered and socially positioned (Mitchell 2000). Tourism is highly visible in its impacts and capable of making profound societal and cultural changes not only on host destinations but also to tourist exporting areas (Robinson *et al* 2000b; Terkenli 2004). In tourism research, this influence of spatial and temporal bonds between people and places has been widely studied in the light of the effects of tourism on the environment (Pearce 1995). Yet, despite the distinct geographical nature of tourism, there has been little detailed exploration of the way and the extent to which places and more specifically place promotion influence tourist behaviour (Morgan 2004). Given that the tourist and the place are central to tourism consumption, an understanding of tourist behaviour is to realise the importance of the place and the way it may influence the tourist. In partial response to this omission, this section will consider the significance of place with

the main purpose being to provide insights for the ensuing discussion on the influence of the nationality of the place on interpretations of destination imagery.

3.3.1 The significance of place

Without places to visit, places to gaze, new places to discover and places to dream of, tourism by definition would not exist. Tourists are essentially 'out' of their normal physical and cultural contexts: they are out of normal time and space (Wagner 1997). In essence, place is the starting and ending point, the origin and destination. Yet, place is a term which eludes easy definition and has been used in a number of disparate ways throughout history (Cloke, Crang and Goodwin 1999; Mitchell 2000). Specifically, positivist approaches to the study of places were concerned with uncovering universal spatial laws in order to understand the way the world worked. The focus was on spatial order and the use of quantitative methods to explain and predict human patterns of behaviour (Johnston 1991; Unwin 1992). Thus, place has been used as an alternative to 'location'. However, in the 1990s, humanistic geography considered social space, not physical or objective space, as the object of inquiry (Smith 1990b). While location refers to position within a framework of abstract space, often indicated by 'objective' markers such as degrees of longitude and latitude, or distance from another location, place has come to refer to a mixture of 'objective' and 'subjective' facets including location but adding other, more subtle, attributes of the human world (Cloke *et al* 1999) including social space (Cunningham 2005). Radical approaches, most notably those inspired by Marxism, sought to understand space as the product of social forces, observing that different societies use and organise space in different ways (Smith 1990b).

In turn, engagement with postmodernism produced a new sensitivity to the myriad of variations that exist between the many 'sorts' of human beings studied by human geographers – the variations between women and men, between social classes, between ethnic groups and between human groups defined on all manner of criteria – and to recognise the very different inputs and experiences these diverse populations have into,

and of, 'social-spatial' processes' (Cloke, Philo and Sadler 1991). Conceptualising space has therefore become increasingly sophisticated, and it is understood to play an active role in the constitution and reproduction of social identities (Ringer 2000). Such social identities are not regarded as fixed categories but are understood as multiple, contested and fluid. Space is therefore neither understood as having particular fixed characteristics, nor is it regarded as being merely a backdrop for social relations, a pre-existing terrain which exists outside of, or frames everyday life. Rather, space is understood to play an active role in the constitution and reproduction of social identities; meanings and relations are recognised as producing material and symbolic or metaphorical spaces (Hubbard, Kitchin and Valentine 2004). Thus Massey (1995:283) explains that space:

Is the product of the intricacies and complexities, the interlockings and the non-interlockings, of relations from the unimaginably cosmic to the intimately tiny? And precisely because it is the product of relations, relations that are active practices, material and embedded, practices, which have to be carried out, space is always in a process of becoming. It is always being made.

For the purposes of this thesis, the wider understanding of place is adopted and it accepts that places are the result of increasingly 'imagining a somewhere else' (Johnson, Gregory, Pratt and Watts 2000: 10). Place and society do not merely interact with, or reflect each other but rather are mutually constituted and individuals and groups are recognised as having multiple identities. As such, it is accepted that there are no neutral or innocent spaces (Hubbard *et al* 2004) and such spaces and places are in a constant state of change as a result of continuous struggles of power and resistance among a diversity of stakeholders such as planners, users and product providers (Pritchard and Morgan 2005). Labels like post-modern, post-Marxist, post-industrial, post-structural are deemed appropriate and the world is not according to Marx but according to Baudrillard and Eco – a world of hyper-reality, sign saturation and spectacle (Crick 1994).

For many, the reality of places is derived from images and the discourses that surround them. For instance, cultural and feminist geographers have looked on the ways in which places and spaces are heterosexualised (Valentine 1993; Aitchison 1999; Darke and

Guerney 2000)) and radicalised (Segal 1990). Thus, there is significant literature which contends that landscape is 'a form of representation and not an empirical object' (Rose 1993:89). As such, tourism sites, attractions, landmarks, destinations and landscapes are seen as spaces through which "power, identity, meaning and behaviour are constructed, negotiated and re-negotiated according to socio-cultural dynamics" (Aitcheson and Reeves 1998:51). The same processes shape the relationship between nationality, identity and touristic marketing of places and people. Central to this contention is the argument that powerful discourses shape our ways of seeing the world (Berger 1983; Cohen 2002) – a process from which tourism is by no means immune since historical, political and cultural discourses influence how people and places are seen and represented in contemporary marketing. Tourism is clearly a cultural arena, which reflects these configurations of power – thus, for instance, whilst colonialism may have been rejected economically, tourism continues to exert cultural power in terms of how tourism imagery constructs people and places (Britton 1979; Silver 1993).

Despite the influence of nationality and national identity in moulding our ways of seeing tourism representations, limited research attention has focused on how the projected image of a place is constructed and perceived by individuals from differing nationalities and national identities. In part, this is a reflection of the continuing lack of critical analyses of image representation in tourism (Mellinger 1994) and the ensuing discussion will consider the relevance of imagery from a cross-national perspective with particular emphasise on the influence the nationality of the product has on interpretations of destination imagery.

3.3.2 The nationality and national identity of the product and interpretations of destination imagery

There is some evidence which suggests that the nationality and national identity of the product may influence interpretations of destination imagery, particularly in terms of the construction of tourism representations. Both Bordas and Rubio (1993), cited in Gallarza *et al* (2002) and Williams and Clarke (1991) for example, argue that products and places

can arise in consumers' minds under the umbrella of a global image based on nationality. However, in much of the tourism literature, there is an implicit assumption that tourism exists as an all-powerful, virtually 'placeless' phenomenon that, by definition, affects change, causes impacts and creates effects on 'defenceless' local places. Chang, Milne, Fallon and Pohlmann (1996) for example, remark that the relationship between the global and the local is often portrayed in literature as unequal, with global forces exerting considerable influence over local conditions in creating and shaping tourism products. This privileging of the global reflects a failure to appreciate the ability of destinations themselves to initiate development, mediate and harness external tourism forces and capitalise on place-specific characteristics and resources to influence the shape of local tourism places (Quinn 2003).

3.3.3 Promotion of 'national' place specific characteristics

Place-specific characteristics and resources may therefore exert considerable influence in the construction and reproduction of place but their influence may also be conditioned by the national identity and nationality of the product itself. This is because the significance of tourism imagery is far wider than the impact of seeing a photograph in a brochure since the selection process conveys messages to both the visitor and the visited. MacCannell (1984:385-6) reinforces this point by arguing that certain ethnic identities are maintained and promoted over others in order to entertain the tourist. National and cultural identity is the hallmark of such representations or what Hall (1997:236) refers to as 'The marking of 'difference' and is 'the basis of that symbolic order we call culture'. This tendency to focus on and often to appropriate the experience of 'others' is an essential component of the tourist product particularly in light of globalisation. Image is now central to creating some place 'new', as it involves the 'manufacturing of the exotic' (Rossel 1998), and often results in the 'commoditisation' of cultures (Greenwood 1978). Image constructors 'make places' by changing destinations into veritable paradises where many time-honoured themes in the depiction of the 'other' – primitivism, simplicity, sensuality, excess, harmony - are fervently recycled (Britton 1979).

Tourism marketing in particular makes use of binary representations to label and define the world in terms of us and them, superiority and inferiority, intellect and instinct. People and places are assigned key characteristics which conform to this two-dimensional or oppositional world view (Pritchard 1998). Marketers select and utilise particular images and aspects of society and discard others and representations are created, filtered and mediated through cultural and ideological structures. Such images focus on national identity and national cultural and are by no means neutral or mere reflections of reality. They are drawn from a stock of cultural knowledge which is highly ideological and selected. For example landscapes, castles, country houses and their associated paraphernalia of everyday life are often presented as embodying the essence of nationhood. They thus provide visitors with both a physical and an experiential link with a nation and its people (Sternbery 1997). These symbols help to construct and convey a sense of national identity and are imagined to lie at the heart of a nation's soul (Palmer 1999). The use of such symbolism is of particular salience to countries, like England and Ireland, which rely upon them as the means to attract tourists. As Horne (1984: 166) acknowledges nationality is 'one of the principle colourings of the tourists' vision'.

Tourism advertising is instrumental in constructing systems of meaning and assists in defining and describing and even limiting its audience. In tourism's case, it presents and represents others for a particular audience's consumption while it is contended that:

...peoples and cultures have been freely appropriated by twentieth-century advertising in its promotion of goods and services in the marketplace – a marketplace that also includes ideologies in its offerings (O'Barr 1994-158).

However, tourism's use of identity goes far beyond the commercial as it goes to the heart of a people because it serves to define their cultural identity and to make this visible both to themselves and to others. For example, The World Tourism Organisation's report, 'Tourism 2020 Vision' suggested that:

The next century will mark the emergence of tourism destinations as a fashion accessory. The choice of holiday destination will help define the identity of the traveller and, in an increasingly homogeneous world, set him apart from the hordes of other tourists' (Luhman 1998: 13)

Tourists use props to show their tourist status. Cameras, video-cameras, the dress code from sunglasses to casual shoes, display and communicate to others that this person is, for the time being, 'a tourist'. Destinations successfully sell souvenirs stamped with logos, sweatshirts, car and luggage stickers, which form visible statements of tourist consumption. Tourists send postcards to non-participants left behind to underline their position to others. From their behaviour, it would appear that tourists use the tourism experience to communicate to others something about themselves. Furthermore, cultural identity underpins national identity as it communicates the past and present traditions and mores of a people thus enabling their identification as a distinctive group (Palmer 1999). As O'Connor (1993) suggests individual and personal identities are constructed through interaction with others and determined largely by the ways in which we are perceived and treated by them. Cultural and national identities are also constructed from the representations produced by people both inside and outside of a culture. Thus, the way in which we see ourselves is substantially determined by the way in which others see us. This in turn, raises important issues relating to the impact of nationalistic messages on individuals within that nations' conceptions of their personal identity and how the nation and its people are perceived by others.

The images of tourism thus provide the means by which local people can be identified and encountered. However, the myths and traditions of nationhood that are promoted by the tourism industry may have little to do with the 'real' lives of the people, or with how they themselves understand their national identity. Those images that enable tourists to recognise a nation may have been selected for just that purpose and may not have been meant to represent how the local people actually see themselves in the twentieth century. For example, Ireland's tourism identity is specifically constructed around themes designed to attract overseas visitors. The country is represented as a sort of pre-modern society:

a country of 'shamrocks'... and leprechauns, a place of picturesque scenery an unspoiled beauty, of friendly and quaint people, a place which is steeped in past traditions and ways of life', in a sense a country that is in no particular hurry to catch up with the modern world (O'Connor 1993: 68).

Such words and phrases are not merely examples of nostalgia-arousal; they also promote an idea of a nation (Walsh 1990). They create an awareness of the foundations upon which a nation's identity rests. As Ashworth argues the past, as heritage, is a potent marketing strategy because it can define a national identity through a few selected stereotypes of people, places and mythologies (Ashworth 1994). Indeed the tourism industry continually emphasises specific aspects of the past as being representative of what the nation is really all about, or perhaps, what it should be about (Palmer 1999). According to Palmer (1999) one reason why heritage tourism is so popular and enduring is because the images presented reveal a past that people can recognise as belonging to them. It unites and is timeless representing a lifestyle perceived to have been better, more fulfilling and community driven. Such selling of a nation involves a complex mix of fact and myth enabling national identity to be experienced physically as well as mentally. Thus, Samuel's comment that the idea of nationality has a real, as well as, an imaginary existence is not without foundation (Samuel 1989).

3.3.4 Projected image

Marketing tools used to promote destinations, logically strive to project images and meanings to potential visitors by constructing and communicating images of the cultural and national identities of host populations. As such, destination decisions may be based on the symbolic elements of the destination (as conveyed in visual imagery) rather than the actual features portraying these elements as exotic, mysterious or in other ways different. In doing so, however, tourism imagery creates this sense of 'otherness', of difference between the intended audience and the people and culture of the destination country. For example, Jorgensen (2003) suggests that Irish tourism imagery can be seen as a discourse of Ireland, and Irish identity is partly constructed by selectively representing certain features of Ireland. However, Jorgensen (2003) also argues that little attention has so far been paid to how *Irishness* is understood by foreign visitors and how that Irish identity is constructed or as Urry (1990:3) states how imagery is "endlessly reproduced" through various mass media and objectified in the tourism imagery. Yet,

Cheong and Miller (2000) feel that Urry attributes too much of the construction of the gaze to the tourists themselves. In an elaboration of Urry's work they argue instead that the tourist gaze is constructed and controlled by powerful professionals in the tourism industry such as tourist boards, guides, hotels and writers of guide-books. These, according to Cheong and Miller, are the agents of power, who are able to select which aspects of the destination that are to be submitted to the gaze. In addition, Urry fails to take into account the potential influence of destination familiarity and place attachment in the construction and consumption of the tourist gaze.

3.3.5 Promotion of destination familiarity

Difficulties of studying the influence of the nationality of the product on interpretations of destination imagery is complicated by destination familiarity. McKay and Fesenmaier (1997) found that the concept of cultural familiarity is important in understanding how individuals interpret representations of destinations. In their study, unique scenes were perceived as low in familiarity, however attractive destinations were perceived as familiar. Cultural unfamiliarity is signified by race and class, and Hall (1992a) argues that the centre of periphery of 'West and the Rest' are not geographical locations, but concepts that organise knowledge.

Dann (1996b) identifies familiarity as a specific strategy used by the guidebooks to reassure potential tourists that they will not feel out of place because the 'natives' are friendly and speak English. The images of locals were made to 'appear safe' by presenting them as happy and catering to tourists' desires in familiar ways, yet also used to add local colour, signify the host culture, provide entertainment from a social distance, and convey sexual allure, and exoticism. Conversely, promotional material excludes information about ubiquitous cultural patterns, descriptions of ordinary life and discussions about contemporary socio-cultural developments. For example, in Ireland the importance of scenery, people and pace of life as key facets of Ireland's destination image are underscored by the findings of Bord Failte's Visitor Attitudes Surveys (1983, 1988, 1993,

1997a, 1999) and Failte Ireland's Visitor Attitudes Surveys (2002a, 2003a, 2004a).

Indeed, since the 1960s, Bord Failte has promoted Ireland as a clean, green, pre-modern and friendly destination. But, the recently acquired reputation as a 'tiger economy' is in conflict with the more traditional image of Ireland and poses two problems: firstly, it serves to alienate those who were attracted to Ireland on the basis of its pre-modern character and secondly, the existence of contradictory images implies a degree of falsehood, and may result in a lack of credibility in the projected image of the destination.

3.3.6 Existence of place attachment

In addition, establishing the influence of the nationality of the product on interpretations of destination imagery may also be difficult due to the existence of place attachment, whereby symbolic meanings may be attached to particular places (Lee, Allen, Norman and Backman 1999). Place attachment can be applied to tourism imagery because tourists interact with a destination's environment, attaching meanings to the places they visit and experience (Lee *et al* 1999). For instance, national parks enjoy a special status in America that is especially rich in meaning (Selwyn 1996) as they are considered an important part of American heritage. Such ideas of place attachment relate to the previously discussed notions of national will and national character. This involves the recreation of localities and regions by endowing places with a personality and thus rendering them understandable, examinable, and memorable. Thus, Anderson's (1991) 'imagined communities' can be related here to a much older idea of 'imagined places'. This line of research predominantly has addressed residents' attachment to their communities in relation to length of residence and perceived impact of tourism (McCool and Martin 1994). Lee and Allen (1999) highlight the need to expand understanding of a tourist destination to include not just an aggregate of attributes, but rather an assessment of the entity as it is experienced. Indeed, as Lee and Allen (1999) point out, much remains to be done to understand and measure the meaning that tourists associate with the projected images of a place.

In Ashworth's (1988) application of tourism in the communication of senses of place or displacement in New Mexico, it is suggested that because people are different in their needs, they will imagine different places in the same location. Thus, as Graham (1997:3) has expressed "landscapes are multivocal" (p.3). The landscape is taken here to include the man-made as well as the natural physical features, and is inevitably speaking with the many different voices that have ascribed meanings to it. It is thus equally polysemic in conveying different messages, including different messages and different identities, either sequentially or synchronously. The opposite of a sense of place has been labeled 'placelessness' (Relph 1976:11) meaning a location that lacks distinctiveness, conveying only a sense of being anywhere that is thus nowhere. However, Ashworth (1988:4) suggests a third possible circumstance, namely a sense of 'displacement' where it is not 'anywhere', that is communicated by the wrong 'somewhere'. The sense of places exists and is experienced but it does not accord with the identity needs of the recipient who therefore feels 'out of place'. These two possibilities of multiple place identities and displacement are central to an investigation on national identity and tourism consumption.

3.4 Summary of Conceptual framework

This exploration of nationality and interpretations of destination imagery contends that first, the nationality of the tourist is important to investigations of this nature and second, it highlights the importance of considering also the influence of the nationality of the place. This chapter highlights several key factors that contribute to the way in which perceived and projected destination images are interpreted which, when taken together, provide a conceptual framework in which to couch this investigation. These factors are drawn from literature relating to destination imagery, nationality and tourist behaviour and their relationship to nationality generally and to the nationality of the tourist and of the place, are conceptualised in Figure 1.

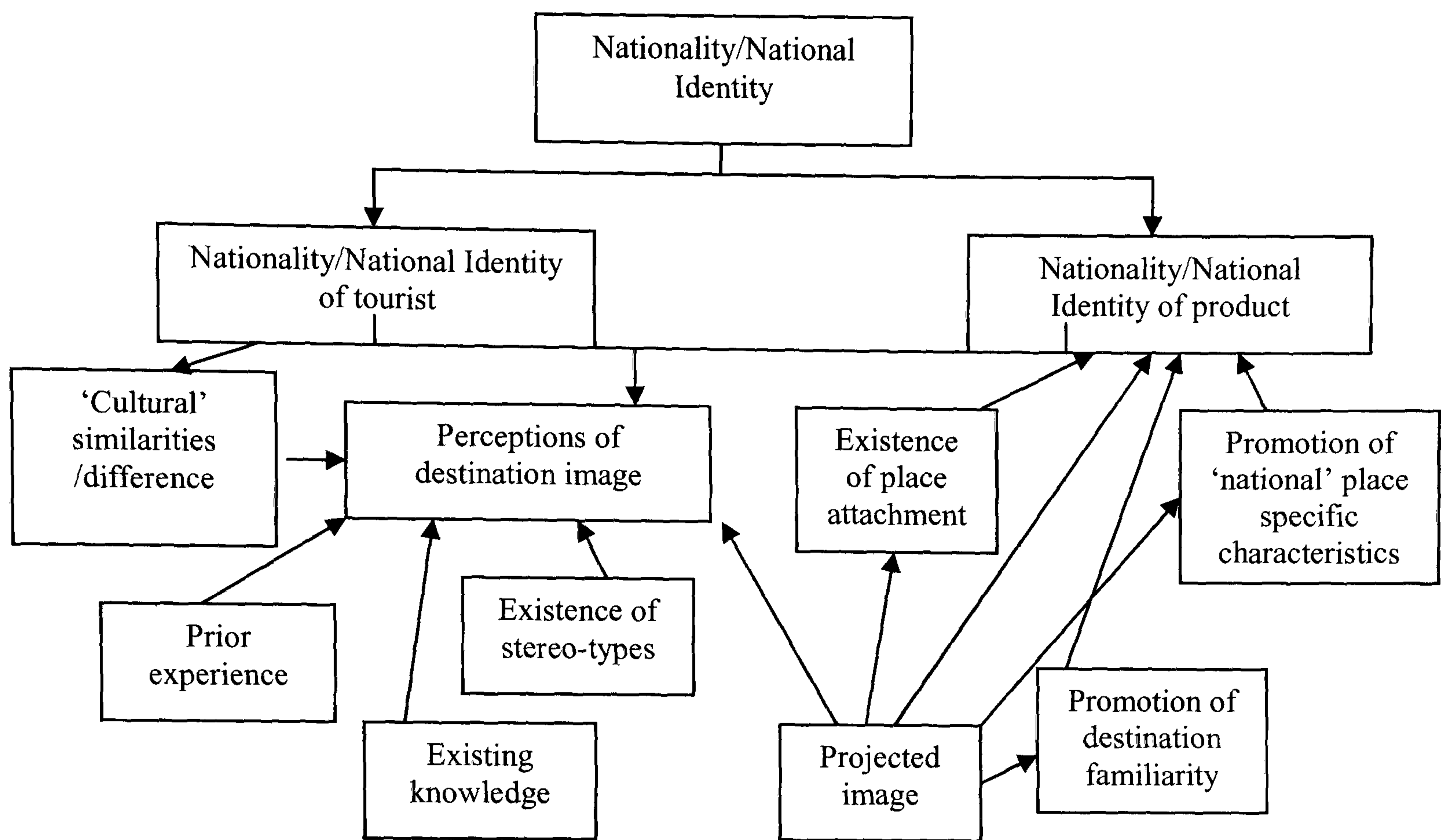


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

These factors include the existence of cultural similarities and differences, prior experience, existing knowledge, the existence of stereo-types, projected image, the existence of place attachment, the promotion of national place-specific characteristics and the promotion of destination familiarity.

3.5 Conclusion

There is a considerable amount of published research concerning destination imagery and tourist behaviour. In particular, investigations of the ways in which images are formed have been extensively researched (Echtner and Ritchie 1993; Gartner 1993; Gunn 1988; Moutinho 1987). Despite this however, the majority of research considers projected and perceived images separately, and fails to consider the relationship between both concepts or in other words, the extent to which perceptions influence the way in which projected images are interpreted, or the extent to which projected images influence perceptions. In addition, there has been scant investigation of the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery. Therefore, this research aims at contributing to

academic understanding of the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery.

In this chapter, nationality is explored further in relation to interpretations of destination imagery highlighting, in particular, the influence of the nationality of the tourist and the nationality of the place on interpretations of destination imagery. Consequently, a number of research strands have emerged:

- The necessity for in-depth investigation of the relationship between a tourist's nationality and the perceived images of a destination. This will help to elucidate the way and degree to which nationality influences interpretations of verbal and non-verbal representations of a destination and its impact on tourist behaviour;
- The urgent need for further research of the influence of stereotypes on interpretations of destination imagery as it is not clear whether pre-existing stereotypes are dismantled by actual experience, whether preconceptions are influenced by nationality, or if these preconceptions are then used as standards against which the visited nation is evaluated. Thus, investigations of this issue should seek to determine the extent to which the tourist relies on, and is influenced by, stereotypes in the interpretation of tourism destination imagery; and
- The need for detailed examination of the degree of influence the nationality of the place has on the construction of tourist representations. By suggesting that places can arise in consumers' minds under the umbrella of a global image based on nationality, this thesis highlights a link between projected tourism images and the nationality of the place itself. However, what is not clear is that if the nationality of the place itself determines the projected image and conditions tourist perceptions of the destination and to what extent does it contribute to its selling?

This chapter, through these research considerations on tourism destination imagery suggests an important relationship between interpretations of tourism destination imagery and nationality. More specifically, this study will investigate the influence of nationality on interpretations of Ireland's destination imagery from the perspective of tourists travelling from Britain through an examination of the projected and perceived images of Ireland as understood by these tourists. Thus, examinations of the influence of nationality on interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected destination images must employ a research methodology which facilitates detailed assessment of the factors outlined. As a first step towards this investigation, the next chapter will discuss issues of methodology and will identify the methodological approach which underpins the research and the theoretical perspective adopted.

Chapter 4 Research methods

4.0 Introduction

The study so far has articulated the meaning and nature of nationality and tourism destination imagery, highlighting the influence of the nationality of the tourist and the nationality of the product on interpretations of destination imagery. It was proposed that tourism destination imagery is significant in emphasising and perpetuating the meaning of the nation and national identity, while suggesting that globalisation does not represent a threat to the national concept but rather serves to reinforce it. As such, it has become apparent that understanding how it is that the nation influences, and is influenced by the construction and interpretation of such imagery is important to the study of tourist behaviour. The fundamental argument is therefore that there exists an important relationship between tourism destination imagery and nationality, a relationship that is underpinned by the projected and perceived images of Ireland as understood by tourists travelling from Britain. Thus, this study first attempts to discover whether these images differ and the extent to which tourists of different self-identified nationalities/national identities interpret tourism representations in different ways and second, the degree to which (if any) the perceived existence of Ireland's national identity informs the interpretations of tourism representations.

Several key factors contribute to the way in which perceived and projected destination images are interpreted, identified in Figure 1 (see Chapter 3, page 83). These include the existence of cultural similarities and differences, prior experience, existing knowledge, the existence of stereo-types, projected image, the existence of place attachment, the promotion of national place-specific characteristics, and the promotion of destination familiarity. As previously stated (see Chapter 1, page 17) these factors have informed the focus of this study which, is based on three main aims; Firstly, the influence (if any) of the nationality of the tourist on pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's destination image

from the perspective of tourists travelling from Britain is explored. To achieve this it is necessary to identify tourists perceptions of their nationality; to ascertain the pre- and post-visit perceived image of Ireland, to determine the pre- and post-visit projected image of Ireland and to assess the influence (if any) of the nationality of the tourist on pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected images. Secondly, the influence (if any) of the nationality of the place on pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's image from the perspective of tourists travelling from Britain is investigated. This concerns identifying the intended projected image of Ireland as well as determining the influence (if any) of the nationality of the product/destination on pre-and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected images. Thirdly, the implications of interpretations of Ireland's destination image are examined. This involves assessing the implications of potential differences between the perceptions of Ireland's image and its intended projected image and the actual projected image of Ireland. It also includes evaluating the implications of the influence (if any) of the nationality of the tourist on pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected destination images. Assessing the implications of the influence (if any) of the nationality of the place for pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected destination images is also warranted.

So far, these aims have not been assessed in the context of Irish tourism and it is believed that the first step towards such an assessment is a discussion of the choice of methodology adopted for this thesis which included both secondary and primary data collection. Thus, the chapter will discuss the research approach adopted which has served to guide and underpin this tourism destination imagery research. To achieve this, the chapter is organised into six sections. The first section identifies the different methodologies employed in tourism destination imagery research as well as the methodological approaches adopted in cross-cultural studies. The second section concentrates on the range of methodologies that have been used to measure tourism destination imagery and includes a taxonomy review of non-quantitative and quantitative methods for measuring tourism destination imagery. The strengths and weaknesses of

each methodology are outlined emphasising the benefits of a combined approach. The design of the research methods for this study are detailed in section three by outlining the research methods which were employed to facilitate a detailed assessment of the relationship between nationality and tourism destination imagery in the context of Irish tourism. This includes both secondary and primary research. The usefulness of semiotic and content analysis as tools ideally suited to systematically quantifying and classifying media messages is emphasised. Section four describes the primary research employed which includes a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire-based longitudinal survey. In an effort to develop an attribute list of the attributes most pertinent to the population being studied, the results of a preliminary phase of qualitative research are presented. A detailed discussion of the design of both the pre-and post-visitation questionnaires is provided as well as outlining the steps involved in approaching respondents and distributing the questionnaire-based survey. The fifth section summaries each of the four stages of the data collection procedure and summaries the main limitations of the research approach adopted. The final section provides a brief conclusion and outlines the direction of the following chapter.

4.1 Methodologies in tourism destination imagery (TDI) research

Within the extensive TDI research field, there are two very different approaches to its measurement: first, there are empirical studies that apply statistical instruments (Schroeder 1996) and second, there are empirical studies, which as well as explaining a methodology, deal with the problems of the measurement of image (Carmichael 1992; Echtner and Ritchie 1993; Reilly 1990). Due possibly to the aforementioned difficulties, studies of the first approach are more common than those of the second and according to Carmichael (1992: 94), the particularities of the TDI construct make any approach to its research a 'methodological challenge'. As shown by Mazanec (1994), in any image study, relationships between variables are set out in three dimensions: the subject's perceptions are measured (dimension 1) around objects or destinations (2nd dimension) and with respect to certain attributes or characteristics (3rd dimension). This tri-dimensionality of

image studies gives the researcher some flexibility when managing the relationship between variables. Empirical studies of image for example have been developed from a segmentation perspective (Baloglu 1997; Crompton 1979b; and Schroeder 1996), from the point of view of competitive analysis for example, Guthrie and Gale (1991) and from the perspective of the analysis of the components of this image for example, Ahmed (1991), Baloglu and Brinberg (1997), Gartner (1989) and Echtner and Ritchie (1991). These numerous research approaches reflects the multidisciplinary nature of tourism research.

Gallarza *et al's* (2002) study investigates relationships between variables focusing on common areas such as residents or scenery. For example, 'Residents' was the attribute most mentioned (20 out of 25 studies), followed by 'landscape and/or surroundings' (19 out of 25 studies). The same attributes were previously found in Echtner and Ritchie's (1991) review, but in inverse order. The point is made on the importance of tourists' perception of residents and in a diachronic analysis, the balance between functional psychological attributes seem not to change over 20 years, although studies since 1990 seem to contemplate more attributes. Gallarza *et al* (2002) also note that with respect to the number of destinations studied, there is indeed a great variety, depending essentially on the aim of the study and the methodology employed. Embacher and Buttle (1989) suggest a limited number of destinations when the purpose is to relate image to the choice process. Regarding destination types, it can be observed that the most common is countries (10 out of 25 studies), followed by cities and US states. Very few studies compare two different types of destination (Baloglu 1997; Goodrich 1978) and cross-cultural tourist behaviour research in particular is limited having no integrated theory (Hudson and Ritchie 2001).

4.1.1 Methodological approaches in cross-cultural studies

The 'invention' of cross-cultural studies depends on the recognition that culture is of central importance and that it can only be appropriately analysed in the context of power

and politics. The stimuli for research projects are often, therefore, social and political problems, or questions and the methodological procedure or cultural studies can be best described according to Seale (2004:1) as 'neutral tools' who suggest that for a particular research project, theories and methods are selected, combined and applied from arrange of fields of science according to pragmatic and strategic points of view. Thus, the object of cross-cultural research does not consist of discrete cultural forms observed in isolation from their social or political context. On the contrary, proceeding from concrete questions, cultural processes in their varying forms are analysed in contexts limited in space and time. As Grossberg (1996: 13) writes, a hallmark of cultural studies is a radical contextualism:

To put it succinctly, for cultural studies, context is everything and everything is contextual.

In this respect, context is not merely a framework that influences and determines social practices that takes place within its borders. For analysis, this means that 'understanding a practice involves theoretically and historically (re)-constructing its context' (Grossberg 1992: 55). Theory and context, in the framework of cross-cultural research therefore condition each other reciprocally: any knowledge gained is always context-specific, and in this context are never fully represented, but can only be constructed under differing perspectives.

Context has become topical in many more recent research project studies. On one hand, much attention has been given to globalisation, involving Western consumer goods and media text (Friedman 1994), while on the other hand the migration of ethnic groups has been frequently addressed. One central question is the related transformation of cultural identities and the fashioning of new forms of ethnicity (Hall 1992b). A first ethnographically based investigation of this context was carried out by Gillespie (1995). She shows how television and video are used as communicative resources by families from the Punjab (Hindus and Sikhs) and by young people in Southall in West London, to negotiate new identities in the diaspora. Taking the example of Coca-Cola

advertisements and the way young people address them locally, Gillespie (1995) shows that a transnational product can open up an imaginary space in which one's own culture can be redefined: 'media are being used by productive consumers to maintain and strengthen boundaries, but also to create new, shared spaces in which syncretic cultural forms, such as 'new ethnicities' can emerge' (p 191-197). However, according to Du Gay (1997) cultural studies have devoted more attention to investigating the processes of 'production', for example, to the analysis of its cultural dimension (Du Gay 1997), or to the production of 'media events' (Fiske 1994). Du Gay, Hall, MacKay, Janes and Negus (1997) argue that in order to be able to analyse a cultural text of an artefact such as tourism imagery appropriately, the cultural processes of representation, production, consumption and regulation should be investigated together.

To understand such cultural processes, Uzzell (1989) has drawn on Levi-Strauss's distinction between the raw and the cooked. Levi-Strauss (1976) argues that these concepts are central to understanding the processes of transforming fundamental human practices into socially constructed and intelligible units of social exchange, in the same way that the raw ingredients are processed, prepared and transformed for eating. The resources that make up tourism – be they natural, built, or cultural – are transformed into distinctive yet recognisable elements of a symbolic system. In this system, a beach becomes a castaway's paradise, a resort becomes an aristocrat's playground, a national park becomes untouched wilderness and an historic village becomes living heritage. Craik (1998) argues that tourists consume such packages not only to learn about and experience otherness, but also to reaffirm the cultural transformations integral to their society of origin. This raw-cooked continuum of tourist resources has implications for modes of interpretations or as Craik (1998:115) terms this 'interpretive mismatch'. According to Craik (1998), there is always a tension between how a destination seeks to represent itself and open itself up for the tourist gaze and how tourists choose to engage in and subvert those cooked or packaged images. Thus, according to Reisinger and Turner (2003) successful international tourism marketing depends upon the understanding of the cultural background of tourists whom marketers attempt to target, and how this

background determines the expectations of these tourists. Culture makes it possible for human society to communicate using verbal and nonverbal systems of expressive behaviour, 'culture explains how a group filters information' (Herbig 1998: 12). These cultural groups encourage a particular communication style and have the power to shape perception, develop feelings, images and stereotypes (Dodd 1998). As nationality is considered one such group or subculture, this idea is central to the current study which is concerned with the role of nationality and national characteristics in this cultural process.

While the role of national cultural characteristics in affecting tourist behaviour has been investigated (Pizam and Sussmann 1995, Dimance 1994 and Peabody 1985), Seale (2004) suggests that assessments of national characteristics are often biased by ethnocentrism. Seale (2004) defines ethnocentrism as being based on the attitude that one's own race and/or culture is superior. Dimance (1994) adds that tourism research should improve its cross-cultural methodological skills and pay more attention to language and cultural equivalence issues in order to improve quality of the studies conducted. Berno (1996) suggests that much cross-cultural research in tourism primarily focus on the content of the research objectives, rather than the cultural context in which tourism occurs, and states that all too often the need to consider the cross-cultural applicability of methodology is neglected. Consequently, this research methodology emphasises the context in which an image is constructed in order to establish if that image is accurate and consistent with the intended image projected, as well as representative of what the destination has to offer.

The research approach in this thesis has drawn inspiration from methodologies employed in the wealth of studies previously undertaken on tourism destination imagery (Ahmed 1991, 1996; Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Gartner 1989, Muller 1995; Schreder 1996; Stabler 1988; Haahi 1986). As a consequence of this wide range of discussion on methodologies on tourism destination imagery research, the methodological approach adopted has been influenced in two ways. Firstly, it acknowledges the necessity of reviewing and analysing methodologies on TDI with particular emphasis on

methodologies that have been used to measure the projected and perceived images of a destination as understood from the tourist's perspective. It is expected that the methodology adopted will facilitate the exploration of the relationship between nationality and the projected and perceived image of that destination as well as an assessment of how the production of national identities influence (if at all) the behaviour of travellers.

Secondly, this study contends that tourism destination imagery and national cultures are closely related. Using the indirect method, social scientists have tried to describe and catalogue various perceptions that residents and entrepreneurs have of tourists of various nationalities, while the direct method has empirically tried to discover what if any differences actually exist in the behaviour of tourists of various nationalities. While few studies specifically consider the relationship between tourism destination imagery and nationality, the methodological procedure adopted in this study will endeavour to highlight the availability of sophisticated analytical techniques to measure national/cultural differences to allow for comparability of potential differences in the interpretation of tourism imagery. At the same time, however, it is accepted that any knowledge gained will be context-specific suggesting that how destination imagery will actually be projected, interpreted or learned involves, according to Grossbery (1992), theoretically and historically understanding the context in which the imagery is constructed and represented. This context is determined in the course of ongoing changes in contemporary societies, and therefore the methodological approach will relate to researching a particular place at a particular time. Thus, it is of paramount importance that this research links tourism destination imagery within the context in which it is set i.e. Ireland.

4.2 Measurement methodologies and tourism destination imagery

As a range of methodologies have been employed to measure tourism destination imagery, it is useful to review the measurement methodologies employed in previous

studies to justify decisions made. Table 1 provides a review and taxonomy of qualitative methods presented in two sections.

Methodological Procedure

I. Qualitative Techniques

Authors

Free Elicitation/Open ended questions

Reilly (1990), Embacher & Buttle (1989), Dann (1996a), Echtner & Ritchie (1993)

Focus Groups

Driscoll, Lawson & Niven (1994), King (1994), Fakeye & Crompton (1991)

In-depth interviews/discussions with experts

Haahi (1986), Selby & Morgan (1996), Bramwell & Rawding (1996), Amor, Calbalbuig, Abellan & Monort (1994), Fakeye & Crompton (1991)

2. Other Techniques

Content Analysis

Stabler (1988) Fesenmaier & McKay (1996), Crompton (1979b), King (1994), Baloglu & McCleary (1999)

On previous results

Embacher & Buttle (1989), Reilly (1990), Echtner & Ritchie (1993), Haahi (1986), Fakeye & Crompton (1991)

Table 1: A taxonomy review of non-quantitative methods for measuring TDI adapted from Gallarza *et al* (2002)

The first section encompasses techniques such as free elicitation and open-ended questions, focus groups and in-depth interviews and expert's discussions. The second section covers essentially content analysis. The two columns considered are methodological procedure and authors. Each author can be located in one or more than one section, depending on the number of qualitative techniques employed in his/her study. Table 2 provides the same kind of taxonomy and review for quantitative methods distinguishing between multivariate methods which include principal component analysis, factor analysis, correspondence analysis, cluster analysis and analysis of variance as well as bivariate methods which include correlation analysis and *t*-tests.

Statistical Procedures	Data Collection	Authors
1. Multivariate Methods		
1a. Information reduction procedures	LK5	Ahmed (1991, 1996)
Principle Component Analysis	LK5	Baloglu & McCleary (1999)
	LK7	Walmsley & Young (1998)
	LK7	Stenquist (1985)
	LK7	Fakeye & Crompton (1991)
	LK10	Muller (1995)
	SD7	Driscoll, Lawson & Niven (1994)
1b. Factor Analysis Methods	LK7	Crompton, Fakeye & Lue (1992), Schroeder (1996)
	LK7	Opperman (1996), Guthrie & Gale (1991)
	SD5	Crompton (1979b)
	LK6	Echtner & Ritchie (1993)
1c. Correspondence Analysis	Yes/No	Calantone <i>et al</i> (1989)
	Yes/NO	Eizaguirre & Lake (1996)
1d. Multidimensional	LK5	Gartner (1989)
	LK7	Stenquist (1985)
	2 nd technique	Guthrie & Gale (1991)
	RK 12	Haahti (1986)
	SD 7	Baloglu & Brinberg (1997)
1e. Grouping i.e. cluster analysis	2 nd technique	Muller (1995)
	DS 5	Embacher & Buttle (1989)
1f. Dependency Analysis		
Multiple Regression	LK7	Dadgostal e Isotato (1995)
Log Linear	2 nd technique	Eizaguirre & Laka (1996)
Conjoin Analysis	RK4	Carmichael (1992)
Analysis of Variance	LK5	Chon (1992)
	LK5 SD7	Baloglu & McCleary (1999)
	2 nd technique	Schroeder (1996)
	2 nd technique	Crompton (1979b)
	2 nd technique	Gartner & Hunt (1987)
	2 nd technique	Baloglu (1997)
	2 nd technique	Fakeye & Crompton (1991)
	2 nd technique	Ahmed (1996)
2. Bivariate Methods		
2a. Correlations Analysis	2 nd technique	Dadgostar e Isotalo (1995)
2b.. T-test and others	LK7	Chon (1991)
	SD5	Gartner & Hunt (1987)
	LK 5	Borchgrewink & Knutson (1997)
	2 nd technique	Fakeye & Crompton (1991)
	2 nd technique	Ahmed (1991)
	2 nd technique	Muller (1995), Reilly (1990)
	2 nd technique	Oppermann (1996)
	2 nd technique	Schroeder (1996)

Table 2: A taxonomy review of procedures for measuring TDI

SD = Semantic Differential; LK = Likert Scale; Caegorical Data : Yes/No
 RK = Ranking Order

Also, the same presentation as in Table 1 is adopted, with an additional column which details the data collection technique used in questionnaires.

The result of this review shows that the methodologies used are in general quite complicated. For the most part, within any one study there is a combination of multivariate and bivariate techniques while qualitative techniques are often used to supplement statistical survey to attain a more complete description of the research topic (Mason 1994). For example, qualitative techniques are more often employed in the preliminary steps (such as Guthrie and Gale 1991), using focus groups to generate items, then Factor Analysis and Multidimensional Scaling. Very few studies use qualitative methods as the main technique (Dann 1996a; Reilly 1990), and a few use a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Echtner and Ritchie 1993). Thus, quantitative or structured techniques have tended to predominate in image research.

The majority of destination image studies have tended to focus on the common, attribute-based aspects of destination image. Such attributes include price levels, transportation, types of accommodation and climate which according to Echtner form only part of a complex story and fail to incorporate the holistic aspects of the destination image. Qualitative methodologies, on the other hand, are more conducive to measuring the holistic components of destination image (Echtner and Ritchie 1991). These methods normally work on the basis that reality is viewed and understood in different ways by different groups and individuals and the analysis of meanings in specific contexts is usually emphasised rather than the expression of generalities. Reilly (1990), for example, has used open-ended questions in destination image measurement as such an approach is considered useful for capturing the overall image perception as well as unique features and auras (Echtner and Ritchie 1991). Such advantages are now recognised by a growing number of researchers. For example, Dann (1995) has been one of the major proponents of qualitative research in tourism, while other researchers who have recently considered the issue of qualitative research in tourism, include Walle (1997) and Anderson and Shaw (1999). However, a limited number of studies have employed a

combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. This limited use may be explained by the relative strengths and weaknesses of each approach in relation to tourism destination imagery.

4.2.1 Strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methodologies

The strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methodologies with respect to destination image research are summarised in Table 3.

The majority of all previous studies have used structured methodologies, specifically scales, to measure destination image. The scale items, usually based on a set of standardised attributes, are used to rate and compare a series of destinations. While such structured methodologies can be quite effective for measuring the common and attribute-based components of image, they are not useful for capturing the unique and holistic components (Echtner and Ritchie 1993).

While the debate between protagonists of qualitative and quantitative research can be somewhat partisan, it is now widely accepted that the two approaches can complement one another (Veal 1997). Indeed, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) argue, that in order to fully capture the components of destination image – attribute, holistic, functional, psychological, common and unique – a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies should be used.

	Quantitative/structured (positivism)	Qualitative/unstructured (phenomenology)
Description	Various common image attributes are specified, incorporated into standardised instruments.	Respondent is allowed to freely describe his or her impressions of the destination. Data is gathered from a number of respondents, sorted and then used to determine the 'image dimensions'
Techniques	Usually a set of semantic differential or Likert-type scales	Focus groups, open-ended survey questions, content analysis, free elicitation, repertory grid
Advantages	Easy to administer, simple to code. Results easy to analyse using sophisticated statistical techniques. Facilitates comparisons between destinations	Conducive to measuring the holistic components of destination image. Reduces interviewer bias, reduces likelihood of missing important dimensions or components
Disadvantages	Does not incorporate holistic aspects of image, attribute focused – that is, it forces the respondent to think about the product images in terms of the specified attributes. Completeness of structured methodologies can be variable. It is possible to miss dimensions	Level of detail provided by respondents is highly variable. Statistical analyses of the results are limited. Comparative analyses are not facilitated

Source: Jenkins, 1997 (after Echtner and Ritchie 1991)

Table 3: Structured Vs unstructured methodologies in image research

In order to address this methodological deficiency, Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) developed a system of measurement for destination image, which has received widespread acceptance amongst image researchers. For example, Chen and Hsu (2000) in their study of Korean tourists' images of overseas destinations, used an 18-attribute scale which mirrored that of Echtner and Ritchie; and Choi, Andrew and Janice (1999) employed Echtner and Ritchie's qualitative/quantitative model as a basis for their study of Hong Kong as a tourist destination. Further studies that employed or adapted Echtner and Ritchie's (1991, 1993) approach include Baloglu and Mangalolu's (2001) comparison

of four Mediterranean countries, and Murphy (1999) who incorporated both structured and unstructured methodologies in her study on Australia's image amongst backpackers. Thus, from a methodological perspective Echtner and Ritchie's study provides a generalized framework that can be used to compare and contrast the images of most, if not all destinations. It is this approach that was adopted, at least to some degree, in the current study to investigate the pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's destination image from the perspective of tourists travelling from Britain.

4.3 Design of research methods for this study

To achieve the objectives of this study, it was necessary to carry out both secondary and primary research. The secondary research involved a combination of semiotic and content analysis while the primary research was based on an in depth interview and a longitudinal survey.

4.4 Secondary research

Secondary research was carried out by analysing data collected by other researchers to substantiate material while providing alternative interpretations of existing research. As Marshall and Rossman (1995) have pointed out, the analysis of documents is a useful instrument for gathering information when it is tied in with the questions under study. In order to consider the projected image of Ireland, this secondary stage of research reviewed documents pertaining to the promotion of Irish tourism. The documents analysed include Bord Failte Reports (2000), Failte Ireland Reports (2002b, 2003b, 2004b, 2005), Northern Irish Tourist Boards Reports (2000, 2001) Tourism Ireland (2002b, 2003, 2004b, 2005), CERT Reports and publications (2000), and other recent reports detailing the advertising campaigns and public relations activities for Ireland in the British market. To extend this line of enquiry, primary research was undertaken to assess in detail the image projected of Ireland in a sample of promotional brochures.

4.5 Primary research

Documents were reviewed through the application of content analysis and semiotics to assist in understanding recipients interpretations of different forms of communication. The former technique involved selecting a sample which is considered representative of the material projected in the brochures under review, but small enough to allow for substantive analysis. Consequently, this sample was not random but convenience based due to the nature of the investigation and the materials involved. With respect to the latter, the semiotic process which refers to the study of sign systems, was selected to uncover the structure of signs within the selected visual material to contribute to more fully understanding human communication (Echtner 1999), and tourists' interpretations of the destination imagery of Ireland. The following section describes how semiotics and content analysis were operationalised in this study while briefly outlining the potential usefulness of each approach in understanding the deep structure and meaning in tourism marketing.

4.5.1 Semiotics and Content Analysis

In the present research, a content analysis of selected Tourism Ireland brochure promotional material was undertaken to assess the content of the documents.

This approach was adopted as content analysis is considered a research tool ideally suited to systematically quantifying and classifying the content of media messages (Kress and van Leenween 1990), It has a long history in communication studies and as a research technique in tourism it has been frequently used in destination image studies and rather less frequently in examinations of gendered and radicalised representations (Pritchard and Morgan 2000). In the current study, Tourism Ireland brochures from 2003 and 2004 were selected for analysis. Due to the nature of the investigation and the materials involved (Slater 1998: 235) this approach was not random based. While, it may be considered that the unit of analysis could provide the basis for developing a coding system to summarise the data set as a whole, a formal coding scheme was deemed

unnecessary due to the limited number of brochures being studied. Also, the absence of a coding scheme increased flexibility of analysis by permitting more varied readings and interpretations. Such an approach is approved of by Neuendorf (2002) who contends that content analysis need not employ a formal coding scheme or be a precursor to any kind of quantification. The content analysis of the brochures entailed inspection of the data for recurrent instances of some kind, irrespective of the type of instance (e.g. 'items', 'themes'). Not surprisingly therefore, this data analysis technique which reports qualitative data is often described as 'thematic' analysis. Having conducted a content analysis of the promotional materials as a whole, a number of images and text were selected which the author considered best illustrated some of the themes identified. To highlight their contributions, quotations and images were integrated into text, rather than in tabular form. This approach was not so much a method of research as a strategy. It aimed to understand particular images and/or text in detail, acknowledge their complexity and their circumstances which Punch (1998) concludes may entail using whatever methods are deemed suitable. However, although content analysis was considered appropriate, when utilised in conjunction with other forms of textual investigation – such as semiotics – it becomes more critical, richer and complex interpretations of representations result (Pritchard 2000).

The study of systems of signs is called semiotics. Since signs are used to create and convey meaning, semiotics has also been referred to as the study of the structure of meaning (Echtner 1999). In other words, the semiotic approach is concerned with understanding the mechanics of how language produces meaning, and as such is the study of the language of signs and thus meaning in culture. The semiotic paradigm suggests certain processes for the examination and interpretations of such data (Echtner 1999). As with most non-positivist qualitative approaches, semiotic analysis need not follow a strictly defined, linear procedure. Indeed, as Leymore (1975: 21) points out 'there is no such thing as a standard structural analysis', and the semiotic/structuralist approach allows considerable analytic freedom and creativity in terms of research procedures.

The application of semiotics to tourism research is relatively recent. In the case of tourism marketing, Uzzell (1984) uses a semiotic/structuralist perspective to examine the photographs in a sample of brochures produced by six 'sun holiday' companies. He employs semiotics to go beyond the obvious contents of the photographs and to explore the fantasies and myths structured at a more symbolic level. Cohen (1989) examines the hand-written advertisements, maps, photographs, and fliers that have been produced to promote hill tribe trekking in northern Thailand, while Brown (1992) employs the semiotic process to discuss the symbolic nature of the tourism experience. Selwyn (1993) examines a larger sample of tourist brochures, analysing both text and photographs to move beyond the denotative surface layer of the contents and interpret patterns of meaning at a deeper symbolic and connotative level. The semiotic approach is used by Cooper (1994: 144) to 'examine the question of tourism imagery, and the ways in which it is employed to manipulate the touristic experience'. He concludes that tourist brochures contain narratives that 'frame the ritual acts that must be performed and [that] manage contact with the world'.

Dann (1996a) conducts a semiotic analysis of tourist brochures and develops a typology of destination experiences based on the types of people portrayed. In this endeavour, he demonstrates the emphasis on both structure and interpretation inherent in the semiotic approach. In, perhaps the most definitive work in this area, *The Language of Tourism*, Dann (1996b) argues that tourism promotion creates its own language and provides the first detailed semiotic analysis of this language. In so doing, he effectively sets the stage for further, more focused researching the semiotics of tourism marketing.

Several common threads are apparent in the semiotic research outlined above. The 'language' of tourism marketing (communicated both verbally and visually) is viewed as a sign system that creates, codifies and communicates certain 'mythical' tourism experiences. Each researcher, as a semiotician, has attempted to uncover the structure of these tourism myths – and ritualised behaviours and encounters that they encourage or discourage. Thus, the collective contribution of this semiotic research is to expose the

structure of the tourism experience as communicated (and therefore interpreted) by the language of tourism research. In the case of this study, the analysis involved identifying and interpreting the myths and ideologies connoted by the text and images in the selected materials within the context of the culture in which these meanings were produced and consumed. This was achieved by adopting Peirce's semiotic triangle. This semiotic triangle considers the action of image production and communication, the message of the media, both manifest and latent meanings, and, audience decoding of messages - in other words, the sender, the message and the receiver.

4.5.2 A Framework for semiotic research – the tourism semiotic triangle

Peirce's semiotic triangle has been adapted by Echtner (1999) and illustrates the need to address the relationships which exist between the destination, the tourism images (signs or signifiers) and the tourist (the interpretant)

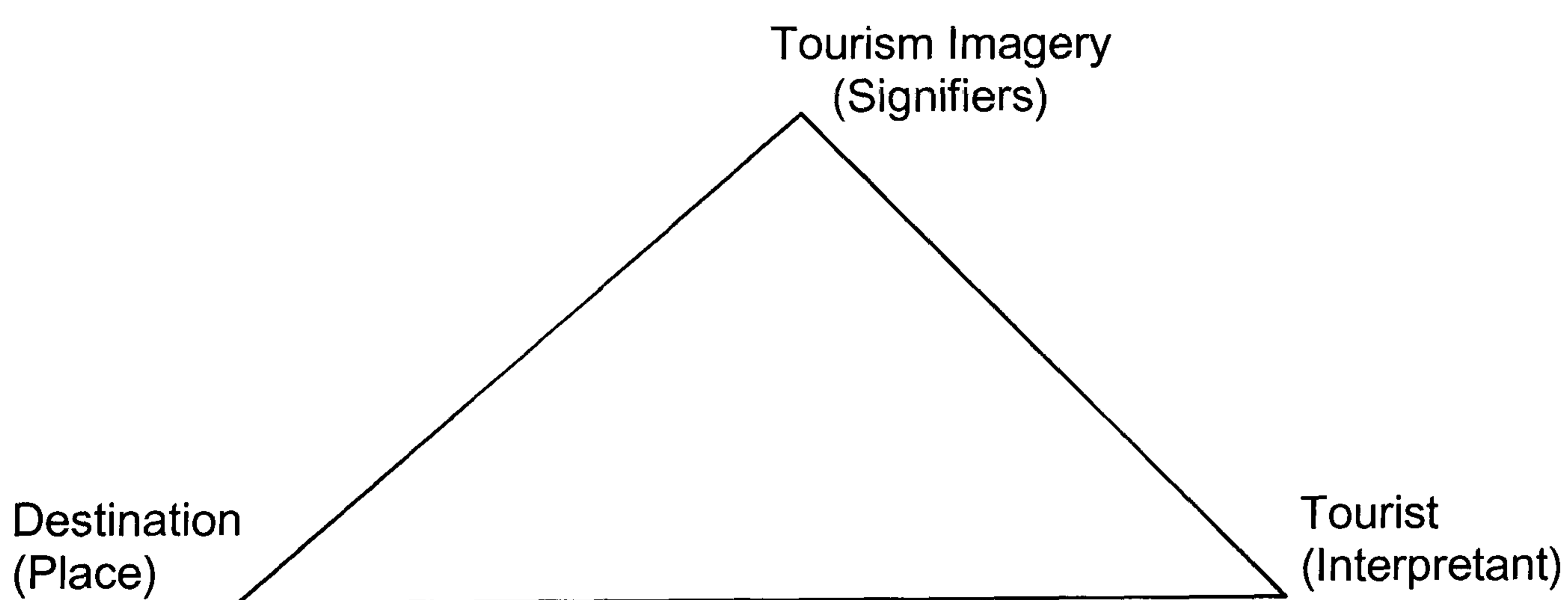


Figure 2: Peirce's semiotic triangle adapted by Echtner (1999: 54)

Three distinct relationships emerge in the tourism marketing semiotic triangle relating to (1) destination/tourism, (2) tourism image and (3) the tourist. In applying the semiotic triangle to this research, three areas of inquiry emerged:

1. How did the tourism agency (Tourism Ireland Ltd) represent (Ireland) as a tourist destination? An analysis of Tourism Ireland brochures 2003 and 2004 uncovered what meanings the image producer derived from particular representations. This assisted in ascertaining whether the meanings of selected materials were the same for the image producers and consumers.
2. How did the tourist interpret the tourism images of the destination and to what extent (if any) did these interpretations vary according to the perceived nationality and national identity held by the visitor. A number of questions relating to specific images were included in the pre-visitation questionnaire. These questions concerned both the impression communication by the selected material and the meanings conveyed by specific signs (icons, indices and symbols).
3. What was the symbolic consumption experience offered to the tourist by the destination? This was used to provide understanding of how Ireland as a destination is used to symbolically express self-concept i.e. how tourists to Ireland attempt to symbolize themselves in choosing Ireland as a holiday destination. Self-concept in this study related to demographic characteristics such as passport held, nationality and perceived national identity.

The framework was useful for highlighting gaps in existing semiotic research. In certain instances, these gaps included varying interpretations of the same imagery according to whether the interpretant was the sender or receiver. This framework also guided the direction of this study in relation to the relationship between interpretation of visual stimuli and nationality/national identity. As emphasised previously, it is important to remember that the meanings of sign systems are determined by social convention. Although few signs may be universally recognized and interpreted, this is not usually the case as sign

systems are culturally bound. Since tourism is a cross-cultural experience and depends heavily on international marketing, semiotic studies need to be constructed across various cultural settings. This cultural context of the image communication process is an important element in understanding the complete meaning of media messages (Gold 1994).

Due to the cross-cultural nature of this line of enquiry, the research approach adopted, in part at least, drew its inspiration from the paradigm of semiotics to provide a methodological framework for the deeper understanding and interpretation of the sign systems prevalent in the tourism phenomenon. Yet, despite its usefulness, semiotic research in the context of tourism destination imagery remains unexplored (Echtner 1999). This combination of content analysis and semiotics assisted in enhancing understanding of the relationships between the projected representations and national cultures/nationalities in tourism imagery. It also contributed to uncovering the influence such imagery had on tourist behaviour. However, while this approach investigated the actual images projected, it was also necessary to identify the intended image projected from the perspective of the image creator. Consequently, it was considered necessary to undertake additional primary research to analyse how that image was created and consumed. This necessitated conducting a semi-structured interview to assess the intended projected image of Ireland in the British market, while a longitudinal study investigated the perceived image of Ireland from the perspective of those traveling from Britain to Ireland both pre- and post-visitation.

4.5.3 Semi-Structured Interview/Expert Interview

A semi-structured telephone interview with the Deputy Director of Marketing for Tourism Ireland Ltd at the London office was undertaken to analyse the views of the Tourism Ireland representative. This interview investigated the intended projected image of Ireland that was, and is to be projected with particular emphasis on Britain. Also, a number of images used by Tourism Ireland in their promotion of Ireland in Britain were discussed during the interview to investigate the intended projected visual communication. This

answered some pertinent questions in relation to the projected image of Ireland from the perspective of those involved in the construction and representation of Ireland's tourism image.

This approach aimed to cover a given set of topics in a semi-structured interview. Moser and Kalton (1977) refer to this type of interview as guided or focused, and suggest that such interviews are designed to encourage the respondent to talk freely around each topic while providing the interviewer with a framework for discussion. Marriott (1953) provides an example of this type of interview where a survey among industrial workers aimed to study what factors made for satisfaction and what for discontent, amongst them. The individual interview was guided around eight topics that a preliminary study had found to be crucial. A similar approach was adopted in this instance where a combination of themes namely: current projected image of Ireland, intended/future projected image of Ireland, accepted level of knowledge/familiarity, performance of key attribute importance/activities promoted, promotional materials/techniques used, stereotyping, existence of place attachment and problems/issues in the British market directed the interview. A few simple factual questions introduced each subject and these were followed by open questions to form the core of the discussion for every topic. Aiming for depth of interpretation, the methodology of open-ended questions will allow expression in her own words, without imposing the researcher's point of view (Squire 1994). Dann, Nash and Pearce (1998) also make this point in a review of methodology in tourism studies, noting the potential for using interpretative qualitative approaches like semi-structured and open-ended interviews. In particular, when researching the complexity of imagery as a whole, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) suggest that unstructured methodologies should be employed to some degree to gauge holistic impressions. At the same time, the semi-structured interview provides a set form and ensures that all the relevant topics are discussed without the inflexibility of formal methods (Moser and Kalton 1977).

The respondent was asked for information on the identified themes but had plenty of opportunity to develop her views at length. The interviewer was free to choose when and

how to put questions and how much to explore and probe, all the time keeping within the framework imposed by the themes under discussion. However, the attainment of a successful interview was dictated by a number of factors. Cannell and Kahn (1968) distinguish three broad concepts as necessary conditions for a positive outcome, including; accessibility of the required information to the respondent, cognition or understanding of what is required and motivation to answer questions accurately. As noted on page 108, it is anticipated that the respondent will be able to fulfil each of the three requirements.

Therefore a semi-structured interview was deemed appropriate. Questions were set in advance but the interviewer modified the order of the questions based upon her perception of what seemed most appropriate in the context of the interview. Also the interviewer changed the way the questions were worded, provided explanations, left out particular questions which seem inappropriate and included additional ones.

The respondent, Ms Vera Stedman, Deputy Director of Marketing in Tourism Ireland is a key player in the development and implementation of the projected tourism destination image of Ireland in Britain. Informal discussions with personnel in Failte Ireland (FI) and the Northern Irish Tourist Board (NITB) directed the researcher to Tourism Ireland Ltd and subsequently to Ms Stedman. Tourism Ireland is a publicly owned limited company, jointly owned by the NITB and FI and established on a trans-jurisdictional basis in an effort to maximise tourist potential and reduce duplication. As a result, Tourism Ireland provides the following three services:

1. Planning and delivering international tourism marketing programme, including programmes in partnership with the industry North and South.
2. Market research, provision of information and other appropriate assistance to help this industry develop international marketing expertise; and
3. Co-operation through consulting and assisting other bodies or associations in carrying out tourism related activities (Trimble/Mallon Statement 1998).

Both the NITB and FI are responsible for domestic tourism in their respective destinations whilst Tourism Ireland markets the Island of Ireland abroad. As such, the Deputy Director of Marketing in Tourism Ireland will have access to the necessary information and be able to answer questions in the specified terms of reference. Meuser and Nagel (1991: 441) refer to this type of semi-structured interview as the 'expert interview' which was considered an appropriate technique in this situation for a number of reasons. Firstly, the interviewee was integrated into the study not as a single case but as representing a group of experts and as such, the interviewee is of less interest as a (whole) person than in her capacity of being an expert in her field of activity (Flick 2002). Secondly, the respondent was aware of what was required of her prior to commencement of the interview. Several contacts via email and telephone confirmed availability for interview as well as informing Ms Stedman of the main topics to be discussed. Thirdly, the initial decision to co-operate and positive feedback from previous contact suggested that the interviewee was motivated and interested in the subject matter. Also, as Britain is one of the most significant generators of tourists for Ireland (Tourism Ireland 2004b), it was expected that the themes discussed as well as the research findings would be of particular importance for Tourism Ireland. At the same time, this research will benefit Tourism Ireland by ensuring accountability in the use of public resources while keeping the organisation in touch with changes in its environments and its performance.

As the respondent is based in London, England but travels extensively, it was agreed that the interview would be conducted by telephone. The most obvious advantages of interviewing by telephone include less cost, speed and accessibility (Oppenheim 1992). Finally, the researcher secured the interviewer's permission to record the interview on tape for the purposes of transcription only. Consequently, the interview was recorded which allowed the interviewer to concentrate on the interview itself as an accurate record of the interview material was guaranteed.

In summary, a combined semiotic and content analysis assisted in assessing the projected image of Ireland in Britain and the expert interview established the intended

image projected. However, to investigate the perceived image of Ireland from the perspective of tourists travelling from Britain and the influence (if any) of nationality and/or national identity on that perception a longitudinal survey was undertaken.

4.5.2 Questionnaire-based longitudinal survey

A questionnaire-based longitudinal survey was selected as the researcher aimed to achieve as large and as representative a sample as possible. As Veal (1997) points out, questionnaires are a good means of ensuring that a complete picture of a topic is obtained while providing the means to gather and record simple information on the incidence of attitudes, meanings and perceptions among the population as a whole. Also, self-administered postal questionnaires in particular avoid interviewer bias and have the ability to reach respondents who live at widely dispersed locations (Oppenheim 2002). For these reasons, questionnaire-based surveys are the most widely used data collection technique (de Vaus 1986), and is a loose term used to cover postal questionnaires, group or self-administered questionnaires and structured interview schedules including telephone interviews (Oppenheim 2002).

Each questionnaire is to a large extent, unique and within the field of TDI a number of approaches using questionnaires have been employed. For example, Andreu *et al* (2000) analysed the perceived image of Spain in an ad hoc study of the British market carried out based on structured and self-administered questionnaires. While the overall objective of this study was to analyse the relationship between the projected and perceived image of Spain, Andreu *et al* (2000) research methodology did not allow comparisons between perceptions of the TDI pre- and post-visitation. The analysis dealt with the projected and perceived image of Spain in the UK and both concepts were approached separately, each with a different methodological focus: the projected image through secondary sources, and the perceived image through an empirical study based on quantitative research. Bord Failte's Visitor Attitudes Survey (VAS), provides another example of questionnaire based TDI research. This survey aims to assess holidaymaker's reactions regarding a range of

different aspects of their visit to Ireland employing a questionnaire carried out post-visitation (Failte Ireland 2002a). However, the Scottish Tourist board's, Tourism Attitudes Survey, is conducted on a pre/post-visitation basis which allows for comparison between pre-visit perceptions and actual experience. Yet, this is not a true representation of attitudes as visitors are surveyed during their holiday as a proxy for pre-visitation even though there is a need to ensure compatibility of pre-visitation perceptions with experience at the destination. A destination must, therefore, be able to assess the image held by visitors prior to visitation so that efforts can be made to match perceptions with reality implying that a pre-visitation questionnaire is an essential component of the image appraisal process. At the same time, using the same sample, a post-visitation questionnaire is suggested to analyse any changes in perception once the trip is completed, and to facilitate a comparison between the projected and perceived image to discover discrepancies (if any) between the two. Thus, it was suggested that pre-and post-visitation questionnaires or before-and-after designs across the same sample, was an appropriate research instrument for this inquiry.

The before-and-after designs are part of the larger family of 'longitudinal' design (Oppenheim 1992). The classic longitudinal survey collects data from the same population from at least two points in time which may be prospective or retrospective. The underlying principle of the longitudinal design is to measure the dimensions of interest of a given entity (in this case tourists travellers from Britain) before and after an intervening phenomenon (in this instance, a trip to Ireland) to determine whether or not the phenomenon has some effect (in this case on interpretation of destination imagery). However, Oppenheim (2001) claims that longitudinal surveys often lack control samples and suffer from case losses and consequent biases mainly because there may be months or even years between the time the base-line measures are taken and the final measurement stage. Oppenheim (2001) gives the example of typical prospective longitudinal studies as long-term follow-up studies of groups of children or of major social interventions; or the study of the long-term effects of advertising or of other communication campaigns, and suggests that during such a lengthy interval many

intervening variables may influence the effects being studied. Veal (1997) contends that due to the need to keep track of the sample members and the requirement of a large enough sample at the beginning to allow for the inevitable attrition to the sample over time, longitudinal studies are expensive to carry out. As a result there are very few examples in tourism research (Veal 1997) with Pinsonneault (1993:75) noting that only two per cent of surveys are longitudinal. However, this temporal frame of reference (de Vaus 1986) offers an excellent way of studying trends, both in terms of behaviour or attitudes as it offers greater precision and enables the researcher to measure not only net changes, but in addition, to identify and study the 'changers' (Moser and Kalton 1977). For example, there is a strong argument for using pre/post visitation studies in that post-visitation questionnaires can only capture an individual's hindsight, they cannot reverse the study to accurately measure pre-visit expectations. It is usually impractical at the end of a trip to ask a visitor to complete perception instruments as its accuracy is tarnished by their travel experiences and appraisal (Crompton and Love 1995). Therefore, the most appropriate method of measuring perceptions and experiences is to capture them pre-and post- visitation. Such a pre-/post-visitation study is also known as a longitudinal study.

The intent of this instrument was to enable comparisons (if appropriate) to be drawn between the perceived image of Ireland held by travellers from Britain before and after their visit as well as to highlight the degree to which (if any) nationality and national identity influenced this perception. To facilitate this research, a two-part questionnaire measured Ireland's destination image pre-visitation and post-visitation. However, to inform the design of the pre- and post-visit questionnaires, a preliminary phase of quantitative data collection was undertaken with the aim of developing a list of attributes that the British market associate with Ireland as a tourist destination for inclusion in the pre- and post-questionnaires.

4.5.3 Development of attribute list

Firstly, a review of the relevant destination image literature was conducted to develop a master list of attributes that theoretically measures destination image. Many studies including Pearce (1982), Phelps (1986) and Gartner (1989) conceptualise destination image as comprising such features as attractions, climate, culture, host populations, recreation and scenery. Secondly, a preliminary phase of qualitative research was undertaken to distil the constructs or attributes most appropriate to the population being studied (Jenkins 1998). Qualitative content analysis was used to derive the image attributes of Ireland, which are applicable to British travellers to increase the likelihood of producing a complete list of items to describe destination image increases by using more than one technique.

As will be recalled from the conceptual framework (Chapter 3, page 77), content analysis of written information, such as guide-books, or visual information, including images in travel brochures, can provide a great deal of information about the images projected from a tourist destination. For example, Dilley (1986) conducted a survey of the images used by different national tourist organisations in projecting their destination to the North American market. Brochures from 21 countries were analysed and images categorised according to the type of information conveyed. Even though Ireland was not included in this survey, a brief examination of any Bord Failte brochure will highlight the clear dominance of scenery, open spaces and the Irish people (Failte Ireland 2002b, 2003b, 2004b).

A preliminary questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of 100 tourists in Cornwall staying in a number of hotels and guesthouses during the months of July and August 2003. This questionnaire also served as a pilot for some of the questions in the pre-visitation questionnaire and influenced, to some extent, the design and implementation of the pre- and post- visitation questionnaire. As previously stated, the researcher incorporated a review of image study literature with content analysis during the

initial stages of the research in order to determine the attributes most pertinent for visitors travelling from Britain to Ireland. In the interest of avoiding respondent fatigue and boredom, the researcher limited the number of attributes used in the main questionnaire. Moreover, it was felt that the inclusion of questions adapted from Echtner and Ritchie's open-ended questions¹ allowed respondents to indicate any additional attributes that were of particular importance to them. The most frequently cited attributes were included in the pre- and post-visitation questionnaires. Thus, this preliminary analysis investigated current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination in order to develop an attribute list for the pre- and post- visitation questionnaire even though until the 1990s, few researchers used consumers to identify and generate the lists of destination image attributes (Echtner, and Ritchie 1991). Questions related to perceived mental images of Ireland, perceived symbols that capture the essence of Ireland, perceived characteristics and the overall image of Ireland as a tourist destination. These allowed the respondents to describe the destination without any of the pre-determined constructs of the researcher. Thus, the elicitation of these attributes from the target population is an attempt to gain a truly accurate representation of the British tourist's image of Ireland.

Photographs and additional questions relating to the formation of images of Ireland as well as demographic details such as passport held, nationality and national identity, were also included. These questions were deemed appropriate as they facilitated a preliminary analysis of the similarities and/or differences between attributes, image formation and nationality/national identity. Six unidentified photographs were piloted in the preliminary questionnaire to examine destination image interpretation, two of which are not used by Tourism Ireland to represent Ireland. These two photographs are used by other national tourism agencies to represent their respective destinations, namely; Denmark and Gran Canaria. These were included to investigate if the same images could be used to represent different types of destinations. The remaining four are a selection of brochure

¹ 1. What images or characteristics come to mind when you think of X as a vacation destination (functional holistic component)? 2. How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting X (psychological holistic component)? 3. Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in X (unique component)?

images used by Tourism Ireland Ltd in the promotion of Ireland as a tourist destination in the British market. These images aimed to uncover the meanings conveyed by specific signs, as well as to demonstrate that whilst consistent images may be beneficial for marketing implementation, the use of standard symbols and images across cultures may have differential connotations and therefore, lessen marketing effectiveness.

Finally, a number of questions relating to nationality and national identity were also added to this preliminary questionnaire. It was agreed that this multinational tourist research involved knowing and understanding not only the destination (Ireland) but also tourists' origins and other salient dimensions for destination image evaluation. Even though respondents travelled from the same country of origin (Britain), it did not necessarily follow that all the respondents shared the same nationality or national identity. As a consequence, this initial phase of the research proved much more extensive than originally anticipated primarily due to greater emphasis being placed on the significance of visual representation and the role of nationality and national identity in influencing tourist behaviour. Appendix I provides a sample of the preliminary questionnaire.

In addition to applying the generalized framework presented by Echtner and Ritchie (1993), uncovering recurring patterns and various layers of meaning within particular tourism images is relevant in this study. McKay and Fesenmaier (2000) recommend that research employing variations in visual stimuli, such as social interaction and tourist attractions (activities, cultural/heritage images, ethnic groups, natural scenery), and or text/visual combinations across more cultures is necessary to discern patterns of similarity as well as difference. Multinational tourist research involves knowing and understanding not only the destination but also tourist's origins and salient dimensions for destination image evaluation. Consequently, this aspect of the study examined cross-cultural image perception to ascertain if the interpretation of image dimensions differs across varying nationalities and national identities.

The results of the data analysis from this preliminary questionnaire were then used to inform the design of pre-visitation questionnaire in two ways. Firstly, it helped to develop

a list of destination attributes. Such attributes and tourist's 'holistic' impressions of a place warrant investigation, because the omission of any aspects will result in an incomplete measurement of the destination image. Secondly, this preliminary questionnaire facilitated the piloting of a number of questions that were intended to be included in the pre-visitation questionnaire. To assess the appropriateness of the piloted questions and the usefulness of the attribute list, the ensuing discussion presents the results of the data analysis taken from the preliminary questionnaire. The data collected from the preliminary questionnaire was analysed by employing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 11.1)

4.5.4 Preliminary questionnaire data analysis (stage 1)

The principle aim of the preliminary analysis was to investigate current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination in Britain in order to develop an attribute list as well as piloting a number of proposed questions to be included in the pre-visitation questionnaire.

The sample of tourists was selected in Cornwall during the peak season of July and August, 2003. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to tourists who visited guesthouses and hotels in different locations in the County to ascertain the perceived image of Ireland regardless of whether they had visited Ireland or not. Two interviewers canvassed respondents and as 24 tourists either refused to participate in the survey, or inadequately answered any of the questions, only 76 usable questions were obtained. The refusal was 18%. The preliminary findings indicated that Ireland was considered a 'scenic, rural and emerald isle' by most respondents. Its stated weaknesses, however were that Ireland was viewed as a wet, politically unstable and expensive destination.

The following frequency tables summarise the results of the initial investigation establishing the most frequently mentioned attributes associated with the image of Ireland in Britain. It is anticipated that identifying what sources of information respondents consider important, which images they consider most represent Ireland as a tourist destination, and what emotions such images evoke will assist in identifying factors which

influence perceptions. Finally, national identity, nationality and ethnic origin are also considered to ascertain if such characteristics influence tourist perceptions.

As the destination image is composed of people's perceptions of individual attributes, as well as more holistic impressions (Choi, Chan and Wu 1999), Table 4 relates to the words or expressions, symbols and characteristics of Ireland that respondents used to describe Ireland. Also included are the results of a general question relating to respondents overall image of Ireland. To limit the number of attributes listed in the pre-visitation questionnaire,

Variable	Frequency	Valid %
Shamrock	70	92
Beautiful Scenery	67	88
Drink/Guinness/Harp	64	84
Friendly/Welcoming	46	61
Irish Music & Dance	38	50
Folklore and Myths	30	39
Troubles/IRA/War	26	34
Relaxing	25	33
Religion	23	30
Rain	17	22
Irish Pubs	15	20
Humour/Craic/Banter	14	18
Fishing	14	18
Laidback/slow	13	17
Flag	12	16
Horseracing/equine	12	16
Tranquillity	12	16
Blarney Kissing Stone	12	16
Good Night Life	11	14
Irish expressions/colloquialisms	10	13
Irish Accent	9	12
Family orientated	8	11
Irish Sport/GAA	8	11
Nostalgia	8	11
Expensive	7	9
Surfing	7	9
Historical	6	8

Table 4: Most frequently mentioned attributes

Physical appearance	6	8
Luck of the Irish	6	8
Irish Food	5	7
Hen & Stag destination	5	7
Accessible/easy to tour	5	7
Gypsy/Travelling community	4	5
Romantic/Mysterious	3	4
Castles	3	4
Irish Cross	3	4
Aer Lingus	3	4
Golf	3	4
Cottages	2	3
Potato	2	3
Killarney	2	3
Liffey	2	3
Bad Roads	1	1
Gold Coin	1	1
Celtic Knot	1	1
Claddagh ring	1	1
Shipbuilding	1	1
Migrants	1	1
Irish Ferries	1	1
St Patrick	1	1
Celtic	1	1
Irish Linen	1	1
Limerick	1	1
Galway Bay	1	1
Irish Sea	1	1
Giants causeway	1	1
Patriotic	1	1
Not commercialised	1	1

Table 4: Most frequently mentioned attributes (contd)

only those attributes mentioned at least three times were selected and those that share similar characteristics were combined and represented as one attribute. For example, relaxing and tranquil are combined as are Irish Pubs with drink, Guinness, Harp; and nostalgia with historical; castles with crosses and Irish accent with expressions and colloquialisms. Also, there appeared to be little variation in terms of the frequency of attributes mentioned between those who had visited Ireland previously and those who had never been to Ireland.

Table 5 represents the summarised list of 33 attributes to be included in the pre-visitation questionnaire. A distinction can be made between those image characteristics that are directly observable, or measurable (functional) such as 'rain', 'expensive',

'accessible/easy to tour' and those that are less tangible or difficult to observe (psychological) include 'Friendly People/Welcoming', 'Humour/Craic/Banter' and 'Laidback/slow'.

- Shamrock
- Beautiful Scenery
- Irish Pubs/Drink/Guinness/Harp
- Friendly People/Welcoming
- Irish Music & Dance
- Folklore and Myths
- Troubles/IRA/War
- Relaxing/Tranquil
- Religion
- Rain
- Humour/Craic/Banter
- Fishing
- Laidback/slow
- Flag
- Horseracing/equine
- Blarney Kissing Stone
- Good Night Life
- Irish Accent/expressions
- Family orientated
- Irish Sport/GAA
- Historical/Nostalgic
- Expensive
- Surfing
- Physical appearance
- Luck of the Irish
- Irish Food
- Hen & Stag destination
- Accessible/easy to tour
- Gypsy/Travelling community
- Romantic/Mysterious
- Castles/Crosses
- Aer Lingus
- Golf

Table 5: Attribute list

Using Ireland as an example, the three continuums of destination image are illustrated in Table 6, demonstrating that images of destinations can range from those perceptions based on 'common' functional and psychological traits to those based on more distinctive or 'unique' features or feelings. On the attribute side, the functional attributes include observable factors such as weather and nightlife, while the psychological attributes include less observable factors such as local residents' attitudes and political instability. Likewise, on the holistic side, tourists form impressions that are functional e.g. bad roads and psychological e.g. slower pace of life. Tourists' perceptions of Ireland are also based

on factors that are common to other destinations in Europe or features and feelings that are unique in the world. Beautiful scenery and traditional music are good examples of common functional and psychological factors because places such as Scotland, Wales and Brittany all have similar reputations, while the Blarney Kissing Stone and the Shamrock are unique features and feelings associated with Ireland. The attribute list, developed in this preliminary research phase, was included in the pre-visitation questionnaire where respondents were asked to rate each of the elements/attributes according to the importance they hold for them in choosing a holiday destination. As such, this part of the pre-visitation questionnaire comprised pre-developed Likert statements, designed to measure the functional and psychological attributes. Specifically, respondents will be asked to indicate their level of agreement on a five-point scale, ranging from 'not at all important' (1) to 'very important' (5). The intention was that these Likert statements were explored to combine the statements into a smaller set of factors that will be deemed to represent the image dimensions of Ireland.

An illustrative example of the three image continuums of Ireland

3. Functional-Psychological

1.	<i>Attribute-Holistic</i> Attribute	Poor/Wet Weather Good Pubs/Night life	Friendly People Politics/IRA
	Holistic	Historical/Nostalgic	Slow pace of life
2.	<i>Unique-Common</i> Unique	Blarney Kissing Stone	Shamrock
	Common	Beautiful scenery	Traditional Music

Table 6: Functional-psychological image continuums of Ireland

While 20 respondents had visited Ireland before, the opinions of those that had visited Ireland appeared very similar to the perceptions held by those who had not visited. Thus at this preliminary stage, actual experience of the destination does not appear to influence

the selection of attributes that are considered representative of Ireland. To uncover the factors which influence image held, Table 7 considers how respondents have formed this image of Ireland as a tourist destination. However, as indicated in Table 7 when asked how respondents had formed their image of Ireland previous visit/s were considered to be a significant source of information. All those who had visited Ireland noted previous visitation as important and at the same time word of mouth and print media were also considered useful. To further examine the influence of actual experience on image perception, additional questions were incorporated into the pre-visitation questionnaire. Including both those who had never visited Ireland, and those who had actual experience of the destination, 36.6% consider print media including brochures, guidebooks and fictional/non fictional books the primary source of their image of Ireland, while 32.4% agree that Television/Video including film and documentaries greatly influence their image of Ireland. Moreover, a further 27% consider word of mouth a significant variable in influencing their perception of Ireland as a tourist destination. Only 4.1% recognise current affairs and news as contributors to their perceived image of Ireland, even though 'troubles/IRA/war' is among the top seven attributes most associated with Ireland. This raised important questions relating to the role of promotional tools in terms of their effectiveness in influencing perceived images and the decision-making process.

Source of perceived image	Frequency	Valid Percent
Print Media	26	36.6
Previous visit/s	20	26.3
Word of Mouth	21	27.6
Television/Video	23	32.4
Current Affairs/News	3	4.1

Table 7: Sources of information about Ireland as perceived by respondents

Tentative results suggested that print media, television and video are the most important external influences whilst word of mouth and previous visitation appeared to be a significant internal influence on perceived image. As these sources are very general, specific options such as guide books, travel books, Failte Ireland brochures and Tour

operator brochures will be noted in the pre-visitation questionnaire to distinguish more accurately the sources of information used.

Table 8 identifies pictures that are considered to most represent Ireland with a strong majority (93%) indicating that the images of fishing, golfing, musicians and the horse and trap were the most representative. Irrespective of the fact that the golfing image was taken from a brochure of Gran Canaria, 32.9% of respondents claimed this image was the most representative of Ireland and 3% agreed that the image of beach huts, taken from a Danish brochure, adequately reflected their image of Ireland, while only 5% recognised O’Connell Bridge in Dublin as symbolising Ireland. 31.6% identified the musicians in photograph 5 as representative of Ireland evoking specific emotions e.g. ‘laid back’, ‘natural’ and ‘traditional’. This image appeared to work at a much broader cultural level by inviting the reader to realise that for example, these are not just a couple of musicians, but that they *are* in fact Ireland and are evoking a particular view of the country – traditional, expressive, relaxed, spontaneous. A number of respondents argued that this mode of representation is ‘natural and real’ and as such could be interpreted as naturalising the symbolic message by making the image appear uncontrived. Similarly, 24.4% choose the horse and trap image commenting that this image was ‘old worldly’, ‘peaceful’ and ‘rural’ and by so doing the image was linked to society itself, to the beliefs, concepts and values which inform society and the descriptive is transformed by the respondents into something which has meaning beyond objectivity.

Images that most represent Ireland		Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Golfing	25	32.9
2.	Fishing	27	35.5
3.	Horse & Trap	17	22.4
4.	Bridge	4	5.3
5.	Musicians in Pub	24	31.6
6.	Beach Huts	3	3.9

Table 8: Frequently cited images that respondents consider most represent Ireland as a tourist destination

Results in Table 9 suggest that the image of the Horse Fair generally aroused negative feelings of 'sadness', 'concern', 'backward' and 'animal cruelty', while a minority viewed the image as 'warm', 'friendly', 'relaxed', 'nostalgic', 'different culture' and 'lively' suggesting more positive feelings of rural life, cultural diversity and community unity.

13.1% did not comment on the image at all, either because they did not understand the content, were indifferent to the photograph or simply did not like it.

Emotions/feelings evoked When seeing pictures	Frequency	Valid Percent
<i>Picture 1: Horse Fair</i>		
Market town/busy	12	15.7
Sadness/Concern	12	15.7
Animal cruelty	10	13.1
Warm/Friendly	7	9.2
Feelings of tradition/nostalgia	7	9.2
Backward	6	7.8
Lively	4	5.2
Diverse cultures/travellers	3	3.9
Gathered community	2	2.6
Rural life	2	2.6
Interesting	1	1.3
Not answered	10	13.1
<i>Picture 2: Rock of Cashel</i>		
Serenity/peace/relaxing	26	34.2
Historical	13	17.1
Picturesque	11	14.4
Countryside/natural	6	7.8
Bleak/Remote	4	5.2
Mystery	4	5.2
Tourism	1	1.3
Not answered	2	2.6
<i>Picture 3: Hurling</i>		
National Sport/for Irish only	15	19.7
Competitive	13	17.1
Excitement	13	17.1
Energetic	11	14.4
Do not understanding what is happening	9	11.8
Relaxing	2	2.6
Not answered	14	18.4

Table 9: Emotions and feelings most frequently mentioned that evoked when viewing images of Ireland

Picture 2 appeared to evoke much more positive emotions of serenity, peace, relaxation, history, picturesque, mysterious and remote with respondents describing the image as 'breathtaking stillness', 'splendid scenery' 'rugged' and 'pleasant and green'. The hurling image evoked positive emotions such as competitive and energetic but the most frequent response was similar to 'National sport, for Irish only'. This could be interpreted as a mixed emotion, on one hand 'national sport' may be seen as positive in terms of community togetherness, distinctive culture and national pride, but on the other hand 'for Irish only' may instil negative feelings of not belonging, isolation and otherness. These negative connotations were further emphasised as 11.8 % of respondents did not know what was happening and 18.4 % did not comment at all. Again, just as in the Horse Fair image, this may be because respondents simply did not like the image, experienced feelings of indifference or did not understand the message.

Out of the three selected images in Table 10, the Guinness photograph was considered by 81.2% as the most representative image of Ireland. Of those that choose this photograph, 68% agreed that Guinness symbolised good pubs and traditional nightlife, 14% suggested that the image reflected the Irish as heavy drinkers and 7% considered the image to represent Ireland as the home of good stout. Comments included 'Guinness drinking is what I would expect to do', 'good nightlife', 'Ireland and Guinness go together' and 'Ireland is famous for pubs and Guinness'. 14.5% selected the Cyclist as the most representative suggesting that it depicted Ireland as 'slow with bad roads', 'a get away from it all', 'green and rural'. Only 4.3% choose the Port as symbolising Ireland and comments mainly related to 'fishing', 'island feeling' and 'rural fishing village'.

Photograph that best represents Ireland	Frequency	Valid Percent
Photo 1: Port	3	4.3
Photo 2: Guinness	56	81.2
Photo 3: Mountain/Cyclist	10	14.5

Table 10: Photographs which best represent Ireland as tourist destination

In the final image related question, question 8 considered respondents understanding of another set of three photographs. Over 90% interpreted the castle image as historic with comments such as 'a colourful past', 'British rule', 'steeped in history'. 43% viewed the cyclist image as a combination of rural and spaciousness suggesting that the image represented 'a get away from it all', 'tranquil and calm', 'lonely and bleak landscape', while the Guinness image was again seen to represent 'good pubs', 'lively nightlife' and/or 'traditional entertainment'.

Respondents Profile

As shown in Tables 11 and 12 respondents were predominantly white and British. Only 4 respondents considered themselves Black British and 1 mixed, while just 1 respondent held a dual passport i.e. Irish and British passport. As a consequence it was decided that correlations between nationality, national identity, ethnic origin and image perception could not be adequately addressed as significant difference in the respondents profile did not exist. To enhance the likelihood of increased variety in respondent's profile, additional questions relating to age, gender, length of time living in Britain and occupational status were included in the pre-visitation questionnaire.

Passport Type	Frequency	Valid Percent
British	74	97.3
Australian	1	1.3
Dual	1	1.3

Table 11: Passport types

Ethnic Origin	Frequency	Valid Percent
White	71	93.4
Black British	4	5.2
Mixed	1	1.3

Table 12: Ethnic Origin

4.5.5 Summary of Preliminary Analysis

This preliminary analysis investigated the current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination in order to develop an attribute list for the pre-visitation questionnaire. The results of the preliminary analysis also directed the design of the pre-visitation questionnaire in a number of ways:

Firstly, 33 attributes were selected as the most representative words, symbols and characteristics associated with the image of Ireland which were incorporated into the pre-visitation questionnaire to extend understanding of the perceived image of Ireland in Britain. It is intended that these attributes will be rated by the respondents in order to ascertain the attribute-holistic, functional-psychological and common-unique image of Ireland from the perspective of the visitors travelling from Britain. Also, external influences, particularly print media and internal factors, such as word of mouth were identified as being considered important in determining perception. As the nature of these sources of information is very general, more specific questions were devised for the pre-visitation questionnaire.

Secondly, to supplement research on the perceived image of Ireland in Britain, a number of images were selected to ascertain which images were considered most representative of Ireland as well as the emotions evoked through such imagery. The initial findings pose some interesting questions regarding the role of promotional tools in the tourist decision-making process. It is argued that such semiotic techniques will assist in exploring how tourists interpret images as well as aid understanding of the degree of effectiveness of such tourism images. In particular some images selected by respondents were considered to represent Ireland even though a number of these photographs were previously used to promote other destinations. This highlights the notion that all media borrow from other cultural spheres and that the tourism image is everywhere in the sense that ones view of people, places and products is heavily influenced by cultural processes. Also the negative responses to the image of the Horse Fair and hurling photography

demonstrates that such perceptions are learned and are inexorably bound in particular cultures and contexts. Therefore, it is appropriate to include a limited number of these images in the pre-visitation questionnaire in order to articulate how respondents read such photographs and establish what meaning such images convey.

Thirdly, the frequencies of categorical variables such as passport held, nationality, national identity, mother tongue, dual passport and ethnic origin were examined in order to determine the proportion of respondents in each category. As the vast majority were white and British, it was agreed that a number of other demographic questions would be added to the pre-visitation questionnaire. The purpose of this was to elicit profiles of the respondents to facilitate an investigation of the degree of influence (if any) nationality and national identity have on perception as well as for descriptive purposes.

4.5.6 Pre-visitation Questionnaire

The design of the pre-visitation questionnaire aimed to analyse the perceived and actual projected images of Ireland, and help to elucidate the way and degree to which nationality and or/national identity of the tourist and of the product influences interpretations of destination imagery. This questionnaire was distributed pre-visitation to address seven key themes. The first theme related to current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination and begins with five open-ended questions. These questions (as in the preliminary questionnaire) were adapted from Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) survey, but were extended to examine as comprehensively as possible the holistic and unique elements of the image of Ireland as a destination. These questions related to the perceived mental image of Ireland, perceived atmosphere, perceived characteristics, perceived symbols and perceived emotions attached to Ireland. The formation of current perceptions was the next theme addressed through a variety of open and closed ended questions relating to previous visitation, current knowledge of Ireland, familiarity/place attachment with Ireland, and expectations of Ireland as a tourist destination. The third theme considered a number of attributes based on the findings of the preliminary

questionnaire, and the respondents were required to rate the relative importance of the attributes, for example, 'how important is scenic beauty in your personal travel decision-making on a scale of one to five (where 1 = not at all important and 5 = very important).


This format was adopted as the Likert scale, which requires an individual to rate a set of pre-determined attributes, is one of them most popular in use. In an analysis of fifteen image studies, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) discovered that almost all used either semantic differential or Likert-type scales. As the optimal scale length is between five and seven points (Moser and Kalton 1977) a 5-point Likert scale was employed in this study. It is anticipated that the responses to the open-ended image questions will provide the more holistic functional and psychological characteristics of the destination image, while the scale, will focus attention on the common, attribute-based functional and psychological components of destination image. A similar approach was adopted by Echtner and Ritchie (1991). In their study, respondents were asked to rate a list of 33 attributes, reflecting the three identified continuums, according to level of importance on a 5-point Likert scale. The set of scales, used to measure the common, attribute-based components of destination image, along with both functional and psychological dimensions, were developed from the list of possible image attributes presented in Table 13.

As previous studies have confirmed, Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) have successfully developed a conceptual framework that has managed 'to identify 'true' images of tourist destinations' (Baloglu and Mangalolu 2001: 7). Thus this empirical study indicated that a relationship exists between the system of measurement used and the ability to capture certain components of destination image. Given the intangible and experiential nature of tourism activities, combined with the fact that tourists use both holistic impressions and psychological factors to select the destination of their choice (Choi, Chan and Wu 1999), this approach was useful in defining a comprehensive image for Ireland. While a quantitative approach allowed for statistical analysis of attributes, a qualitative approach provided a direction opportunity to describe the tourists' holistic impressions as well as the

unique features and feelings associated with a place. As a result, the design of the research methods employed was informed, in part, by the approach developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) as it comprised both structured and unstructured components.

Functional (physical, measurable)

Source: Echtner and Ritchie (1993)

- 
- Tourist sites/activities
 - National parks /wilderness activities
 - Historic sites/museums
 - Beaches
 - Fairs, exhibits, festivals
 - Scenery/natural attractions
 - Nightlife and entertainment
 - Shopping facilities
 - Facilities for information and tours
 - Sports facilities/activities
 - Local infrastructure
 - Cities
 - Accommodation/restaurants
 - Architecture/buildings
 - Costs/price levels
 - Climate
 - Crowdedness
 - Cleanliness
 - Degree of urbanisation
 - Economic development/affluence
 - Extent of commercialisation
 - Political stability
 - Accessibility
 - Personal safety
 - Ease of communication
 - Customs/culture
 - Different cuisine/food and drink
 - Hospitality/friendliness/receptiveness
 - Restful/relaxing
 - Atmosphere (familiar versus exotic)
 - Opportunity for adventure
 - Opportunity to increase knowledge
 - Family or adult oriented
 - Quality of service
 - Fame/reputation

Psychological (abstract)

Table 13: List of attributes used for developing scale items

Investigating the influence of perceptions on tourist behaviour is the next theme with questions relating to destination selection, motivation, purpose, length and reasons for visit as well as questions analysing intended activities whilst on holiday, source of information and reasons for choosing specified sources. Theme five asked respondents to evaluate Ireland's performance as a tourist destination according to the key attributes, for example, 'how do you rate Ireland's performance in terms of scenic beauty on a scale of one to five (where, 1 = very poor performance and 5 = very good performance)'. The highest scores from the attribute scale and performance scale will be combined so that the parts of the image, which are perceived as important by the respondents, will be highlighted and given more weight in the findings. To limit the influence that these lists of attributes had on the answers provided in the open-ended questions and to avoid prompted and predetermined responses these questions were purposely placed towards the end of the questionnaire. The final themes concentrated on national identity/nationality and other demographic details including age, ethnic origin and occupational status to identify variables, which might be, factors in enhancing or inhibiting perception and image change. A sample of the pre-visitation questionnaire is contained in Appendix II.

4.5.7 Distribution of the pre-visitation questionnaire

An initial sample of 200 tourists to Shannon airport (Republic of Ireland) were targeted and included both first-time and repeat visitors. As it is impossible to reach all units in a tourist population (Kozak 2002) a sample was selected through systematic sampling. The frame for this convenience sample consisted of those surveyed in the baggage hall of Shannon Airport during November and early December (2003) from tourists arriving from UK airports, namely, Stanstead, Birmingham, Bristol, Heathrow and Manchester over a period of five days. Flights were operated by the largest carriers of airline passengers from the UK to Ireland which included British Airways, Aer Lingus and Ryanair and the first ten passengers from each aircraft who came through to the baggage hall were selected as a sample in order to give them enough time to fill in the questionnaires. To

satisfy the objectives of the research, all respondents targeted were residents of Britain at the time surveyed. There was no particular reason for selecting Shannon as a destination airport, except that the researcher is familiar with the destination and had little difficulty in obtaining an airport security pass. This facilitated the collection and the interpretation of the primary data. However, it is useful to acknowledge that Shannon airport is the second largest airport in the Republic of Ireland and is a major gateway of access from the UK to the west of Ireland. While the majority of those who consented were given a self-administered questionnaire which was collected upon completion, a limited number of respondents requested that they complete the questionnaire orally. To maximise the response rate the researchers completed questionnaires on their behalf when requested. A total of 157 questionnaires were considered usable mainly because 30 refused to participate at all due to the length of the questionnaire and onward journey arrangements. The remaining 13 questionnaires were incomplete and occasionally unreadable giving a non response rate of 21.5%.

An examination of the incomplete questionnaires, whose demographic details parts were filled, demonstrated that the demographic profiles of these non-respondents were not similar to the rest of the sample group which suggested that non-response bias was an issue. Given that the primary objective of this research is to ascertain if nationality and/or national identity determines tourist behaviour, the demographic profiles of respondents were of paramount importance. To maximise the validity of the survey, the literature suggests the existence of a positive relationship between the number of items and the sample size, representing a ratio of at least 1:4 or 1:5 (Tinsley and Tinsley 1987; Hinkin, Tracey and Enz 1997). Also, the larger the sample, the smaller the sampling error and the more accurate the survey (Lewis 1984). As sampling error is expected to decrease as the size of the sample increases (Uhl and Schooner 1969; Hurst, 1994) it was necessary to survey a larger number of visitors. Therefore, to guard against error, the sample population was increased to a total sample size of a minimum of 250 respondents which permits an allowable error rate of less than 5% at the 95% confidence level. Thus, using the same approach as in the preliminary survey, additional questionnaires were

distributed to arrivals from the same UK airports to Shannon airport at the end of January and early February (2004). Mid December and early January were purposely avoided due to the disproportionate numbers of VFR and Irish nationals travelling during the Christmas season. In this subsequent phase of distribution, an additional 150 questionnaires were presented out of which 124 completed questionnaires were obtained. As occurred previously, time constraints and lack of interest were the main reasons cited for non-participation and other questionnaires were eliminated as they were incomplete or had excessive amounts of missing data. After elimination, a combined total of 281 completed questionnaires out of the 350 distributed with a total non-response rate of 20% were coded for data analysis. All respondents agreed to participate in the 'follow up' or post-visitation questionnaire.

To ensure accuracy of the sample representation, it was necessary to assess the sample with the annual Visitor Attitude Survey (VAS) carried out by Tourism Ireland (2002b). This confirmed that the arriving tourists within this period of time were commensurably represented in the sample in terms of nationality, age, country of origin and gender. However, it was not possible to compare the remaining socio-demographic characteristics of respondents as Tourism Ireland does not analyse visitors in terms of passport held, national/ethnic/cultural identity, occupation, ethnic origin and length of residence in Britain. Two variables, ethnic origin/decent and occupation are excluded from the analysis due to the disproportionate number of respondents identifying themselves as white and in professional and managerial employment.

4.5.8 Post-visitation questionnaire

This stage involved the implementation of a post-visit questionnaire to the same sample of tourists who completed the pre-visit questionnaire. The post-visit questionnaire investigated the post-visitation perceived and actual projected images of Ireland's image, and enabled comparative analysis of pre- and post- visitation perceived and actual projected images to be undertaken. This was necessary in order to assess the

implications of potential differences between the perceptions of Ireland's image, its intended projected image and the actual projected image of Ireland, and to highlight the roles played (if any) by stereo-typing, destination familiarity and place attachment.

This questionnaire was distributed post-visitation seeking detailed and specific information on broadly similar themes to those in the pre-visitation questionnaire. This investigated tourist perceptions post-visitation and allowed comparisons to be made of perceptions pre- and post- visitation. The first theme concentrated on the formation of current perceptions and asked a variety of both closed and open-ended questions on sources of holiday information, while the second theme addressed travel motivation and visit intensity. Theme three investigated current perceptions of Ireland as a destination post-visitation, taking the first five open-ended questions in part one which relate to the perceived mental image of Ireland, perceived atmosphere, perceived characteristics, perceived symbols and perceived emotions attached to Ireland were included so that perception and image change (if any) could be assessed qualitatively. Theme four asked respondents to describe how they felt Ireland was performing with respect to the same attributes as presented in the pre-visitation questionnaire performance list (developed in stage one), while theme five provided the comparison of pre- and post-visitation performance to assess degree of image modification. Lastly, theme 6 used a number of open and closed-ended questions relating to image change, expectations, perceptions and strengths and weaknesses of Ireland as a destination to measure the TDI held by visitors from Britain after their visit to Ireland. The response rate was 50% with a total of 140 usable questionnaires forwarded via email or post; the majority of which were received within two weeks after the trip was completed. Appendix III provides a sample of the post-visitation questionnaire.

4.5.9 Approach to respondents and distribution of questionnaire-based survey

It was intended that the design stage of the research methodology would help avoid some of the pitfalls inherent in this largely positivist approach. Specifically, the way respondents were approached was considered of paramount importance in increasing response rates (Oppenheim 2001). For example, Moser and Kalton (1977) note that the main problem with surveys is getting an adequate response rate and that a response of as low as 10 per cent is not unknown, while rates of over 90 per cent have been reported on a number of occasions. Oppenheim (2001) suggests that a number of steps can be taken to maximise results. These steps together with suggestions outlined by Moser and Kalton (1977) and Weiers (1988) are considered here in the light of the current survey which includes both the preliminary questionnaire and the pre-and post-visitation questionnaire. The following steps were taken in the design and distribution of the preliminary and longitudinal surveys in an attempt to reduce lack of control samples, case losses and biases:

1. A brief note accompanied the questionnaire (Appendix II) to overcome any prejudice the respondent may have against surveys. To enhance credibility, it was necessary to highlight that the Research Development Committee at the University of Plymouth supported this research. It made clear the reason why and by whom the survey was undertaken, stressed confidentiality, explained how the respondent was selected for questioning and why s/he should reply. As respondents to the preliminary and pre-visitation questionnaires were approached in person by the researcher, this information was reinforced verbally. Also when seeking the cooperation of a potential respondent, Veal (1997) notes that it is also usually necessary to maintain eye contact while indicating how long the questionnaire will take and what type of questions will be asked. Personal distribution and collection of the preliminary and pre-visitation questionnaires enhanced the response rate as well as reduced the return time. The post-visitation questionnaires were returned by post.

2. A prize was offered as an incentive for the completed pre- and post-visitation questionnaires. Moser and Kalton (1977) found that a small prize generally proved more helpful than larger incentives so a nominal valued prize will be offered. A competition for €100 was offered and considering that only 350 pre-visitation questionnaires were distributed there was a strong possibility of winning.

3. Confidentiality of all survey data was emphasised in the sense that only the researcher had access to it. Notice of absolute confidentiality was displayed prominently in the preliminary survey as well as in the pre- and post-visitation questionnaires. This was particularly important as respondents were requested to give their name and address at the bottom of the pre-visitation questionnaire so that once their trip was completed a post – visitation questionnaire was forwarded to their address. The use of follow-ups was clearly an important feature of this survey and so anonymity could not be provided but a guarantee of absolute confidentiality was essential.

4. Appearance is important and there have been many experiments with general layout, type face, colour and quality of paper in the case of postal questionnaires but no general conclusions have emerged and so a relatively 'conservative but pleasant appearance' is advised (Oppenheim 2001). Also, research on the method of salutation suggests that it does not matter whether the letter begins with a personal or impersonal greeting (Oppenheim 2001). For ease of compilation, an impersonal approach i.e. 'Dear Visitor' was adopted for all questionnaires so that they could be printed uniformly.

5. The envelope used for the post-visitation questionnaire looked 'professional' and included a stamped addressed envelope. Oppenheim (1992) reports that a higher response rate results when stamped addressed envelopes are included.

6. Length was determined to a large extent by the subject matter and the number of questions the surveyor need to ask for the analyses. Cartwright and Ward (1968) conducted a study and concluded that shorter questionnaires had a significantly higher

response rate than that of the longer ones, but it was also acknowledged that the nature of the additional questions may have been responsible for the greater non-response rate of the longer questionnaire. These results are therefore inconclusive and dated, and Oppenheim (2001) notes that the topic and its degree of interest to the respondents determines the extent to which the questionnaires will be completed.

For the pre-visitation questionnaire, a random sample of tourists travelling from Britain was selected in the baggage hall of Shannon airport and as visitors had already taken the decision to visit Ireland, it was considered that the topic was of intrinsic interest to the prospective tourists. The sample universe was all visitors coming to Ireland from Britain and the sampling frame related to visitors from Britain to Shannon airport who travelled during the months of October and November 2003 and January 2004. This sample frame constituted a representative subset of the population from which the sample was drawn and the timing of distribution was largely influenced by the availability of an airport security pass and the avoidance of the Christmas holiday period due to the concentrated number of VFR travellers during the Christmas season. The first ten passengers from each aircraft who came through to the baggage hall were selected as a sample in order to give them enough time to complete the questionnaire.

Irrespective of attempts to stimulate a maximum response rate, length of questionnaires was presumed to affect the morale of respondent and also probably refusal rates and the quality of the data. The only certainty according to Moser and Kalton (1971: 309) is that the 'shorter the questionnaire the better the interviewer and respondent will like it, which is about as useful as saying that the bigger the sample the more precise will be the results'. Both statements are unexceptionable but neither suffices a guide for action. However, Weiers (1988) advises that the survey planner must rigorously examine every question and exclude any that are, not strictly relevant to the survey's aims and objectives. The researcher considered that the questionnaires distributed were long but found that the degree of interest was high due to the clarity of the questionnaire design and the nature of the topic.

7. In order to generate a question sequence that will provide useful data, Weiers (1988) suggests that for the sequence to be clear and acceptable to the respondent the initial questions should be simple and interesting as the motivation of the respondent is of prime concern. Weiers (1988) also contends that short, interesting questions at the beginning will encourage the completion of those that remain, questions that have a similar format and topic should be placed together to avoid both distraction and duplication, while questions of a classificatory and potentially sensitive nature (e.g. age, nationality, passport held etc) should be at the end of the questionnaire. For this reason, the initial questions were short and interesting while questions relating to nationality, national identity, age, occupation and passport held were placed towards the end of the questionnaires.

8. Oppenheim (1992) advises that question design is a creative process emerging from brainstorming session, group discussions, previous research and adaptation of earlier questionnaires. While acknowledging that there are no one set of rules or principles for question wording, Oppenheim (1992) notes that questions should not be too long, double-barrelled questions, proverbs and double negatives should be avoided, use simple words, avoid acronyms, abbreviations, jargon and technical terms and beware of leading questions and pay due attention to detail. Thus, the questionnaire design strived to reduce ambiguity by keeping questions concise avoiding technical jargon and abbreviations.

9. Reminders were sent out when returns of post-visitation questionnaires dropped and again after a week to those who did not returned the post-visitation questionnaire. Frequently, where electronic addresses were provided post-visitation questionnaires were forwarded via email and the response rate improved. Moser and Kalton (1977) points out that the quality of the returns may decline with successive mailings and reminders for the post-visitation questionnaire helped reduce case losses.

10. It is imperative that the respondent is aware of what is expected of them in advance. For example, in this survey the respondent was informed that there was a follow up survey i.e. post-visitation questionnaire prior to completing the pre-visitation questionnaire. Oppenheim (2001) confirms that in situations where the follow up was not planned as part of the initial intervention, lack of control samples, increased case losses and consequent biases results. As there were two parts to the longitudinal study, lack of a comparison was not an issue as the same sample frame was used to study image change.

11. Pilot Work /Pre-testing refers to the lengthy process of designing and testing questions. Piloting can help not only with the wording of questions but also with procedural matters such as the design of a letter of introduction, the ordering of question sequences and the reduction of non-response rates. Thus, as Oppenheim (1992) notes questionnaires do not emerge fully-fledged, they have to be created or adapted and every aspect of a survey has to be tried out beforehand to make sure that it works as intended. Consequently, pilot work provides benefits such as voiding a great deal of effort being wasted on unintelligible questions producing unquantifiable responses and uninterpretable results. Pilot work is an intellectual challenge in conceptualising and re-conceptualising the key aims of the study and in making preparations for the fieldwork and analysis so that not too much will go wrong and nothing will have been left out. Thus, after the first draft of each questionnaire was generated, it was subjected to pre-testing. The preliminary survey and pre- and post-questionnaire was administered to friends and colleagues as an initial step towards uncovering potential ambiguities and other problems. While such a convenience sample may be helpful toward uncovering potential difficulties, additional pre-testing is necessary (Weiers 1988). To pre-test the preliminary questionnaire, the survey was administered to students and staff at Cornwall College.

Although no major changes were necessary, minor amendments related to sentence structure, layout and spelling. For example, respondents were initially asked what images or characteristics come to mind when you think of Ireland. Such questions were later

broken down into two separate questions as respondents appeared to find the questions confusing. Once adjustments were applied, questionnaires were re-presented to students and staff to verify that the revised version was appropriate. While many questions in the pre-visitation questionnaire were trailed in the preliminary survey, Weiers (1988) advises that pre-tests should be undertaken using the same kind of individuals who will be the object of the research. Consequently, pre-visitation questionnaires were administered in person to a small sub sample of visitors from Britain arriving in Shannon Airport during one day in early November 2003. The post-visitation questionnaires were administered to participants on their return home to test part two of the questionnaire.

The presence of the researcher during the pre-testing resulted in valuable insights that might otherwise have been lost. As Weiser (1988) suggests subjects may request additional information regarding a question, may exhibit a different frame of reference from that which has been assumed, be unable to follow the directions provided, or find it impossible to supply the information in the form or detail that has been requested. Also, personal observations of respondent reactions to the questionnaire will almost inevitably result in useful revisions to the instrument. A postal questionnaire was distributed to the pilot sample on their return home to test the post-visitation questionnaire. Piloting the pre- and post-visitation questionnaires helped identify minor changes in question wording and information requirements. These included requesting both email and postal addresses of respondents as the pilot revealed that a number of participants preferred to disclose email as opposed to postal addresses. Also, when asked about sources of information, Tourism Ireland Brochures was given as one option. Although Bord Failte no longer exists, respondents still referred to Bord Failte Brochures. Consequently, this option was amended to Failte Ireland/Bord Failte Brochures in the revised version. Many of the questions included in this preliminary phase of the study were also included in the pre-visitation questionnaire. While no significant changes were applied to the pre- or post-questionnaires as a consequence of the pre-testing, the pre-testing phase allowed for the various features of the main enquiry to be assessed and provided guidance on the adequacy of the sampling frame, non-response rate, suitability of data collection methods

and probable cost and duration of the main survey. Although, the pre-test provided the last safeguard against the possibility that the main survey would be ineffective, a number of limitations were nonetheless identified.

4.5.10 Study limitations

From a methodological perspective, this study has certain limitations which affect the evaluation and generalization of its results. Firstly, the perceived image of Ireland from the perspective of tourists travelling from Britain was based on a sample of visitors who had already decided to visit Ireland. To gain a truly accurate sample it would have been necessary to distribute pre-visitation questionnaires to potential travellers before they had decided to visit Ireland. Secondly, two variables, ethnic origin/decent and occupation were excluded from the analysis due to the disproportionate number of respondents identifying themselves as white and in professional and managerial employment. This is not to dismiss the significance of these socio-demographic characteristics. This disparity may reflect, on one hand, the perceived unattractiveness of Ireland as a tourism destination held by those of either other ethnic origin/decent or alternative occupational status while, on the other hand, it may serve to demonstrate that the images portrayed by the Irish travel media assumes a particular kind of tourist – white, western and professional. Thus, the generalization of the results was yet another limitation, since the area of research only permitted the results to be generalized for the sample population and from the perspective of those travelling to Shannon airport from Britain. Therefore, it is advisable both to replicate this research in other settings and to analyze the influence (if any) of nationality on the perceived and projected image of Ireland from the perspective of those embracing other nationalities and/or national identities.

Thirdly, in terms of the combined content analysis and semiotic study, a series of images and text were selected by the author in an effort to identify and interpret the myths and ideologies connoted by the material. However, such interpretations were conditioned by the author's own culture which may not be readily interpreted in the same way by those of

other cultures and identities. Consequently, due to the cross-cultural nature of tourism, further semiotic and content analysis studies needs to be constructed across various cultural settings to further understanding of the complete meaning of such media messages. Fourthly, longitudinal studies can present a number of restrictions. Apart from practical difficulties such as time, keeping in touch with people and maintaining their cooperation, de Vaus (1986) suggests that this approach has problems including the absence of a comparison group and likelihood of other factors affecting behaviour over the intervening period. Moser and Kalton (1977) argue that the achievement of an initial sample, sample mortality and conditioning are the main issues in this data collection technique. For example, to recruit a representative sample of respondents willing to provide detailed information regularly is no mean task, while difficulties of tracing respondents are far greater, especially when the interval between questionnaires is as long as a year or more. Some respondents will move house and change name/s so tracing becomes a difficult and time consuming task.

Finally, a real danger with repeat questionnaires from the same sample is 'conditioning' (Moser and Kalton 1977: 142) which is the risk that the sample members may become untypical as a result of their involvement in the research as they become more conscious of defects, more interested and more attentive. Should this become an issue, the sample becomes untypical – not in composition but in its characteristics – of the population it was selected to represent. Other shortcomings are associated with questionnaires in general, and include generally low response rates, and consequent biases; unsuitability for respondents of poor literacy or the visually impaired, no opportunity to correct misunderstandings or to probe, or to offer explanations or help; no control over the order in which questions are answered, no check on incomplete responses, incomplete questionnaires, or the passing on of questionnaires to others; and no opportunity to collect ratings or assessments based on observation (Oppenheim 2001). Yet, while acknowledging the limitations of this data collection technique, it is expected that the benefits that were previously outlined will outweigh the disadvantages.

In summary, the analysis of the projected image of Ireland was based on secondary sources which later informed a semi-structured interview with a representative from Tourism Ireland while the elicitation of the perceived image was undertaken through empirical research. It was concluded that after studying the projected and perceived image separately, a comparison of both concepts was possible. An outline of each research stage is provided in Figure 3.

4.6 Stages in the data collection procedure

The following diagram illustrates the procedure employed to assess the relationship between nationality and national identity with the perceived and projected image of Ireland from the perspective of tourists travelling from Britain. Figure 3 identifies the data collection procedure employed in a series of four distinct stages.

Each of the four stages identified in Figure 3 are detailed as follows:

Stage 1:

To inform the design of the pre- and post- visit questionnaires, a preliminary phase of quantitative data collection was undertaken. A preliminary data analysis as outlined on page 115 involved the implementation of a brief questionnaire that was distributed to 100 tourists visiting Cornwall during July and August 2003.

Stage 2:

A combined content and semiotic analysis of selected brochure material was undertaken to establish the projected image of Ireland while an in-depth interview with Tourism Ireland was carried out to determine the intended projected image of Ireland. A number of images used by Tourism Ireland were also selected and discussed to investigate the intended visual communication of Ireland to tourists.

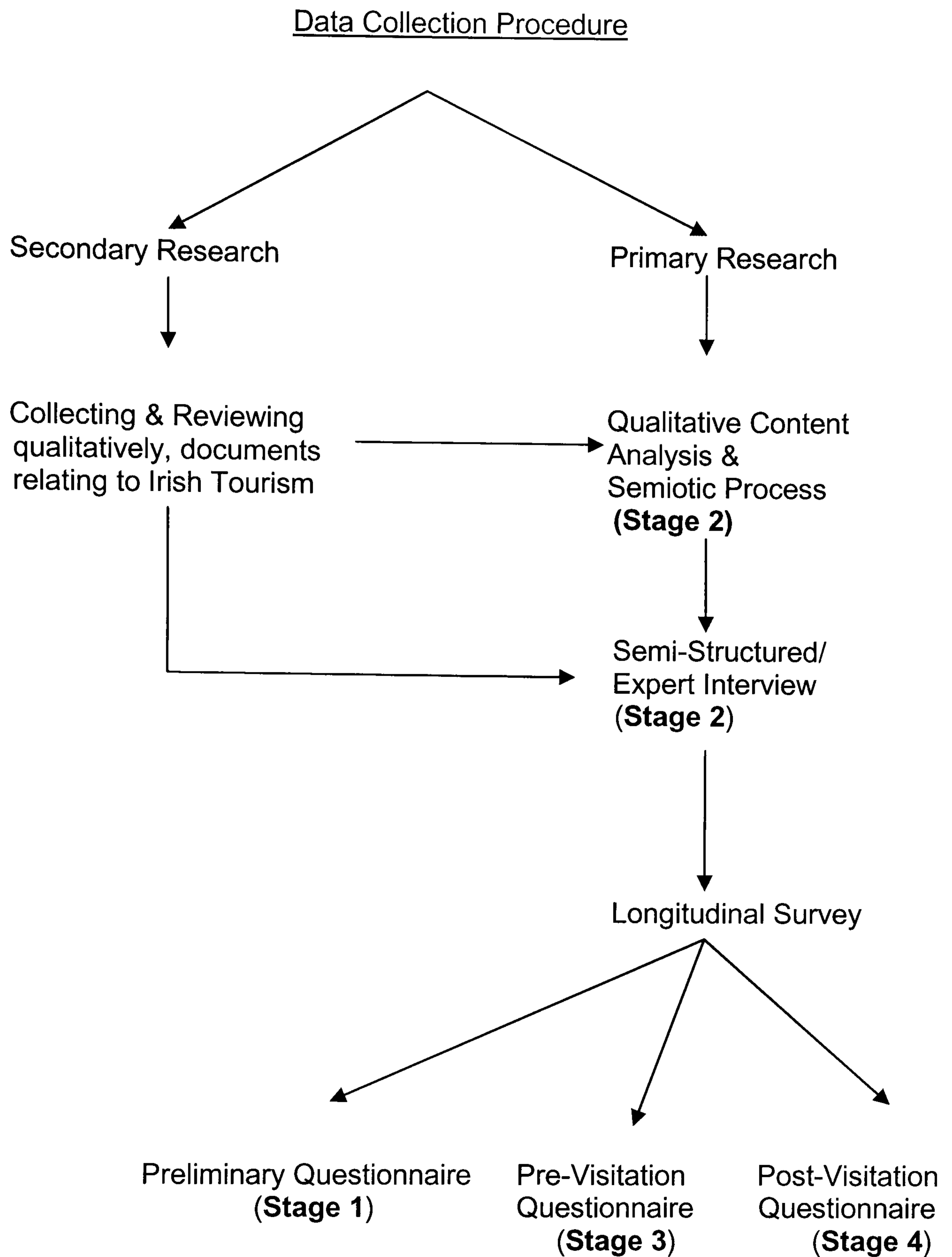


Figure 3: Summary of the data collection procedure

Stage 3:

This involved the implementation of the pre-visitation questionnaire which aimed to analyse the perceived and actual projected images of Ireland and help to elucidate the way and degree to which nationality influence interpretations of destination imagery. A total of 281 usable questionnaires were collected from tourists travelling from Britain, arriving in the baggage hall of Shannon airport between November 2003 and January 2004.

Stage 4:

This involved the implementation of a post-visit questionnaire to the same sample of tourists who completed the pre-visit questionnaire. The post-visit questionnaire investigated the post-visitation perceived and actual projected images of Ireland's image and enabled comparative analysis of pre- and post-visitation perceived and actual projected images to be undertaken. This was necessary in order to assess the implications of potential differences between the perceptions of Ireland's image, its intended projected image and the actual projected image of Ireland, and to highlight the roles played (if any) by stereo-typing, destination familiarity and place attachment.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed a number of issues relating to tourism destination image by presenting a review of methodologies employed in tourism research highlighting existing and alternative research approaches used in researching tourism marketing phenomena. A detailed account of the research instruments used in this study was given and the constraints and benefits of the approach adopted were reported. As discussed, the research design employed in this thesis draws on both the positivist and phenomenologist paradigms, qualitative and quantitative methods. The use of a longitudinal instrument allowed the researcher to gauge the effect of visitation on destination image by measuring the image pre- and post-visitation. The information provided by the rating of attributes and both the open-ended and closed questions were used to assess the perceived image of Ireland as a tourism destination in Britain, the semi-structured interview investigated intended projected image of Ireland, while the semiotic and content analysis established the projected image. This facilitated a comparison between the projected and perceived TDI, as well as ascertaining the degree of influence that nationality and national identity has on tourist behaviour.

The ensuing Chapter will identify the projected image of Ireland in Britain to facilitate comparisons between the constructed tourism representations and the intended projected image of Ireland in Britain. It is anticipated that tourism images of Ireland are drawn from popular cultural resources indicating that such images are not selected at random, rather they are the culmination of various discourses that have developed over considerable periods of time. Consequently, the following chapter will determine if such representations are influenced by such cultural resources specifically in terms of the nationality of the product itself.

Chapter 5 The intended projected image and the projected image of Ireland as a tourist destination

5.0 Introduction

Tourism has been and continues to be a major shaping force in Ireland (Cronin and O'Connor 2003) and general and specialist interest in Irish tourism parallels the increasing importance of tourism within the Irish economy. Not surprisingly therefore, approaches to tourism policy are frequently framed in terms of economic imperatives (Crick 1989).

However, to see the tourism sector in Ireland as simply a ready source of income and labour is both to underestimate its real significance and limit critical readings of its impact. For example, Morgan and Pritchard (1998) claim, tourism is a prism through which we can see other social, cultural and political scenarios being played out suggesting that the process of representation is informed by the dominant socio-economic and historical context. Cronin and O'Connor (2003) also suggest that culture and the de-differentiation of society has gained momentum resulting in the increasing imbrication of tourism in many areas of social and cultural life. These themes are becoming increasingly important in Irish society which, according to *The Economist* (2004), has experienced massive and rapid social change over the last decade. The process of representation is therefore informed by dominant socio-economic and historical practices and as Morgan and Pritchard (1998) suggest destination images are neither created nor exist in a vacuum. As a result, in this chapter the development and construction of tourism representations in Ireland is explored in a cultural context. Therefore, rather than analysing the construction of tourist representations solely from a marketing perspective, this chapter seeks to examine the extent to which tourism imagery influences, and is influenced by, a wide range of social, economic, political and historical forces.

This chapter presents the findings of stage two of the data analysis which proposes to identify the projected image of Ireland in Britain. To facilitate this, the chapter will address four key areas. Firstly, Ireland's projected international tourism image is identified. To do this, it is necessary to explore the intended projected image of Ireland drawing on the

results of a semi-structured interview with a representative of Tourism Ireland while the findings of a semiotic and content analysis of brochure material will establish the projected image. Secondly, to further understand the current image, a historical and contextual review of the socio-economic environment in which the images arise is provided. Thirdly, the factors that influence the production of these images such as pubs, music and dance, cinema and photography are discussed and the degree to which such factors comprise the 'nationality' of the tourist product are reviewed. This assists in investigating the extent to which marketers have control over intended projected images. The fourth section assesses how Ireland's intended projected image has changed (if indeed it really has) over the past century, and the reasons that explain this change are explored.

5.1 The current intended projected international tourism image of Ireland

To establish the intended projected international tourism image of Ireland, a semi-structured interview with Vera Stedman, the Deputy Marketing Director of Tourism Ireland was undertaken (2003) concentrating primarily on Tourism Ireland 2003 and 2004 brochures. Four main brochures are used to market Ireland in Britain, North America, France and Germany described as 'general holiday destination marketing' targeted at the mass market while 'product destination marketing' refers to specialist anglers, golfers, cyclists and equestrian/horse racing (Personal Interview 2003, Representative of Tourism Ireland). The 'general' market relates to 'the mass British, US, French and German tourists who come to Ireland without searching to enjoy a particular activity such as golf but are here to enjoy Ireland as a whole'. She suggests that the 'presentation of each of the four brochures for these four markets are different in terms of language, front cover and overall design approach'. The front covers are intended 'to appeal to the different markets' but fails to specify how the overall design varies. The caption 'Discover the Island of Ireland' with the Tourism Brand Ireland symbol 'reinforces the collaborative efforts of the cross-broader initiative, while the colours (purple and green), reflect the colour of the Irish landscape, flora and painted houses in Ireland. The shamrock beside

the word 'Ireland', heightens the association of Ireland and the shamrock as well as symbolising environmental soundness.'

Ireland is:

'for some younger visitors 'partyish; whether it is a day at the races or the healthy outdoor element a day sailing, a day walking or whatever as well. More mid-lifers want more romantic breaks, tour holidays, festivals ... while the more mature look for relaxation and certainly a lot more of the country element that comes into it, while people with families like the openness of Ireland the ... friendliness of Ireland and the idea of being able to bring their families back to something like holidays like they used to have ... like having fun in rock pools or actually climbing around old buildings' (Personal Interview 2003, Representative of Tourism Ireland).

Thus, it would seem that Tourism Ireland targets its promotional campaign on four main markets, these being the younger age group, the family market, the mid-lifers and the older visitors while product marketing targets the specialist as opposed to the participant. The continued importance attributed to the scenery, people and open spaces is acknowledged by Tourism Ireland noting 'it's the people who are most important, followed by space and then place'. The idea of the 'emotional experience' is seen as crucial in the current marketing initiative. The emotional experience is described as a 'core brand essence for Ireland's tourism' and 'the ease of interaction with Ireland's friendly and engaging people' is identified as a key dimension to framing this 'emotional experience' (Personal Interview 2003, Representative of Tourism Ireland). Even more significant it is argued that 'the friendliness and hospitality of the Irish people have been seen consistently as the dominant distinguishing advantage over the past number of years'. The 'Irish pub, *Riverdance*, traditional music, famous writers, history and culture ... all contribute to what makes Ireland different' (Personal Interview 2003, Representative of Tourism Ireland). This 'marketing magic' is key to helping 'increase tourism to the Island of Ireland as well as supporting Northern Ireland to realise its own tourism potential in an effort to emphasise Ireland's value as a holiday destination'. It is this 'Irish difference that we want to illustrate in our brochures for all to see'. As such, Tourism Ireland 'owns and manages Tourism Brand Ireland (TBI) and all its associated communication materials'. It

is suggested that 'as a brand it is unique', in that, although Tourism Ireland is the promotional body carrying out the destination marketing, 'it does not own the product associated with brand'. It is Tourism Ireland's 'belief that this brand marketing approach to selling assumes a special relevance as the Ireland tourism product has continued to change and evolve' (Personal Interview, 2003 Tourism Ireland Representative).

In short, Ireland is now promoted as providing 'an emotive experience' and offering 'opportunities for a wide range of recreational activities'. As indicated, the campaign concentrates on 'the strengths of the country in terms of its people, its uniqueness as regards its green environment, relaxed pace of life and the range of activities which can be enjoyed by visitors regardless of age or interests'. In other words, 'people, pace and place' are the core elements of the current image of Ireland projected internationally. However, in order to determine the actual image projected it is necessary to consider the findings of the semiotic and content analysis of Tourism Ireland brochure material.

5.2 The projected international tourism image of Ireland

A semiotic and content analysis of brochure material was carried out to determine the projected image of Ireland as a tourist destination. The Tourism Ireland 2004 and 2003 brochures used to target the British, North American, French and German markets were assessed and revealed that except for the use of different languages and varying front cover images, the structure, style and presentation of the brochures for the four markets were identical. At the same time, the analysis revealed that a number of recurring themes were pursued in the imagery which included rurality, sense of community, friendly, professional service, harmony with nature, pre-modern, nostalgia, tranquillity/serenity, rural activities and pace of life.

5.2.1 Rurality

The dominance of the rural landscape/seascape, the people and the pace of life in the promotional material was evident throughout both brochures. Such a countryside ideal according to Bunce (1994) instigates a desire to experience nature and country living in reality. This attraction of the countryside for an increasingly urbanised, industrialised society was utilised in the promotional material with references to 'majestic mountain ranges, hidden glens, beautiful lakes ... an ideal destination to get away from it all', 'a striking mixture of coastal beauty, rambling hills, mountains and lovely lakes', while Ireland is regarded as 'one of the most unspoilt landscapes in Europe'. Specific references to rurality, agrarianism and pre-industrialisation include 'accommodation in a rural tranquil setting', 'largely untouched by the industrial revolution', and in relation to crafts, in equating handmade, artisan crafts production with the self-provisions and working in harmony with the community and nature in rurality. Text such as 'sit back, relax ... ', 'in peaceful surroundings', 'an oasis of calm and tranquillity' and 'here one can find peace' promise readers a relaxing, hassle-free holiday which will 'sooth away twentieth century stresses'.

The form which the rural idyll takes, according to Bunce (1994) is based on a combination of values and images symbolizing community and harmony with nature and cultural and landscape imagery, and which contrasts with urban and industrial imagery. These are similar to the myths identified by Hopkins (1998). In his socio-semiotic analysis of the format, content and signs used to represent and commodify a landscape in south-western Ontario, Hopkins (1998) identifies the images that create the place myths of this symbolic countryside. The three most recurring myths include the naturalness of the environment, the connection to the past and the importance of community. These are the myths, the signs of rurality, which are marketed by the place promoters and consumed by tourists. 'Rural' is thus a marketed brand image for a specific kind of place commodity; the 'rural' is a commodified sign of a symbolic countryside' (Hopkins 1998: 77). Such rural ideals were

evident particularly in relation to the notion of community and crafts in the promotional brochures examined.

5.2.2 Sense of community

Community is frequently symbolised in terms of craftsmanship and artisanship, in the myth of handmade and in rural production which in turn provides for the community (Long 1984 in Fisher 1997). Fisher (1997:232) contends that ‘associations of rurality and craft production converge, reinforce and compound each other [and which] pivot on the idea of ‘self-provisioning and family enterprise’’. The idea of community was exemplified in the current brochures with numerous references to hospitality and friendliness in written text such as ‘a warm and welcoming place to visit’, and in the welcoming photographs of owners and smiling staff as well as in allusions to traditional music, pubs and ‘craic’. Within this analysis, declarations of hospitality and customer care include ‘a true Irish welcome’ and ‘you’ll receive such a friendly welcome from us that we hope you won’t want to leave’. This theme plays on the perceived notion of Irish friendliness, which has been identified as one of the most important selling points (Personal Interview 2003, Tourism Ireland Representative).

5.2.3 Friendly, professional service

The significance of the association of the owners with the product can be seen in relation to the use of photographs of proprietors, specifically, the perceived importance of owner involvement in maintaining quality standards and in ensuring a friendly, homely atmosphere and personal service. In this analysis, the photographs used of the proprietors and employees of the businesses were usually very informal, showing smiling, welcoming faces. In the case of the proprietors, the photographs showed two owners (identified as husband and wife), in the accompanying text, who are casually dressed in a relaxed pose with the product (B&B) in the background. This signifies the idea of family

and domesticity, while the informality of the pose and dress suggests a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. However, despite the suggested informality, the general absence of children in these photographs reassures the reader of a professional approach to the business. The employees included in photographs, while also smiling and welcoming were rather more formal than the proprietors, in terms of dress and pose. Most featured were attired in clothing which denoted some type of uniform. This implies professionalism and a uniformity or consistency of quality. Also, staff were engaged in carrying out a task related to the operation of the business, such as taking a meal order or a chef examining the quality of the catch of the day. This, combined with smiling faces is suggestive of an enthusiastic willingness to perform any task to satisfy the consumer. Thus, the qualities signified by photographs of proprietors were those of informality, personal care, hospitality and homeliness, while those of staff were of a more professional (therefore less personal), albeit friendly and welcoming service.

5.2.4 Harmony with nature

Another theme that emerged from this semiotic and content analysis was harmony with nature which was very evident in the promotion of crafts. A rural landscape was used to naturalise the product and the production process through equating production with natural forces, by placing the product in the landscape. Several photographs showed the product displayed on a natural stone or wood surface, sometimes with other natural materials such as fern, fronds and shamrocks also present and framing the edges of the composition. As such, there are several layers of meaning operating in such photographs. For example, the association of the product with natural materials may be an attempt to naturalise the product itself and disassociate it from modern, artificial, mechanised processes. The message is: this object is not machine-made, it is something of nature, using natural materials and it is authentic (the framing of the products 'within nature' emphasises this point). Another reading of the use of natural materials may be to highlight nature and the environment as inspiration in product design. The colours and shapes of the products mirror those of the natural materials shown. The choice of the

particular surfaces (stone, wood which appears old and preserved) is also significant. They infer an ancient landscape, enduring through time against elemental forces. The juxtaposition of such ancient materials with the craft or activity, imbues the product with the same characteristics of longevity, antiquity and a timeless, natural beauty. The use of leafy, green vegetation again represents environmental consciousness while the signification of the shamrock may evoke Irishness.

5.2.5 Pre-modern

In Figure 4, two fishermen who carry their rowing boat (currach) ashore to an unpolluted and unpopulated beach is suggestive of traditional and environmental fishing practises.



Figure 4: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2004)

According to Cosgrove (1998: 69), important features of the aesthetic attractions of landscape 'lies in their nostalgic evocation of pre-modern forms of collective life in productive nature. Imagined words of agrarian simplicity and social harmony are captured'. Such messages for example are visually reinforced in Figure 5 where another image of a currach is used. Three fishermen row the traditional boat as the



Figure 5: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2004, 2003)

sun sets on calm water over the caption 'no mistaking the taste of oysters, especially once you've had six'. This suggests that any seafood consumed is freshly caught from quaint traditional Irish boats without the use of modern, commercial equipment.

5.2.6 Nostalgia

Tourism Ireland appears to utilise this attraction of landscape and rurality in an attempt to harness readers' nostalgic yearning for the past. For example, in a photograph of a 'traditional' Irish cottage (Figure 6) there are no signifiers of modernity to be seen, no television aerial on the roof, no telegraph and electricity poles and the deliberate exclusion of the secondary road which borders the property. The profusion of greenery in the composition, vegetation growing on the walls, and the thatched roof of the building combine to emphasise nature and the countryside. It suggests that the product exists in harmony with its environment, indeed has been incorporated into nature (foliage on the walls). Thus, the absence of markers, combined with the old style of the cottage signify permanence, antiquity and a distant past recaptured. This reinforces the rural idyll and perhaps indicates that visiting Ireland is about a nostalgic re-discovering of a past heritage about experiencing an earlier, simpler time.



Figure 6: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2004, 2003)

This is emphasised further in Figures 7 and 8 where images of historical ruins represent 'Ireland in the Past' suggesting that 'In Ireland, the past is truly a living spirit' and that 'the island is steeped in history and Celtic mythology'. Such pictures promote Ireland as a place frozen in time yet reinforcing heritage and culture in 'an immensely rich heritage of ancient monuments spanning more than 8,000 years and describing the country as an 'Island of Memories'.



Figure 7: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2004)



Figure 8: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2003)

Traditional images such as Figure 9 of unpopulated landscapes reinforce the idea of time standing still and are found in abundance in the promotional literature examined here.



Figure 9: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2003)

5.2.7 Tranquillity and serenity

Rural areas were also symbolically distanced from everyday life in a number of ways in the sample, most notably in evocations of tranquillity, peacefulness and havens of serenity. These areas were portrayed as offering refuge from the hectic pace of everyday life. Some of the ways in which this atmosphere was achieved was through the absence of people and technology signifying similar ideas to that discussion in relation to Figure 6. The significance of the photography in Figure 10 lies in the perspective chosen to illustrate the house. The view of the property as seen from a distance and concealed amongst its surroundings signifies a number of different concepts. First of all, the placing of the property within nature in terms of the situation of the house among trees and foliage is evident. Also, the view of the house is somewhat obscured implying that the property is hidden away from the world (a metaphor for a retreat from modern life), and the angle from which the house is observed implies that the reader has stumbled upon it almost by accident. The image may suggest that the house is worth discovering because it is hidden from the world, located within nature and represents escapism to a past time.



Figure 10: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2003)

5.2.8 Rural activities

Several of the images include people engaged in activities such as playing golf, fishing, sailing, boating or dining, as well as people engaged in other activities, such as horse riding, walking and visiting attractions. Examples of such images are presented in Figures 11, 12 and 13.



Figure 11: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2004)



Figure 12: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2004)



Figure 13: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2004)

According to Briggs (1997), it is useful to use photographs of people having fun or carrying out suitable activities in tourism promotion, particularly if the people look like the target market. This principle has been adhered to in the majority of the photographs present in the sample. For example, Figure 14 illustrates an example of a photograph used to promote angling where the target consumer for angling businesses in Ireland is generally male and aged over 35 years (Failte Ireland 2004b). The photography is proof of the event using simple iconic codes. This composition includes two smiling anglers holding fishing equipment while a chef examines the fish caught in front of a (his) restaurant.



Figure 14: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2003)

These various signifiers combine to produce a syntagmatic composition of experienced anglers, satisfied (smiling) and proud (displaying their catch for the chef to examine) after a successful fishing trip (other fish on the harbour wall implying there were more caught). The fish are salmon symbolising an unspoilt and fertile environment. This may also suggest that salmon served in restaurants are fresh and wild (not farmed), with each being individually assessed by the chef straight from the sea (harbour wall). The intended reader is expected to identify with the angler and believe that he too can be this successful if he visits the area. Such imagery is a good example of the denoted message (smiling men with angling rods displaying their abundance salmon catch), naturalising the symbolic message (satisfaction and success guaranteed).

All of the photographs of people engaged in various activities employ similar methods to connote comparable messages. There was a preponderance of photographs of males, either alone or in groups. The majority were engaged in traditional male activities, in particular golf and fishing. Photographs of females were more varied, but were generally of women engaged in more passive activities, such as viewing various attractions or sitting enjoying a meal. Photographs of couples and mixed gender groups depicted a variety of active and passive recreations, including boating, walking, hiking, and cycling. Few images contain children with only one image depicting children on their own in a scene, as illustrated in Figure 15.

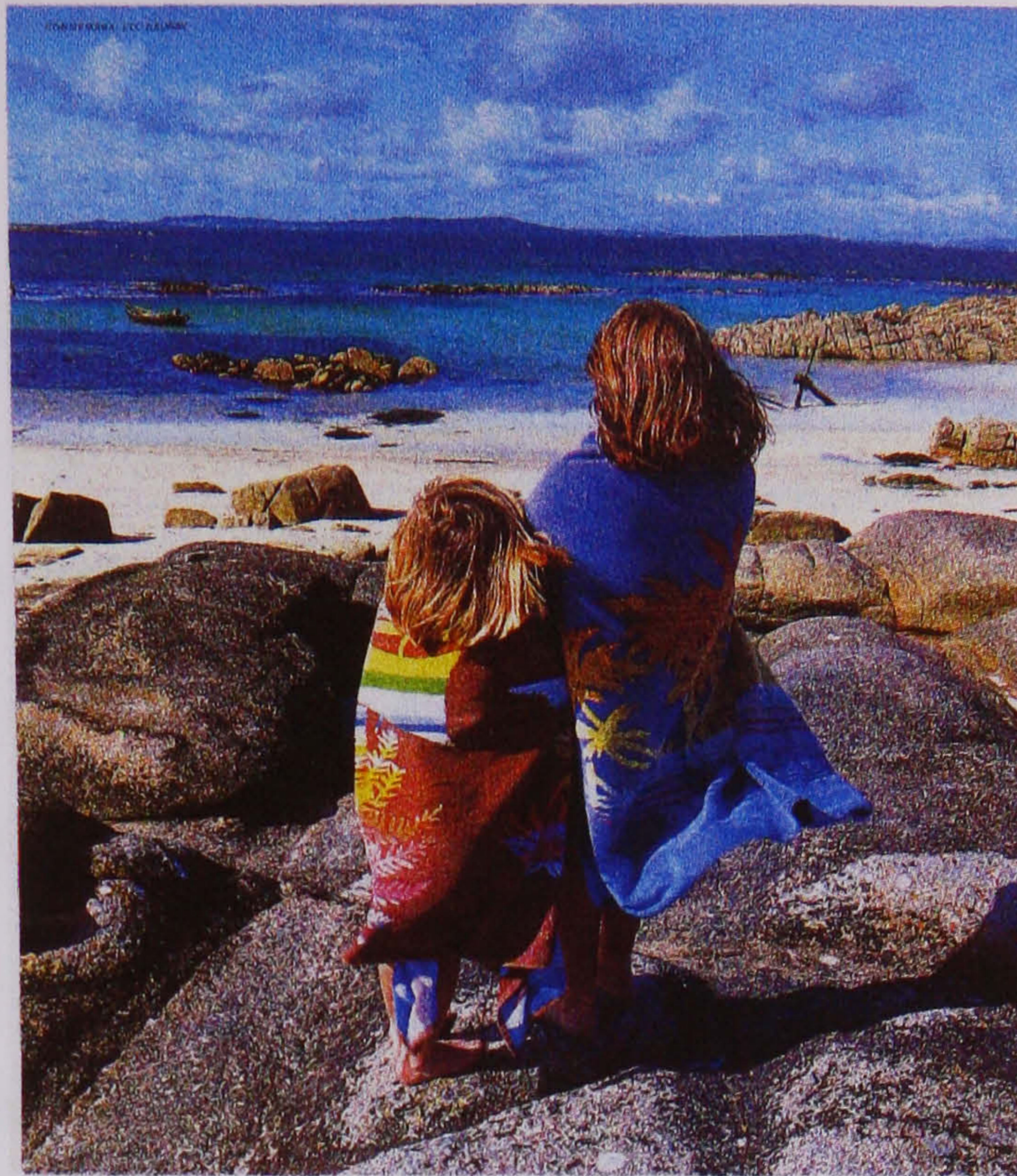


Figure 15: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2004)

The children in this scene stand barefoot on rocks facing the ocean, wrapped in towels with their backs to the reader. This suggests perhaps that Ireland is safe enough for children to play and swim alone considering that the beach is otherwise empty. Such imagery according to Urry (1995: 137) emphasises 'the solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze'. This 'romantic gaze' according to Urry (1995: 138) considers nature as 'authentic' and it is by this mechanism that tourism is spreading causing tourists to constantly seek out new objectives to gaze upon (Walter 1982 as noted in Urry 1995).

In the majority of materials surveyed here, it was this romantic gaze which was constructed and the products were aimed at consumers seeking this gaze. Emphasis was placed on showing views without people or with just one or two solitary individuals in the view. This seems a deliberate choice in order to promote solitary landscapes/seascapes. Also in written text, much reference was made to tranquillity, getting away from it all and peacefulness. Such representations Johnson (2000) describes as 'empty space' and 'empty time'.

5.2.9 Pace of life

A limited number of images included the presence of larger numbers of people which Urry (1995:138) describes as the 'collective gaze', as 'other people give atmosphere to a place'. This is evident in images of pubs and Irish music and frequent references to the 'craic' to be had. Figure 16 for example, depicts musicians playing to a group of tourists suggesting that past traditions and ways of life exist. Soft lighting, pints of Guinness and traditional instruments in Figure 17, creates an ambience of warmth and relaxation, while the accompanying text suggests cosy and cultural entertainment in 'Out of Ireland's cultural history has come a tremendous creative inheritance of theatre, music, painting, sculpture, architecture and, above all, literature'.

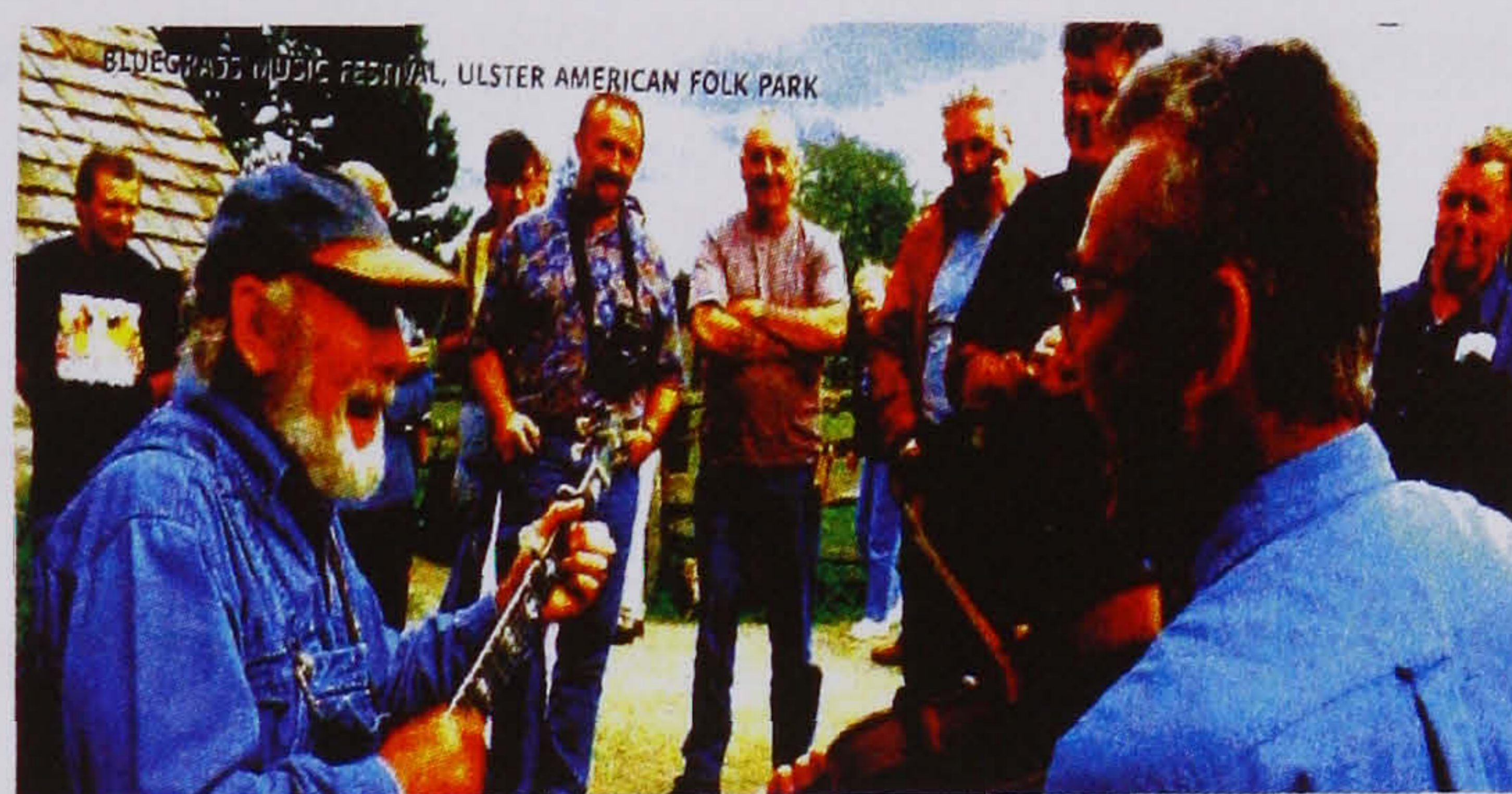


Figure 16: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2004)



Figure 17: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2003)

Finally, only a couple of images depicted urban scenes, one of Trinity College and the other of O'Connell Bridge both located in Dublin. Yet, even these pictures incorporate nature to frame the images, with Trinity College surrounded by manicured gardens while commercial buildings and city traffic are omitted. Similarly, in the O'Connell bridge photograph emphasis is on the quaint style of the bridge itself, the 'clear' waters of the

river Liffey and the greenery that surrounds it. Thus, elements of the countryside can also be found in the few urban areas presented.

In summary, the findings of the semiotic and content analysis concluded that a number of themes frequently reoccur in the Tourism Ireland brochures. The overall results indicate that the projected image is one of a natural, unspoiled, peaceful and rural environment populated with friendly people, where traditional methods of production survive in an idealised landscape out of time. The common message was one of an invitation to experience 'rural pace of life ', with emphasis on the 'delightfully varied landscape', 'friendly welcome', 'marvellous natural golfing country' and 'spectacular coastal settings famous for its fishing and water sports'.

To a large extent, these projected images have been identified as representative of the destination in the past. In conducting a content analysis of brochures produced by Bord Failte and travel companies, Quinn (1989) concluded that the natural environment was regarded as being the essential basis from which all other elements obtained their appeal. Quinn (1989) argued that Bord Failte attempted to disguise the existence of any urban settlements in that less than 10 per cent of brochure space was devoted to urban scenes. In brief, the dominant themes promoted were the natural landscape, the friendliness of the Irish people, Ireland's culture, heritage and sporting activities. The fundamental message promoted was that Ireland is a world apart from modern society (Quinn 1989). Indeed, Quinn's longitudinal study of brochures from the early 1970s onwards revealed only relatively minor changes in the promotion of Ireland as a tourist destination with the overall image remaining virtually unchanged (Quinn 1989). For example, these themes broadly match those identified by Quinn (1994) in her earlier content analysis of verbal and visual presentations in brochures produced to promote Ireland as a tourist destination in Continental Europe between 1989 and 1993. She identified a number of broad concepts: a world a part from modern society, an attractive, unspoiled environment, friendly people, a relaxed pace of life, a vast cultural heritage and a large selection of sporting opportunities. The actual images incorporating these themes include mostly rural

landscapes, vernacular (thatched cottages, stone walls) and spectacular architecture (castles, mansions), people in traditional attire and carrying out traditional activities (bringing home the hay), aspects of historical legacy (Celtic crosses) and the natural environment as a location for sporting activities (golf, angling).

Bell (1995) defines images of the Irish landscape in terms of their portrayal in photographs and text in the promotional literature used to market Ireland in the German tourist market. These representations of the landscape have borrowed heavily from artistic representations and produce an image of Ireland as a romantic tourist destination. This image is placed within a framework of a set of visual codes and literary sensibilities, already present in the popular culture of a particular class of German tourist. These are partly derived from a long established travel and ethnographic literature relating to Ireland, but also form a more general discourse present in German popular visual culture which has its roots in a northern Romantic landscape artistic tradition. This 'provides 'a perfect frame' for the German experience of Ireland' (Bell 1995: 49). Similarly, O'Connor (1993) identifies a number of common themes that continue to be reproduced for tourist consumption. These include the image of Ireland as a picturesque, unspoiled, timeless country with a friendly and quaint people, and a place where past traditions and ways of life still exist, in other words, a pre-modern society.

Other studies confirm Quinn's findings: Kneafsey (1994:112) states that the 'projected image of Ireland reinforces the idea of the country as a retreat from life in the fast lane'. Stocks (1996:252) confirms that Ireland has been 'depicted as a country with a relaxed way of life, quaint thatched cottages and old men sipping pints of Guinness, and a wealth of history and legend'. Morgan and Pritchard (1998) suggest that a key selling point of Ireland is its orientation to time, which is seen as 'non-linear and archaic' and is suggestive of a pre-modern society. The results of a study by Prentice and Andersen (2000) corroborate this view of the international image of Ireland being couched in terms of its people, landscape and culture. As such, the present study reveals only minimal

changes in the promotion of Ireland as a tourism destination with those reported in studies undertaken before the launch of the Tourism Brand Ireland marketing campaign in 1997.

5.3 Tourism Brand Ireland (TBI)

This approach for the marketing of Ireland was advanced in 1997 – Tourism Brand Ireland (TBI). The initiative was developed in response to changes in the tourism industry generally, and in recognition of the fact that Irish tourism had already extracted much of the growth potential accruing from such drivers as lower access costs, the peace dividend, product development and fashionability. This initiative aimed to refocus the promotional message around what Tourism Ireland believes to be Ireland’s strongest asset as a tourist destination, namely, ‘the people and the emotional experiences that is Ireland’ (Personal Interview 2003, Representative of Tourism Ireland). Four months of research and development of advertising concepts among both the industry and consumers, followed by four weeks of filming, resulted in the creation of a global advertising approach for all media (Bord Failte 1996) culminating in the launch of ‘Ireland – Live a Different Life’ campaign in 1997 as depicted in Figure 18.

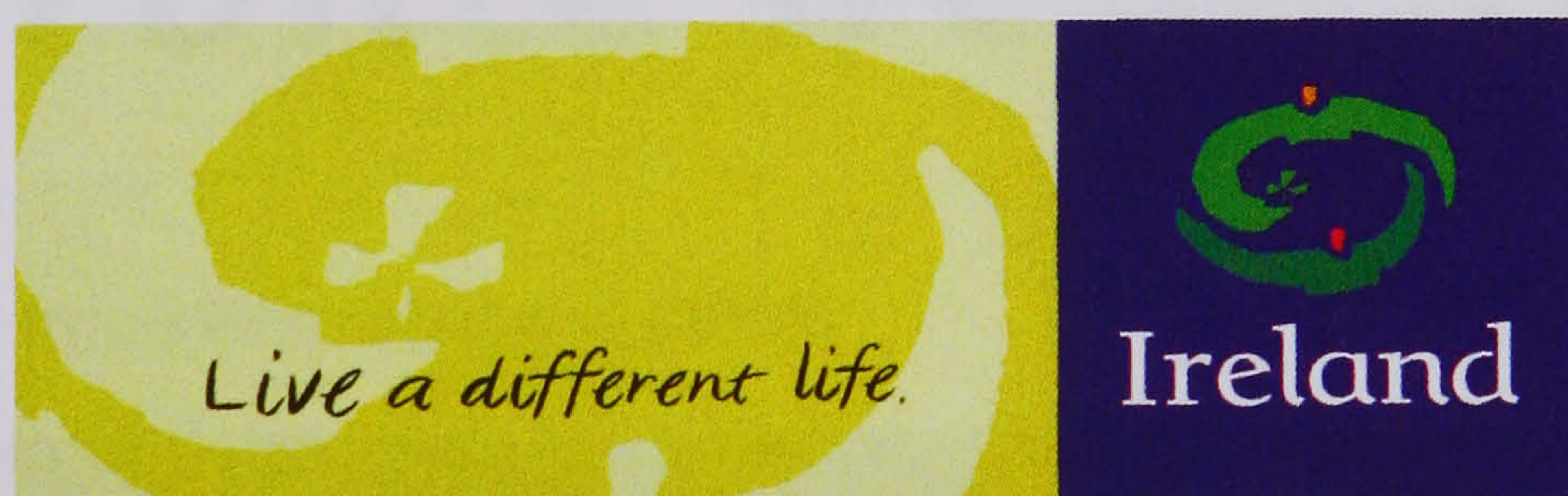


Figure 18: Ireland – Live a Different Life Campaign (1997)

The Brand development also included the development of a visual identity for Ireland which depicted two people embracing and exchanging shamrock as illustrated in Figure 19.



Figure 19: Visual Identity (Bord Failte 1997a)

However, widespread debate followed the introduction of the new brand logo which was modified shortly after the launch (Bord Failte 2000). This demonstrates that such symbols are recognised not just as a marketing tool but regarded as national emblems, signifying the influence of cultural and national identities in forging and negotiating the making of a place. A revised version of the brand logo, illustrated in Figures 20 and 21, appears on the current Tourism Ireland brochures (2003, 2004a, 2005).



Figure 20: Tourism Brand Ireland (2005)



Figure 21: Tourism Ireland Brochure (2003, 2004, 2005)

In spite of this controversy, TBI continues to represent a significant progression in the marketing of Irish tourism with the establishment of Tourism Ireland in 2000. Tourism Ireland is a North/South tourism company comprised of sections of Bord Failte and the Northern Irish Tourism Board, with the sole responsibility of marketing the whole Island of Ireland abroad. The stakeholders in this process are not just government and the general public to whom it is ultimately accountable, but also the industry constituency with whom the NTA is working. This is particularly so for Tourism Ireland, an organisation established to promote the success of the Good Friday Agreement, involving cooperation of marketing programmes across national borders as well as with industry partners (Guiney 2002). According to Tourism Ireland the 'strategy is to market the Island of Ireland to help the Island of Ireland reach its full tourism potential and our target for this year (2004) is a gross of 5% with special emphasis and a special mission to help the Northern part of Ireland reach its full potential' (Personal Interview 2003, Representative of Tourism Ireland).

In summary, the overall themes emerging from the representations and texts in Tourism Ireland's 2003 and 2004 brochures predominantly relate to friendly people and relaxed pace of life surrounded by beautiful and rural countryside. The notion of a countryside idea is not a new one (Williams 1973). Bunce (1994: 1) uses words written two centuries ago by Cowper 'God made the country, man made the town' to highlight the idealised or romanticised view of rural life and landscape which continues today. This attraction of the countryside is a product of an increasingly urbanised society and has been constructed from a combination of historical developments and cultural values which have created a blend of ideologies, myths and images. According to Bunce (1994), the form the countryside ideal takes is based on a combination of abstract values and real images, symbolising community and harmony with nature on the one hand, and on the other hand it is a collection of cultural and landscape images which stand out against urban and industrial imagery. Because the idealisation of the countryside was created through historical cultural processes, the form this ideal takes varies from culture to culture. Thus, to further understanding of the current image of Ireland, it is necessary to explore the

cultural and historic context in which the imagery arises. To facilitate an exploration of the relationship between tourism imagery and such wider societal and economic influences in an Irish context, it is appropriate to begin with a brief summary of the social and economic history of Ireland.

5.4 Ireland's socio-economic evolution

While Ireland became independent in 1922, it was not until 1937 that the Irish Constitution was signed. Consequently, developments since the founding of the Constitution will initiate the analysis followed by a review of recent developments between the early 1990s to the present day.

5.4.1 Developments since the founding of the Constitution

The Constitution in 1937 provided a template for an agrarian, conservative, Catholic and patriarchal society (Nolan, O'Connell and Whelan 2000). McGahern (1999) asserts that Ireland had become a theocracy in all but name by 1950, given the control exerted by the Catholic Church over so many facets of Irish life. For example, in most professions, there was compulsory retirement for women on marriage, and the Irish language was advocated as a means of keeping out foreign influences. The climate during the 1950s was insular, repressive and sectarian (McGahern 1999). In the post World War Two period, Ireland diverged significantly from other small democratic European states in neither integrating into the world economy, nor achieving significant growth (Nolan *et al* 2000). The failure of inward-looking, protectionist strategies adopted by successive governments, permeated Irish society. Ireland was heavily dependent on the inefficient farming sector for exports and employment, and on the UK for imports and exports (O'Grada and O'Rourke 2000). In 1958, GDP per capita was just three-fifths of the EU average (Haughton 2000: 46), whilst the population reached its lowest point, 2.8m in 1961 (Haughton 2000). Between 1951 and 1961, over 400,000 people emigrated; these were usually young and poorly

educated, and nearly all of them went to Britain (McGahern 1999). McGahern (1999) asserts that the 1950s were characterised by hidden bitterness, both for those who stayed and for those who were forced to leave in search of employment.

A switch to more outward-looking policies in the 1960s, including reduced protection, tax relief and grants aimed at attracting foreign industry, boosted the economy and stimulated growth and optimism. For the first time since the famine there was a period of sustained population and employment growth, accompanied by significant structural change. This recovery was not sustained, however, and the 'doom and gloom of the late 1970s and early 1980s matched that of the bleak 1950s' (O'Grada and O'Rourke 2000:34).

Emigration resumed in the 1980s, peaking at 44,000 in 1989 (Haughton 2000: 39).

Unemployment surged to 17% in 1986 and remained in double digits for the following decade (Haughton 2000:40).

5.4.2 Recent developments, 1990 – 2004

During the 1990s and in particular the latter half of the decade, Ireland's economy experienced phenomenal growth. This dramatic transformation has meant that Ireland is now widely acknowledged as the 'Celtic tiger'. Recent growth is accounted for by a favourable coincidence of economic and social factors such as foreign investment, social partnership, the effects of EU economic and social cohesion, and education (O'Hagan 2000; Lane 2000, Fitzgerald and Girvin 2000). The foundations for the current boom were laid in the 1960s following the outward-looking policies instigated under the leadership of Lemass. However, Ireland failed to regain much of the ground lost against the rest of modernising Europe. The further slump in the 1980s meant that it was not until the 1990s that Ireland earned its 'tiger' reputation. Thus, while most economies modernised in the 1960s, the process was rather more sporadic in Ireland culminating in rapid growth during the 1990s.

Irish GDP is now well above the EU mean: only Belgium, Luxembourg and Denmark had a higher GDP per head of population in 1999 (Bradley 2000:12), and indicators of living standards such as car registration, consumption per capita and life expectancy are also catching up (Haughton 2000: 14). About 100,000 people migrated into Ireland in the course of the 1990s and unemployment fell to five per cent by 2000 (Haughton 2000:40). Regarding the sectoral composition of employment, it is worth noting that only one sector – agriculture/forestry/fishing – declined between 1994 and 1999 whilst all others increased (O’Hagan 2000: 189). Mathews (2000) reports that the number at work in agriculture fell from 330,000 in 1960 to 130, 000 in 1997, whilst the number of farms is expected to decrease from 146,000 in 1988 to 100,000 by 2010. The negative impact of rapid economic growth has resulted in increases in noise and air pollution, infrastructural bottlenecks, and longer commuting and work hours. The Department of the Environment’s National Spatial strategy predicts that the population will rise to 4.5m by 2020, from 3.8m today. Furthermore, car numbers are projected to double, reaching a level of 2.1m by 2016 from 1.2m today (Hogan 2000).

Over the past half century and, in particular, the last decade, Ireland has been profoundly transformed from a relatively poor, inward-looking agricultural society, in capable of sustaining its population, to a prosperous industrial society fully integrated into the international economy and attracting immigrants to meet its labour demands (Nolan *et al* 2000). Ireland has become a technology hub within Europe. O’Toole (1999) argues that while the technology itself would have altered the nature of Ireland, its effect was multiplied by the fact that the Irish economy and, therefore society, was driven by investment from global technology companies. Ireland has evolved from being one of the most catholic, insular and rural outposts of Europe, to become one of the most globalised societies in the world. Ireland’s economy has become so ‘open’² that nearly a quarter of Irish employees work for companies based outside the Island (O’Toole 1999). Hourihand (2000) suggests that the pace of life in Ireland, particularly in Dublin, has increased and

² The Irish *wirtschaftswunder* of the 1990s through extensive deregulation and privatisation and foreign investment has meant the accelerated integration of the country into the global economy (McSharry 2000).

now compares with that of other major international urban centres. According to Cronin and O'Connor (2003), openness implies access, movement and hospitality, traditional watchwords of tourism development. During the foot-and-mouth crisis, tourism chiefs repeatedly declared that Ireland was 'open for business'. This is in sharp contrast to a historically insular, 'closed' society. Ireland is now regarded in the language of economists and policy-makers as one of the most 'open' economies in the world (Cronin and O'Connor 2003).

5.4.3 Tourism and the Irish economy

The links between tourism and dominant economic practices takes two forms. Firstly, there is the continued importance of place in the global economy. While the impact of globalisation on contemporary societies has profound implications for understanding economies and societies, place and space remain fundamental constructs in tourism studies. The spatial characteristics of destinations, as well as the contrasting features of domestic spaces, are essential to understanding the dynamic character of destinations and meanings attached to places by tourists (Quinn 2003). In contrast to the wider speculations of cyber hype and dystopian predictions of cultural critics, the new IT-driven global economy has not dispensed with geography. Location, location, location is not only the mantra of real-estate gurus but it is also a strategic factor in corporate policy. As Manuel Castells notes in a discussion of major European metropolitan areas in *The Rise of the Network Society*, tourism and travel are generally an integral part of the new economic structure (Castells 1996: 401).

This is evidenced by the success of the Irish economy being matched by growth in the tourism industry in Ireland in the late 1990s. 1998 was a record year for Irish tourism. Ireland attracted 5.7 million visitors, an increase of 10.7% on 1997 (CSO Principal Statistics – Travel and Tourism). According to a report in the Sunday Business Post, the hotel sector was extremely active in 1998, with 50 new hotels being added to the existing 730 establishments throughout Ireland (Hughes 1998). The Irish Times reported

estimated that at the end of 1998 there were about 32,500 hotels rooms in the country, and this figure represented an increase of around 7% over the 1997 figure. According to the Irish Times (2003) in Dublin alone 20 new hotels opened or increased in size during 1998 and this added 1500 new rooms and brought the total of rooms available to 9,200. This represented an increase of almost 20% over the 1997 figure, and 44% over the 1996 figure (Keena 1999). The same growth is found in the restaurant sector. The Employment Survey of the Tourism Industry in Ireland, carried out by CERT, the state Tourism Training Agency, published in 1998 and estimated that in 1997 there were 1890 restaurants in the Republic, an increase of 16% on 1996, a trend which was set to continue with further new restaurants and hotels opening.

However, while there is evidence of a rapid transformation of the country, this study suggests that the projected image of Ireland as a tourist destination has changed little. For example, the current Tourism Ireland campaign of 'people, pace and place' are not significantly different to the images Bord Failte produced in the 1966 film *Ireland invites You* which begins with the statement:

This is Ireland, a green island set in the seas like a gem of a rare beauty, a haven of undisturbed peace in a restless world, a land of infinite variety of scenes, an ageless, timeless place where old beliefs and customs live on beside the spread tide of human progress' (Bord Failte 1966).

This brings into focus the need to assess the contribution that Irish tourism policy (from which Tourism Ireland emerged) has made to the intended projected destination image. Any meaningful analysis of the intended projected image of Ireland therefore requires that the role of Irish tourism policy, in both a historical and contemporary context, is reviewed so that a composite picture of the projected image of Ireland can be produced.

5.4.4 Irish Tourism Policy

Approaches to tourism policy are frequently framed in terms of economic imperatives of short-term political pragmatists (Cronin and O'Connor 2003). Only too rarely are they related to broader societal questions. However, a number of recent studies, most notably a study by Thompson (2003) of Ireland in the 1920s examines the fundamental connections between tourism policy and the very terms within which Ireland has been defined in that period. Thus, this section will briefly identify the contribution of this particular study in Thompson's assessment of Irish Tourism Policy, while summarising the key elements which have formed the basis of Ireland's promotional appeal.

Thompson (2003) takes a critical look at tourism development in the early years of the Irish Free State by examining, in particular, the activities of the Irish Tourist Association (ITA) founded in 1925 and the points of view expressed in the ITA journal, *Irish Travel*. Thompson sees Irish tourism in the period as the classic expression of a post-colonial elite dependent for patronage and favour on the former colonial power. Not only was Ireland heavily dependent on Britain for agricultural markets, but the country also created a legacy of dependency in the tourism sector by its almost exclusive focus on the British market. In order for the project of attracting British tourists to succeed, it was important to sanitise, normalise and depoliticise representations of a country which only years earlier had been engaged in open warfare with The British state. It was this task that was embarked upon in its publications and promotional campaigns. Thompson continues to show how that staunchly pro-Free State political view of the ITA board members diverged radically from those of the ITA staff, all of whom were either former or still active members of the anti-treaty IRA. It was these staff members who would be responsible for producing much of the promotional and advertising literature on Ireland for the British market in the latter half of the 1920s. Notable in the early period was the reticence of ITA employees like C.S. (Todd) Andrews towards the whole tourism enterprise who saw it as the perpetuation of 'national flunkeydom' (Andrews 1982:3). Dissenting views in the early years were not common, though, in the publication of Irish-language articles in *Irish Travel*

and brief attempts to encourage Irish internal tourism, Thompson detects a move to frustrate a uniquely dependent position for tourism in the new state.

While the founding of the ITA represented the first attempt to structure the industry, lack of funding for this voluntary organisation restricted promotional and publicity activities. This situation was redressed to some extent by the Tourist Traffic (Development) Act of 1931 which made the ITA an official beneficiary of local government finance, but the board's capacity to fulfil its objectives however, was limited by the lack of finance³. A bilateral agreement signed by the Irish and US governments in 1944 guaranteed that all US aircraft in transit over Irish territory would stop at Shannon. This established Shannon as an international airport in the years immediately following the war. The post-war era also saw an influx of visitors from Britain where strict food rationing was still prevalent, but the lack of suitable accommodation meant the industry was unable to fully exploit these opportunities (Deegan and Dineen 1997). According to O'Grada and O'Rourke (2000), little concrete work was undertaken to promote Ireland as a tourist destination for international visitors before the 1960s. The main priorities were the UK and US markets, particularly during the period of 'the troubles'⁴, when the industry focused its attention on the ethnic (Irish) in these countries. In Germany, France, and the Benelux countries, the marketing campaign featured unspoilt Irish landscape, the friendliness of the people and the Craic in the Irish pubs (Bord Failte 2000). The focus of those involved in the tourism industry during the 1960s and 1970s was on legislative changes which sought to improve the range and quality of accommodation and facilities. The emphasis therefore was on developing the tourism product and not on marketing. The lack of marketing focus was compounded by the fact that the tourism industry as a whole was largely ignored by policy makers until 1985 (Deegan and Dineen 1997).

³ A National Economic and social Council (NESC) report in 1980 was critical of the 1939 act on the grounds that it provided few guidelines on even the most basic issues of tourism policy.

⁴ Late 1960s/early 1970s when the violence in Northern Ireland worsened.

For almost five decades, the budget available for the promotion of Ireland as a tourist destination has been small in comparison with that enjoyed by many competitor destinations, although this situation has improved in recent years through the increased allocation of marketing funds from the EU and the private sector (Bord Failte 2000). An additional layer of marketing was introduced in 1993 in response to poor performance in the British and American markets – the Overseas Tourism Marketing Initiative (OTMI). The OTMI is a co-operative marketing programme involving a number of key tourism industry interests, Bord Failte and Northern Ireland. It was established in order to boost the promotion of Ireland in the US and was extended, in 1995 to include Britain, France and Germany.

The two major catalysts in the development of a strategic plan for Irish tourism marketing were the investments accorded under the Operational Programmes for Tourism and the publication of the Little report in 1994. The first Operational Programme invested £48.3m in marketing and the second invested £125m, whilst the Little report (1994)⁵ and the decision to focus exclusively on generic destination promotion, preceded the formation of Tourism Brand Ireland. Current marketing strategy is built around Tourism Brand Ireland which is outlined in a *Business Plan for Irish Tourism Marketing 1998-2003*, a follow up to the *Marketing Plan Framework 1994-1999*. Thus, a central feature of the proactive approach to the development of Irish tourism was publicity (Deegan and Dineen 1997: 21-5). To further understand the projected image of Ireland, the following section will analyse the promotional approach adopted by Bord Failte. This will assist in establishing the extent to which the projected image of Ireland as a tourism destination has undergone change.

⁵ In 1994, the government appointed consultants, Arthur D. Little Ltd, to review the role and operations of Bord Failte, particularly in the light of growth targets which had been set. The consultant reported that Bord Failte had become too involved in too many aspects of the industry, fostering a dependency on it, and should instead focus primarily on overseas promotion and consumer marketing.

5.4.5 Bord Failte's and Tourism Ireland's promotional approach

Tourists could only come to Ireland if they know it and as austerity was coming to an end in Britain and because Americans were increasingly discovering the novelty of air travel, the potential market was expanding (Jorgensen 2003). Consequently, Fogra Failte, was established as the publicity wing of Irish tourism operations under the 1952 Tourist Traffic Act. Although Fogra Failte was later subsumed into Bord Failte, the initial establishment of a separate body was significant in indicating the perceived need to emphasise the external marketing of the country. Tangible evidence of the new orientation in tourism policy was the decision to produce a regular by-monthly publication which would showcase Ireland's attractions as a place to visit. The first issue of *Ireland of the Welcomes* appeared in 1952 under the title 'Seeing what is good' seeking to promote a marketable version of the 'truth' (the Irish as welcoming, convivial and modernising). The particular conception of the audience for the publication is eloquently expressed in the advertisements seeking subscribers. In the September-October issue for 1963, the copy begins: 'Ireland today is all you ever hoped, much you never dreamed'. *Ireland of the Welcomes* is 'next to being there... A magazine specifically for those of us who can't be there, but yearn to know it'. Such material has a representative function in that it represents Ireland to those who cannot be there as well as the publication being rhetorical. The magazine was initially the responsibility of Fogra Failte and the primary aim of that organisation was to persuade people to visit Ireland. Hence, the choice of articles, contributors, illustrations is dictated by an imaginary dimension to tourism discourse, by the way in which the potential Irish tourist is envisaged and what is seen to excite his or her interest (Cronin 2003).

In the 1963 advertisement, the only names mentioned were those of writers. It is writers alone who legitimise the claims of the magazine to be representative and authoritative in the establishment of a specifically Irish touring culture. Indeed, this history of the magazine might be generically summarised as the passage from literary journal to colour supplement. For example, in the first year of its existence *Ireland of the Welcomes*

published articles and poems by Benedict Kiely, Dora Sigerson Shorter, Brendan Behan, Sean O Faolain, Lord Dunsany, Donagh McDonagh and Reverend Francis Mahony (Cronin 2003). The selective use of literary texts to remove Ireland from history into a land of fairytale and myth is almost a parody of the literary revival. The irony is that literature is repeatedly enlisted by *Ireland of the Welcomes* magazines although prominent writers themselves no longer feature in any significant way in the publications. However, this literate utopia makes two important assumptions, namely that the tourist is interested in Irish writers and is an English speaker. Cronin (2003) contends that that not only are Irish writers less likely to be the subject of the pub discussions prized by English tourists to Ireland decades ago, but they are also less likely to feature in any public discussion on the subject. Also, while the majority of tourists until the 1980s were English speakers, the British and American dominance of the Irish tourism market began to recede in favour of tourism from the European continent (Pechenart and Tangy 1993). If the magazine in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000 begin to rely more and more on photographs and illustrations and place and considerably less emphasis on the Irish as people with a talent for talk and a ready acquaintance with their literary forbears, it is in part because the language world of tourist contact is no longer homogeneous. A shared language and canon in the past allowed the suitably curious British or American tourist to engage in literary banter with locals. While the focus of this research is on the image of Ireland in Britain it is nonetheless significant that contemporary promotional material assumes that the market is entirely English speaking. Thus, as the promotional efforts in the British market did not consider those with different languages and cultures, this assumed level of familiarity portrayed in attempts at a literary revival are infinitely more problematic.

However, *Ireland of the Welcomes* in the early decades was the product of a poor, peripheral, underdeveloped country and as such, there is a danger in perceiving tourist experience uniquely from the perspective of visually sophisticated heritage attractions in developed economies. While Slater (2003) acknowledges the importance of the visual in late modernity and a great number of heritage attractions place a premium on sight as a way of apprehending experience, the funds for investment in the heritage panopticon of

tourism, material infrastructure of the centre, sight, attraction were not forthcoming (Cronin 2003). So, in a sense there was not much to 'see'. By emphasising literature and language, however, not only could imagination take up where reality left off, but sightseeing could give way to eavesdropping. The degree to which this promotional approach changed in the subsequent period is of interest as Ireland was a relatively new destination for the European market throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Table 14 provides summarises the most significant changes in Irish tourism policy briefly outlining the impact such changes had on the projected image of Ireland. As such, this study period represents a crucial growth phase in the promotion of Ireland as a tourist destination in Europe (Quinn 1989). Thus, it would seem that Ireland was and still is a product (place) to be packaged or as Burgess and Wood (1988:94) suggest 'places have become commodities to be packaged, marketed and sold'.

Gaffey (2004) suggests that it is increasingly recognised that tourism promotional bodies contributes greatly to the creation of the imagined geographies of places abroad through place representation. Waitt (1997: 57) for example, warns that all national tourism promotion bodies have the authority to endorse landscapes that are part of the 'iconography of nationhood'. Also Kneafsey (1995:136) has argued that 'landscape is being interpreted in new ways for tourism ... the interpretation of landscapes can contribute to constructions of place and identity, acting as a powerful symbolic and cultural icon'. In her work, she examines how tourism influences the form of conceptions of rurality, tradition, authenticity and identity. Such images projected in place promotion define the boundaries of experiences. In other words, the 'images define what is beautiful, what should be experienced and with whom one should interact'. However, place promotion involves adapting to, altering or making use of existing images, which are drawn from a multiplicity of sources over which the marketer has little influence (Gaffey 2004). As such, this study recognises that those involved in creating and projecting destination images cannot exclusively control the sources of images, or the manner in which target consumers perceive projected images.

➤ Irish Tourist Association (1922)	1 st attempt to structure the tourism industry Lack of funding restricted promotional/publicity activities. Marketing primarily focused on the British market.
➤ Tourist Traffic (Development) Act 1931	ITA became an official beneficiary of local government in an attempt to increase funding.
➤ Bilateral Irish/US agreement	Compulsory stop in Shannon airport of all US aircraft in transit over Irish territory. Increased focus on targeting the US market.
➤ Fogra Failte (1952)	Establishment of a separate body indicating the perceived need to emphasise the external marketing of the country. Published <i>Ireland of the Welcomes</i> which depicted the Irish as welcoming, convivial and modernising. Writers were the only names mentioned in the earlier publications assuming readers are both English speakers and interested in Irish literature.
➤ Overseas Tourism Marketing Initiative (OTMI) (1993)	Co-operative marketing programme involving Bord Failte and Northern Ireland introduced to improve the Performance of the British and American markets by Investing £48.3 in marketing.
➤ Overseas Tourism Marketing Initiative (OTMI) (1995)	1993 OTMI extended to include Britain, France and Germany by investing £125m in marketing.
➤ Business Plan for Irish Tourism Marketing (1998-2003)	Following the <i>Little Report</i> (1994), Tourism Brand Ireland strategy formally introduced the generic Brand concept.
➤ Marketing Plan Framework	Tourism Brand Ireland strategy developed by refocusing the promotional message to include the people and the emotional experience in the Launch of 'Ireland – Live a Different Life' campaign.
➤ Tourism Ireland (1999)	Established to market the Island of Ireland as one destination internationally (North and South).
➤ Failte Ireland (2001)	Established to market Ireland domestically and support the industry in its efforts to be more competitive and more profitable. Tourism Ireland and Failte Ireland jointly replace Bord Failte.

Table 14: Changes in Irish Tourism Policy (1922- 2001)

Image constructors have to contend with a wide variety of alternative image forming agents not only from other destinations but from other sources of images. For example, according to O'Connor (1993), tourism images of Ireland and the Irish people are just part of a panoply of other imagery, political and social; they have disparate sources and are influenced by a number of factors such as historical relations with other countries and contemporary media representations. Gibbons (cited in O'Connor 1993:69), for instance, claims that 'the absence of a visual tradition in Ireland, equal in stature to its powerful literary counterpart, has meant that the dominant images of Ireland have, for the most part, emanated from outside the country or have been produced at home with an eye on the foreign (or tourist) market'. This suggests that national and touristic images of Ireland are inextricably linked, as are the sources of these images. Although this highlights the difficulty in providing a definitive list of destination sources, the contribution of a selected number of image sources to the projected image will be explored before discussing the degree to which the overall projected image has changed over the past century.

5.5 Sources of destination imagery for Ireland

In relation to tourism promotion, Mellinger (1994: 776) summaries succinctly the multiple influences on the modern tourist's expectations:

Tourists inhabit a mass-mediated cultures in which the proliferation of hegemonically-scripted discourses, including television programs, feature films, travel books, brochures, and postcards, act as powerful tour guides that can produce ideals, identities, and role models for tourists, and define their situations, set their agendas, and establish the boundaries of their gaze.

A diverse range of agencies and companies are partners in the task of portraying favourable brand images including local and national government agencies, environmental groups, chambers of commerce, trade associations and civic groups. Similarly, the range of non travel specific imagery is equally diverse ranging from literature, press, word of mouth to historical connections, heritage, stereotyping and political links. This provides challenges for place promoters because as Burgess (1982) observes organisations and individuals involved in the business of promoting places have

to try to emphasise the positive imagery which already exists about the place whilst simultaneously challenging unfavourable images. This makes the task of identifying all the sources of destination imagery for Ireland unrealistic. Therefore, this aspect of the study does not claim to provide an exhaustive list of the factors that influence the projected destination image. Rather, it aims to acknowledge the particular importance of a selection of prominent representations in the development of the projected image of Ireland in Britain. Image dimensions are selected based on their historical development, cultural and social significance and crucial importance to the tourism industry. In so doing, this section will explore the relationship between tourism imagery and wider societal and economic influences such as the Irish pub, traditional music and dance as well as film and photography. It is anticipated that this will demonstrate that the projected images of Ireland in Britain are dependent as much on social and cultural processes as they are on tourist promotional material.

5.5.1 The Irish Pub and the Tourist Gaze

The 'Irish pub' is crucial to Irish tourism (McGovern 2003) with images of Irish culture and the social lives of Irish people being inextricably bound up with pubs and alcohol in the minds of many tourists. This is not a new phenomenon and an historic review will assist in understanding why many visitors regard Ireland's pub culture as one of the most distinctive and attractive elements of modern Irish society. From a very early date, Ireland was established as a regular destination for the English tourist and one that also 'consistently impressed visitors by its foreign quality' (Hadfield and McVeagh 1994: 134). Notwithstanding the contribution of the Irish landscape and many aspects of Irish society to providing this sense of the different, the romantic and the exotic, it is noticeable that late 18th and 19th century English travellers in Ireland regularly commented on the drinking habits of the peasantry and, indeed of other social classes too, by in large on the basis of pre-conceived perceptions. Travel book representations of Irish drinking habits tended to oscillate between moral condemnation and a celebration of the exotic and primitive, but seldom was an alcohol-centred identity far from the scene (Hadfield and McVeagh

1994:161). Indeed, such images continued to be very much to the fore through the 19th century as various social and economic changes made Ireland as an ever more regular Victorian tourist destination (Grimes 1980; Harrington 1991).

These depictions of the drinking habits and social life of Irish peasants in early tourist writing emerged in tandem with the increasingly recognisable depiction of the 'comic Irishman' on the English stage (Edwards 1994; Kiberd 1995). Conventions for the portrayal of Irish men and women on the popular stage were already fairly well established by the Victorian era but became even more clearly defined in this period. The Stage Irishman was a 'merry, whiskey drinking pugnacious clown' who could similarly be identified both with conversation and articulacy, as an 'outsider' who combined the romanticism of the rogue with the exotic threat of the unknown (Waters 1984:6). Thus there existed a dual image of the Irish within the tourist and colonial mind, or as Egaletton (1998) has recently suggested that the English see the Celts as sociable yet savage which it might be argued has become increasingly the case for non-English eyes as well. However, to suggest that Irish drinking habits, public houses and the culture of sociability that went with them were regarded as distinctive and different abroad was not, however, solely dependent on the symbolism of 'stage Irishry' as it was also in part grounded in certain material realities. The increasing importance of the Irish brewing and distilling industries was one that helped foster the image of the Irish bar and an alcohol-centred Irish identity abroad, which is later discussed as having a direct bearing on present day tourism development. An essentialised and reified conception of Irishness emerged as a key component of product branding by the Irish drinks industry. This process of ethnic commodification was one that has ultimately fed into the commodification of Irishness in the tourist experience of the Irish bar.

By the start of the 20th century the production of Irish whiskey accounted for 25% of the total UK output and the orientation of the industry was geared towards export, while Guinness was to become the largest brewing business in the world. At the same time while the domestic market was contracting, those abroad stimulated ever-greater

production. This export trade was significant to the Irish economy and the relationship of Irish breweries and distilleries to the image of Ireland and the Irish was, therefore, likely to be largely immune to changes in Irish drinking habits to the external eye. However, even though Guinness emerged in the post-war era as a multinational corporation with production sited around the globe, Ireland's image abroad was always likely to be closely associated with those products that were most readily recognisable and accessible as distinctly 'Irish'. It was similarly in the interests of the Irish drinks industry to continue to foster the link between Irishness and their products. As consumption became increasingly dependent upon marketing in the latter part of the 20th century and the vogue for ethnicised consumer objects took an even firmer hold, so the imagery of the Irish bar and of 'romantic rogue' *staged Irishry* constituted a language through which the seller could speak to the consumer. Marketing Irish beer and spirits abroad would increasingly provide an important part of the material basis for the imagination of Ireland in the outsider's mind.

This Irish drinks industry continues to celebrate the extent to which their brands are virtually regarded as national symbols of Ireland in the wider world. In part, this is because they continue to feature so prominently in Ireland's foreign trade. In 1995, for example, the phenomenal success of Baileys cream liqueur ensured that its foreign sales accounted for 1% of total Irish exports (O Grada 1997:129)). Guinness, today, one of the most recognisable brand names in the world and undoubtedly the most well-known commercial Irish symbol, continues to exemplify the link between the political economy of the Irish drinks industry and an Irish alcohol-centered identity. It is also clear that many of those involved in the Irish drinks industry recognise the importance of images of the Irish bar and of a notional conception of Irish people for their continued high profile, particularly in recent years. The marketing campaigns of various Irish beers and stouts during the 1990s emphasised key elements of the contemporary construction of a *staged Irishness*. Emigration, an idiosyncratic sense of wit, spirituality in 'romanticised roguery' have all been prominent elements in the selling of Murphy's, Caffreys, Beamish and other Irish alcoholic products (McGovern 1999). Adverts for Irish beers and spirits also parallel the

tourist images of Ireland as a rural, natural and anti-modern place (Tourism Ireland representative, personal interview 2003). Given that their advertising campaigns often emphasise their imaged 'Irish character', it has been argued by the lobbying organisation of the Irish brewers and distillers that they offer 'free advertising for Irish tourism' (O'Hagan and Scott 1993:37). The high product profile of various Irish alcoholic drinks, and of the site of their consumption are seen as having a direct impact on tourism, 'stout, Irish whiskey, cream liqueurs, and most important perhaps the Irish pub', an Irish drinks industry report concluded 'are significant in international perceptions of Ireland' (Drinks Industry Group 1993). They also, of course, ensure that the consumption of Irish beers and spirits is closely tied to the idea of what Ireland is to the visitor (Drinks Industry Group 1993). The pursuit of increased volume sales of beer and whiskey, outside Ireland as well as within, has resulted in the rapid rise of the Irish theme bar in the last decade due to the recognition of a potential market identified in the expectations of the tourist.

The Irish Pub Company, established in 1991 specialises 'in the design, manufacture and installation of authentic Irish pubs worldwide' by developing a series of design concepts which are intended to encapsulate the 'Irish pub experience' emphasising the 'ambience' of 'casual and attractive sociability', where people can enjoy the art of conversation', music and song' and imbibe 'satisfying and distinctive drinks' (The Irish Pub Company 1997:12-17). The dominant perception of the Irish pub as a 'social centre' informs the sense, too that there is a level of 'social acceptability' for public drinking in Ireland because it is a 'part of the culture' (McGovern 2003: 90). Thus, Irish theme bars through the commodification of the 'craic' construct a notion of Irishness around an anti-modern nostalgia, validating Craik's (1997) claim that it is within the original culture of the tourist that expectations of the destination are shaped. Such marketing strategies both illustrate the existence of, and further reinforces pre-conceived and socially constructed images of Ireland, framing the context within which tourist perceptions are constructed long before their arrival. This, in turn, informs the projected representations of Ireland.

If the image of the 'craic' is linked to the tourist's imagination, then the 'emotive experience' is a critical component in selling Ireland as the 'craic' is a dominant feature of this imaged, emotional experience. As such, this image of Ireland as a pre-modern place must be realised in concrete social situations and specific spaces as such perceptions have subsequently been critical in shaping what it is tourists expect to find when they arrive in Ireland and (increasingly perhaps) what it is that they are subsequently offered. Thus, the role that the pub plays in modern Irish social life and nature of Irish drinking patterns seems to realise many of the preconceived stereotypical images as well as having consequences for the way in which visitors frequent Irish bars. A rise in the general level of consumption of alcohol has been a dominant feature throughout much of the last four decades largely attributable to an overall rise in living standards and disposable income, shifts in gender relations that have resulted in a far greater rate of female consumption, and a parallel fall in the rate of total abstinence (McGovern 2003).

Yet, despite these trends, alcohol consumption rates have decreased in the last two decades and the general trend would appear to be for more people in Ireland to take a drink but instead, more people are drinking less. In addition, international comparisons have shown that per capita, alcohol consumption in Ireland is relatively low. For example, when the consumption rates per capita were compared in 1997 across 20 European countries, Ireland came 12th, far behind not only the more wine-orientated countries such as Portugal, France and Spain, but also beer-dominated markets like Denmark, Austria and Germany. However, what is perhaps most distinctive about Irish drinking habits when compared to elsewhere is its public nature. Cassidy (1996) notes that Irish non-drinkers are also far more likely than their European counterparts to socialise in public houses. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that a substantial number of middle-class 'high-yield' tourists who enjoy pubs in Ireland would not normally consider socialising in a pub in their own country (McGovern 2003). Although many of those engaged in tourist promotion suggest that it is not so much drinking itself that is important to the image of the Irish pub (Personal Interview 2003, Tourism Ireland representative), but rather it is the cultural interaction that is the main attraction. However, the two cannot be easily

separated as it is the combination of drinking and entertainment that make up this cultural experience.

Thus, while the practical and material contribution of Ireland's 8,000 public houses (Scott 1994) to the island's tourist infrastructure matters, of greater importance is the cultural construction of the pub as a quintessentially Irish institution that offers an ideal opportunity to 'consume' Irish culture and people. Indeed, McGovern (2003) argues that the place of the pub is due, in part at least, to external perceptions of Ireland and of the Irish people. However, he also suggests that this same image offers a series of symbols and signifiers through which many Irish people will themselves construct, negotiate and contest their sense of self. Ultimately then, aspects of the Irish pub culture that have been objectified and commodified for and by the tourist. These have implications not just for its role in tourist perceptions and experience, but also its influence on how the Irish see themselves expressed in contemporary representations of the pub in tourism literature. Indeed, as the volume of visitors to the distilleries and breweries illustrate, Irish drink products are themselves invested with cultural significance and heritage value. The important thing is the perception that there is little or no stigma attached to public drinking in Ireland (McGovern 2003) with the Irish pub offering both a relatively safe environment and a novel experience.

It is not unimportant that Irish theme bars are designed to cater for 'high yield' foreign tourists as well as being the primary market at whom much of Irish tourist promotional material is aimed. What therefore emerges is a pressure to manage both the tourists' perceptions and expectations of the 'native' and 'exotic' but in a way that continues to offer the shelter of safety and 'quality service' with an essentialised image of Irish people as being critical to the 'emotional experience'. This has certainly been the case for Tourism Ireland's 'Ireland – Live a Different Life' campaign in 1997. The idea of the 'emotional experience' was seen as the crucial element in this marketing initiative, the 'core brand essence for Ireland tourism' (Bord Failte 1997a: 8). Clearly this campaign was designed to maximise the marketing potential of the particular place occupied by Ireland in the

global tourist industry. This, in turn, is highly dependent on an already established perception of Ireland abroad.

Such representations encourage tourist demand for such elements and the heavy codification of pub iconography of what pubs will have on offer has led to a commodification of 'craic' and an arena for 'staged authenticity'. This, in turn has encouraged cultural performances of traditional music and dance within the pub being shaped by tourist expectations in a way which might be viewed as a modern version of the 'stage Irish' persona of the Victorian era. It is this interface between tourism and such performances as a valuable component in predicting the projected image of the Irish tourism product that is the focus of the following subsection. This discussion will concentrate on music production and consumption in the pub as it is probably the setting in which most visitors to Ireland consume the performance of live traditional music. Also, it is an interesting cultural practice to examine as it retains a sense of spontaneity and mystique which distinguishes it from many contemporary forms of entertainment.

5.5.2 Irish Traditional Music and Dance

Traditional music is often used as an important, if contested, signifier of Irish national identity. For instance, Ireland is one of the only countries in the world to have a musical instrument, namely the harp, as its national symbol (Vallely 1999). Also, traditional music is now being recognised as an important part of the tourism product, as a report by O'Murchu (1999) recommends a comprehensive assessment of the potential of Irish traditional music, song and dance in cultural tourism. However, Quinn (1996:393) affirms that this is 'a difficult task, and one which requires extensive further research in order to understand the nature of the music-tourism relationship, and in particular, appreciate how music is affected in the process of tourism consumption'. The conceptualisation of the relationship between tourism and traditional music presents a considerable challenge, not least because both practices can be theorised from a multitude of perspectives drawing on a variety of disciplines including tourism studies, cultural studies, sociology, geography,

anthropology, ethnomusicology and popular music studies. Furthermore, as Lau (1998:116) argues 'we must recognise from the outset that a universal theory of tourism is highly impractical and virtually impossible because the nature and mode of interaction between society, and tourism varies significantly from place to place'. Recognising this, a comprehensive assessment of the potential of Irish traditional music, song and dance requires an introductory history before discussing the interface between tourism and traditional music and dance and their influence on the projected image of Ireland abroad.

Traditional music is the older dance music and song in Ireland. According to the Irish Traditional Music Archive (Vallely 1999: 403) it is, above all, the music of a living popular tradition. It incorporates a large body of material from the past but this does not form a static repertory - rather it is always changing through shedding material, the re-introduction of neglected items and the composition of new items. Change, however, is slow and takes place within generally accepted principles. It is essentially oral in character in that song and instrumental music have been carried in memory – largely independent of writing and print. Even today, with more printed music available, most musicians learn through imitating more experienced performers. Within this context, the session functions as an important opportunity for musicians to meet and exchange tunes and as such, is both a social and technical activity for the participants as well as the audience. According to Revill (1988), the quality of the music allows it to travel from place to place even though many institutions and orthodoxies have sought to define it. This point can be illustrated through reference to the contested history of traditional music in Ireland where different actors have struggled to attach different meanings to a cultural practice which has enormous mobility. For instance, to many clergy in the early decades of the 20th century, it was seen as an accessory to immoral social behaviour. At the same time, some politicians associated it with subversive political activities such as raising funds for the IRA. They combined to pass the Public Dance Halls Act of 1935, which introduced strict licensing controls which, according to critics, almost resulted in the eradication of music and dance in some areas. At the same time, traditional music also faced competition from fashionable new music imported from America and England. In contrast

to these modern, urban cultural practices, traditional music was designed by many as the expression of unsophisticated and primitive country folk (Vallely 1999). Nevertheless, the 1960s era of protest songs and civil rights movements saw a revival of interest in traditional music. This, in itself, prompted another battle for definition, as musicians tried to distinguish 'authentic' Irish music from popular folk song e.g. Bob Dylan, Irish 'ballad groups' and political ballads.

More recently, traditional Irish music has experienced another surge in popularity, this time re-defined in the context of a new, highly commercialised 'Celtic craze', which began in the late 1980s (Hale and Payton 2000). Such music sessions require not only good musicians and a good rapport between them but it also needs the presence of listeners who possess appropriate social and music knowledge. According to Kneafsey (2003), tourists do not usually have the social and music knowledge required to appreciate the music in the way that the musicians would like, but at least the tourists provide a supportive audience for performers, while the locals attitudes towards traditional music are antipathetic. This demonstrates that it is the tourists rather than the locals that are perceived as the most appreciative if only through their sheer physical presence and engagement in this creative process. This shapes the meaning of the music negotiated through inter-personal, mutually appreciative relationships, with the ultimate goal being the achievement of a 'mighty session' (Kneafsey 2003:33). However, the tourist-musician symbiosis shows signs of changing. Ironically, the changes are occurring largely because of the way in which tourists consume the session as tourists lack the socio-musical knowledge which would enable them to respond emotionally and behaviourally in the way that musicians would prefer, and therefore resort to consuming the session largely through the medium of 'the gaze'. This in turn, allows the tourists to position themselves as 'audience' and is observable in the way they sit around the musicians, watching very closely and quietly, often taking pictures or video-taping events and clapping at the end of each set of tunes (Authors observations 2004). This inevitably becomes more formalised than a group of musicians simply gathering to have 'a few tunes' emphasising the difference between 'playing' and 'performing'. Yet, whilst this may be so during the

summer months, this does not necessarily mean that the session is being commodified. What does appear to be happening is that a distinction is emerging between 'session' and 'gig's. The latter correspond more closely to the notion of a commodity and are emerging mainly in bars in the larger areas and co-exist with sessions. According to Kneafsey (2003) they retain characteristics which defy commodification for a number of reasons;

First, one of the engines that usually drives commodification is the desire to make profit. Yet for the musicians, financial gain is rarely the main motivations of playing in sessions and for the publicans, sessions are not regarded as highly lucrative. Second, as Lovering (1998:34) notes in reference to the music industry, commodification is dependent on the public systems of regulations – 'markets will only work if they are framed by laws, by routinised behaviours and industry 'technology standards'. Such considerations do not apply to the session. Third, Lovering also suggests that to be a commodity – something that is exchanged for money on a systematic basis – individual musical construction must be capable of being parcelled up in ways that allow mass production and mass-sale. Such a description cannot be applied to the majority of sessions as each is a unique, unrepeatable and unpredictable event and retains social meanings that are at odds with capitalist constructions of the commodity. Thus, the increased formalisations, however, does not necessarily indicate the complete commodification of this cultural practice. Rather, the long and complex history of struggles to define, defend or control the meaning of 'traditional music and dance' illustrates that tourism is a cultural practice and that tourism representations and culture hugely overlap.

The increasing popularity of 'traditional' dance in particular as part of the tourist experience is not peculiar to Ireland and can be seen as part of a wider process of the globalisation of ethnic dance culture (O'Connor 2003). Just as *Riverdance* initially attained a global reach through the Eurovision Song contest, Flamenco reached a worldwide audience during the opening ceremony of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and subsequently led to an increased interest on the part of tourists in experiencing this aspect of Spanish culture (Malefyt 1998). Turkey's recent presentation of traditional dance in

2004 Eurovision Song context (RTE 2004) provides another example of how dance is seen as central to both tourism imagery and practice as well as providing a sense of a new cultural identity for the destination. O'Toole (1997) regards *Riverdance* as the exemplar of the liberation of Irish dance. He sees it as a unique expression of a national sense of self-confidence and pride which enables Ireland to play with traditional cultural forms and reassemble them in innovative and imaginative ways which has resulted in popularising Irish music and dance across the world. According to O'Connor (2003) dance fits easily into the tourist packages since it is regarded as a traditional and unique expression of the host culture, facilitating relaxation and fun, as well as providing an opportunity for involvement, however fleeting, with local culture. Indeed, it is important to note that the revival of traditional music and dance coincided with the growth of tourism over the last two decades, a point recognised by those responsible for the creation of the destination's tourism images. (Personal Interview 2003, Representative of Tourism Ireland).

5.5.3 The promotion of traditional music and dance

Contemporary tourism images, appearing in brochures, postcards and books, reinforce the association of Ireland with traditional music and dance, encouraging tourists to expect at least some exposure to the sources of the nation that produced *Riverdance*. This expectation is enhanced through television travel programmes about Ireland that inevitably portray mountains, lakes and empty beaches accompanied by the wistful strains of the pipes or whistle. In a similar vein, Tourism Ireland's 'Discover the island of Ireland' 2003 brochure continues to emphasise similar themes inviting the reader to 'immerse yourself in its beauty, feel the warmth of its people' where 'the hospitality is legendary and the warmth of the people is genuine' supported by visual representations of musicians playing in a cosy local bar with pints of Guinness and traditional instruments prominently displayed.

Not only are visitor numbers to Ireland increasing at a rapid rate (Bord Failte 2000), the audience for various forms of recorded 'Irish music and dance' is also growing (Thornton 2000). There has also been a huge increase in the variety of instruments, singing styles and dance, as well as lectures, recitals and pub music sessions. One of Dublin's newest tourist attractions is Ceol⁶, described as an 'interactive Irish music encounter' and 'a celebration of a living tradition'. Similarly, the Dublin musical pub crawl has proved highly popular with tickets being sold to approximately 6-7000 tourists a year (Quinn 1996). Not only does traditional music and dance therefore, act as a general backdrop to various representations of Ireland but here is evidence to suggest that significant numbers of people include listening to or playing traditional music⁷ within their holiday activities (Tourism Ireland 2002b). Thus, any conclusions regarding the nature of the projected images of Ireland must be understood in the context of Irish identity grounded in cultural rather than utilitarian contexts in order to understand that it is the combination of the phenomenal expansion of media empires, the exponential growth in advertising budgets, and of the borrowing of operational paradigms from areas of cultural creativity by conventional, mainstream industries, that has resulted in the aestheticisation of both the production and consumption of Irish tourism. If consumers are famously creatures of choice, then the decision to buy is more a matter of persuasion than conviction but persuasion is always more effective if it carries the aura of conviction. Hence, the appeal is to wishes, aspirations, needs (real or imaginary) which are reflected in cultural contexts. As such it is the aesthetic component (picture, sound cultural allusion) which will often be decisive in the choice between competing products and services. This is illustrated in the spectacular success of shows like *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance* which have made dance and music critical components not just of selling of Ireland to tourist markets but of the tourism experience. Indeed, in the energy, vitality and inventiveness of the dancing presented, Cronin and O'Connor (2003) contend that there is an image of a new Ireland which has effected an attractive synthesis between tradition and innovation.

⁶ The Irish word for music

⁷ A term which is often used locally, particularly in relation to inhabitants from rural parts of Erris

Such aestheticisation of both production and consumption, according to Lash and Urry (1994) has become a marked feature of our age and it is this new economy of signs that affects Irish tourism in its specific relation to the cultural industries on the island.

However, traditional music and dance also provides a platform for the creators of Irish images to utilise contemporary music to heighten awareness of 'modern' cultures. For example, the use of a hit song from the Irish rock group The Cranberries as the theme music in a highly stylised promotional video for Irish tourism rather than the more conventional strains of uilleann pipes and merry fiddles, is a significant departure from previous practice. The international success of artists like U2, Sinéad O'Connor, Van Morrison, The Cranberries and Boyzone have made contemporary Irish popular music a prominent cultural export. In effect, the success of such artists promotes all cultural products, irrespective of the intentions of the artists, become a form of tourism advertising. When the U2 Lead singer, Bono, promised Irish ministers that he would tell his US fans that it was okay to come to visit Ireland, despite the foot-and-mouth outbreak, he was, explicitly promoting the Irish tourism strategy. In other words, this demonstrates the influence of cultural capital on the tourism product. This complex interplay between tourism and cultural capital (Robbins 2000) is further illustrated in the unprecedented creation and revival of public festivals in Ireland (Manning 1983).

Festivals represent complex cultural phenomena that humans, for centuries, have engaged in to invest cultural practices with specific meanings, to celebrate their beliefs and to assert their identity. Commonly, these events celebrate the history of the nation just as heritage centres provide representations of the past in a leisurely and visual context which can be readily consumed by visitors in a way, that the aura generated is that of the collective (and selective) visual representations (Quinn 2003) of the Irish culture. Such events and places are increasingly being reproduced, carefully packaged, highly mythologised, commodified places where image and marketability assumes greatest significance. This is demonstrated in Tourism Ireland's depiction of Ireland as 'festivals are about celebration ... in Ireland they celebrate a lot', 'the Island is steeped in history and Celtic mythology' or 'I came for a sense of culture and left with a sense of

wonder' (Tourism Ireland 2004a). As such there is a tendency to selectively represent particular dimensions of the country in order to promote their commercial status. Thus, in a world of aestheticised production and consumption, cultural industries (music, dance, festivals, heritage) are indispensable allies so that it is often increasingly difficult to tell the creative (River) dancer from the (tourism) dance (Cronin and O'Connor 2003:165-84). It is this intermingling of music, dance and heritage that encourages Tourism Ireland's dependence in their construction of projected tourism images of Ireland.

5.5.4 Film and Photography

Whilst success in Irish brewing and distillery businesses and achievements in contemporary and traditional music, dance and heritage has helped to raise the profile of the country internationally, the reinforcement of such imagery is partly attributed to the role of film and photography of Ireland abroad. The marked success of Irish pubs and *Riverdance* companies around the globe is a telling indicator of the capacity of cultures not only to be toured but to go on tour. This suggests that Irish tourism is not confined to visiting Ireland, but that the experience begins long before a trip and is considerably prolonged after the trip. Film and photography play an important role in developing this sense of 'Irishness' and have contributed significantly to the *touring culture* by projecting images of Ireland both in cinematic and photographic stimuli.

Cinema emerged in the modern period as a powerful rival to photography's claim to capture different places for the traveller. In the second half of the 20th century, tourism and film have been central to the Irish-American relationship to Ireland and in the absence of other critiques, these have been the principal sources of assessment of that relationship (Rains 2003). As such, the images and impressions of US tourists to Ireland include a romanticising determination to engage with those aspects of Irish culture which confirm the beliefs already cherished in American, most notably those held by Irish-American communities. Typically, this is believed to be centred around a nostalgic view of

Ireland as traditional, politically simplistic and removed from the modern, international culture symbolised by America.

Such images and impressions are conveyed either through story or pictures and this primacy of visual and oral narratives helps to explain the marked difference in Irish tourist promotion films produced for the British and American markets. Whereas the former were largely concerned with the presentation of place and with the provision of information, the latter were highly stylised with fictional characters, story lines and a variety of visual cues which pointed to the centrality of narrative in the Irish-American appropriation of place (Rains 2003). Whilst not dismissing the role of promotional film, feature films projected a very powerful image of 'staged Irishy', an image that still persists today. Examples include John Ford's film, *The Quiet Man* which appeared (in 1952) as one of the most popular and enduring representations of the journey home. It is the story of Sean Thornton's return to his ancestral home in the West of Ireland, and his process of adaptation to the local culture; an exercise which is eventually rewarded by a happy marriage to an Irish girl, Mary Kate. *The Quiet Man* was an epic retelling of the diasporic journey of return. Such was the influence of this film that *The Irish in Me*, travel film was made in 1959 which deals explicitly with the subject of the Irish-American diaspora who have no direct knowledge of Ireland. Such themes persist in more contemporary films such as *Far and Away*, *Micheal Collins* and *The Field* all of which express a quintessential Hollywood Kitsch which continues to inform images of Ireland as a tourist destination today.

Similar themes are expressed in photographic depictions of Ireland which according to Morgan and Pritchard (1998) contribute to the image formation process with images of Ireland expressed through stereotypes of smiling red-haired girls and genial old farmers. The purchase of such images are influenced by their preconceptions about Ireland, which have in turn been shaped by previous representations (Kiang 1989). Also, images of the natural world sit comfortably with tourism and photography as inter-related activities in which the natural world has increasingly been brought into contact with the cultural. As tourism and natural history have brought culture to bear on the physical aspects of nature,

photography has taken the natural world into the life spaces of society. In this seemingly reciprocal act, nature has been transformed into its opposite and the natural world has come to be understood through cultural⁸. The social construction of nature has been embedded in Ireland's social and political past. From literary texts to cartography, nature in Ireland as it has been represented through images from the scientific and cultural worlds has never been distant from the concerns of political and cultural identity (Andrew 1997).

The rise of nature and natural history as popular leisure pursuits coincided with a cultural revival that incorporated the study and collection of Irish folklore, antiquities and literature throughout the closing decades of the 19th Century and opening decades of the 20th century (Carville 2003). This cultural revival continues today and is partly expressed in the nation's visual culture. Frequently, illustrations and photographs promote tourism images which are not only significant in creating an image in the tourists' imagination but are an essential feature of the establishment of cultural identity in recognising one's outward appearance in the material forms of cultural expression. For example, Hinde, the photographer and postcard manufacturer, has had significant impact on the projected image of Ireland. Regularly Ireland is presented as a place of blue skies, red-haired colleens, donkeys and thatched cottages (Irish Times 1998) which he considers are 'at least as important as anything that Bord Failte did' in promoting tourism (Irish Times 1998). Such representations articulate the cultural and national identity of the nation through the acknowledgment of one's embodied outward appearance in what Bakhtin calls the 'plastic pictorial world' that a sense of cultural identity can be fully realised (Bakhtin 1990:28). As Gibbons (1996:10) notes, this emphasis upon the material forms of cultural practices have:

Important consequences in reconsidering the relations between culture and history in Ireland, particularly as they impinge on the deeply contested issues of cultural and national identity. It is clear from this approach that identity does not just involve consciousness, or even self-consciousness, but also the realm of representation, i.e. the capacity to be realised in material form.

⁸ For a critical analysis of the relationship between nature and culture within philosophical and social discourse see Eder (1996).

As such, photography is much more than a medium of the retention of timely images. Rather it is a medium to project connections between culture, identity and meaning in tourism which have become implicit in the image of Ireland projected abroad. As the Irish identity is mediated and formed through the material world in which it is expressed and experienced, photography and film plays a pivotal role in emphasising cultural and political awareness of Ireland both at home and abroad.

This perspective reinforces Mellinger's claim that multiple, non travel related material influences tourist destination imagery. Consequently, it is agreed that an array of factors that affect international tourism flows to Ireland are extensive. Among the range of factors that have a bearing on travel, economic factors have probably been the most systematically investigated and, as a consequence, their influence is arguably better understood (Faulkner 2003). Economic conditions (e.g. relative inflation and exchange rates) that potentially have a more direct bearing on propensities to travel include those that affect such items as the availability for air services, fare levels and accommodation rates. While income and prices are important, potentially important variables are excluded because adequate data are not available and /or they are simply not quantifiable (Faulkner 2003). Omitted variables in the context of Ireland relate to the socio-cultural factors discussed in this chapter such as the Irish pub, traditional music, dance and heritage as well as the influence of photography and film in contributing to the image projected of the destination.

5.6 A comparative analysis of the intended projected image and the projected image of Ireland as a tourism destination.

This study suggests that images are derived from a number of different sources, commercial and non-commercial, organic and induced. While it is acknowledged that attempts to isolate the contribution of NTO's marketing programme is frustrated by the panoply of other imagery which are independent of those under the control of the NTO (Hunt 1991), it is still useful to compare the intended projected image of Ireland with the actual image projected. By drawing on the results of the semi-structured interview and the

semiotic and content analysis findings, a number of conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, Tourism Ireland 2004 and 2003 brochures used to target the British, North American, French and German markets were assessed and revealed that except for the use of different languages and varying front cover images, the structure, style and presentation of the brochures for the four markets were identical. However, Tourism Ireland contends that the presentation of each of the four brochures for these four markets are different in terms of language, front cover and overall design approach but fail to specify how the overall design varies.

Secondly, the content and semiotic analysis revealed that all brochures were based on a number of key themes which included rurality, sense of community, friendly, professional service, harmony with nature, pre-modern, nostalgia, tranquillity/serenity, rural activities and pace of life. Similarly, Tourism Ireland intended to emphasise Ireland as an ideal location in which to escape the stresses and strains of modern industrialised society, and identified the importance of the friendliness of the Irish people and relaxed pace of life in attracting visitors to Ireland. A key element identified as framing this 'emotional experience' was the 'ease of interaction with Ireland's friendly and engaging people'. It is argued that the 'friendliness and hospitality of the Irish people ... have been seen consistently as the dominant distinguishing advantage over the past number of years' (Personal Interview 2003, Representative of Tourism Ireland'. In addition, the link between the pub, the image of Irish people and pre-modernity is emphasised in the fact that 'traditional entertainment' whether 'planned or impromptu' is seen as 'an appealing feature of pub life for tourists, as are old style ambience and open fires (Personal Interview 2003, Representative of Tourism Ireland). Thus, it is suggested that the intended image projected and the image actually projected are very similar. Nonetheless it is important to note that the image projected by tourism Ireland which emphasises the rural and 'pre-modern' nature of Ireland combined with a concentration on 'traditional pub life' is the 'night-time option' (Quinn 1994: 69), is nothing new, but rather reflects their ability to recycle existing national and global images in a touristic discourse. Finally, irrespective of changes in tourism policy and the large amounts of money recently

invested in marketing Ireland internationally, this study concludes that only minimal changes in the promotion of Ireland as a tourism destination with those reported in studies undertaken before the launch of the Tourism Brand Ireland campaign (1997) are evident.

5.7 Conclusion

In the past, Ireland differed from many other locations due to its relative lack of economic development which was reflected in Ireland's image as a tourism destination. Since the 1960s, Bord Failte has promoted Ireland as a clean, green, pre-modern and friendly destination. During the 1990s, the Irish economy experienced phenomenal growth stimulating significant changes in Irish society affording increased investment in marketing by the Irish tourism industry. Tourism Brand Ireland was developed to refocus the promotional message, namely. 'the people and the emotional experiences that is Ireland' while launching 'Ireland – live a different life' campaign in 1997. Currently the industry has invested at least 160 million euro in 2004 demonstrating efforts to remain competitive by making greater use of more effective and cost efficient methods to reach the consumer (ITC 2004). This has resulted in a more aggressive strategic marketing campaign but evidence of image modification on the intended projected image is scant.

Irrespective of such economic and social changes, this chapter has highlighted that touristic representations of Ireland continue to celebrate icons drawn from its rural and agricultural past. These are not necessarily images which Failte Ireland have chosen to promote yet they dominate the tourist discourse of Ireland as many of these representations are drawn from popular cultural resources. In particular, popular cultural resources identified relate to the Irish pub, traditional music and dance as well as film and photography as sources of destination imagery. In short, marketers are products of their own society and their attitudes have been shaped and formed by their experiences. education, cultures, social values and histories. Thus, the intended image projected is influenced by the overall image projected which is conditioned by the nationality and or national identity of the product (Ireland). However, if the image projected is influenced by

the nationality of its creator, it is reasonable to assume that the way such images are perceived is mediated by the nationality and/or national identity of the consumer. In this way, both image makers and image receivers are vital players in the notion of consensual image creation. Consequently, the following chapter will concentrate on consumers' interpretations of tourism images of Ireland based on nationality and national identity pre-visitation. This will extend the investigation of the image/consumer relationship to reveal the underlying structures which link image-consumers and image-creators and shape their view of the destination images of Ireland.

Chapter 6 The perceived image of Ireland as a tourist destination pre-visitation

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and findings of stage three of the data analysis. This involved the distributed of a pre-visitation questionnaire to investigate the perceived image of Ireland as understood by tourists travelling from Britain. More specifically, the questionnaire sought to ascertain the perceived image of Ireland as understood by tourists travelling from Britain pre-visitation, to explore the relationship between nationality and perceived images of Ireland, and to assess if the production of national identities influences the behaviour of such tourists. A total of 281 usable questionnaires were collected from tourists travelling from Britain, arriving in the baggage hall of Shannon airport between November 2003 and January 2004. As in stage 1 of this research (see Chapter 4 pg 115), the collected data was analysed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 11.1).

The pre-visitation questionnaire investigated the overall current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination, and explored factors pertaining to the formation of such perceptions. To achieve this, the presentation of the results and findings in this chapter are organised in four ways. Firstly, a profile of all respondents will be provided to highlight their socio-demographic characteristics. Secondly, the current perception of Ireland as a tourist destination pre-visitation will be established by assessing the results of a number of open-ended questions relating to the image, atmosphere, characteristics, symbols and emotions associated with the destination. The most frequently mentioned attributes by both first time and repeat visitors are combined to summarise the results. It is anticipated that this approach will assist in identifying the overall pre-visitation perceptions of visitors before their trip regardless of any influencing variables.

Thirdly, factors influencing the formation of current perceptions are detailed and include the rating of attributes which are considered important and expected performance. These are examined to supplement the findings of the results of the open-ended questions, to establish what generic attributes tourists travelling from Britain considered important when choosing a holiday destination as well as ascertaining the expected/pre-visitation performance of Ireland as a tourist destination according to these attributes. To determine the influence of the nationality of the tourist and the nationality of the product on pre-visitation interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected images, a number of contributing factors were explored. These include levels of familiarisation, motivation, duration and purpose of trip, intended activities, and information sources. A number of statistical tests were then carried out to ascertain the extent to which these factors inter-relate and influence (if at all) the formation of the current perceived image of Ireland as a tourist destination held by people travelling from Britain. This assists in the identification of factors that enhance and/or inhibit perception and image change. In short, the results concentrate on the overall perceptions held by all respondents regardless of influencing variables while also considering the factors that influence the formation of such perceptions with particular emphasise on nationality and national identity. The fourth and final section provides a synopsis of the study's main findings and conclusions.

6.1 Visitors socio-demographic profile

The four main countries of origin identified were Britain, France, Germany and America together representing 65% of all visitors. The remaining cited England (13%), Wales (6%) or Scotland (15%) as their country of origin. The majority held British passports (67%), although only 32% considered their nationality to be British and less than 15% regarded British as their national/ethnic/cultural identity. 99% noted their ethnic origin/descent as white, 64% were aged between 36 and 64 years, with a slight majority of female visitors. When asked about length of residence in Britain, 15% had lived in Britain for less than 15 years and the majority of respondents were either self-employed or considered their occupation to be professional or lower managerial. However, as previously noted (see

Chapter 4 pg 124), ethnic origin/descent and occupation are excluded from the analysis due to the disproportionate number of respondents identifying themselves as white and in professional and managerial employment. A more detailed summary of visitor profiles is presented in Table 15.

6.2 Current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination

Current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination were identified to ascertain the perceived image of Ireland as understood by tourists travelling from Britain before their trip to Ireland. To uncover such perceptions, a number of questions were asked including what images come to mind when you think of Ireland?, describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting Ireland, identify the key characteristics that capture the essence of Ireland, what symbols do you associate with Ireland?, and what emotions/feelings do you experience when you think of Ireland? The results of each question are presented individually and relate to the general perceptions of all respondents to ascertain the pre-visit perceived image of Ireland.

Characteristic	N	%
Passport Held		
British	188	67
Dual passport	2	0.7
French	30	11
German	28	10
American	33	12
Nationality		
British	91	32
English	37	13
Welsh	18	6
Scottish	42	15
French	30	11
German	28	10
American	32	11
Irish/American	2	0.7
Irish/British	1	0.3
Country of Origin		
Britain	91	32
England	37	13
Wales	18	6
Scottish	42	15
France	30	11
Germany	28	10
America	35	12
National/ethnic/cultural identity		
British	43	15
English	51	18
Welsh	29	10
Scottish	38	14
French	28	10
German	23	8
American	19	7
Irish/American	1	0.3
Irish/British	1	0.3
Irish	43	15
English Protestant	1	0.3
British European	2	0.7
Catholic	1	0.3
European	1	0.3

Gender

Male	134	48
Female	147	52

Age

18-25	9	3
26-35	45	16
36-50	84	30
51-64	96	34
65+	47	17

Ethnic origin/decent

White	278	99
Black or Black British	1	0.3
Chinese or other ethnic group	0	0
Mixed	0	0
Asian or Asian British	2	0.7

Length of residence in Britain

Less than 5 years	3	1
6 to 10 years	8	3
11-15 years	32	11
16 years +	238	85

Occupation

Employers & managers	53	19
Professional	157	56
Lower Managerial	59	21
Intermediate occupations	6	2
Smaller employers	4	1
Lower supervisory, craft	0	0
Semi-routine workers	0	0
Routine occupations	0	0
Long term unemployed	2	0.7

Table 15: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of respondents travelling from Britain

6.2.1 What images come to mind when you think of Ireland?

The most prevalent images, given by 93% of respondents to this question relate to scenery/green and associated images such as cliffs, colours/light, houses, lakes, nature, stonewalls and sea/coast. Welcome/Irish people/associated imagery (e.g. good humour, friendly, hair colour) were mentioned by 40%, while pubs/beer especially Guinness was cited by 37% of respondents. Culture, history and tradition including music and Celtic were referred to by 31%, while animals, (in particular horses, donkeys and sheep) and climate/weather (rain) were seen as important by 17% and 16% respectively. Lastly, a small number of respondents mentioned thatched cottages, historic buildings and specific places including Connemara, Kerry and Dublin, whilst the main activities listed were fishing, golf and rugby.

Scenery and people account for the majority of images noted. This is consistent with the fact that these are two of the key elements of Ireland's intended projected appeal as a tourist destination. However, the open-ended questions allowed respondents to list more specific details regarding these images, for example stone walls, drunkardness, timelessness and physical appearance including hair colour and freckled complexions. It is worth highlighting the connection between Guinness and Ireland which according to McGovern (2003) is not a new phenomenon. Indeed the image of 'garrulous paddy' has a long lineage and is deeply embedded in dominant representations of the Irish throughout modern history. An almost invariably alcohol-centred 'stage Irish' persona is reflected in early travel writing on Ireland, thereby helping to establish a series of easily recognisable and historicised symbols and cultural reference points for contemporary external visions of Ireland. In many instances, references to drink are mentioned alongside avowedly negative portrayals of 'drunkardness', 'alcoholics' and 'laziness'. Yet, such images also seem to forge a romanticised link between the 'Irish Other' and 'conviviality', 'ease of communication' and an escape from 'time work' discipline. Such ideas demonstrate the significance of the nationality of the product as well as emphasising not only the variety of potential image sources, but also the lack of control places have on

destination imagery. However, although the strong pub association may confirm the Tourism Brand Ireland's research findings that Ireland is perceived as being a macho, non-family destination (Bord Failte 1996), such connotations also highlight the attractiveness of Ireland as a site for leisure consumption.

The importance of culture as a constituent of Ireland's destination image is illustrated by the findings that one-third of respondents readily associate traditional music, dance, 'craic', 'way of life', 'rich heritage' and 'easy going' attitudes as a product of the Irish culture. The cultural reproduction of such ethnicised signs represents a reification of their meaning. What is commodified and consumed in the tourist experience of the 'Irish culture' is a notional experience encapsulated in the concept of the 'craic'. Commodifying the 'craic' may thus represent a form of cultural tourism; a form of tourism (seemingly) readily acknowledged and approved of by respondents.

There is mention of horses and sheep and frequent references to the weather. This is not without justification considering Ireland has a reputation as being one of the wettest locations in Europe, and this is undoubtedly reinforced by the constant allusions to 'green' Ireland. While unspoilt scenery and friendly people are the most frequently mentioned images of Ireland, less than 10% of respondents note 'small stone churches, 'round towers', 'ancient tombs' and 'thatched cottages' as important in the context of Ireland. This supports Richard's (1996) suggestion that countries with relatively few major sites such as Ireland have focused on the development of 'living culture' for tourism. As a consequence, the predominant image perceived by respondents appears to relate to the international stereotypical myth of 'Ireland as an Emerald Isle' of 'natural beauty', 'old-fashioned and traditional', inhabited by friendly rogues and Guinness fuelled 'craic'.

6.2.2 Describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting Ireland?

This inquiry focused on the ambience expected by visitors during their visit to Ireland.

There were 268 responses to this question (95% response rate). Where, people gave two

or more factors which were in the same category, only one response was recorded. 'Warm' was the most common response, listed by 44% of respondents, followed by 'hospitable/welcoming/friendly' (36%). 'Tranquil' and 'calm' were referred by 14%, while 'kind/convivial' were each mentioned by 12%. Restful/relaxed was the response given by 10% and either simple or natural were cited by 6%. Examples of other responses include 'happy', 'joyful', 'carefree' and 'familiar' and as in question 1 'pub', 'nightlife' and 'entertainment' was used to describe the Irish people. Thus, atmosphere is conceived mainly in terms of people and the pace of life, and the majority of respondents associate the people with warmth, hospitality, friendliness, kindness and conviviality. This finding is again consistent with the concept of a 'living culture'.

6.2.3 Identify the key characteristics that capture the essence of Ireland?

The purpose of this question was to probe further participant's perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination. While many answers from questions one and two were repeated, this question allowed the respondent to focus on their less immediate or impulsive perceptions. As in the previous questions 'beautiful scenery', 'green landscape' and 'unspoilt, clean land' were noted by the majority (60%), many of whom had included such features to describe their images of Ireland in question 1. However, unlike in question 1, a larger number of respondents (25%) referred to Irish people more specifically noting their 'pale, freckled faces', their 'friendly, colourful characters' and their 'happy-go-lucky' dispositions. 10% mentioned 'laidback/slow' and 'Irish expressions/colloquialisms' to describe the essence of Ireland, while 8% considered Ireland to be 'family orientated', 'religious' and 'traditional'. While traditional characteristics are considered relevant by many visitors, modern-day Irish life is also mentioned, although less frequently. The Celtic Tiger now seems to have become a tourist marker, with references to the 'economic boom', 'the low unemployment' and 'economic success' by 7%, which appears to be viewed in a positive light. At the same time, however, 5% referred to Ireland as a 'costly place' and an 'expensive location'.

6.2.4 What symbols do you associate with Ireland?

The most frequent symbols mentioned included 'Shamrock/clover' by an overwhelming 82%, while similar perceptions about 'Guinness', 'Murphy's', 'friendly people' were repeated as in the previous questions. Occasionally, respondents included more elaborate text than in previous answers either to disguise repeating essentially the same perceptions or to expand on the aforementioned ideas.

At a first glance at the responses, it would appear that most of the participants do not challenge the touristic discourses of the projected image sources such as TV and brochures but take on subject positions required for the discourse to make sense. They seem to accept such projected images and consequently associate them as being tangible symbols of the destination. As such, the respondents take on identities outside traditional, beautiful Ireland, in modernity, and appear to see themselves in the exclusive tourist world. This, according to Boniface (1998), is neither destination nor home, from which they can gaze at the Irish people as a friendly 'other'. The respondents seem to accept the expertise of image providers and the information presented to them by regurgating what they have 'learnt' when asked about symbols of Ireland. The respondents describe Ireland as a place of 'scenic beauty', it is 'quiet', 'serene', 'green' and 'untouched'. It is seen as an 'empty place', yet with 'quaint little villages'. Historical elements are also dominant and again the Irish people are very much described in terms of their stereotypical qualities. In words of the tourists, they are 'friendly', 'lovely', 'charming' or 'accommodating'; they 'like their drink' and 'there is a mystical thing attached to them'. In other words, the tourists reproduce the language of the brochure and of the touristic discourse.

6.2.5 What emotions/feelings do you experience when you think of Ireland?

Entertainment/nightlife/Craic/Guinness and traditional sessions are used in some cases to excuse or justify the 'banter/fun/relaxed' anticipated when 56% of respondents think of

Ireland. While 'entertainment' is seen as an essential part of the destination product, tourists still seem to accept the projected information and advice given and see 'entertainment' as a reflection of friendly Irish nature rather than evidence of tourism as a staged event. For others, 'relaxed attitudes' and a 'healthy outlook on life', evokes emotions of 'nostalgia', 'laidback', 'carefree and calm' while over 18% consider themselves 'familiar to Ireland due to 'family ties', 'their roots' 'English speaking', 'driving on the same side of the road' or 'friends that go way back'. One respondent notes: "I'm very proud of my background, my Irish roots, and the history and what Ireland has to offer". A similar view is expressed by other passengers in 'I love the Irish, they're so, *eche*, what they say they mean I mean sincere, yes, they are very good, like actors'. Thus it would seem, being entertaining, therefore is accepted as an integral part of the Irish identity.

However, it seems that not every tourist simply accepts all projected information or all of the suggested connotations. In a less positive light, 32% expressed the view of Ireland, as a country touched by terrorist acts or civil war and their visions of the country appears to involve the IRA in a prominent place. 12% of those who refer to 'the troubles' suggest that safety is of some concern, while a couple of respondents mention the 'Good Friday agreement' and appear to see this political situation more constructively in 'there are no bombs anymore' and 'the governments are sorting it out'. Yet, while a number of respondents acknowledge terrorist activity in Ireland, the majority seem to push the political situation into the past perhaps because the political situation is currently more stable. More often than not respondents consider 'the troubles' in the context of Ireland's 'rich heritage', 'sad but interesting history', allowing the tourist to attempt to step back across the historical divide between themselves and a time which they perceived as having been more 'authentic' and 'real'. Thus, while negative emotions of 'fear' and 'danger' were evoked by 6% of respondents, many of the responses depicted Ireland (often in the same sentence) in terms of a pre-modern idyll for visitors.

The discussion has highlighted the frequency of important variables in each individual question. Table 16 lists the combined results of the first five questions to summarise the most commonly identified positive and negative images, atmosphere, characteristics, symbols and emotional attributes associated with Ireland by all visitors travelling from Britain. Given the number of mentions, the variables considered most important relate to environment, friendliness/hospitality, culture/way of life, value/price, activities, political issues/safety and other destination attributes. Also, it is evident that the perceived image of Ireland as understood by tourists travelling from Britain before their trip to Ireland is broadly similar across this diverse market.

To facilitate meaningful statistical analysis, Table 16 summarises the current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination by including those attributes mentioned by at least 5% of the surveyed population. However, those that share similar characteristics were combined and represented as one attribute. For example, rain was mentioned positively by 14%, while 3% identified sea breezes as suitable for outdoor pursuits. Such attributes are combined with comments noting healthy and fresh weather, all of which are represented in the variable 'outdoor climate/healthy'. The majority of attributes are positive, with a limited number inferring negative connotations in comments noting 'terrorism' and 'political instability'. While a predominately positive perception was expected as the respondents decided to travel to Ireland, 6% and 17% of those who travelled considered poor weather conditions and terrorism respectively to be important. Thus, although respondents noted such negative attributes, this did not prohibit travel at the time of the survey. However, it is important to acknowledge that the respondents' opinions may be somewhat coloured by the virtue of the fact that they have already chosen and are in Ireland when completing the questionnaire. This is seen, for example, by the relative lack of importance attached to wet weather and negative political issues in selecting a destination. Indeed, rather than the inclement weather being considered a deterrent, 17% viewed the climate as a positive attribute. In order for this information to be truly accurate, the pre-visitation questionnaire would need to have been completed and

returned before the respondents had even chosen to visit Ireland, however, this would have been unfeasible in terms of accessing a sample. Thus, it is perhaps more accurate to say that the factors outlined above are relevant specifically in terms of choosing a 'non-sun' holiday destination, and do not represent a major flaw in the sampling process.

The most frequently mentioned variables associated with Ireland as a tourist destination predominately include unspoilt scenery, friendly/hospitable people, and traditional entertainment with a strong cultural and historical focus. This is consistent with the intended projected image of 'people, places and space' (Personal interview 2003, representative of Tourism Ireland). However, to assess the influence (if any) of the nationality of the tourist and the nationality of the place on pre-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived image, it is necessary to explore the formation of current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination before the trip.

6.3 Formation of current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination

The current perception of Ireland as a tourist destination appears to be similar to the Failte Ireland (2004a) findings with the notable exception of any reference to culture, history or heritage. As such, respondents seem to base Ireland as a tourist destination as well as their version of Irish identity on the symbols, images and characteristics that have been used to represent Ireland before in the various discourse – touristic or otherwise - as outlined in Chapter 5. This may simply illustrate their knowledge of and ability to express and engage with the intended projected and actual image.

However, by no means is this necessarily their only interpretation. While, tourists may be removed from their own culture, this does not restrain their cultural abilities, and they still have other resources to draw upon in interpreting cultural meaning. The degree to which tourists display resistance to such touristic discourse (e.g. people, place and place) and construct their own interpretations of Ireland may be greatly influenced by destination.

Attributes**N = 281*****Environment***

Beautiful Scenery/Emerald isle/Shamrock	90%
Natural, unspoilt environment	67%
Attractive cities/towns/villages	42%
Nature/Wildlife	40%
Pollution free/litter free	39%
Open spaces/freedom	20%
Stone Walls/quiet roads	18%

Friendliness/Hospitality

Friendly, hospitable people	62%
Easy, relaxed, fun, carefree	45%
Banter, 'craic'	34%
Lazy/under-achievers	9%
Single race/one culture/all white	6%

Culture/Way of Life

Nightlife/entertainment	30%
Excellent pub scene	56%
Traditional music & song	21%
Irish dancing/riverdance	19%
Heritage/History/Celtic	26%
Farming	10%
Religion	23%
Family values/family friendly	14%
Familiar/known	16%
Slow pace/laidback	22%
Tranquil/peaceful	31%
Romantic/Mysterious	10%
Old-fashioned/narrow minded	9%

Value/Price

Good all round value for money	26%
Competitively priced access transport	12%
Very expensive/overly priced	21%
Easy to access/tour	15%
Celtic Tiger	5%

Activities

Golfing	24%
Fishing	12%
Rugby	8%

Political issues/safety

Safe place	13%
Terrorism/war/IRA	17%
Politically unstable/threatening	8%
Sinn Fein	5%

Other Destination Attributes

Places e.g. Connemara, Kerry, Dublin	12%
Physical appearance/Irish accent	13%
Irish Food/potatoes	9%
Patriotic/proud nation	7%
Immigration	6%
Outdoor climate/healthy (positive)	17%
Wet/miserable/poor weather (negative)	6%

Table 16 **Most Frequently mentioned attributes**

selection criteria, previous visitation, reasons for trip, destination familiarity, sources of information, socio-cultural position, nationality, national identity, and hence their access to cultural resources

Consequently, the tourists may turn to these when creating perceptions of Ireland, which exist in parallel and sometimes in contrast to the interpretations, offered by the projected image. As such, it is suspected that tourists may incorporate various interpretations when actively negotiating the meanings of images. This analysis suggests that this process is more complex than the 'friendly people and a green unspoilt land' offered by the projected images. It is therefore anticipated that an analysis of the factors that influence the formation of current perceptions will extend the initial investigation, commencing with an examination of destination attributes considered important as well as ascertaining the expected/pre-visitation performance according to these attributes.

6.3.1 Attributes considered 'important/very important' for destination selection.

Question 22 considers a number of attributes derived from the preliminary findings of the pilot questionnaire (Chapter 4, pg 116-117). Respondents were required to rate the relative importance of the attributes, for example, 'how important is scenic beauty in your personal travel decision-making on a scale of one to five (where 1 = not at all important and 5 = very important).

Table 17 summaries the attributes considered 'important/very important' for destination selection, and the results are presented in rank order rather than the order in which they appeared in the questionnaire. Interestingly, a number of variables including physical appearance of the Irish were not rated by any respondent as 'important/most important'. Although these variables were considered representative of Ireland as a tourist destination in the initial open-ended questions, 11 variables were omitted, as they were not rated 'important/most important' by any respondents. However, this list of attributes was originally drawn from the results of the preliminary phase of the research (stage 1) to distil the constructs or attributes most pertinent to the population being studied. As such, the list represents the attributes associated with Ireland by the population being studied in general, rather than representing the elements the sample population at Shannon airport consider important. In other words, there appears to be discrepancies in the attributes associated with Ireland between those who have not necessarily decided to visit Ireland at all, with the attributes perceived as important when choosing a destination by those who have decided to visit the country.

Attributes	% rating attributes as 'important/very important'	Mean rating
Beautiful Scenery	96	4.65
Friendly People/Welcoming	87	4.44
Irish Music & Dance	87	4.44
Irish Pubs/Drink/Guinness/Harp	81	4.19
Historical/nostalgic	81	4.19
Expensive/Cost	79	4.18
Political Situation	75	4.02
Relaxing/Tranquil	72	3.93
Good Night Life	73	4.07
Laidback/slow pace of life	73	4.07
Weather	66	3.83
Family orientated	65	3.86
Humour/Craic/Banter	52	3.53
Fishing	51	3.56
Golfing	43	3.31
Accessible/easy to tour	28	2.48
Castles/Crosses	20	2.57
Surfing	16	2.36
Hen & Stag destination	16	2.36

Source: primary research (note – results are presented in rank order rather than in the order in which they appeared in the questionnaire)

Table 17: Importance of attributes for tourists travelling from Britain when choosing a destination

The above table reveals that respondents give most consideration to the beauty of the scenery, the welcome of the people, the potential to enjoy Irish music and dance, Irish pubs and history, when choosing a holiday destination. However, cost is an important influence when choosing their holiday as is the relative importance attached to climate. Even though Ireland is deemed one of the more expensive destinations in the EU and at the same time one of the wettest climates, these variables have been rated surprisingly high. However, previous comments in the open-ended questions help to explain, in part at least, such ratings. For example, one respondent suggests that 'the beauty of such greenery is due to the damp weather', and highlights that 'at least you won't get skin cancer'. For another it is a 'nice break from the Mediterranean sunshine' and 'it's safe for the kids', while the expense is almost justified in comments such as 'it's not cheap but it's a quality place to go'. While the climate and the high cost of living are significant when choosing a destination for respondents, Ireland was obviously still considered an appropriate holiday destination even though Irish weather and cost of living are deemed

less than positive features of the Irish tourism product by Tourism Ireland (Personal Interview 2003, representative of Tourism Ireland). However, when considered in the light of the answers provided in the open-ended questions, these attributes appear to be viewed as more positive elements of the destination. Such sentiment echoes Ayala's (1996) claim that more than half of all travellers are willing to pay up to 20% more for a holiday in a natural preserved environment. This demonstrates the necessity of combining data from the attribute-based scales with the information provided by the open-ended questions, as suggested by Echtner and Ritchie (1993), in order to present a complete picture of Ireland's destination image in the British market.

This study suggests that the ideal scenario for a tourist destination is when the attributes that the respondents place most importance on when choosing a holiday correspond with those also achieving high performance scores. As a consequence, question 26 aims to ascertain the expected performance ratings of Ireland as a tourist destination. This question asks respondents to evaluate Ireland's performance as a tourist destination according to the key attributes, for example, 'how do you rate Ireland's performance in terms of scenic beauty on a scale of one to five (where, 1 = very poor performance and 5 = very good performance)'. The highest scores, only those rated 4 or 5, are included in the performance list and those attributes that scored less than a mean rating of 2 were omitted.

6.3.2 Ireland's expected performance as a tourist destination

Table 18 shows that respondents felt Ireland would perform best as regards beautiful scenery, because it's a relaxing/tranquil place and because of the welcome of Irish hospitality. Also respondents expected that Ireland would perform well due to the standard of pubs/nightlife, the historic/nostalgic qualities of the landscape, family orientated society and laidback/slow pace of life. With the notable exception of expense/cost, Ireland was expected to perform very well as the expected or pre-visitation performance corresponds satisfactorily with the most important attributes identified by

visitors travelling from Britain when selecting a holiday destination. As such, the pre-visitation performance matches with the tourist imagery that has been constructed by selecting and promoting certain aspects of culture as tourists 'markers' (Personal interview 2003, representative of Tourism Ireland). These 'markers' historically include the scenery, the beauty and the Irish people, who are regarded as an essential ingredient in the publicity package (O'Connor 1993). This research suggests that one of the consequences of this emphasis on people in particular as part of the tourist package is that the nationality of the Irish people becomes more inscribed with tourist expectations.

Thus, when these tourists come to Ireland, they have expectations of what they will see, of the people they will meet and in part seem to accept, at least pre-visitation, the cost involved. As such, the dominant image of 'people, pace and place' projected by Tourism Ireland (2002b) appears to correspond with Ireland's expected or pre-visitation performance. This implies that the image of Ireland as a tourist destination receives widespread acceptance by travellers from Britain.

Attribute	% rating Ireland's expected performance as 'good/very good' (n=281)	Mean rating
Beautiful Scenery	95	4.70
Relaxing/Tranquil	88	4.38
Friendly People/Welcoming	86	4.34
Irish Pubs/Drink/Guinness/Harp	84	4.34
Historic/Nostalgic	82	4.25
Laidback/slow pace of life	78	4.18
Good Nightlife	76	4.09
Family orientated	75	4.02
Accessible/easy to tour	47	3.43
Irish Music/dance	47	3.49
Golfing	46	3.48
Castles/Crosses	39	3.11
Humour/Craic/Banter	37	2.81
Political Situation	35	3.13
Weather	31	2.98
Fishing	31	2.98
Hen and Stag destination	27	2.99
Expensive/Cost	27	2.99

Source: primary research (note – results are presented in rank order rather than the order in which they appeared in the questionnaire)

Table 18 Pre-visitation performance rating of destination attributes in Ireland given by tourists travelling from Britain

6.3.3 Important/most important and pre-visitation performance ratings compared

Pre-visitation or expected performance ratings in themselves do not provide a truly accurate portrayal of Ireland's image amongst travellers from Britain. A comparison between the importance attached to certain attributes when choosing a 'non sun' holiday, and Ireland's pre-visitation performance with respect to these attributes provides a more detailed analysis as outlined in Table 19. The combination of the importance and pre-visitation performance scores means that their image attributes which are perceived as being most important by the respondents can be highlighted and given more weight in the findings.

Overall, the difference between the importance and pre-visitation performance ratings can be seen as positive for ten variables: (1) Irish pubs/drink, (2) historical/nostalgic, (3) relaxing/tranquil, (4) good night life, (5) laidback/slow pace of life, (6) family orientated, (7) golfing, (8) accessible/easy to tour, (9) castles/crosses, (10) hen and stag destinations. For each of these attributes, Ireland's expected performance rating was greater than the importance rating given to them by tourists travelling from Britain when choosing a non-sun destination. The difference between the importance attached and pre-visitation means can be regarded as negative for six attributes, namely: friendly people/welcoming, Irish music and dance, expensive/cost, political situation, weather and fishing. For each of these attributes Ireland's expected performance rating according to respondents was lower than the importance rating.

Attributes	% rating attributes as 'important very important'	Mean Rating	% rating Ireland's Performance As 'good/ Very good'	Mean Rating	Mean Difference
Beautiful Scenery	96	4.65	95	4.70	-0.05
Friendly People/Welcoming	87	4.44	86	4.34	-0.10
Irish Music & Dance	87	4.44	47	3.49	-0.95
Irish Pubs/Drink/Guinness/Harp	81	4.19	84	4.34	0.15
Historical/nostalgic	81	4.19	82	4.25	0.06
Expensive/Cost	79	4.18	27	2.99	-1.19
Political Situation	75	4.02	35	3.13	-0.89
Relaxing/Tranquil	72	3.93	88	4.38	0.45
Good Night Life	73	4.07	76	4.09	0.02
Laidback/slow pace of life	73	4.07	78	4.18	0.11
Weather	66	3.83	31	2.98	-0.89
Family orientated	65	3.86	75	4.02	0.16
Fishing	51	3.56	31	2.98	-0.58
Golfing	43	3.31	46	3.48	0.17
Accessible/easy to tour	28	2.48	47	3.43	0.95
Castles/Crosses	20	2.57	39	3.11	0.54
Hen & Stag destination	16	2.36	27	2.99	0.63

Table 19 Pre-visitation performance rating compared

The most notable discrepancies between the two sets of results are concerned with expensive/cost and Irish music/dance. While 79% of respondents rated expensive/cost as 'important' or 'very important' in their selection of a non-sun holiday destination, only 35% expected Ireland's performance would be 'good' or 'very good' with respect to this attribute (representing a mean difference of -1.19). Similarly, 87% of respondents rated Irish Music and Dance as 'important' or 'very important' for destination selection, whilst only 47% felt that Ireland would perform well on this attribute (representing a mean difference of -0.95). A comparable situation is evident with regards to fishing and the political situation, whereby 51% and 75% rated them as 'important' or 'very important', but only 31% and 35% respectively felt that Ireland's performance on these attributes would be 'good' or 'very good' (representing a mean difference of -0.58 and -0.89). Such divergence between both series of scores is of concern insofar as it may deter other travellers from Britain from even choosing to visit Ireland. For example, even the highly rated 'friendly people/welcoming', 'beautiful scenery', 'Irish music and dance' which are generally recognised as being key elements of Ireland's appeal as a destination, are not as high as the importance that respondents attached to these when choosing any non-sun destination. However, a tourist destination is an amalgam of different attributes and as such some variables may 'compensate' for those with relatively poor pre-visitation

performance scores given that people still come to Ireland. In this instance, it could be argued that factors such as Irish pubs and tranquillity help to compensate for political instability and Irish music and dance. Also, while the performance of 'friendly people' and 'beautiful scenery' were not expected to exceed expectations, only a minimum negative mean rating was recorded.

Positive findings suggest that visitors from Britain perceive the image of Ireland as being inextricably bound up with pubs, alcohol and nightlife. Such imagery is invariably linked to the relaxing/tranquil surrounds and the laidback/slow pace of life in the tourist's vision of Ireland as a traditional, 'accessible', 'family orientated', 'historic/nostalgic' society. Certain collective actions, bonds, emotions and experiences supposedly lost to the modern world can be (albeit briefly) 'lived' by the tourist in this traditional vision of Ireland. This research suggests that the 'emotive experience' is a critical component in the selling of Ireland as a tourist destination and this image of Ireland as a pre-modern place requires an opportunity for a sense of contact with Irish people themselves. As such, the Irish pub and the 'craic' emerge as key dimensions of the tourist's 'emotive experience' of Ireland. Thus, this essentialised image of the historic landscape and Irish people are seen as core elements of the perceived image of Ireland as a tourist product pre-visitation.

6.3.4 Ireland's destination image amongst tourists travelling from Britain

The purpose of this section is to combine the findings from the open-ended questions with the expected or pre-visitation performance rating of attributes, in order to provide a complete picture of Ireland's destination image amongst the sample surveyed. The following Figures 22 and 23 divide the components of destination image into a series of two-dimensional diagrams. The first figure illustrates the functional-psychological and attribute-holistic components of Ireland's destination image among respondents, while the second figure demonstrates the functional-psychological and common-unique components of Ireland's destination image.

The pre-visitation performance ratings were the source of data for the attribute information in terms of both functional and psychological characteristics, whilst the holistic functional and psychological imagery was supplied by the responses to the open-ended questions. Scores for functional attributes of Ireland are presented in the upper left quadrant of Figure 22, which include ratings such as scenery and nightlife. Meanwhile the lower left quadrant demonstrates scores for various psychological attributes such as friendly welcoming people and laidback, slow pace of life, and the open-ended questions supplied data for the right side of the figure as these questions provided more detailed information with respect to certain attributes. Data from the open-ended questions described the functional holistic image: in other words, provided a mental picture of physical characteristics such as stonewalls, perceived appearance and convivial nature of the Irish people. The positive images in the upper right quadrant mirror closely the traditional images, which appear in Tourism Ireland brochures and elsewhere. The atmosphere and emotions noted in the lower right quadrant emphasise the importance of the people, familiarity and living culture in terms of Ireland's image in Britain. Thus, Figure 22 summarises the key facets of Ireland's image as a tourist destination amongst tourists from Britain in terms of individual attributes such as scenery and welcome, as well as more holistic images such as Emerald Isle and Celtic.

Functional Characteristics

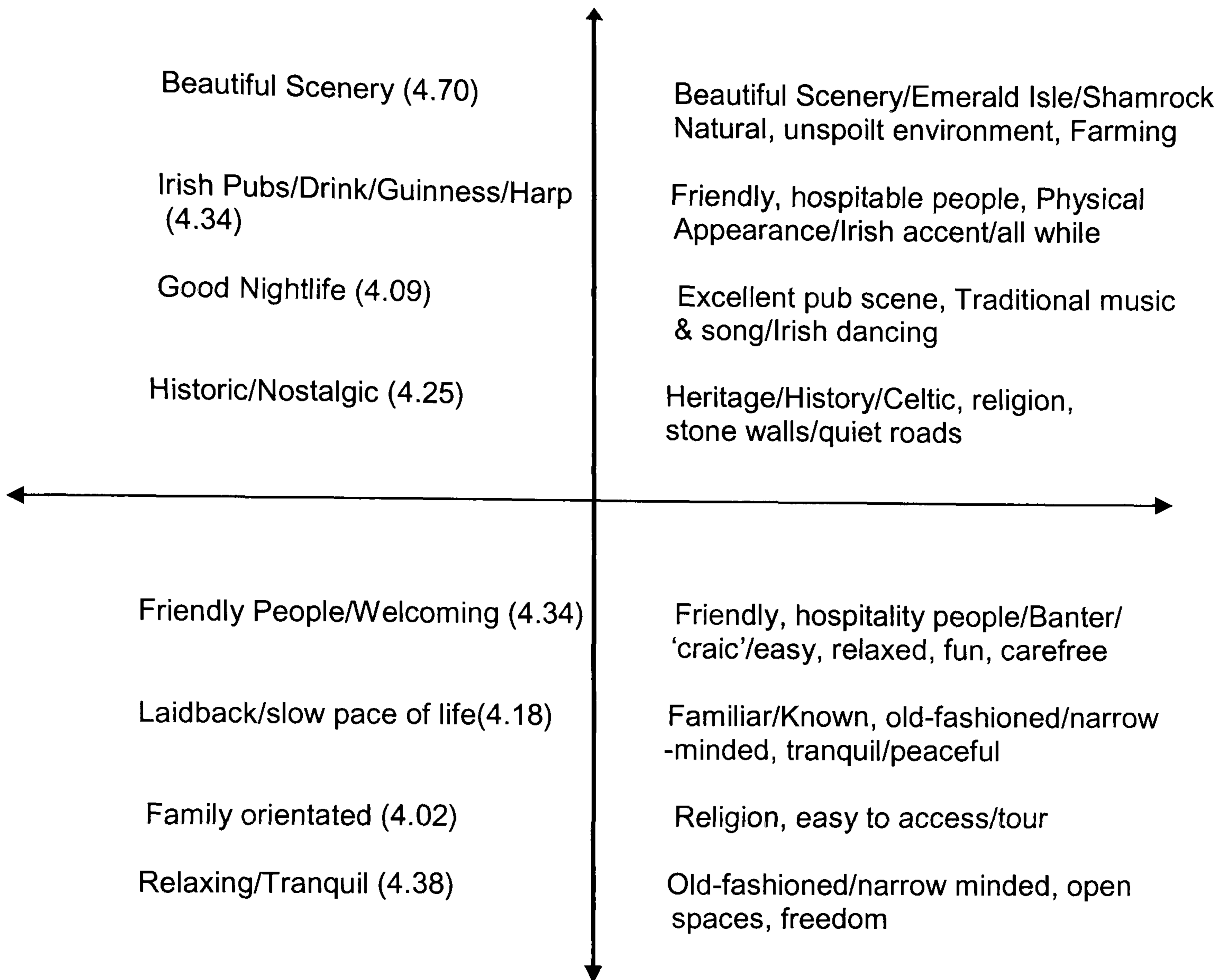


Figure 22 Functional-psychological & attribute-holistic components of Ireland's destination image among tourists travelling from Britain

The functional-psychological and common-unique components of Ireland's destination image for tourists from Britain are demonstrated in Figure 23. The pre-visitation performance ratings measured the common characteristics of Ireland's destination image in terms of both functional and psychological attributes (two left quadrants). Data for the upper right side was obtained from responses to the open-ended questions which cited the characteristics that were considered to capture the essence of Ireland. This included places such as Connemara, Kerry and Dublin. The lower right quadrant provides data from question 8, which asks respondents to specify Irish tourist attractions, which can be generally divided into famous Irish people and well-known buildings. Obviously scenery, golfing/fishing and pubs/beer are not unique to Ireland, however, these are special features of Ireland as a destination, which seem to differentiate it from its competitors.

In Figure 23, it is interesting to note that a significant proportion of respondents were unable to name a famous Irish person (62% of first-time visitors) or at least one famous building (25.4% of first-time visitors), and that the majority of characteristics associated with Ireland were general and non-specific to the destination. Irrespective of the significant investment made in product development during the 1990s and the substantial marketing investment initiated in the recently established Tourism Ireland organisation as outlined in Chapter 5, a significant proportion of respondents were unable to indicate any unique characteristics. Thus, the functional-psychological and common-unique components of Ireland's destination image for tourists travelling from Britain images, particularly in the top right quadrant, confirms the fact that Ireland's appeal as a destination is still couched in essentially intangible terms.

However, it is important to note that the enforced separation of imagery into neat quadrants is somewhat contrived, resulting in a degree of overlap within and between the diagrams.⁹ For example, there are references to the Irish welcome in three quadrants of Figure 22 and in two quadrants of Figure 23. Similarly, Irish pubs/drink/Guinness and familiarity appear in the functional attribute and functional holistic quadrants of Figure 22, and in the common functional and unique psychological quadrants of Figure 23. The dominance of such attributes in each figure underscores their importance as constituents of Ireland's destination image in Britain, and demonstrates that Ireland's destination image should be seen as an interacting and interdependent mix of both figures.

⁹ Echtner and Ritchie (1993) present their results using a third figure, with common/unique characteristics on one axis and attribute/holistic imagery

Common-unique components

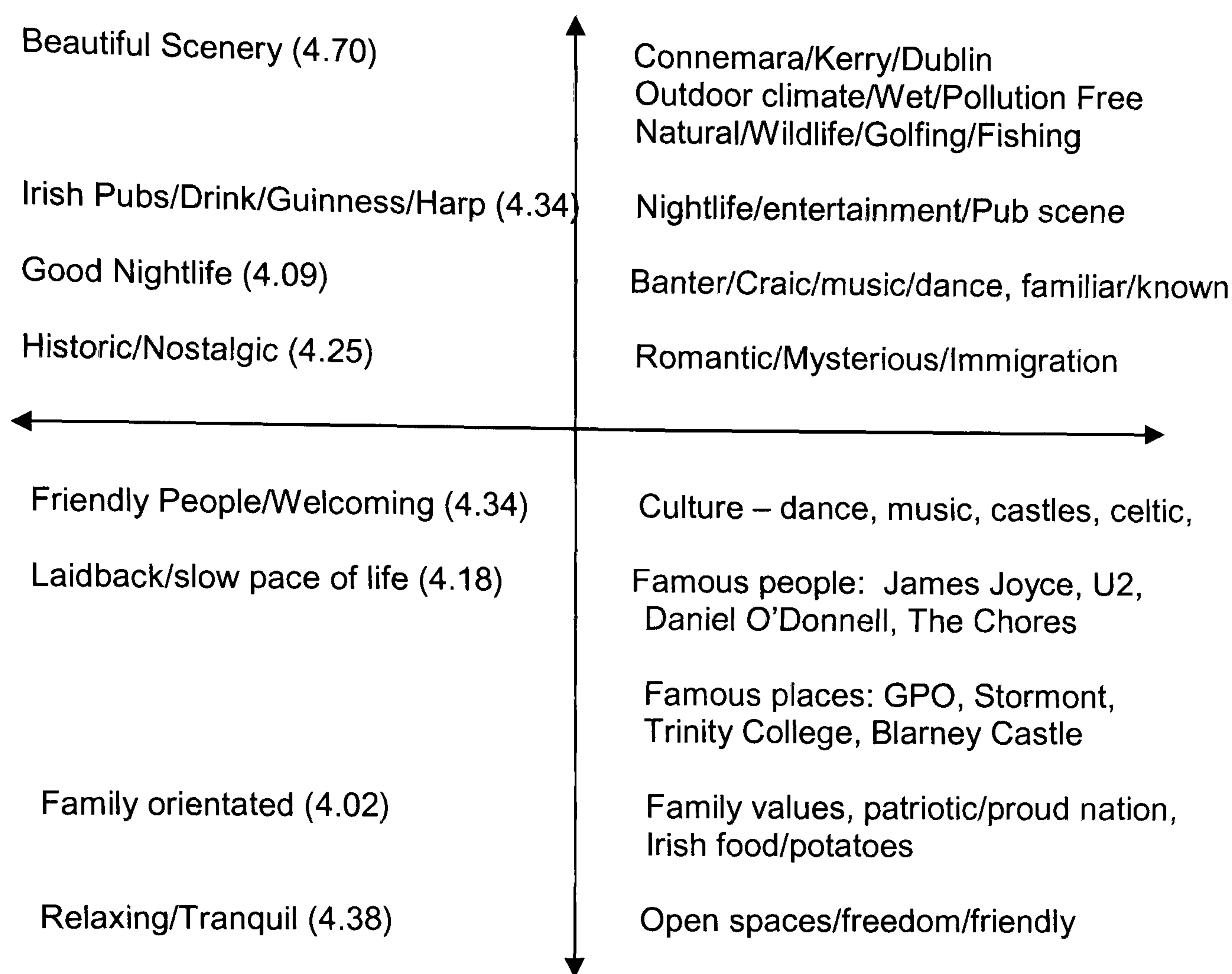


Figure 23 Functional-psychological and common-unique components of Ireland's destination image among tourist travelling from Britain

In short, this research confirms that the perceived image of Ireland as understood by tourists travelling from Britain before their trip to Ireland maintains an ageless, friendly, timeless image where old beliefs, traditions and customs live on despite broad recognition of the Republic as an economic success story. While such images may be unrealistic and contradictory as they reduce people to certain traits, perception. This confirms Fiske's claim that 'Clichés are the common sense, exaggerate and simplify them in an environment that is considered resistant to everyday articulations of the dominant ideology' (Fiske 1989: 118). Irrespective of change, they do demonstrate the influence of stereotypes and clichés on image reality, these findings are helpful in understanding the general perception of Ireland held by those travelling from Britain. It also identifies the role of stereotypes on the interpretation of Ireland's image pre-visitation, which is, in part, conditioned by the nationality of the product. At the same time, however, it does not suggest that the target market interprets tourism representations of the destination in the

same way. For example, previous visits and perceived levels of familiarity can influence perceptions of the destination. However, such perceptions are created, filtered and mediated through cultural and ideological structures. Given the significance of culture on perception, this study contends that perception is influenced, at least to some extent, by nationality and national identity, which shapes the interpretation of verbal and nonverbal messages. Consequently, the ensuing discussion considers the formation of current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination to assess how or indeed if the production of national identities influences the behaviour of tourists travelling from Britain. More specifically, it is necessary to evaluate the relationship between past visits, destination familiarity, motivation, nationality and national identity pre-visitation, to determine whether the behaviour of tourists from Britain is influenced by such variables.

6.3.5 Experience of Ireland and Destination Familiarity

While it is acknowledged that perceptions can be created with or without experience and knowledge of Ireland, examining if previous visitation or direct experience and perceived level of familiarity with Ireland alters or modifies the destination image is relevant. This assists in exploring the extent to which levels of destination familiarity are dependent (if at all) on experience at the destination. Thus, the formation of current perceptions were examined through a variety of open and closed ended questions relating to previous visitation, current knowledge of Ireland, familiarity/place attachment with Ireland and expectations of Ireland as a tourist destination.

Table 20 revealed that the sample predominantly included first time visitors (71%) to Ireland, which is consistent with findings from Tourism Ireland's Survey of Travellers for 1998 (Bord Failte 2000). Second time visitors account for 15% and third to fifth time visitors represent 10%, while those on their sixth to tenth visit and those who have visited Ireland more than ten times represent 2% each of all those surveyed.

No. of visits	%
First visit	71
Second visit	15
Third to Fifth visit	10
Sixth to Tenth visit	2
More than tenth visit	2

Table 20 Experience of Ireland

Amongst the respondents who were on a repeat visit to Ireland, the main reasons given were people, welcome, atmosphere, scenery/environment, in order to visit other regions/sites (previous visit too brief), fishing, and pubs/Guinness. While these findings emphasise the importance of protecting and promoting these attributes in particular, it also highlights a definite potential to encourage people to come back and visit other regions in Ireland.

Cross tabulations between the number of visits to Ireland and pre-visitation performance scores for various attributes revealed no major differences; however when asked specifically to name three unique or distinctive tourist attractions in Ireland, previous visitation appeared to influence the number of named people and places offered. Cramer's V was used as a measure of strength of relationship implied in this contingency analyses, as it is standardised for differing matrix sizes and is thereby a robust comparative measure (Blalock 1960). Cramer's V coefficients of 0.3 and above indicate very strong effects; coefficients of 0.2-0.29 strong effects, and 0.15-0.2 moderate effects. Whether or not a respondent had visited Ireland had a significant effect on his or her ability to name any famous Irish person (Cramer's $V = 0.23347$), or building ($V=0.34819$). Answers were first categorised into the two distinct groups of attractions identified i.e. famous Irish people and buildings. 83.4% of those who had visited Ireland at least once were able to name one Irish person while only 62% of first-time visitors were able to name somebody. For imagery of buildings/physical attractions, the difference was more marked: 59.8% of those who had visited the country before could name at least one building, compared to 25.4% of first-time visitors. Of a total of 98 citations of 50 famous Irish people, 88 were cited by the 81 prior tourists to Ireland. Whether or not a respondent

had personal associations with specific places in Ireland or connections with people living in Ireland also affected their ability to name Irish attractions, confirming the importance of forms of organic imagery other than visitation alone in the divisibility of image.

Thus, as might be expected previous visitations influenced the formation of current perceptions of Ireland. However, while experience of a destination usually has been defined summarily as actual visitation, generic experience may also come second-hand via family or neighbourhood links. While such familiarity should not be equated with actual visitation (Prentice and Andersen 2000), personal associations with specific people and places in Ireland may determine perception. As expected, whether respondents had visited Ireland was found to be associated with whether the person had personal connections with Ireland (Cramer's $V=0.23130$), and with the extent to which they had been abroad in the last three years ($V=0.23527$). Interestingly, while 71% of respondents claim never to have visited Ireland before, 62% of all respondents considered themselves to be familiar with Ireland in terms of general knowledge of the whole of Ireland.

Meanwhile 20% and 8% considered themselves to be familiar with Ireland in terms of knowledge of specific places and experience of people living in Ireland respectively. Less than 7% did not consider themselves to be familiar with Ireland. This suggests that a large number of tourists who had never visited Ireland before still considered themselves familiar with the destination.

Ascertaining this general familiarity of Ireland amongst the sample, all respondents were able to provide some answers in the initial five open-ended questions. These questions related to perceived images, atmosphere, characteristics, symbols and emotions/feelings respondents associated with Ireland as a tourist destination. Visitation did not significantly influence the number of images offered in the open-ended questions, which were largely summary and positive for both new and repeat visitors. As previously noted, images were both affective (such as nice, lovely, beautiful, unspoiled and tranquil) and descriptive, (green, hills, castles). Affective associations were more frequent among repeat tourists than first-time visitors and famous people were more frequently named by repeat visitors

than new visitors. Yet, the extent to which this imagery is nuanced is less when respondents were asked to name any Irish attractions. The next most popular category Irish music and dance also produced a relatively high number of nuanced images. Among these, 36% out of the 21% who mentioned Irish music and 22% out of the 19% who noted Irish dancing in the initial questions referred to specific kinds of music, dance, singing, singers and festivals, were relatively uninfluenced by visitation. However, evidence of other emblems such as the shamrock and leprechauns, were mentioned more frequently by new visitors than by repeat tourists, suggesting the relative unimportance attached to the most enduring symbols of Ireland by repeat visitors. Thus, while visitation appears to have little influence on positive perceptions of Ireland, negative attributes were noted more by first-time visitors. For example, 82% out of the 17% who mentioned war/IRA were new visitors to Ireland, suggesting that negative associations with Ireland are more pronounced for those who have not visited the country before.

To test further levels of familiarity, respondents were asked to indicate which attractions tourists had not heard of, had heard of and had visited. Considering that 71% of respondents were first-time visitors to Ireland, it is hardly surprising that an overwhelming majority of 91% had not heard of any of the popular tourist attractions mentioned. Only 7% noted that they had heard of at least one of the attractions listed, and less than 2% had visited at least one of the attractions. Blarney Castle, Bunratty Castle and Folk Park and Dublin Castle were the most well known attractions and Dublin Castle was the most visited. Given that Blarney Castle is located in the West of Ireland and the close proximity of Bunratty Castle and Folk Park to Shannon airport, it is not surprising that these attractions feature as the most well known amongst respondents. However, the results of question 13 which endeavoured to uncover the most familiar regions appear to contradict these findings, as 52% consider themselves most familiar with Dublin, yet no respondent had heard of Dublin Zoo and only 2 respondents (.7%) had visited Dublin Castle. Similarly, Kilkenny/Waterford was cited as the next most recognisable region, with 8% noting these areas most familiar even though Waterford Crystal was considered by all

respondents as unfamiliar. Whilst the vast majority of attractions listed were considered unfamiliar, over half the sample surveyed recognised at least one geographical area. This may serve to demonstrate the importance of perceived familiarity in attracting tourists to Ireland, but implies that many in the sample did not base their level of familiarity on visitation or knowledge of tourist attractions. Over 50% of all respondents had either personal association/s with specific places or people living in Ireland, which may serve to explain in part, why 62% of visitors considered themselves familiar with the destination. Thus, familiarity may evoke not just physical images such as tourist attractions and the physical environment but also relate to sensory, affective, creative-cognitive and social identity experiences influenced by family or neighbour links.

This is further emphasised in Table 21 when respondents noted landscape/scenery, Irish heritage/culture and Irish music/dance as most familiar. 34% of visitors expected to visit a heritage/visitor centre, 21% suggested that they wished to see a house/castle, while 12% thought a museum/art gallery would be of interest. When asked if respondents intended to undertake any other leisure activities, 56% expected cultural activities such as ‘learning about the country’ and ‘enjoying the craic’, followed by 22% who suggested relaxing/resting. 20% noted visiting pubs and eating out.

Attributes/Features	Most Familiar
Places to eat/drink	5%
Tourist Accommodation	12%
Irish Music/dance	21%
Irish heritage/culture	26%
Tourist Attractions	3%
Shops	2%
Irish Language	9%
Landscape/scenery	56%

Table 21: Most Familiar Attributes/Features

These findings confirm Fakeye and Crompton (1991) suggestion that for persons who have not visited a destination, the image can be regarded as a pre-taste of a destination,

leading to expectations about it. Whilst, familiarity does not rely totally on visitation and destination knowledge, this research does not dismiss the influence of repeat visits on image perception. Instead, it recognises that visitation to Ireland appears to increase spatial knowledge about holiday opportunities and that as an overall driver to propensity to visit, familiarity was found to have a strong direct effect on destination choice. Overall therefore, results so far indicate that images held by those on repeat visits do not appear to differ substantially based on the number of actual visits, but that perceived familiarity has an intervening influence on destination selection. This has led to the conclusion that many of the perceptual changes occur during the first direct experience rather than multiple experiences or visits. However, perceived levels of familiarity appear to be influenced to some extent by passport held as the following cross tabulation in Table 22 indicates.

Passport Held	Personal Associations with specific places in Ireland	Personal Associations with specific people in Ireland
British	37%	39%
French	7%	7%
German	4%	2%
American	30%	36%

Table 22: Level of Familiarity x passport held

The British passport holder considers him/herself the most familiar with Ireland. This may be partly explained by historical links between the two countries and the sustained immigration of the Irish over the past century. This may mean that Ireland is familiar even to many Britons who have never visited it. The conflict of the past thirty years has placed Ireland in the forefront of British news reporting, albeit in a negative fashion, although recent advances in the Good Friday agreement has encouraged a more positive view of country. According to Irish Marketing Surveys (1995), the destination was seen as welcoming and familiar in terms of both the language spoken and for driving on the same side of the road as in Britain. A shared history may also explain why many American visitors perceive Ireland to be so familiar in terms of both the place and its people, thereby highlighting the importance of the nationality of both the tourist and the product.

While Table 22 indicates that passport held influences assumed levels of familiarity, Table 23 reveals that respondents' perceived national identity strongly predicts positive notions of familiarity. For example, those identifying themselves as Welsh, Scottish, Irish American, Irish British and Irish considered themselves more familiar with Ireland in terms of both specific places and specific people in Ireland, than those who considered themselves French, German and British. Thus, identifying tourists from Britain's perception of their own nationality and national identity is relevant.

National Identity	Personal Associations with specific places in Ireland	Personal Associations with specific people in Ireland
British	23%	19%
English	27%	35%
Welsh	55%	55%
Scottish	74%	70%
French	7%	7%
German	4%	8%
American	15%	16%
Irish American	100%	100%
Irish British	100%	100%
Irish	100%	100%
English Protestant	0%	0%
British European	50%	50%
Catholic	100%	100%
European	100%	100%

Table 23: Level of Familiarity x National/ethnic/cultural identity

As shown in Table 24, tourists' perception of their national/ethnic/cultural identity is not always dictated by passport held. Interestingly, while all but two respondents held a dual passport (one having an Irish/British passport and the other an Irish/American passport), almost 42% of visiting Americans considered Irish or Irish-American to be most representative of their national/ethnic/cultural identity irrespective of their US passport. Similarly, 63% of all British respondents i.e. those carrying British passports, considered their national/ethnic/cultural identity to be Irish, while 8% of all British respondents described their nationality as Irish regardless of the nationality of their passport. Less than

23% of those carrying British passports considered their national/ethnic or cultural identity to be represented on their passport, while one 2 respondents noted religion as a significant identifier. In contrast, the vast majority of those holding French or German passports deemed their passport representative of their identity. This suggests that many American and British nationals who visit Ireland embrace the sort of multiple identities hailed by postmodernists. While the passport is a recognisable legal document and an important symbol of the nation-state system, it does not automatically represent the perceived national identity of the holder as the self-identification of respondents demonstrates. As suggested, the tourist can and very often does hold several

	British	Dual	French	German	American
British	43	0	0	0	0
English	51	0	0	2	0
Welsh	29	0	0	0	0
Scottish	38	0	0	1	0
French	0	0	30	0	0
German	5	0	0	25	0
American	0	0	0	0	19
Irish American	0	1	0	0	1
Irish British	0	1	0	0	0
Irish	15	0	0	0	13
English Protestant	1				0
British European	2	0	0	0	0
Catholic	1	0	0	0	0
European	1	0	0	0	0

Table 24: Passport Held x National Identity

identities and to rely solely on the nationality of the passport as a classification of one's identity is to disregard the significance of how the tourist views themselves. Indeed, this study argues that national identity combined with nationality is a more accurate tool for segmenting the market rather than nationality and national identity alone.

In relation to national identity, it is not surprising that those who identified themselves as Irish, Irish/American or Irish/British considered themselves to be familiar with Ireland in terms of the people and the place, even though the vast majority of these respondents held British or American passports. Interestingly, while only one respondent identified

herself as Irish/American and another as Irish/British, a substantial 10% of all respondents (the majority of whom held either American or British passports) considered themselves Irish. Such notions of familiarity depict Ireland in the voice of the respondent as 'home' or the 'old country' with all the connotations of the familiar, the hospitable and the specific, which that implies.

As previously noted historic events such as immigration may partly explain the existence of such feelings of place attachment and familiarity. This concept of the 'home' with all the powerful associations it contains, becomes particularly complex for a diaspora which has reached its second, third or even fourth generation since that 'home' was left behind. According to Rains (2003) such was the case for the Irish-American diaspora by the beginning of the 1950s. While of course, the Irish-American and Irish-British continued to receive many first-generation immigrants, by the end of the Second World War. A substantial Irish-American and Irish-British population was established who had no first-hand experience of Ireland, and in particular, no experience of the post-independence of Ireland. Certainly this appears to be the case for the respondents who identified themselves in this research as Irish, Irish-American and Irish-British as the sample surveyed does not include first generation Irish or those currently living in Ireland. As a consequence, frequent references by respondents to 'home' is not directly and personally remembered. It is this moment at which Ireland becomes, for these travellers who identify themselves as Irish or partly Irish, a 'home' understood through the consumption of narrativised images, rather than first-hand memory or experiences. This emphasises the significance of the nationality of the product and it is principally through such national representations of tourism that these images are illustrated. Ireland therefore, stands in the cultural imagination of its diaspora as a figurative 'home' constructed through memories, and as such sentiment and nostalgia are contained within Irish-American and Irish-British perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination. Similarly, a significant proportion of those who claim a Scottish or Welsh identity consider themselves familiar with Ireland, suggesting that perceived national identity and nationality as opposed to the

nationality of the passport held is an indicator of perceived levels of familiarity of Ireland as a tourist destination.

While acknowledging that the vast majority of respondents are first-time visitors to Ireland, this does not diminish the significance of notions of familiarity expressed through sentiment and nostalgia. Rather, even the first visit to Ireland is described as 'a return' or 'going home' which contains within it the clear implication that under these conditions, time is not to be understood in purely linear terms and that memory is of more than personal, first-hand experience. This is evidenced in comments such as 'the mother land', 'great to come back to the land of my ancestors', 'back to my roots', made by first time visitors to the country. This implication complicates the classic touristic trope of depicting the journey through space to the tourist destination as also being a journey back through time. As O'Connor (1997:75-6) points out, such a representation of the destination is typical of tourist imagery and certainly has been particularly striking in Irish tourism. The depiction of Ireland in terms of a pre-modern idyll for respondents is one of the most consistently recurring themes of the nation's tourist imagery. Such images of a pre-modern lifestyle are consistent with attempts to commodify a nation's history, which are common within the tourist industry across the world.

However, when the audience for these images of Ireland is the Irish diaspora, it would seem that there is more to this process than the 'inauthentic' commodification of the past. If that diaspora's memory is understood to be collective and cross-generational, then the images of Ireland as 'traditional' and 'un modern' are not necessarily anachronistic within the terms of their process of memory and recovery. In the context of this research, the nature of collective memory for second or third generation Irish diaspora is relevant. By the nature of cross-generational cultural transmission, much of the understanding and experiences of Irish-Americans' and Irish-British identity is necessary through the medium of the image whether this is through film, photography or narrative. This process is even more pronounced in the diasporic 'recollection of Ireland (as distinct from their diasporic

Irish identity with America or Britain) for those generations who have never previously been there. It would appear for many Irish-British and Irish-Americans that while a considerable amount of their cultural identification comes from narratives within their communities such as family and other first-generation immigrants, they also acquire an extensive exposure to images of Ireland primarily through touristic discourses. Such exposure determines levels of familiarity and influences perceptions of tourist destination imagery. This influence of familiarity and its effect on propensity to visit is further analysed in questions relating to motivation, destination selection, intended activities whilst on holiday, sources of information used, as well as reasons for choosing the specified sources.

6.3.6 Analysis of motivations

A series of questions were presented to identify underlying dimensions of the motivations for travelling to Ireland including reasons for the trip, perceived advantages of Ireland over other destinations and sources of information used. A list of motivational factors were based on self-reported motivation items and comprised open ended questions in order to investigate the major influences that respondents considered important in selecting Ireland as a tourist destination.

6.3.6.1 Exploratory factorial analysis

An exploratory factorial analysis was undertaken with the aim of reducing the number of motivational dimensions and identifying the determinant factors. According to Reisinger and Turner (2003:203) there are three reasons for searching out a possible combination of original variables to create the new variables:

Firstly, to remove collinearity as the new variables were generated in such a manner as to reorganise the original variables into groups having as little collinearity as possible;

Secondly, to reduce the number of original variables by eliminating redundancy and aiding in the identification of the most useful variables for prediction and

Thirdly, to identify dimension or classes among the set of observations on the basis of a set of variable measures.

Variables such as 'to increase knowledge of new places', 'to visit historical and cultural places', 'heritage and history' and 'to meet local/friendly people' were closely related to the first factor, 'culture'. 'to have fun', to 'mix with other tourists', 'to seek adventure', 'to enjoy the nightlife' and 'to get away from daily life', were associated with the second factor 'pleasure seeking/fantasy'. Including variables such as 'to relax', 'to refresh memories', to enjoy the peace and tranquil scenery' were interpreted as measuring the respondents' intention to have the experience of 'relaxation' while 'physical', includes variables such as 'to engage in sports such as fishing, golf', 'to be active' and 'to get close to nature'. Table 25 presents the results of this analysis, which summarises the findings in a new set of variables.

Primary motivational factors	Frequency %
Culture/history	43%
Pleasure seeking/Fantasy	30%
Relaxation	12%
Physical	10%
Non response	5%

Table 25 Motivational Factors

The score for culture/history clearly illustrates its importance in the holiday-decision making process for tourists, as the majority rated culture/history as the main reason for visiting Ireland. This mirrors this study's findings relating to visitors intended activities (pg 225). For example, as previously noted, over half the respondents expected to undertake cultural activities which may suggest that such cultural tourism presupposes an interest in, and ability to, partake in cultural activities.

To extend this line of enquiry, the influence of passport held on the primary motivational factors are examined in Table 26. The findings of the comparison between the main national identities held by respondents visiting Ireland suggest that the motivational

factors for the British and the American respondents are similar as culture/history and relaxation were the most frequently cited reasons for visiting Ireland. In sharp contrast, the French and German tourists suggested that relaxation was the most important motivational factor for their trip. For example, the data suggests that, to 99% confidence, the percentages of the French and Germans, whose motivational factors are drawn from these four categories, are not the same as the British or American. Also, considering the four categories as independent, then on the basis of a chi square test, there is not sufficient evidence at the .01 significance level to conclude that the proportions of Germans whose motivational factors are drawn from these categories are significantly different from those of French. In other words, the data suggests that, to 99% confidence, the percentages of Germans whose motivational factors are drawn from these categories are the same as the French. Thus, there is great potential for variability among national cultures in terms of tourist motivation. This confirms Kim's (1999) claim that cross-cultural research on motives and motivation of tourists from different cultures should focus on the context in which studies of international tourism are embedded, rather than the content of the research objectives.

To some extent the motivational factors identified in this study compare favourably with Hofstede's (1980) four subjective cultural aspects; these being (1) *power distance*, (2) *masculinity-femininity*, (3) *individualism-collectivism* and (4) *uncertainty avoidance*. As cultures encourage or maintain power of status differences between interactants, culture/history may be represented by *power distance*. Pleasure seeking/fantasy may refer to the degree of *individualism-collectivism* which relates to whether one's identity is defined by personal choices and achievement or by the character of the collective groups to which one is more or less permanently attached. Physical might refer to *masculinity-femininity* which emphasises achievement and interpersonal harmony which characterises gender distinctions in some national culture. Relaxation may mirror the need to develop ways to deal with the anxiety and stress of uncertainty which Hofstede refers to as *uncertainty avoidance*.

	British	American	French	German
Culture/History	56	52	13	15
Pleasure Seeking/Fantasy	18	20	42	32
Relaxation	19	16	32	36
Physical	9	18	14	18

Sum of categories is higher than the total number of respondents due to multiple responses

Table 26 Motivational Factors x Passport held

This research finds that the US and the UK exhibit characteristics of higher power distance, higher individualism and higher masculinity, and perhaps as a consequence of perceived levels of familiarity, lower uncertainty. French and German tourists exhibit characteristics of higher collectivism and higher avoidance with lower power distance and masculinity. This may infer that many aspects of subjective culture go together in forming patterns of beliefs, attitudes, norms, values and social behaviour. However, the importance of novelty is apparent in all of the four motivational factors offered by respondents. Indeed, it confirms Iso-Ahola (1982) contention that seeking and escaping are the basic motivational dimensions of leisure behaviour, and suggests that in the case of the US and UK tourists, novelty has something to do with the cultural dimension of low uncertainty avoidance, combined with fairly high masculinity. In addition, Dann (1977) proposes 'anomie' and 'ego enhancement' as tourism motives. 'Anomie', according to Dann, represents the desire to transcend the feelings of isolation inherent in everyday life and to simply 'get away from it all' or as expressed here 'pleasure seeking/ fantasy' and 'relaxation'. 'Ego-enhancement', on the other hand, derives from the need for recognition, which is obtained through the status given by travel and expressed motivational factors such as culture and history. This would appear to authenticate Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggestion that such enhancement value is primarily a western phenomenon.

In short, the motivational factors indicate that there is a difference between the motivational factors expressed by the four types of passports represented here. More specifically, a disparity exists between the importance given to culture and history as a motivational influence by American and British visitors, on one side and the French and

German on the other. This difference is further reinforced when these motivational factors are considered in the light of national/ethnic/cultural identity. The vast majority of those who identified themselves as Irish, Irish/American, Irish/British, Scottish and Welsh considered culture/history the prime motivational factor for their visit, with frequent references to visiting friends and relatives. Interestingly, out of the 43 respondents who considered their national identity British, only 6 noted culture and history as the main reason for the trip, with the main reason cited being for relaxation. .

6.3.6.2 The Influence of Gender and Age on Motivation

Whilst acknowledging that nationality and national identity would appear to have a moderating effect on motivation, a number of other interrelated factors may also influence motivation. The following cross tabulations reveals a number of interrelated factors which can, to a large extent, account for differences in consumption between respondents. In table 27, culture and history is seen as the main reason for travel for both males and females, but females cite culture and history more frequently than males as the primary motivation for the trip. Conversely, physical is cited twice as often by males as the purpose for the trip than females. This may support the suggestion that gender influences the choice of holiday activity insofar as men are inclined to choose sporty/physical activities while women tend to choose calm and/or cultural activities (ONT 1994). However, irrespective of this difference, general interest in visiting Ireland is fairly evenly distributed, as 52% of respondents are female and 48% being male with culture and history being considered the main reason for the holiday by both sexes.

	Female	Male
Culture/History	40	30
Pleasure Seeking/Fantasy	26	26
Relaxation	24	24
Physical	10	20

Table 27 Motivation x Gender

Table 28 indicates that the importance attributed to culture and history when choosing a holiday increases with age. 11% in the 18-25 age cohort, 22% in the 26-35 age cohort, 59% in the 36-50 age cohort, and 53% between the ages of 51 and 64 consider culture/history the main reason for the trip. The highest percentage of those indicating culture/history as the prime motivational reason was found in the 65+ cohort. However, on the basis of a chi square test, there is not sufficient evidence at the .025 significance level to conclude that the proportions of 65+ of whose motivational factors are drawn from these categories are significantly different from those between 36-50 age group. In other words, the data suggest that, to 97.5% confidence, the percentages of the 65+ whose motivational factors are drawn from the four motivational categories are the same as the 36-50 age group. In the other cases (18-25, 26-35 and 51-64), the data suggests that, to 97.5% confidence, the percentages whose motivational factors are drawn from these four categories are not the same as the 36-50 cohort. In all other cases, the data suggest that, to 99% confidence, the percentages of one age group whose motivational factors are drawn from these four categories are not the same as those of any other group. This is consistent with ATLAS's findings, which indicate that the mature and senior citizens are seen as the main source market for cultural tourism due to their growing number and considerable leisure time availability (Richards 1996).

	18-25	26-35	36-50	51-64	65+
Culture/History	11	22	59	53	60
Pleasure Seeking/Fantasy	33	44	24	17	28
Relaxation	11	22	14	21	9
Physical	44	11	2	9	4

Table 28 Motivation x Age

6.3.7 Information sources used

Respondents were asked to indicate how they obtained the information used to plan their trip. As indicated in Table 28, respondents were provided with a list of 9 information

sources and asked to select the sources that they used most in organising the trip. These information sources were (1) Internet (2) Guide Books (3) Tour Operator's Brochures (4) Travel books (5) Word of Mouth (6) Tourism Ireland Brochures (7) Newspapers/Magazines (8) Film/Radio (9) Other sources. The 'other sources' category, this being (9), was initially included to allow for factors not considered by the author.

It is clear from Table 29 that the primary source of information is organic in nature, namely, word of mouth recommendations from family, friends or colleagues. Additional sources include the internet, guidebooks, Tourism Ireland brochures and media indicates that travellers do not depend on one type of information source. In the 2002 Visitor Attitude Survey (Failte Ireland 2002a), these figures are comparable in the corresponding question relating to the information sources that influenced the choice of Ireland across all respondents.

Information Source	%
1 Tourism Ireland Brochures	14
2 Guide Books	12
3 Word of Mouth	50
4 Film/Radio	12
5 Tour Operator Brochures	10
6 Newspapers/Magazines	6
7 Travel Books	5
8 Internet	42
9 Others	10

Note: sum of results exceed number of respondents as multiple answers were given

Table 29 External sources of information used by travellers

In the 'other' category (9), less than 10% of all respondents identified further factors, which are important in their selection of Ireland as a holiday destination. Examples of other sources of information included memory of previous visits (most frequently mentioned), Celtic culture, literature (notably Frank McCourt and James Joyce), kinship with Scotland and twinning. However, since there was little consensus amongst them,

responses to the other category are not included in the analysis. Finally, when asked to rate in order of importance the best sources of information used, word of mouth was considered the most useful, although this rating appears to depend to some extent on gender, number of visits and national identity. Interestingly, newspapers/magazines and travel books did not score at all in terms of being the most useful source of information used. This low score corresponds with their infrequent use as shown in Table 29.

The relationship between the image sources rated the best and gender (Table 30), number of visits to Ireland (Table 31) and national/ethnic/cultural identity (Table 32) reveal of number of differences.

Information Source	Female	Male
Tourism Ireland Brochures	8	7
Guide Books	6	16
Word of Mouth	52	31
Tour Operator Brochures	9	12
Internet	24	32
Film/Radio	0	2

Note: Newspapers/magazines, travel books and other sources were not rated by any respondents as the best sources of information used and were therefore eliminated from the analysis.

Table 30 Image source x Gender

For example, Table 30 highlights that word of mouth recommendations from family, friends and colleagues were most influential as a source of information for female respondents (52% compared to 31% for males). This differential is balanced by the greater importance attributed to the internet, guide books and other sources of information by males. The relationship between best source of information used and gender was found to be statistically significant at Chi-square [pearson] .001 [DF5]. Table 31 shows that as the number of visits to Ireland increase, the reliance on word of mouth as a source of information declines and is replaced by other sources most notably the internet. A

statistically significant relationship between sources of information and number of visits to Ireland exists at Chi-square [pearsons] .042 [DF20].

Information source	1 st visit	2 nd visit	3-5 visit	6-10 visits	10+ visits
Tourism Ireland Brochure	8	7	4	17	0
Guide Books	11	10	4	0	33
Word of Mouth	48	36	24	33	17
Tour Operator Brochures	12	10	4	0	17
Internet	20	38	60	50	33
Film/Radio	1	0	4	0	0

Note: Newspapers/magazines, travel books and other sources were not rated by any respondents as the best sources of information used and were therefore eliminated from the analysis.

Table 31 Image source x Number of visits to Ireland

Table 32 reveals that the information search behaviour of those travelling to Ireland who identify themselves as British, English, and French are alike which would suggest that similar marketing strategies should be developed for these markets. For example, the data suggests that, to 99% confidence, the percentages of the British whose image source are drawn from six categories outlined on Table 32 are the same as the French. Tourism marketers who want to reach British and French travellers should focus on Tourism Ireland brochures. The findings indicate that government agencies are considered by the majority of those who identify themselves as British, English and French, the best source of information, regardless of the purpose of the trip. Establishing good relationships with French and British travel agencies will help to further penetrate the market and distribution of Tourism Ireland publications may sway potential travellers into actual demand. Thus, it may be reasonable to assume that a combination of Tourism Ireland Brochures and tour operator brochures, and to a lesser extent the internet and travel books, could be used to specifically target British and French tourists.

However, this research also indicates that the British market in particular is not one cohesive group but represents several diverse components. While those who identify themselves as British share common information search behaviour with those who identify

themselves as English and French, those of Welsh or Scottish national identity display different information search behaviour. Although Tourism Ireland and Tour Operator Brochures are considered the best sources of information for those who considered themselves British, English and French, the internet and guidebooks were deemed the best sources of information by Welsh and Scottish visitors. For German visitors, guidebooks were considered the best source of information followed by the Internet and Tourism Ireland brochures.

American travellers are likely to rely on Tourism Ireland Brochures and film and/or radio as a source of information. Film and/or radio rated surprisingly high for American respondents when compared to its significance for other respondents, although it is unclear whether it is principally in the form of feature films or promotional films or a combination of both.

	Tourism Ireland Brochure	Guide Books	Word of Mouth	Tour Operator brochures	Internet	Film/ Radio
British	38	16	18	24	4	0
English	30	10	20	26	14	0
Welsh	7	9	56	0	32	0
Scottish	8	10	54	0	28	0
French	38	14	12	21	15	0
German	19	29	9	12	25	1
American	18	7	48	4	2	21
Irish/US	0	0	100	0	0	0
Irish/British	0	0	100	0	0	0
Irish	5	23	50	0	20	2
English Protestant	100	0	0	0	0	0
British European	100	0	0	0	0	0
Catholic	100	0	100	0	0	0
European	100	0	0	0	0	0

Note: Newspapers/magazines, film/radio and travel books were not rated by any respondents as the best sources of information used and were therefore eliminated from the analysis.

Table 32 Image source x National Identity

Irrespective of which type of film is considered most influential, the importance of the medium of film for the American market is reflected in this research. These findings

support Rains (2003) discussion where she explores the diasporic tourism industry in Ireland and filmic representations of the country. She suggests that due to the importance of Irish-American audiences to the development of the film industry in America, representations of Ireland have not only been a constant feature of Hollywood films from the silent era onwards, but these representations have been structured in ways which have reflected the demands and imaginative positioning of that Irish diasporic audience. In light of the previous discussion on the negotiation of Irish-American's relationship to Ireland in terms of perceived levels of familiarity and national identity, the emotional and symbolic journeying through film narrative before physically visiting Ireland is relevant. Indeed the significance of film is reinforced by Gallagher (1989:26) in her discussion of the use of landscape in Bord Failte's films, describing this as a framing device which attempts to resolve the tension between 'a cinematic drive for narrative and the timelessness insisted on by spectacle'. This resolution, she argues is achieved through the depiction of arrival (and departure) in order to make the experience of the films, in themselves, into 'imagery visits to Ireland' for the viewer. However, according to Fullington (2004) promotional film in the US market (or indeed in any other market) is not a priority for Tourism Ireland and demand for such a promotional tool is limited. Thus, it is suggested that the use of film as a promotional tool in the US market could be extended to positively influence the image of Ireland as a tourist destination in the North America market.

Finally to attract British, American, French and German tourists positive word of mouth is essential as all respondents rely on friends and relatives for information. This is consistent with Failte Ireland's findings outlined in Table 33 illustrating that each year since 1997 around half of all holidaymakers described friends and relatives as a major influence (Failte Ireland 2002a).

Base: all respondents

Information source	1997 %	1999 %	2000 %	2001 %	2002 %
Friends/relatives/business associates	53	51	50	51	45
Guide books	32	27	26	24	23
Internet	11	18	18	22	20
Tour company brochure	19	15	17	16	14
ITB literature	18	17	11	12	11
Travel Agent	10	13	10	10	11
Films	16	16	14	11	10
Other promotional literature	13	14	11	11	12
Travel programme on TV/radio	13	13	9	9	10
Articles in magazines	13	11	9	10	9
Advertising for Ireland	N/a	11	9	10	8
Travel Agent	6	12	10	9	8
Films	10	10	9	8	7
Articles in newspaper	9	7	6	7	6

Source: Failte Ireland (2002) Visitor Attitude Survey 2002

Table 33: Information sources that influenced choice of Ireland

The results of this research confirms Tourism Ireland's findings that word of mouth recommendation continues to be one of the primary influence on the choice of Ireland for a holiday destination. As such, special attention is needed to be given to customer satisfaction and complaint handling. Customer satisfaction should be constantly monitored in order to identify the problem areas and make necessary modifications to enhance customer satisfaction. This, in turn, will influence destination image. When asked to rate in order of importance the best sources of information, over 50% recorded friends and relatives as significant sources of information.

In short, the research confirms that leisure travellers do not depend on one type of information source. Uysal, McDonald, Reids' (1990) study on the information search behaviour supports to some extent this claim. Whilst acknowledging that their research focused on German, French, British and Japanese travellers who travelled to the US, they concluded that British travellers used travel agents as the main source of external information sources, followed by family and friends, brochures and magazines and newspaper. Like German travellers, word of mouth was found to be the most important

external information source for French travellers, followed by travel agents and brochures. Due to the similarity of findings it is reasonable to assume that travellers from different countries were more inclined to utilize different types of information with varying frequency.

Such behaviour may be attributed to either the nationality of the tourist or the nationality of the destination product, or a combination of both. However, the evidence also suggests that subcultures within a national group (i.e. Scottish, English and Welsh) expressed in the reasons for the trip for example, culture and history, pleasure seeking and fantasy, relaxation and physical, can influence the source of travel information used. As a consequence it could equally be argued that these motivational factors transcends nationality, while at the same time national identity as opposed to nationality and passport held, has a moderating influence on information search behaviour. Thus, this research supports the notion that on one hand, information-search behaviour is based to some extent on person-specific motivations, which are partly determined by the nationality of the visitor. On the other hand, however, the image of the destination and its perceived ability to satisfy a tourist's needs is also influenced by assumed national identity as well as nationality of the place.

6.3.8 Interpretation of visual representations

Given the influence of nationality and national identity on information-search behaviour, the possibility that the same message projected by marketers may be interpreted differently by different audiences, or even individual members of the same audience is relevant. Such destination information comes from many sources, but mainly from national tourist organisations (Sussmann and Unel 1999). Hence eight different images were employed from the promotional material used by Tourism Ireland (2003 and 2004) as outlined in Chapter 4. These were used to explore if the visual representations were perceived differently among the research sample as well as ascertaining the influence of

such stereotypical imagery on the interpretation of Ireland's image pre-visitation. An additional photograph (the golfer) used to promote tourism in Gran Canaria was also included to uncover if the tourist promotions of these two islands, so qualitatively different in climate and culture, nevertheless can share a common theme in their promotional material. As nature-based attractions are most easily communicated visually (Wells, Burnett and Moriarty 1998), the most frequently selected image by Tourism Ireland are framed by rural, picture perfect landscapes. Therefore, the majority of the selected representations in this research survey included photographs of Ireland in a natural setting while the remainder depicted the Irish pub scene, traditional music and sport. Table 34 represents a cross tabulation of passport held by the image considered most representative of Ireland, and the reasons given to explain the images selected were subjected to content analysis.

	British	French	American	German
Golfing	62	45	67	40
Fishing	10	35	10	28
Horse & Trap	5	12	22	12
Bridge	19	10	6	4
Music	42	33	41	28

Note: sum of categories is not double the number of respondents as some respondents ticked two boxes while the majority ticked just one.

Table 34 Passport held x photo most representative of Ireland

Although written comments are not likely to be representative of the visitor's entire perception, they do represent some of the images that tourists are exposed to pre-visitation, and assist in exposing specific dimensions of projected images as perceived by the target market. The content analysis of the respondent's free responses involved a number of interconnected stages ranging from sifting to coding and sorting (Table 35 and 36). In order to identify the range of comments, the respondent's answers obtained in this section of the questionnaire, were first transcribed, coded and then grouped.

Golfer: Spacious and Green; beautiful and free; no noise; the best place to golf!; clean and fresh, quality environment, green grass, like home, the healthy outdoors, Emerald Isle, spacious and unspoilt scenery, 'quality environment'.

Fishing: good fishing, plentiful, clean water, picturesque lakes and rivers, island destination, reminds me of Scotland, relaxed, calm, abundant, outdoors, sport, salmon, tranquil, free, high standard.

Horse and trap: old fashioned, timeless, free to roam, relaxed and carefree, unhurried, kitch, happy, traditional, fresh, slow, laidback, fake, no pollution, family life, looks like France, rural, culture, way of life, coming home, too good to be true, room/space, 'fear of change'.

Bridge: European, bridge, city, artist, quaint, urban, colourful past, Dublin, O'Connell Bridge, modern day, busy, cosmopolitan life, architecture, quiet.

Music: Craic, pubs, Guinness, nightlife, culture, traditional, friendly people, banter, fun, drink, talent, times past, keeping tradition alive, no stress, atmosphere, no closing time, not England, session, hospitality, real, carefree, no rules, the genuine article!

Table 35 Reasons given for selecting images

Market Day: reminds me of how Scotland used to be, animal cruelty. dangerous, out of control, busy, market day, selling animals, old fashioned, homely, the way things were, things have changed and not for the better, nice to see such a way of life still alive, nature, fear of change.

Guinness: pubs, Craic, Guinness, good beer, the black stuff, alcohol, friendly atmosphere, drink, two good pints, the best of Irish, fun, returning home, like England, want to be there now, stereotype,

Rock of Cashel: peaceful, tranquil, the most beautiful country in the world, progress destroys such beauty, dreaming, relaxing, enjoying nature, romantic, picturesque, unreal, historic, nostalgic, culture, fear of development, conservation, history, traditional, British occupation, natural, preservation is a good thing.

Hurling: Irish sport, fun, lively, dangerous, for the Irish only, confused, aggressive, out of control, sticks, like a Scottish game, do not know what is going on, energetic, real Ireland.

Table 36 Emotions or feelings experienced when viewing images

The golfer and the traditional music/pub scene image were considered by the majority of respondents, irrespective of nationality or national identity, the most representative of Ireland. Interestingly, 35% of French visitors consider the fishing image, while 22% of American tourists noted the horse and trap photograph as representative of Ireland. The

least popular image, except amongst the British, was O'Connell bridge in Dublin which is the only readily recognisable and tangible attraction depicted in this set of images. This may be attributed to the image of the 'Emerald Isle' and emerging green values in the context of the increasing separation between nature and society. Thus, it appears that the opportunity of temporary escape from urbanisation to gaze upon 'things' lost to an industrialised world forms the major cultural context for how Ireland is apprehended in the tourist gaze and the imagination. The explanations provided for the choice of photographs selected seems to confirm Lash and Urry's (1994) suggestion that tourism can become an overarching structure through which it is possible to experience a romanticised appreciation for nature. This may explain many repeated comments related to the reoccurring themes of Ireland being 'clean, green, fresh and peaceful', 'great pub culture', 'beautiful scenery' and 'open space/freedom'.

Such comments were also used to answer the initial open-ended questions at the beginning of the questionnaire when asked to describe the images, atmosphere, characteristics, emotions and symbols associated with Ireland. As such, this may indicate that environmental considerations are now a significant element of travellers' destination choosing process. Also, as the images presented have capitalised on promoting Ireland's natural resources, the images themselves may be partly responsible for perpetuating tourists' notions of traditional and the authentic. Similarly, when asked to describe emotions and/or feelings experienced when seeing images comments included 'traditional', 'great Guinness', 'pubs and craic', 'peaceful place' and 'traditional sport'.

Such emotion is articulated by one young, German student living in Britain for less than five years who described the picture of the Rock of Castle 'the most beautiful country in the world for dreaming, relaxing and enjoying the nature', 'just what I'd love to see'. Does this therefore infer that such image production is consumer led as it appears, at least in this instance, to be responsive to touristic desires and motivations?

The fear of development and 'progress' destroying nature constantly emerged as a middle-aged professional female from America living in Britain for between six to ten years

imagined Ireland as 'the last natural country in the world'. Similar references included 'preservation', 'natural spaces', 'fear of change', 'keeping traditions alive' and 'hope it doesn't get like Wales ... too built up and grey looking'. Such interpretations exposed visitor's generalised fear of environment destruction in the context of increasing urbanisation. Imagining these associations as a contrast to their everyday life and environments were frequently invoked, as one French professional who has been living in Britain for less than five years explained: 'I get feelings of space ... with few people and not that much stress like we have in Paris and London'. Similarly, one semi-routine English worker remarked: 'I know it will be almost entirely in contrast to Birmingham— with green grass, clean water and friendly locals', while a rural based small employer from Wales suggests that 'the pubs there make the place'. In this light, it becomes clear that there are geographical and socio-cultural variations in the construction of what constitutes the element of attraction in the tourist gaze. More than 50% of tourists with city-based addresses commented on open spaces, freedom and room to move as an immediate emotion of Ireland in their minds. In contrast, those in the sample who live in relatively scarcely populated rural areas did not mention space at all. Similarly while 21% of tourists identifying themselves as British imagined Ireland to be like Britain (very often they said – 'like England twenty years ago), while those tourists of German identity did not express that association at all.

In addition, another layer of meaning consistently emerged whereby a generalised fear of environment destruction and deepened social alienation caused by urbanisation and industrialisation was expressed. To an American male professional in the 51-64 year old age group living in Britain for more than sixteen years, 'Ireland is great .. a place where we can taste a relaxed lifestyle'. For a semi-routine German female worker in the 26-35 year old category who has been living in Britain for less than five years 'it was my dream to experience nature, which we do not have in Germany'. A French male in intermediate occupation living in Britain for less than five years wanted 'to see one of the last natural countries in the world before it's gone', while a Scottish female professional between the ages of 26 and 35 felt the image of the market day 'remind me of how Scotland used to

be'. For a middle aged English man the same image is 'sad and violent' and for another it is 'animal cruelty and dangerous'. Interestingly two images, namely; the market day and the hurling picture were considered negatively by 12 respondents and 10 respondents respectively. All these respondents were British nationals with one reporting the market day image as 'aggressive and out of control' and another suggesting that the hurling image is 'a dangerous sport for the Irish only'.

A middle aged professional woman identifying herself as Welsh describes the scenery in the golfing image as 'a beautiful countryside ... a quality rural environment'. A female small employer between the ages of 51 and 64 noting her national identity as French and working in a lower managerial capacity refers to the 'really rural and varied countryside'. At the same time, a younger man with an English identity working in a managerial capacity considers the same image as a 'healthy place. Good for you .. absolutely the best scenery in the British Isles' while a woman over 65 years of age describing her national identity as German considers that the 'environment is of a very high standard'. The diversity and integrity of the natural and cultural resources is expressed by a man in the 18-25 year age bracket of a British European national identity in comments such as 'variety of things to do like, walking in a beautiful landscape and seeing lots of old buildings and enjoying traditional things'. Meanwhile a woman between the ages of 51 and 64 holding German identity suggests that 'it is marvellous to see old ways of life and cultures protected'. Also, a middle aged professional man identifying himself as British suggests that 'the Irish are great to keep simple ways of life and culture going and maintain what is important'. In a similar vein, a woman employed in a managerial capacity with English identity considers the 'laidback and a real timeless quality to the country' to be very important.

Respondents generally interpret the images as being representative of the quality of the destination landscape, in terms of environmental health and of the diversity and integrity of natural and cultural resources. Despite their different positions conditioned by age, occupation, national identity and nationality, there appears to be a value system that

assigns virtue to rural and natural images in a traditional setting, which prevails cross-culturally. In other words, while visitors with different value systems and motivations may make distinct meanings from the images perceived certain interpretations emerged almost universally. This is seen in the popularity of the golfing image, which, although not of Ireland, is still considered the most representative of the country. This suggests that imagery of rural life and beautiful scenery are abundant and that themes are shared across destinations. As such, the research indicates that environmental considerations are now a significant element of travellers' destination selection process.

Environmental considerations predominantly include the attraction of the landscape and rurality. Respondents suggest that tourism is about 'escapism', 'escaping from the pressures of modern life'. Rural tourism, in particular, is perceived as offering 'nostalgia', 'a re-discovering of ones heritage, both 'natural and cultural', and experiencing an earlier, more 'simple time'. In other words, re-visiting 'a country which is in the past'. These ideas tend to romanticize pre-industrial times. This according to MacCannell (1989) is characteristic of (post) modernity, which he describes as the 'museumisation' of the premodern. As such, the majority of respondents idealize the past and contrast it to the stresses of the modern world, whether recent or remote, in comments such as 'reminds me of Scotland ... the good old days, exciting', 'simple and relaxed', 'old fashioned, real, natural'. This seems to verify Lowenthal's (1985: 24) contention that the past is seen as 'natural, simple, comfortable – yet also vivid and exciting'. However, these images also expose more of the intimate and even contentious realities of local life. This is illustrated in comments relating to the images presented such as 'Kitch', 'too good to be true', 'stereotype', 'unreal' and 'real Ireland'. Interestingly, such negative connotations predominately emanate from those of British and English identity and are most notable in relation to the horse and trap image. For example, while only 12 respondents described the horse and trap image negatively, all 12 respondents identified themselves as British and or English. Yet, 50% holding German, Scottish and Welsh identity predominately view the image in a more positive light with 'timeless', 'free to roam', 'relaxed and carefree', 'slow, laidback' and 'family life' among the remarks. These initial findings suggest that

such 'realities' vary to a limited degree across nationalities and stresses the importance of the contexts within which representations operate. In focusing on the consumption of selected images of Ireland, this highlights the geographical and historical specificities involved in processes of negotiating meaning within a culture-specific context.

6.4 Summary of results

A number of persistent themes relating to the pre-visitation data analysis have emerged and the following summaries the main findings of this analysis

Firstly, the most frequently mentioned variables associated with Ireland as a tourist destination predominately include unspoilt scenery, friendly/hospitable people and traditional entertainment with a strong cultural and historical focus. This is reinforced by the dominant image of 'people, pace and place' projected by Tourism Ireland. However, there appears to be discrepancies in the attributes associated with Ireland between those who have not necessarily decided to visit Ireland at all, with the attributes perceived as important when choosing a destination by those who have decided to visit the country. The consequence of the emphasis on Irish people as essential to the tourism product is that Irish people become inscribed with tourist expectations and so, when these tourists come to Ireland, they have preconceived expectations of what they will see and the people they will meet. Thus, the reliance on, and promotion of Ireland relates closely to the international stereotypical myth of Ireland as the Emerald Isle, which is a quaint and timeless place inhabited by friendly rogues and Guinness fuelled 'craic'. While each individual constructs and applies his or her own meaning to the place, certain patterns recur. This includes for example, the consumption of nostalgia, the idea of progress and an image of traditional Ireland, in other words the guiding fictions of the nation. Thus, this essentialised image of the historic landscape and Irish people prevails as core elements of the perceived image of Ireland as a destination pre-visitation. Moreover, previous visitation appears to have little influence on positive perceptions, yet negative associations, most notably wet weather and political instability, are more pronounced for

those who have not visited the country. The evidence suggests that such negative connotations diminish during subsequent visits.

Perceived levels of destination familiarity are important in terms of propensity to travel and the results indicate that levels of familiarity are not based on visitation or knowledge of tourist attractions. Indeed, it was concluded that familiarity may evoke not just physical images such as tourist's attractions and the physical environment, but were more often than not related to sensory, affective, creative-cognitive and social identity experiences influenced by family or neighbour links. Whilst, it was found that familiarity does not totally rely on visitation and destination knowledge, this research does not dismiss the influence of repeat visits on image perception. Instead, it recognises that visitation to Ireland appears to increase spatial knowledge about holiday opportunities. As an overall driver to propensity to visit, familiarity was found to have a strong direct effect on destination choice.

While passport held influences assumed levels of familiarity, perceived national identity strongly contributes to positive notions of familiarity with those of Scottish, Welsh, American/Irish, Irish/British and Irish identities inferring a more sharpened awareness of Ireland as a familiar destination. Such self-identification confirms that visitors from Britain to Ireland very often hold several identities. Thus, relying solely on the nationality of the passport as a classification of one's identity is to disregard the significance of national identities held by visitors. Despite the limitations of this kind of evidence in getting to grips with the complexities of identities, it is none the less instructive to compare nationality of passport held with perceived national identity. Indeed, based on the results of this investigation, this analysis contended that national identity combined with nationality is a more accurate tool for segmenting the market rather than nationality alone. For example, the influences of sources of information used and motivations indicate there is a difference expressed between the four types of passport holders represented (i.e. British, American, French and German). However, this difference is more marked when these motivational

factors and sources of information used are considered in the light of national/ethnic/cultural identity. Irrespective of the fact that all respondents have travelled from, and live permanently in Britain, they still vary in their predisposition to use particular services such as information providers and destination facilities. In other words, people within one target market (i.e. Britain), use tourism services differently and it is suggested that an understanding of the impact of their national identity will stimulate a new perspective in the study of destination marketing.

Moreover, if it is accepted that tourist's cultural orientation (in this case national identity) influences perception, then the tourist product is self-authored in the mind of the tourist. As such, interpretations of visual representations of the destination will vary. However, whether the visit is to consume a set of experiences which contrast with the everyday in their search for the mythical 'other', or is simply an intensification of pleasurable activities associated with the familiar, the stereotypical images of Ireland held by respondents are 'authenticated', or at least reinforced by the photographs presented in the pre-visitation questionnaire. Indeed, whatever the motivation to travel, this research suggests that the reading of visual imagery in tourism marketing are based on the judgements conferred by others, which in turn are informed, in part at least, by the national/ethnic/cultural identity of the viewer.

Finally, the research indicates that respondents irrespective of their national identity and/or nationality generally interpreted the images as being representative of the quality of the destination landscape, in terms of environmental health and of the diversity and integrity of natural and cultural resources. The results relating to the visual representations included the significance of environmental considerations in choosing a destination, fear of development and progress, and deepened social alienation caused by urbanisation and industrialisation. Yet, the representations and meanings contained within such images were not always immutable and were evidently subject to challenge and change. For example, interpretations of certain representations, most notably the golf

and music images emerged almost universally, while the meanings from other visual imagery such as the horse and trap, the market day and hurling images were contested across nations and national identities. Thus, while indicating processes, which may prove common across destinations to some extent, the analysis also indicates the importance of research that shows how such processes can vary in particular contexts.

6.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, a number of interesting findings have emerged from the pre-visitation questionnaire, which primarily relate to the perceived image of Ireland as understood by tourists travelling from Britain before their trip to Ireland. This chapter analysed the results of the pre-visitation (arrival) questionnaire which concentrated on three main areas. First, to ascertain the perceived image of Ireland as understood by tourists travelling from Britain pre-visitation, second, to explore the relationship between nationality and perceived images of Ireland from the perspective of the British tourist, and third to assess if the production of national identities influences behaviour of such tourists highlighting the relationship between destination familiarity, nationality and national identity pre-visitation. The initial part of this chapter concentrated on the overall perceptions held by respondents regardless of influencing variables, while the remainder outlined the factors influencing the formation of such perceptions with particular emphasise on the nationality and national identity in the context of tourist behaviour. The fourth and final stage of this data analysis seeks to develop further understanding of the influence of nationality on interpretations of Ireland's destination imagery by investigating the post-visitation image of Ireland as understood by the same sample of tourists who travelled from Britain. These findings are detailed in the following chapter.

Chapter 7 The perceived image of Ireland as a tourist destination post-visitation

7.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the results of stage four of the data analysis. A pre-visitation (arrival) questionnaire was distributed to ascertain the perceived image of Ireland as understood by tourists travelling from Britain pre-visitation. This facilitated an exploration of the relationship between nationality and perceived images of Ireland from the perspective of the British tourist. An examination of the influence of national identities on the behaviour of such tourists was provided while emphasising the relationship between destination familiarity, nationality and national identity pre-visitation. The fourth stage of this data analysis seeks to develop further understanding of the influence of nationality on interpretations of Ireland's destination imagery by investigating the post-visit image of Ireland as understood by the same sample of tourists who have travelled from Britain. A total of 140 usable questionnaires were forwarded via email or post. The high non response rate of 50% may have been for a number of reasons, (see Chapter 4, pg 111) including respondents forgetting to return questionnaires or due to a general lack of interest once the holiday was completed.

As in the previous stages of this research, the collected data was coded for analysis by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 11.1). This data analysis was designed to measure the perceived image of Ireland after the actual experience of the destination and the degree of influence nationality and national identity has on tourists perceived image of Ireland as a tourist destination held by those travelling from Britain post-visitation. Consequently, the current chapter focuses on the post-visitation findings by investigating the overall current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination post-visitation, and explores the factors pertaining to the formation of such perceptions. As a result and based on ease of application, the findings will be presented in the format adopted in stage 3 of the data analysis (see Chapter 6, pg 199-200). Firstly, a profile of the respondent's socio-demographic details will be outlined which are considered

proportionally representative of the socio-demographic characteristics of the initial sample group. Secondly, the current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination post-visitation is established by assessing the results of a number of open-ended questions relating to image, atmosphere, characteristics, symbols and emotions associated with Ireland. Additional open-ended questions relating to the advantages and disadvantages of Ireland as well as the main weaknesses of Ireland as a tourist destination are included. Thirdly, factors influencing the formation of current post-perceptions are considered and include the rating of Ireland's performance as a tourist destination post-visitation. To identify the influence of the nationality of the tourist and the nationality of the product on post-visitation interpretations, a number of contributing factors are explored. These include familiarisation; visit intensity and organisation of trip, motivation, activities undertaken, possibility of repeat visitation and degree of image modification (if any) as identified by the visitors themselves after the trip. Thus, as in stage 3 of the data analysis, the beginning of this chapter presents the overall perceptions of Ireland irrespective of influencing factors, while the remainder identifies the factors that influence the formation of such perceptions post-visitation in the context of nationality and national identity. Lastly, a summary of the post-visitation analysis are presented.

7.1 Visitors socio-demographic profile

A profile of respondent's socio-demographic characteristics post-visitation are detailed in Table 37. Of those who completed the pre-visitation questionnaire (281) almost 50% returned completed post-visitation questionnaires.

Characteristic	N	%
Passport Held		
British	89	64
Dual passport	2	1
French	13	9
German	17	12
American	19	14
Nationality		
British	43	31
English	18	13
Welsh	9	6
Scottish	21	15
French	15	11
German	14	10
American	17	12
Irish/American	2	1
Irish/British	1	.7
Country of Origin		
Britain	46	33
England	18	13
Wales	9	6
Scottish	21	15
France	15	11
Germany	14	10
America	17	12

National/ethnic/cultural identity

British	20
English	24
Welsh	13
Scottish	19
French	14
German	16
American	10
Irish/American	1
Irish/British	1
Irish	21
English Protestant	0
British European	0
Catholic	0
European	1

Gender

Male	65
Female	75

Age

18-25	1
26-35	20
36-50	42
51-64	50
65+	27

Ethnic origin/decent

White	139
Black or Black British	1
Chinese or other ethnic group	0
Mixed	0
Asian or Asian British	0

Length of residence in Britain

Less than 5 years	2
6 to 10 years	4
11-15 years	14
16 years +	120

Table 37: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of respondents post-visitation

7.2 Current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination post-visitation

Current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination are identified to ascertain the perceived image of Ireland as understood by tourists travelling from Britain after their trip to Ireland. As in the pre-visitation questionnaire, a number of open-ended questions were asked. These included what images come to mind when you think of Ireland? the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting Ireland, the key characteristics that capture the essence of Ireland, symbols associated with Ireland and the emotions/feelings experienced when thinking of Ireland. The answers were broadly similar to those in the pre-visitation questionnaire. The most frequently mentioned positive variables associated with Ireland as a tourist destination post-visitation include beautiful, unspoilt scenery, excellent pub scene, easy/relaxed/fun/carefree atmosphere, places such as Connemara, Kerry and Dublin, familiar/known and friendly people. Negative attributes included very expensive/overly priced and wet/miserable/poor weather. A more detailed summary of the most frequently mentioned attributes associated with Ireland post-visitation is provided in Table 38.

Attributes**N = 140****Environment**

Beautiful Scenery/Emerald isle/Shamrock	92%
Natural, unspoilt environment	80%
Attractive cities/towns/villages	23%
Nature/Wildlife	38%
Pollution free/litter free	12%
Open spaces/freedom	50%
Stone Walls/quiet roads	25%

Friendliness/Hospitality

Friendly, hospitable people	50%
Easy, relaxed, fun, carefree	62%
Banter, 'craic'	25%
Lazy/under-achievers	2%
Single race/one culture/all white	10%

Culture/Way of Life

Nightlife/entertainment	63%
Excellent pub scene	70%
Traditional music & song	45%
Irish dancing/riverdance	35%
Heritage/History/Celtic	18%
Farming	14%
Religion	20%
Family values/family friendly	4%
Familiar/known	64%
Slow pace/laidback	16%
Tranquil/peaceful	24%
Romantic/Mysterious	14%
Old-fashioned/narrow minded	5%

Value/Price

Good all round value for money	1%
Competitively priced access transport	0%
Very expensive/overly priced	45%
Easy to access/tour	10%
Celtic Tiger	15%

Activities

Golfing	34%
Fishing	10%
Rugby	0%

Political issues/safety

Safe place	23%
Terrorism/war/IRA	0%
Politically unstable/threatening	2%
Sinn Fein	5%

Other Destination Attributes

Places e.g. Connemara, Kerry, Dublin	72%
Physical appearance/Irish accent	21%
Irish Food/potatoes	14%
Patriotic/proud nation	14%
Immigration	9%
Outdoor climate/healthy (positive)	25%
Wet/miserable/poor weather (negative)	32%

Table 38: Most frequently mentioned attributes post-visitation

To probe further current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination post-visitation, respondents identified a number of factors that would encourage and/or discourage a return visit as well as the advantages and/or disadvantages as well as weaknesses that Ireland has as a tourist destination.

7.2.1 Encouraging Factors

The scenery/nature/environment was mentioned by 35%, the Irish people/welcome was referred to by 25%, while 21% considered Irish music and dance important. This corresponds with the discussion in Chapters 5 and 6 as it implies that these are seen as the most attractive features of Ireland as a destination. Clearly, scenery, hospitality, music and dance are what people desire when they come to Ireland. Therefore, these should be promoted to their fullest advantage. 30% stated that they would return to Ireland to visit other regions/revisit certain areas with one French respondent for example stating that:

‘une semaine, c’est court pour visiter l’Irlande. Il nous faudrait revenir plus longtemps et nous limiter a une ou deux regions afin de pouvoir approfondir’¹⁰.

While a Scottish visitor said that he:

‘Didn’t get a chance to see the Rock of Cashel – there was simply too much happening where we were’.

and an American visitor suggested that she would:

¹⁰ ‘A week is short for visiting Ireland. We will have to come back for longer and limit ourselves to one or two regions for a more in-depth visit’.

'Have to learn some set dancing but really hadn't time to take the classes available'.

Moreover another American said that they:

'Will be back to do the Ring of Kerry and maybe Bere Island' (American)

These statements highlight the very definite potential for attracting repeat visitors and the need for packaging the product (place) in a tangible manner so that visitors will be presented with concrete reasons for returning. Also activities and culture were cited as encouraging factors by 24% who expressed either an interest in participating in certain activities and/or a desire for such activities and culture to be developed further:

For example, a Scottish tourist said that they:

'Didn't see any Irish football games but would be really interested in returning and maybe learn the rules if I could'

and an English visitor stated that:

'The Irish tend to be very sociable and it is this that I love about the place the good conversation as well as of course the drink!

Further, an Irish visitor suggested that he:

'Enjoyed the music and the crack and will be back for more' (Irish)

while a British tourist said that:

'There are some fantastic golf courses like in Lahinch so I expect to be back for that'.

Fishing, golf, walking and rugby were the main activities listed, whilst Celtic, tradition and music were the main associations for culture. The desire to engage in activities were also linked to the urge to visit other regions. The atmosphere was mentioned by 14% of respondents, whilst pubs and beer were referred to by 8%. As discussed in Chapter 5, culture in Ireland is defined more in terms of a way of life or living culture and since the atmosphere and pubs/beer could be part of that experience, culture gains an even greater significance in terms of attracting repeat business. Thus, it may be suggested that activities and culture are seen as capable of stimulating repeat visits, thereby inferring a need to expand Ireland's appeal beyond people and scenery, to include more specific

tourist products such as cultural tours, golf, traditional music and dance classes. Finally, an improvement in the cost of living (mainly in terms of accommodation and food) was noted as encouraging by 5%. Other factors included, the wish to speak Irish, relative proximity, improved peace and open spaces.

7.2.2 Discouraging Factors

Regarding factors likely to discourage people from returning to Ireland, the cost and quality of access, access, accommodation, and food and restaurants were mentioned by 28% of respondents with comments such as 'not recommended as a last minute trip – too expensive' and 'with the Euro I know exactly how much extra things cost in Ireland'. Some respondents stated that costs were discouraging as they are at present, whilst others stated that they would become discouraged if prices increased further. As government plays a central role in consumer pricing and inflation, the key role pricing structures play in influencing demand needs further attention, while the tourism industry itself can also play a significant role as regards monitoring accommodation, travel and food prices. The weather was cited as discouraging by 25% with comments such as 'Green Ireland – you soon realise why' underscoring the need for weather-independent facilities. Other discouraging comments related to the lack of authenticity and an increase of commercialism and development were listed as discouraging by 12% of respondents.

For example, one Englishman noted that:

'A few years ago, the country was more authentic from what my friends say, less touristy – nature was preserved more and you didn't have to queue to see the Cliffs of Moher'

while a young Scottish woman said that:

'Our first trip is a disappointment because of the tourist invasion everywhere'.

Furthermore, a German woman suggests that:

'Ireland has lost some of its identity over the years ... tendency to over-Europeanise'

and a British visitor contends that:

'In England, there is a mythical Ireland, which for me no longer exists'.

In a similar vein a Scottish tourist agrees that:

'The reality is not as beautiful as the dream ... Ireland is a modern country and the image we have is really one of the past'.

while an English visitor suggests that:

'The Killarney regions has become too touristy as has the village of Dingle ... some 'museums' seem like a rip-off'.

A French traveller said that:

'We wish only that Ireland will not become Americanised'

while an Englishman is:

'concerned about the size of some sites (the building of hotels) which do not correspond with the image we would like to keep of Ireland'.

Finally, an Irish visitor voices concern regarding the:

'Destruction of the wild Irish coast by the anarchic construction of individual houses and hotels'.

Many respondents referred to a 'changing Ireland' and indicated that the country was seen as being more authentic a number of years ago. There is a sense that Ireland is losing its identity, and concerns were voiced regarding the effects of 'Europeanisation' and 'Americanisation'. The socio-economic transformations, coupled with the problems created by the tourism industry itself, in terms of increasing visitor numbers and the construction of accommodation facilities, are exerting pressure on the environment as well as the people. The recognition of these changes by tourists from Britain indicates a negative trend and confirms unequivocally that the threats imposed by a rapidly changing nature of Irish society and the tourism industry itself, may have detrimental consequences.

Related to the concept of commercialism, a number of respondents made reference to the welcome and the lack of language (English) competency amongst service providers. For example, an English visitor suggested that:

'The legendary Irish conviviality was well hidden this week because we did not see it'

while a Welsh tourists contends that:

'The welcome of professionals (shops, restaurants) is not as warm as it might be'.

An American questions:

'Why is it no Irish work in the hotels .. its all foreigners who cannot understand English and are unable to give precise directions'

while a German visitor criticises the Irish welcome in:

'To begin with no welcome on board the plane ... we were sorry that the welcome was not greater in B&Bs, restaurants and bars'.

Similarly, an English tourist stated:

'Disappointment as regards the welcome, B&Bs are becoming a real industry where the homely aspect is forgotten, not at all like the accommodation at home'

and one German visitor noted a:

'Big theft on the first day of the holiday .. welcome went from bad to worse (I had never experienced the 'worst' during my previous trips)'

A Scottish visitor referred to:

'The language barrier ruined part of the holiday (in the visitor centre I could not understand a word of what the Eastern European was saying) and there was I thinking the Irish ascent would be lovely to here while away'.

An Englishman described how:

'Many of the staff working in the bars are students with holidays jobs trying to learn English

and a British tourist stated that:

'People obviously exasperated if you can't count the Euro fast enough'.

While a Scottish visitor comments on:

'The Irish don't want to work in the bars or restaurants anymore .. that work is now left for the foreigners who cant speak a word of English'.

In general, the welcome of the people was not as good as anticipated. A more commercial aspect of tourism was also evident and the repeated observations in the print media discussed previously in Chapter 5, point to the issues facing tourism policy-makers in Ireland for whom the employment of non-Anglophone staff is a very new development. Also regarding the issue of development, respondents noted the destruction of the environment with litter and pollution being particular problems:

An Irish visitor stated that:

'Some towns (Dublin, Ennis) are dirty'

while a French tourist described Ireland as:

'Dirty environment .. boxes and papers in the cities and very untidy'.

A British visitor noted the sign:

'Take your litter home' – not always possible to fill you car with rubbish bags'

and a German tourist suggests that there is:

'Too much litter everywhere; even at historic sites (especially beer cans)'

while a British visitor notes:

'I was struck by the litter in the streets of Limerick'.

Such observations with regard to litter, pollution and the environment are significant threats to Ireland's tourism image. Poor road signs were cited by 6%. For example, a German visitor describes:

'Hugh difficulties with parking your car in the countryside – no picnic areas .. road signs not very clear, incomprehensible or inexistent on secondary roads',

an American considers the:

'Poor signage of towns and villages on the roads – sometimes in English/some in Gaelic/sometimes in miles/sometimes in Kilometres – signs badly situated',

while a British tourist said:

'I was lucky to find Shannon airport ... could still be driving around the potholed roads or should I say dirt tracks?'

Obvious infrastructural problems are clearly a serious issue given that the product is largely based on the ability of visitors to tour from one location to another in view of the fact that all respondents arrived by plane.

Irrespective of national identity and nationality of the respondent, the three key elements of Ireland's international appeal of 'people, pace and place' image projected by Tourism Ireland, is validated by responses to the post-visitation questionnaire. As the most

frequently mentioned attributes associated with Ireland post-visitation indicate (see Table 38 pg 262-263), the intended projected image accurately reflects the overall post-visit interpretations of Ireland's destination image. The results from the open-ended questions highlight the importance of scenery, welcome and culture attributes post-visitation across all national identities. Additional information provided by questions relating to what factors would encourage and/or discourage a return visit further validates these findings (pg 263-268), thereby lending support for the need to research which combines qualitative and quantitative methods as stated in Chapter 4. As such, the post-visitation image predominately includes unspoilt scenery, friendly people and traditional entertainment including nightlife and pubs with a strong cultural and historical focus. In order to extend further this investigation, an analysis of the factors that influence the formation of current perceptions post-visitation is necessary. This commences with an examination of Ireland's performance as a tourist destination after the trip.

7.3 Formation of current perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination

Respondents were asked to describe how they felt Ireland was performing with respect to the same attributes as presented in the pre-visitation questionnaire (see Table 16, pg 212). As in the pre-visitation questionnaire, respondents rated certain attributes on a scale of one to five according to how they thought Ireland was performing (where 1 = 'very poor performance' and 5 = 'very good performance'). The ranking of Ireland's performance with respect to these attributes is contained in Table 39.

Attribute	% rating Ireland's expected performance as 'good/very good' (n=140)	Mean rating
Beautiful Scenery	95	4.71
Relaxing/Tranquil	88	4.32
Friendly People/Welcoming	76	3.98
Irish Pubs/Drink/Guinness/Harp	80	4.21
Historic/Nostalgic	79	4.16
Laidback/slow pace of life	78	4.15
Good Nightlife	81	4.19
Family orientated	69	3.94
Accessible/easy to tour	47	3.16
Irish Music/Dance	54	3.52
Golfing	63	3.69
Castles/Crosses	42	3.18
Humour/Craic/Banter	38	3.18
Political Situation	37	3.17
Weather	27	2.99
Fishing	32	3.12
Hen and Stag destination	27	2.99
Expensive/Cost	27	2.99

Table 39: Post-visitation performance rating of destination attributes in Ireland given by tourists travelling from Britain

Respondents reported that Ireland was performing best with regards to its beautiful scenery and relaxing/tranquil environment. People were found to be friendly and welcoming while Irish pubs, Irish drinks and nightlife entertainment also performed very well. Finally, Ireland performed very satisfactorily as a historic and nostalgic destination offering a laidback, slow pace of life. On the surface, this suggests that the experience of Ireland corresponds with the key elements of Ireland's projected tourism image as outlined in Chapter 5, namely 'people, pace and place'. At the same time, Ireland has performed less favourably in terms of wet weather and poor fishing facilities. As a hen and stag destination, Ireland performed poorly and was considered by many respondents too expensive. However, it is also necessary to consider the formation of post-visit perceptions to assess how or indeed if the production of national identities influences behaviour of tourists travelling from Britain. More specifically, it is necessary to evaluate the relationship between organisation of trip and information search behaviour, motivation and visit intensity, nationality and national identity to explore if such variables influence post-visit interpretations of Ireland's image from the perspective of such visitors.

7.3.1 Organisation of trip and sources of information used during the trip

According to Lehto, O’Leary and Morrison (2004), tourists commonly engage themselves in pre-trip risk reduction activities. Advance booking (Holloway and Robinson 1995) and maximising knowledge by seeking as much information as possible about the destination are indicators of an individual’s search for security (Fodness and Murray 1997).

Consequently, a number of questions focused on information search behaviour during the visit. These included details of when the decision to visit Ireland was made, when the trip was reserved, information acquisition and evaluation of sources selected.

Table 40 indicates that a decision to visit Ireland is not immediately followed by a travel reservation. 49% of tourists decided to visit Ireland at least six months ago, yet 60% of respondents booked their trip less than two months in advance, suggesting a notable time lapse between making a decision to visit Ireland and commitment to travel. Similarly, 24% of visitors booked their holiday less than four weeks prior to departure, even though only 2% made an apparently impulsive decision.

Decision time	N	Reservation made	N
1 to 2 Years ago	22	1 to 2 years ago	12
6 to 11 months ago	46	6 to 11 months ago	16
3 to 5 months ago	44	3 to 5 months ago	28
1 to 2 months ago	25	1 to 2 months ago	51
less than 4 weeks ago	3	less than 4 weeks ago	33

Table 40: Length of time between decision to travel and making reservation

This finding may be related to the fact that for over 50% of participants, their visit to Ireland was an additional short-break holiday as they stayed for less than 5 nights (Table 50, pg 282). The short holiday duration may reduce the need to book in advance.

Alternatively, it might point to the fact that a more limited information search is required for a relatively shorter stay than when booking a main holiday for more than five nights.

Therefore, the degree of risk is decreased in short haul-travel where significantly less time and money is invested and the level of uncertainty is less than for long haul-travel.

Equally, it may be contended that the pre-purchase information seeking behaviour in this case is extensive, given that 46% of visitors made the decision to travel a minimum of six months prior to their visit. However, it may also suggest that information acquisition after the travel reservation has been made, is considered less relevant as the destination selection has already been made. As such, it is suggested that information search behaviour may be conceptualised as a series of interrelated activities related to aspects of the external environment which in this case may relate to the difficulty of the choice task, number of alternatives and short haul flight time, situation variables which may include previous satisfaction, time constraints, perceived risk, composition of travelling party, as well as consumer characteristics such as education, prior product knowledge, and involvement and product characteristics which could include purpose of trip and mode of transportation. Thus, to uncover the influence of information sources on image formation, a psychological/motivational analysis which combines the individual, the product and involvement is necessary.

Cross tabulations in Table 41 reveals that the vast majority of those holding French, German and American passports made the decision to travel at least six months prior to their visit, while 76% of visitors carrying British passports made the decision to travel to Ireland no more than five months prior to taking the trip. While 60% of respondents made travel reservations within a relatively short time (two months) before travelling, passport held appears to influence to a limited extent those who are likely to book a trip to Ireland in such a short period of time prior to the visit.

	British	Dual	French	German	American
1-2 yrs	3	1	5	5	8
6-11 months	17	1	6	11	10
3-5 months	41	0	1	1	1
1-2 months	24	0	1	0	0
< 4 weeks	3	0	0	0	0

Table 41: Decision Time x Passport Held

As evidenced in Table 42, those holding British passports account for 55% of all of the trips booked in less than two months before the trip. This may indicate that British passport holders require less time to arrange travel to Ireland in comparison to 46% of French, 52% of German and 47% of American passport holders who reserved their trip at least six months prior to this visit. Gursoya and McCleary (2004) suggest that tourists are likely to search as long as they believe that the benefits of acquiring information outweigh the costs.

	British	Dual	French	German	American
1-2 yrs	0	1	3	4	5
6-11 months	4	0	3	5	4
3-5 months	8	1	4	4	10
1-2 months	44	0	3	4	0
< 4 weeks	33	0	0	0	0

Table 42: Reservation made x Passport Held

Such costs according to Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) can be categorised into three separate components: (1) time spent, (2) financial cost and (3) effort required. In this study, time, cost and effort required appears to be more limited for the British passport holder than for the other passport holders both before the reservation is made and after the purchase decision has been confirmed. Information acquisition is perceived as less necessary by the British passport holders when selecting the destination and for onsite decisions such as choosing accommodation, transportation, activities and tours. However, Schul and Crompton (1983) suggest that information search almost always initially takes place internally. Internal information search includes previous experiences and knowledge accumulated through on-going search. It may be suggested that the British passport holder has prior knowledge of the destination (perceived familiarity) and consequently does not perceive a need to acquire additional information externally. This may infer that there is a relationship between passport held and individual's pretrip risk reduction efforts. However, it may also indicate that there is a negative relationship between the amount of prior knowledge (past visits/perceived familiarity) and the amount

of external search time as indicated in Table 43 irrespective of passport held. In other words, as perceived levels of familiarity increase, the amount of external information search time considered necessary reduces.

Table 43 indicates that as the number of visits to Ireland increased, the time taken to make the decision to travel reduces. Over 70% of all respondents were first-time visitors and all first-time visitors, made the decision to travel at least three months prior to travel. 100% of those who had travelled to Ireland at least ten times made their travel decision a maximum of two months in advance of the visit. However, this does not validate the claim that a negative relationship exists between amount of prior knowledge and external information acquisition for two reasons. Firstly, the vast majority of respondents were first-time visitors and secondly, even though a limited search time was recorded, it does not automatically follow that extensive external research was not undertaken in a shorter period of time.

	1 st visit	2 nd visit	3 rd -5 th visit	6 th -10 th visit	10 visits +
1-2 yrs	22	0	0	0	0
6-11 months	40	30	0	0	0
3-5 months	37	35	0	0	0
1-2 months	0	35	70	100	50
< 4 weeks	0	0	30	0	50

Table 43: Decision Time x no. of previous visits

To further understand the relationship between individual's risk reduction efforts, accumulated experiences and nationality, respondents were presented questions relating to what sources, of information they used most while on holiday, the reason for choosing sources and the accuracy of the information provided. Respondents were asked to select information sources from the same list of nine sources that were presented in the pre-visitation questionnaire. Table 44 indicates a considerable variety of organic, induced and autonomous sources of information were used during the respondents' trip even though such sources, which Phelps (1986) calls secondary image, were also selected before the

trip. Organic sources were popular during the trip. These involved people such as acquaintances during the trip, and friends and family giving information about places based on their own knowledge or experience whether the information was requested or volunteered.

Information Source	During trip %
1 Bord Failte Brochures	5
2 Guide Books	22
3 Word of Mouth	65
4 Film/Radio	15
5 Tour Operator Brochures	2
6 Newspapers/Magazines	12
7 Travel Books	12
8 Internet	8
9 Others	6

Note: sum of results exceed number of respondents as multiple answers were given

Table 44: External Sources of Information used during trip

65% used travel and guidebooks. Interestingly, while respondents were not asked to specifically name which travel/guidebook they used, over 70% of those who noted travel or guide books as the main source of information provided details of which text they used in the 'other' option. Two books overwhelmingly dominated the texts travellers referred to, namely; McCarthy's bar and the Lonely Planet. This may suggest that exposure to such literature may result in visitors perceiving a standardised image of what to expect during the visit and that ongoing search is influenced by involvement with the product and the text simultaneously. Most notably Tourism Ireland Brochures, Tour Operator Brochures and the Internet were used considerably less than other sources of information during the trip. A number of comments relating to the main reasons for choosing a particular source of information were offered:

'I didn't know where to access a PC ... so I used the local paper'
'Booked on-line with Ryanair and took brochures for the trip'.

'Unable to get online as library was closed the day I arrived but the Lonely Planet was very helpful'.

'It seems just like too much work to get a computer ... anyway I use a computer everyday back home so I listened to the local radio instead which wasn't bad'.

'Holidays are about reading books not screens! ... I bought 'McCarthy's bar' to read in a bar in Ireland!'.

Irrespective of which sources were considered most useful during the respondents' trip, it may be concluded that travellers make systematic use of information available to them during the trip. Travellers to Ireland do not seem to depend on one type of information source, but rather combine available information sources rationally. This is inferred in comments such as:

'No point just looking at brochures when away as you really get an insight by just listening to the radio and hearing the news on their TV'.

'Social history is much more interesting than reading mass produced brochures ... although brochures I suppose are good for looking up accommodation'.

'Its good to read the local papers – find out what's really going on'

'I have to look at the Irish times when I'm in Ireland ... it has a different sort of angle to the Times here'.

'Took the Lonely Planet and Rough Guide for the trip'.

'Brought a couple of travel books as they tell the place as a story rather than giving directions and phone numbers all the time. Also picked up the Irish Examiner'.

However, what is clear is that repeat visitors use a varied approach to information acquisition during the trip. According to Woodside and Ronkainen (1980), first time travellers to a destination are prone to using travel agents and tour operators more frequently. Similarly, Bitner and Booms (1982) and Snepenger, Meged, Snelling and Worrall (1990) found that destination-naïve (first-time) travellers mostly rely on professional sources such as tour operators and travel agents in their information search behaviour. It is therefore relevant to note as indicated in Table 45, no respondent who had visited the destination before used Tourism Ireland and/or Tour Operators' brochures during their subsequent trip/s.

	1 st visit	2 nd visit	3 rd to 5 th visit	6 th -10 th visit	10 visits +
1. Failte Ireland Brochures	8	0	0	0	0
2. Guide Books	4	20	40	52	40
3. Word of Mouth	59	21	10	16	10
4. Film/Radio	0	9	30	25	50
5. Tour Op brochures	4	0	0	0	0
6. Newspapers/magazines	0	25	20	66	50
7. Travel Books	0	25	10	50	30
8. Internet	0	0	10	20	20
9. Others	0	0	0	0	0

Table 45: External Sources used most during trip x number of visits

Reliance on particular sources of information during the trip varied depending on whether this trip was the first or one of a number of previous experiences with the destination. As indicated in the above table, as the number of visits to Ireland increase, the reliance on word of mouth declines and is replaced by other sources including Guide and Travel Books, Film/Radio, Newspapers/Magazines, and to a lesser extent, the Internet. The main reasons given for selecting particular sources of information which were considered by almost all respondents as providing an accurate picture of Ireland include; 'interesting and informative', 'colourful and not too detailed', 'easy to understand', 'short and concise', 'to the point', 'an essential accommodation guide', 'accurate', 'small and easy to pack/carry', 'realistic', 'up-to-date' as well as being 'detailed and precise'.

Thus, it is suggested that experienced consumers perform more efficient information searches primarily because they use a greater variety of information sources during the trip, while indicating that less time is required between making the decision to travel and the actual trip. At the same time, this discredits the notion that there is a negative relationship between the amount of prior knowledge and the amount of external search. In accordance with Coupey, Irwin and Paynes' (1998) findings, it is argued that consumers experienced with a destination perform more efficient information searches because they know what is important, useful, and where to get it. Also, it is suggested that prior knowledge encourages extensive searches by making it easier to process

additional information. For example, increased knowledge of Ireland may allow the individual to formulate more questions and, therefore may lead to more extensive external searches as indicated by the variety of information sources utilised by repeat visitors.

While Table 45 verifies that information acquisition is dependant on previous visitation, Table 46 also indicates that utilisation of specific external information sources and their information search behaviour during the trip are likely to be influenced by visitors' perceived national identity.

	Failte Ireland Brochure	Guide Books	Word of Mouth	Film /Radio	Tour Operator Brochures	Newspaper Magazines	Travel Books	Internet
British	15	30	55	15	10	10	5	5
English	8	29	42	4	4	4	8	4
Welsh	0	15	77	46	0	31	31	15
Scottish	0	11	84	21	0	16	21	16
French	14	21	71	0	0	7	7	0
German	0	38	44	0	0	0	31	13
American	0	10	50	50	0	50	0	0
Irish/US	0	0	100	100	0	0	0	0
Irish/British	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0
Irish	0	14	95	5	0	5	0	9.5
European	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note: sum of results exceed number of respondents as multiple answers were given

Table 46: Image Source used most during trip x National Identity

While levels of dependency on word of mouth as a source of information varied, across the range of national identities expressed, the majority of all respondents considered this the most important source of information during the visit. This confirms Zeithaml's (1981) assertion that the need for experienced information (i.e. those living in the destination) prompts a reliance on word of mouth sources as they are perceived to be more credible and less biased. As found pre-visitation, the information search behaviour of those who identify themselves as British, English and French whilst on holiday is similar particularly in relation to their limited use of travel books and continued reliance, although to a much lesser extent than pre-visitation, on Tourism Ireland Brochures. Interestingly, these three markets were the only users of brochure material during the trip with both the British and

English using both Tourism Ireland and Tour Operator brochures while those identifying themselves as French referred to the use of Tourism Ireland brochures only. This reinforces the need for tourism providers who wish to target such markets to concentrate their efforts on such government agency brochures.

In contrast, all other markets including those holding Welsh and Scottish identities did not consider Tourism Ireland brochures of any importance. Travel books and Film/Radio were cited as the main sources of information during the trip, even though both the Welsh and Scottish markets did not use these as information sources pre-visitation at all. Also, both of these national identities continued to use (although to a lesser degree than pre-visitation) the Internet more than any other market during the trip. Those holding German identities were the main users of the Internet and travel books whilst at the destination. Those who identified themselves as American relied on film/radio and newspapers/magazines, and to a lesser degree, guide books. Not surprisingly, those who considered themselves Irish used word of mouth most, followed by guide books and the Internet. In each of the remaining categories, only one respondent described himself/herself as Irish/US, Irish/British and European.

In short, this study's findings suggest that travellers from Britain to Ireland conduct an ongoing external information search during their visit. This analysis indicates that repeat visitation and national identities held are factors that impact on the way travellers make their vacation decisions during their trip. It also suggests that in analysing the information search behaviour of visitors travelling from Britain to Ireland, it is not sufficient to assess the market as one homogenous group. It is contended that using national identity to segment the market may provide more accurate results as it will assist in highlighting any disparity in information acquisition between visitors holding different national identities. However, to extend this line of enquiry, a series of questions relating to motivation to travel and level of visit intensity were presented to respondents, to distinguish the degree of difference or similarity these variables have on differing national identities.

7.3.2 Analysis of motivations

Unlike in the pre-visitation questionnaires, participants were required to indicate the main reasons for the visit in a closed-ended question. This variation in questioning style was introduced to extend the depth of analysis, avoid respondent fatigue, allow participants the opportunity to analyse their reasons for travel post-visitation, and at the same time, ensure that respondents did not feel under pressure to remember the motivational reasons given pre-visitation.

As indicated in Table 47, for all passport holders the main reason for their visit was holiday. This was followed by visiting family and friends except in the case of German passport holders. While the categories in Table 47 are not strictly comparable to those outlined pre-visitation (Table 25, pg 235) it nevertheless highlights that holiday and visiting friends and relatives are the main reasons for travel.

	British	American	French	German	Dual
Holiday	80	63	92	100	50
Study	1	0	0	0	0
VFR	17	37	8	0	50
Business	1	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0	0	0

Table 47: Motivational Factors x Passport Held

However, while acknowledging the importance of these findings, it is evident from Table 48 that using national identity and not relying solely on passport held provides a more detailed analysis. Holidays are the main reason for the trip but using national identity provides a more detailed assessment given that visiting friends and relatives is considerably more important for those expressing Welsh, Scottish, Irish and American identity. In contrast, for those of British, English, French and German identity, holidaying was the only reason cited for the visit. These findings are consistent with the degree of reliance on word of mouth as a source of information for the different national identities as indicated in Table 48. This may suggest that motivations influence the image forming process and choice of destination, and perhaps that motivations exert a direct influence

on the affective component. In so far as affective images refer to the feelings aroused by a place, those holding varying national identities, while having different motives, may assess a destination in a similar way if the perception satisfies their needs. In the end, the affective component is the value that individuals attach to destinations based on motivations. Moreover, since the affective dimension influences the overall image, motivations may also influence either directly or indirectly, that overall image.

	Holiday	Study	VFR	Business	Other
British	100	0	0	0	0
English	92	0	8	0	0
Welsh	62	0	38	0	1
Scottish	63	5	37	0	0
French	93	0	7	0	0
German	100	0	0	0	0
American	60	0	40	0	0
Irish/American	0	0	100	0	0
Irish/British	100	0	0	0	0
Irish	48	0	53	0	0
European	100	0	0	0	0

Table 48: Motivational Factors x National Identity

Closely related to the concept of affected images, is the influence of visit intensity. Visit intensity refers to the extent of an individual's interaction with the place. In this instance, this relates to whether the trip was a main or secondary holiday, the duration of stay and organisation of travel and activities undertaken.

7.3.3 Visit Intensity

For 54% of all visitors, Table 49 shows that Ireland was a secondary holiday destination. This indicates that Ireland is considered by travellers from Britain to be almost equally suitable as either the primary or secondary holiday choice. However, given that for the majority of those who identify themselves as Scottish, French and American, Ireland is their main holiday choice, this is not true across all national identities. For example, 90% of all those who identified themselves as American, considered Ireland a primary holiday choice which may be attributed to journey times and cost. However, it does not explain

why those of Welsh and Scottish identity consider Ireland a main holiday choice, with 54% and 68% respectively noting Ireland as their main holiday. This finding may have implications for the marketing of Ireland as a short break destination for those expressing British, English and German national identities while longer and more extensive holidays may appeal to those of Scottish, French, American, Irish/American and Irish identity.

	Main Holiday	Secondary Holiday
British	10	90
English	17	83
Welsh	54	46
Scottish	68	32
French	57	43
German	25	75
American	90	10
Irish/American	100	0
Irish/British	0	100
Irish	76	24
European	0	100

Table 49: National Identity x Type of Holiday

Similarly, in Table 50, 50% of all respondents stayed in Ireland for less than five nights with only 28% staying for at least fourteen nights. For example, 75% of those who considered themselves British were at the destination for less than five nights while 74% of Scottish and 70% of American identity stayed between six and thirteen nights. This indicates that whether a destination is considered a main or secondary choice is dependant on not just the number of nights spent in Ireland, but also on the national identity of the visitor.

	< 5 nights	6 – 13 nights	14 – 21	22+
British	75	25	0	0
English	79	21	0	0
Welsh	54	46	0	0
Scottish	26	74	1	0
French	50	50	0	0
German	63	25	13	0
American	10	70	20	0
Irish/American	0	0	100	0
Irish/British	100	0	0	0
Irish	19	76	0	5
European	100	0	0	0

Table 50: National Identity x No. of Nights

With respect to the organisation of the trip, over 80% of travellers, irrespective of national identity, were independent visitors which may, in part explained the general lack of interest in Tourism Ireland and tour operator brochures. Table 51 highlights a number of findings that may have implications for the destination marketer. For example 50% of all

	Alone	Couple	Friends	Family
British	2	12	6	0
English	1	16	7	0
Welsh	3	6	2	2
Scottish	4	10	2	3
French	0	10	4	0
German	4	12	0	0
American	5	1	0	4
Irish/American	1	0	0	0
Irish/British	0	1	0	0
Irish	5	5	0	11
European	0	1	0	0

Table 51: National Identity x Organisation of trip

visitors travelled as part of a couple, 35% alone, 29% with friends and 28% with family indicating that those travelling singly and those as part of a couple are the main target market. With the exception of those travelling with family which not surprisingly are more frequent for those holding Irish identities and to a lesser extent for those of American identity, little difference in the results exist. This reinforces the previously discussed assertion, that Ireland is typically not considered a non-family destination and relies more on those travelling alone or as a couple. Obviously, Ireland is also a non-sun destination which may impact on the number of families who visit the destination.

Duration of stay and organisation of trip may dictate the regions visited and activities undertaken during the stay. Over 70% of tourists visited both the Clare, Limerick and Tipperary and Dublin regions, 25% mentioned Cork and Kerry with Kilkenny and Waterford being the least popular. This is hardly surprising considering the geographical location of Shannon airport where the survey was initially carried out. It appears that visitors are relatively mobile as the majority visited more than one area and given the travel distance involved between the Clare, Limerick and Tipperary regions, and the Dublin area. As the vast majority travelled without families, this concurs with Lawsons'

(1991) findings that the social orientation of singles and couples is greater due to the lack of constraints imposed by children. Irrespective of pre-visitation intentions, only 10% of visitors actually went to a heritage/visitor centre and no respondent mentioned a museum or art gallery post-visitation. Of those that visited a heritage/visitor centre, the vast majority held Scottish or Welsh national identities whilst repeat visitors were the most frequent visitors to a house or castle. 25% cited festival/cultural events most notably traditional music sessions and contemporary dance shows. In contrast over 60% of all visitors visited or viewed historic monuments irrespective of national identity. Similarly, almost all respondents mentioned visiting pubs which reflects non-family activities.

Given the importance of pubs as a tourist attraction, the recently introduced legislation that children under 16 are no longer permitted on licensed premises (excluding restaurants) after 8pm (Irish times 2004), may have a positive effect in attracting the existing type of tourist. Predictably, this may also have a negative impact any effort to increase numbers of visitors with children (Personal Interview 2003, representative from Tourism Ireland) . Overall, however, first-time visitors undertook less activities than repeat visitors. As such, it is evident that accumulated touristic experiences play a positive role in determining tourist behaviour during the actual visit. The relationship between first-time tourists and the number of visits made to places of interest in the destination becomes clear in terms of their lack of use of natural and cultural resources. Prior experience was a strong predictor of activity participation patterns with the most frequent tourists tending to have the most focused activity choice sets. It is thus of primary importance that product providers carry out campaigns to make first-time visitors aware of places of interest at the destination to stimulate repeat business and increase length of stay.

In short, as motivation to visit Ireland is based on what Goodall and Ashworth (1988) describe as person-specific motivation and destination-specific attributes (push/pull factors), it is logical to assume that destination choice is based on visitors' perceived image that these motivational factors will be realised. Thus, after the visit the tourist will

evaluate their experiences against the previously perceived image. In an attempt to understand tourists' personal evaluation of the trip, a number of questions relating to image modification and intention to return were posited to assess the post-consumption perception. Image modification in this instance relates to the tourists' self evaluation of the stay, while intention to return is concerned with the influence of destination image on after-purchase behaviour, as well as the relationship between image and subsequent evaluation of the stay.

7.3.4 Image Modification and intention to return

All respondents noted that their image of Ireland had changed, with the exception of 19% of those who identified themselves as Irish who did not report any image change. As outlined in Table 52, for the majority the image change was positive. The main reasons given relating to people and welcome, scenery and environment, culture, pubs and beer, atmosphere and visiting people. Indeed the endurance of a traditional image of Ireland post-visitation serves to highlight the influence per-established stereotypes and clichés which appear to be reinforced irrespective of reality.

	Positive	Negative
British	17	3
English	21	3
Welsh	12	1
Scottish	18	1
French	12	2
German	16	0
American	10	0
Irish/American	1	0
Irish/British	1	0
Irish	15	2
European	1	0

Table 52: National Identity x Image Change of first time visitors

Of those who reported that their image had changed negatively, the main reasons given were concerned with the welcome and the people particularly in terms of poor language

ability and the over-commercialism of B&Bs. Litter and dirty environment 'poor hygiene', 'over-construction' 'over flowing litter bins', and cost/quality mainly in terms of accommodation and food, were cited. Also, poor roads and inadequate signs were referred to by 6% of respondents.

While these findings were typical across all national identities, it does not necessarily ensure that respondents are likely to return. This is because the consumption of a tourism product will occur in the future, and according to Sirakay, McLellan and Uysal (1996) tourists are relatively unsure of their intention to return. In fact, it might be argued that on occasions, tourists do seek variety and prefer to visit new destinations. As such, the special peculiarities of tourism must also be taken into account. For example, while a positive evaluation of the perceived image of Ireland post-visitation does not guarantee their return when questioned on their intention to return, some interesting insights emerged. This is not to dismiss the significance of the role of a positive image, as tourists are willing to recommend the destination to family and friends. Thus, intention to return based on national identity is useful in understanding the likelihood of both repeat visitation and subsequent positive word of mouth.

Table 53 indicates that those holding Welsh, Scottish, American and Irish national identities are the most likely to return. However, those expressing Welsh, Scottish and American identities do not expect to travel next year, with the majority of them choosing to visit in two or three years. In contrast, of those identifying themselves as British, 40% will probably visit while 40% also suggest that they probably will not, and 5% will never return. Similarly, of those holding English identities, 60% will probably visit, with 17% noting that they probably will not visit, with a further 17% reporting that they will definitely not visit. Over 50% of those with French national identities will probably visit but 43% noted that they probably won't visit, while 50% of all those with American identities reported that they will definitely visit and 30% suggesting that they probably will return.

	Yes Def	Yes Prob	No Prob not	No definet not	Next year	2-3 year s	4-5 year s	5 year s +	No Idea	Nevr
British	10	40	40	10	10	60	5	0	5	5
English	20	60	17	17	4	13	4	13	50	17
Welsh	54	31	15	0	15	62	15	0	8	0
Scottish	42	53	5	0	21	53	0	0	16	0
French	7	50	43	0	7	43	7	7	36	0
German	19	50	31	6	6	19	13	13	44	6
American	50	30	20	0	20	60	0	0	20	0
Irish/American	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0
Irish/British	100	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0
Irish	90	10	0	0	57	24	14	0	5	0
European	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	100	0

Table 53: National Identity x Intention to return and timing of next visit

At the other end of the spectrum, relatively few respondents considered that they would never visit the destination, but a substantial number suggested that they had no idea when the next trip was likely to take place. However, of the 20% of those who never intended to return, 85% considered themselves English, 30% German and 25% British, suggesting that national identity is an indicator of propensity for tourists to return to the destination.

The final set of questions attempted to establish Ireland's competitors, where respondents were asked to indicate which other destinations are similar to Ireland. The majority mentioned at least one destination as Table 54 indicates.

	Scotland	Wales	Isle of White	Cornwall	Brittany	Lake District	Yorkshire
British	40	15	5	20	0	15	5
English	17	8	8	25	4	17	21
Welsh	38	46	0	16	0	0	0
Scottish	74	5	0	16	5	0	1
French	43	21	0	29	7	0	0
German	63	19	6	13	0	0	0
American	70	10	0	20	0	0	0
Irish/US	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Irish/British	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Irish	48	0	0	48	5	0	5
European	0	0	0	100	0	0	0

Table 54 National Identity x Similar Destinations

Respondents first answers are recorded in the above table, as it is expected that their first choice most closely represents the country perceived to be most like Ireland. Those expressing British, Scottish, American and German identities considered that Scotland was most like Ireland, while those of English and French identities suggested Cornwall as being most similar to Ireland. Interestingly, 21% of those expressing an English identity considered Yorkshire as being like Ireland. This finding may in part be explained by the fact that several respondents came from the north of England as very few other respondents considered Yorkshire similar to Ireland. Those who considered their national identity Irish considered Scotland and Cornwall most like Ireland while those of Welsh identity suggested that Wales and Scotland was most like Ireland. This may suggest that national identity has an influence on the post-visit perceptions of the product itself and in turn, the nationality of the place influences that perception. Overall, the countries most often cited were Scotland, followed by Cornwall and Wales. Although Scotland is recognised by Failte Ireland (2004b) and ITIC (2004) as being Ireland's closest competitor emphasising the importance of comparative image research, it is advisable for those involved in destination image management to focus on the factors of differentiation between Ireland and many similar destinations in order to develop a strong competitive advantage. The reasons given why Ireland has advantages and disadvantages over the destinations listed were broadly similar to the encouraging and discouraging factors outlined in sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2.

In summary, this chapter has presented the data analysis of the post-visitation questionnaire which has primarily related to the post-visit perceived image of Ireland, the influence of the nationality of the product and the influence of the nationality of the tourist on post-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived. The following section details the main findings of this analysis.

7.4 Summary of study's findings

Firstly, the most frequently mentioned positive variables associated with Ireland as a tourist destination post-visitation include beautiful, unspoilt scenery, excellent pub scene, an easy, relaxed, fun and carefree atmosphere, the existence of places such as Connemara, Kerry and Dublin as well as familiar and friendly people. Negative connotations include very expensive/overly priced and wet/miserable/poor weather. The post-visitation performance rating of destination attributes appeared to validate this post-visit perceived image. Ireland performed best with regards to beautiful scenery, relaxing/tranquil, friendly people/welcoming, Irish pub/drink, good nightlife and potential offered by the destination for history/nostalgia and laidback, slow place of life. At the same time, Ireland performed less favourable in terms of weather, fishing, cost and as a hen and stag destination.

Secondly, passport held influences reservation patterns with the majority of British passport holders booking their travel arrangements to Ireland in a much shorter period of time prior to the journey than those holding French, German or American passports. Consequently, unlike those holding British passports, French, German and American passport holders may be less sensitive to last minute promotional efforts of product providers and respond more positively to advance booking offers. However, as repeat visitors and those holding British passports are more likely to reserve their holiday nearer the date of departure, marketers have a relatively shorter period of time in which to communicate their promotional messages. This more limited period of time may indicate there is a relationship between passport held and perceived levels of familiarity. In other words, as perceived levels of familiarity increase, the amount of external information search time considered necessary reduces. Schmidt and Spreng (1996) argue that it is during this pre-purchase period that marketers exert most influence on image perception and therefore consumer's buying decisions. Therefore, marketing strategies, particularly in relation to the timing of promotional campaigns need to take account of these booking patterns when targeting such consumers. As such, image perception is influenced, not

only to an extent by national identity of the travellers and perceived levels of familiarity, (experience) but is also a key factor in the hands of destination marketers.

Thirdly, all travellers conduct an information search during their trip and evidence suggests that for all visitors to Ireland, word of mouth is a very important source of information at the destination. As such, the process of acquiring information during a trip to Ireland is extensive as consumers make use of sources of information at their disposal such as TV, radio, newspapers and magazines during the visit. The evidence suggests that information acquisition is dependant on both national identity and previous visitation. As the number of visits to Ireland increases, the reliance on word of mouth declines and is replaced by other sources including Guide and Travel Books, Film/Radio, Newspapers/Magazines, and to a lesser extent the Internet. However, the results also suggest that national identity expressed is an indicator of information search behaviour. The acquisition of information by those who identified themselves as British, English and French whilst on holiday, is similar particularly in relation to their limited use of travel books and continued reliance on Tourism Ireland Brochures. In contrast, all other markets including those holding Welsh, Scottish and American identities did not consider Tourism Ireland Brochures of use. The Internet was used most by those of Welsh, Scottish and German identity, those of German identity used travel books most and those expressing American identity preferred film/radio and newspapers/magazines as information sources. Thus, it is contended that in analysing information search behaviour of visitors travelling from Britain to Ireland, it is not sufficient to assess the market as one homogenous group. It is suggested that marketers need to be aware that information search behaviour during the trip are dependent on both previous visitation and national identity, and that they have the capacity to reach repeat visitors by extending the type and variety of promotional material employed at the destination.

Fourthly, the majority of tourists to Ireland are first-time visitors travelling alone or as part of a couple, staying for a relatively short period of time, with holidaying and visiting friends

and relatives cited as the main reasons for travel post-visitation. Ireland is typically regarded as a non-family destination and even though visitors were relatively mobile only 10% actually visited a heritage/visitor centre and no respondents mentioned a museum or art gallery. Of those that visited a heritage/visitor centre, the vast majority held Scottish or Welsh national identities, while repeat visitors were the most frequent visitors to a house of castle. Thus, national identity and past visits influence propensity to enjoy a greater variety of activities and attractions.

Finally, while the vast majority reported a positive image change irrespective of national identity, when questioned on their intention to return, national identity influenced propensity to return. For example, those of Welsh, Scottish, American and Irish national identities are the most likely to return, 40% of those identified as British will probably visit, while another 40% suggest that they will not visit. Thus, this infers that there is a relationship between national identity and overall intention to return. While, acknowledging that positive post-purchase evaluation does not ensure repeat visitation, it may perhaps increase the possibility of tourists recommending the destination to family and friends. In agreement with Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez (2001), tourism destinations should concern themselves with improving their image if they are to compete successfully in the competitive holiday market, because the image that tourists hold of them will affect their post-purchase evaluation and the word of mouth communication that takes place, as well as the possibility of repeat visitation. In addition to this, achieving a lasting relationship with customers will also help to offset competition from destinations considered similar to Ireland. Overall, the countries most often cited were Scotland, followed by Cornwall and Wales. Again, the tourists' national identity informed which countries were considered most like Ireland. It is also concluded that the nationality of the product also influences the image perceived post-visitation.

7.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, nationality, national identity and previous visitation are key factors which influence interpretations of perceived images of Ireland post-visitation. While, this chapter has outlined how tourists evaluate experiences post-visitation, it is also necessary to compare post-purchase perceptions with pre-visitation perceptions and intended projected images. Thus, chapter 8 will provide a comparative analysis of the perceived images of Ireland pre- and post-visitation as well as the intended projected image of Ireland by combining the results of each stage of the data analysis. This is necessary in order to assess the implications of potential differences between the perceptions of Ireland's image, its intended projected image and the actual projected image of Ireland, and to highlight the roles played by stereo-typing, destination familiarity and place attachment.

Chapter 8 A discussion of the results of the pre-visitation, post-visitation and projected image data analysis

8.0 Introduction

The previous data analysis in chapters six and seven, identified the intended and actual projected images of Ireland, and investigated the influence of the nationality of the tourist and of the product pre- and post-visitation. However, to assess the implications of potential differences between the perceptions of Ireland's image, its intended projected image and the actual projected image of Ireland both before and after the trip, it is necessary to undertake a comparative analysis of the findings. This will be achieved by comparing the results of the pre-and post-visitation data analysis, while referring to the intended projected images and the actual projected image of Ireland as a tourist destination in Britain. Consequently, this chapter is designed to measure the image change (if any) between the perceived and projected images of Ireland pre-and post-visitation, and to assess the degree of influence that nationality and national identity may have on these images.

To facilitate this discussion, this chapter is divided into four sections. In the first part of this chapter, a profile of respondent's socio-demographic details both pre- and post-visitation is outlined. Secondly, the current perceptions of Ireland is presented to ascertain potential differences between overall perceptions pre- and post-visitation. Thirdly, a comparative analysis of the factors influencing the formation of current pre- and post- visitation is undertaken are considered and includes an examination of the ratings of Ireland's performance as a tourist destination before and after the trip. To evaluate the implications of the influence of the nationality of the tourist and the nationality of the product for pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's perceived and projected destination images, a number of contributing factors are explored. These include sources of information, familiarisation, stereotyping and motivation to determine the degree of influence such variables have on image modification both pre- and post visitation in the

context of nationality and/or national identity. Finally, the main findings of this comparative analysis are presented.

8.1 Respondents socio-demographic profile pre- and post-visitation

Very little variation exists between the socio-demographic profiles of pre-visitation and post-visitation respondents, which in the case of nationality, country of origin and national/ethnic/cultural identity are proportionally almost identical before and after the trip. A slightly higher percentage of females returned questionnaires post-visitation than did males, while a marginally lower percentage of British passport holders who completed pre- visitation questionnaires returned questionnaires post-visitation. Similarly, while 9 respondents (3%) were aged between 18 and 25 pre-visitation, only 1 (.7%) respondent in this age group completed the post-visitation questionnaire. A more detailed summary is provided in Table 55.

Characteristic	N	%	N	%
Passport Held				
British	188	67	89	64
Dual passport	2	0.71	2	1
French	30	11	13	9
German	28	10	17	12
American	33	12	19	14
Nationality				
British	91	32	43	31
English	37	13	18	13
Welsh	18	6	9	6
Scottish	42	15	21	15
French	30	11	15	11
German	28	10	14	10
American	32	11	17	12
Irish/American	2	0.7	2	1
Irish/British	1	0.3	1	.7

Country of Origin

Britain	91	32	46	33
England	37	13	18	13
Wales	18	6	9	6
Scottish	42	15	21	15
France	30	11	15	11
Germany	28	10	14	10
America	35	12	17	12

National/ethnic/cultural identity

British	43	15	20	14
English	51	18	24	17
Welsh	29	10	13	9
Scottish	38	14	19	14
French	28	10	14	10
German	23	8	16	11
American	19	7	10	7
Irish/American	1	0.3	1	.7
Irish/British	1	0.3	1	.7
Irish	43	15	21	15
English Protestant	1	0.3	0	0
British European	2	0.7	0	0
Catholic	1	0.3	0	0
European	1	0.3	1	.7

Gender

Male	134	48	65	46
Female	147	52	75	54

Age

18-25	9	3	1	.7
26-35	45	16	20	14
36-50	84	30	42	30
51-64	96	34	50	36
65+	47	17	27	19

Length of residence in Britain

Less than 5 years	3	1	2	1
6 to 10 years	8	3	4	3
11-15 years	32	11	14	10
16 years +	238	85	120	86

Table 55: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of respondents travelling from Britain

8.2 Pre and post-visitation perceptions of Ireland as a tourist destination

Table 56 compares pre- and post-visitation perceptions of Ireland to investigate the degree (if any) of image modification in terms of images, atmosphere, characteristics, symbols and emotions attached to the destination. Using the same headings as in the pre- and post-visitation analysis for ease of comparison, Table 55 compares the most frequently mentioned attributes before and after the trip.

Attributes	Pre-Visitation N = 281	Post-Visitation N = 140
<i>Environment</i>		
Beautiful Scenery/Emerald isle/Shamrock	90%	92%
Natural, unspoilt environment	67%	80%
Attractive cities/towns/villages	42%	23%
Nature/Wildlife	40%	38%
Pollution free/litter free	39%	12%
Open spaces/freedom	20%	50%
Stone Walls/quiet roads	18%	25%
<i>Friendliness/Hospitality</i>		
Friendly, hospitable people	62%	50%
Easy, relaxed, fun, carefree	45%	62%
Banter, 'craic'	34%	25%
Lazy/under-achievers	9%	2%
Single race/one culture/all white	6%	10%
<i>Culture/Way of Life</i>		
Nightlife/entertainment	30%	63%
Excellent pub scene	56%	70%
Traditional music & song	21%	45%
Irish dancing/riverdance	19%	35%
Heritage/History/Celtic	26%	18%
Farming	10%	14%
Religion	23%	20%
Family values/family friendly	14%	4%
Familiar/known	16%	64%
Slow pace/laidback	22%	16%
Tranquil/peaceful	31%	24%
Romantic/Mysterious	10%	14%
Old-fashioned/narrow minded	9%	5%
<i>Value/Price</i>		
Good all round value for money	26%	1%
Competitively priced access transport	12%	0%
Very expensive/overly priced	21%	45%
Easy to access/tour	15%	10%
Celtic Tiger	5%	15%

Activities

Golfing	24%	34%
Fishing	12%	10%
Rugby	8%	0%

Political issues/safety

Safe place	13%	23%
Terrorism/war/IRA	17%	0%
Politically unstable/threatening	8%	2%
Sinn Fein	5%	5%

Other Destination Attributes

Places e.g. Connemara, Kerry, Dublin	12%	72%
Physical appearance/Irish accent	13%	21%
Irish Food/potatoes	9%	14%
Patriotic/proud nation	7%	14%
Immigration	6%	9%
Outdoor climate/healthy (positive)	17%	25%
Wet/miserable/poor weather (negative)	6%	32%

Table 56: Most frequently mentioned attributes both pre- and post-visitation

Table 56 reveals that the frequency that attributes were mentioned pre- and post-visitation indicate that image modification to a limited extent has occurred. This is particularly positive with respect to beautiful scenery, the natural and unspoilt environment, availability of open spaces and freedom as well as the easy, relaxed, fun and carefree atmosphere. Other positive attributes include the abundant stone walls and quiet roads, good standard of nightlife and entertainment, together with an excellent pub scene, satisfactory provision of traditional music and Irish dancing. Also respondents felt that they were familiar with the destination and suggested that Ireland was good for golfing, was a safe place free from terrorism while, at the same time, a patriotic and proud nation with lots of places to visit and good Irish food to enjoy as well as having a healthy outdoor climate. The most positive change occurred where respondents were not surprisingly more able to mention specific places post visitation. These included small towns such as Lisdoonvarna in Co. Clare and Killarney, in Co. Kerry, as well as, national parks such as The Burren, and the Killarney Lakes. Also, some respondents were also able to identify tourist sites such as Dublin Castle, St Johns Castle, Bunratty, Cliffs of Moher, Ring of Kerry, River Fergus, Grafton Street, and Durty Nellies. However, negative

changes are also apparent with the most notable related to cities, towns and villages as well as increase in pollution and litter. Many respondents considered the Irish to be less friendly and hospitable than expected while the quality of the heritage, historic and celtic sites were not considered by some respondents to be of a satisfactory standard. Also, Ireland was not as tranquil and peaceful a place as was anticipated, was considered expensive, inaccessible and difficult to tour with very wet and miserable weather conditions.

On the basis of a binomial test, there is sufficient evidence at the .01 significance level to conclude that, in respect of each of the categories identified in Table 57 with 'sig.diff', there is a significant difference between the frequency with which that attribute is mentioned pre-visitation and the frequency with which that attribute is mentioned post-visitation. For example, there is sufficient evidence at the .01 significance level to conclude that there is a significant difference between the frequency with which 'Natural, unspoilt environment' is mentioned pre-visitation and the frequency with which 'Natural, unspoilt environment' is mentioned post-visitation. For other attributes, there is not sufficient evidence at the .01 significance level to conclude that there is a significant difference between the frequency with which for example, 'Beautiful Scenery/Emerald Isle/Shamrock' is mentioned pre-visitation and the frequency with which the same attribute is mentioned post-visitation. In other words, the data suggests that, to 99% confidence, there is no difference between the frequency with which 'Beautiful Scenery/Emerald Isle/Shamrock' is mentioned in pre-visitation and in post-visitation, but there is a difference between the frequency with which 'Natural, unspoilt environment' is mentioned in pre-visitation and in post-visitation.

Environment	Binomial
Beautiful Scenery/Emerald isle/Shamrock	
<u>Natural, unspoilt environment</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
<u>Attractive cities/towns/villages</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
Nature/Wildlife	
<u>Pollution free/litter free</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
<u>Open spaces/freedom</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
Stone Walls/quiet roads	
Friendliness/Hospitality	
Friendly, hospitable people	
<u>Easy, relaxed, fun, carefree</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
Banter, 'craic'	
Lazy/under-achievers	
Single race/one culture/all white	
Culture/Way of Life	
<u>Nightlife/entertainment</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
<u>Excellent pub scene</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
<u>Traditional music & song</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
<u>Irish dancing/riverdance</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
Heritage/History/Celtic	
Farming	
Religion	
<u>Family values/family friendly</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
<u>Familiar/known</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
Slow pace/laidback	
Tranquil/peaceful	
Romantic/Mysterious	
Old-fashioned/narrow minded	
Value/Price	
<u>Good all round value for money</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
<u>Competitively priced access transport</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
<u>Very expensive/overly priced</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
Easy to access/tour	
<u>Celtic Tiger</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
Activities	
Golfing	
Fishing	
<u>Rugby</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
Political issues/safety	
<u>Safe place</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
<u>Terrorism/war/IRA</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
Politically unstable/threatening	
Sinn Fein	

Other Destination Attributes

<u>Places e.g. Connemara, Kerry, Dublin</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
Physical appearance/Irish accent	
Irish Food/potatoes	
<u>Patriotic/proud nation</u>	<u>sig diff</u>
Immigration	
Outdoor climate/healthy (positive)	
<u>Wet/miserable/poor weather (negative)</u>	<u>sig diff</u>

Table 57: Binomial test on the most frequently mentioned attributes both pre- and post-visitation

While Table 57 suggests that image modification has occurred for twenty one variables, Table 56 concluded that the most frequently mentioned variables associated with Ireland pre- and post-visitation are similar. Irrespective of nationality and/or national identity, the overall image of Ireland from the perspective of those travelling from Britain predominately includes unspoilt scenery, hosted by friendly and hospitable people, where traditional entertainment including nightlife and pubs can be enjoyed. This compares favourably with the intended projected image which is firmly rooted in the tradition of 'stage Irish' as one of the most important aspects of tourist's expectations on a visit to Ireland. These intended projected images are not necessary images that Failte Ireland may have chosen to promote, yet they dominate the tourist discourse of Ireland as many of these representations are drawn from popular cultural resources. In this way, the nationality of the product itself contributes to perceived images of Ireland by reinforcing more traditional and stereotypical images in the minds of visitors. Yet, each person's image of a particular place is unique, comprising their own memories, associations and imaginations of a particular place (Reisinger and Turner 2003). At the same time, according to Gabbott and Hogg (1998), the product that the tourist purchases often consists of a complex system of products in combination such as accommodation, transportation, food services and activities. As such, the product (destination) is a bundle of tangible and intangible components perceived of, by the tourist, as a total experience. Thus, to further understanding of how individuals perceive the destination and to assess the degree of image modification, it is necessary to evaluate the factors contributing to the formation of such perception pre- and post-visitation. This is achieved by posing a number of related questions both before and after the visit relating to the performance of the destination,

travel motivations and visit intensity, which are examined in the context of nationality and national identity.

8.2 Formation of current perceptions pre- and post-visitation

To further assess the degree of image change, respondents were asked before and after the visit to describe how they felt Ireland was performing with respect to a number of attributes. However, as these results were taken independently they were unable to provide a complete description of Ireland's performance as a tourist destination. In Chapter 3, it was concluded that the larger the difference between image and reality, that is between expectations and experience, the more likely it is that a tourist will be dissatisfied (Pizam and Milman 1993; Mathieson and Wall 1982, Chon 1990). A more meaningful analysis of performance thus requires the comparison of pre-visitation expectations with post-visitation results of experience. In this perspective, the product is considered to be an objective entity, consisting of separate attributes that can be identified and quantified (Gabbott and Hogg 1998). Image perceptions with the destination are expected to be related to contentment with these different attributes. In other words, image perception is partly influenced by the result of a comparative process, between expectations and actual performance. Positive perceptions will occur when expectations are fulfilled or even exceeded, while disconfirmed expectations create negative perceptions. Thus, the pre-visitation (expected) and post-visitation (actual) performance ratings for each of the 18 attributes are listed in Table 58 as well as the difference between both means.

Attribute	Importance mean¹¹	Pre-visit performance mean¹²	Post-visit performance mean¹³	Difference between pre and post mean (+/-)
Beautiful Scenery	4.65	4.70	4.71	.01
Friendly People/Welcoming	4.44	4.34	3.98	-0.36
Irish Music & Dance	4.44	2.81	3.52	0.71
Irish Pubs/Drink/Guinness/Harp	4.19	4.34	4.21	-0.13
Historical/nostalgic	4.19	4.25	4.16	-0.09
Expensive/Cost	4.18	2.99	2.99	0.00
Political Situation	4.02	3.13	3.17	0.04
Relaxing/Tranquil	3.93	4.38	4.32	-0.04
Good Night Life	4.07	4.09	4.19	0.10
Laidback/slow pace of life	4.07	4.18	4.15	-0.03
Weather	3.83	2.98	2.99	0.01
Family orientated	3.86	4.02	3.94	-0.08
Humour/Craic/Banter	3.53	2.81	3.18	0.37
Fishing	3.56	2.98	3.12	0.14
Golfing	3.31	3.48	3.69	0.21
Accessible/easy to tour	2.48	3.43	3.16	-0.27
Castles/Crosses	2.57	3.11	3.18	0.07
Hen & Stag destination	2.36	2.99	2.99	0.00

Table 58: Pre-Visitation (expected) and Post-Visitation (actual) performance compared

The important attribute mean scores from Table 16 (see Chapter 6, pg 211) are also supplied in this table to facilitate comparison. The greater the importance attached to an attribute in the destination selection process by tourists travelling from Britain, the more consequential a poor performance score, whether pre – or post-visitation. The information provided by the comparison of pre- and post-visitation performance scores were analysed in the following way; each attribute was considered according to its relative importance ranking, the differences between its pre- and post-visitation scores and whether its performance rating moved in a positive or negative direction (improved or disimproved). As outlined in Table 59, a preliminary statistical test was also conducted to discover whether the image of Ireland as a whole modified because of visiting the country. As

¹¹ Importance of attributes for tourists travelling form Britain when choosing a 'non-sun' holiday destination, where 1 = 'not very important' and 5 = 'very important'.

¹² Visitors' pre-visitation rating of Ireland according to destination attributes, where, 1 = 'very poor performance' and 5 = 'very good performance'.

¹³ Visitors' post-visitation rating of Ireland according to destination attributes, where 1 = 'very poor performance' and 5 = 'very good performance'

Uddin (1988) agrees the difference between the pre- and post-visitation ratings must be statistically significant for at least one-third of the attributes in order to confirm that modification has taken place. To prove whether this was the case, paired *t*-tests were carried out, and it is clear that image modification has occurred for seven out of the 18 attributes. In other words, based on post-visitation evaluation, the travel experience has modified pre-visitation perceptions.

Performance of Ireland as regards ...	Significance (2-tailed)/p-value
Beautiful Scenery	.932
Friendly People/Welcoming	.004
Irish Music and Dance	.353
Irish Pubs/Drink/Guinness/Harp	.036
Historical/nostalgic	.036
Expensive/Cost	No change
Political Situation	.596
Relaxing/Tranquil	.080
Good Night Life	.538
Laidback/slow pace of life	1.000
Weather	.932
Family orientated	.288
Humour/Craic/Banter	.353
Fishing	.000
Golfing	.000
Accessible/easy to tour	.004
Castles/Crosses	.538
Hen and Stag destination	No change

Table 59: Paired *t*-test results

In order to summarise this post-visitation evaluation process, Figure 24 adopts Chon's (1990) model by outlining four sets of comparisons which enables an assessment of the process, namely; positive congruity, positive incongruity, negative congruity and negative incongruity. As Figure 24 demonstrates, positive congruity occurred with respect to the beautiful scenery and the political situation thereby indicating moderate satisfaction, while for Irish Music and dance, good nightlife, humour/Craic/banter, fishing, golfing, castles/crosses, positive incongruity resulted which indicates the highest possible satisfaction. For six variables a negative incongruity occurred inferring a considerable discrepancy between a positive expectation and a negative outcome. These variables include expensive/cost, weather, family orientated, hen and stag destination, thereby suggesting a low discrepancy between a negative image and a negative experience.

However, the fact that image modification has taken place alone reveal little about the direction or the extent of image change for each attribute. A comparison between the pre- and post-visitation mean ratings shows that the travel experience altered the image amongst visitors from Britain in a positive direction for seven attributes, a negative direction for nine attributes while two attributes have not moved in either direction.

<p><u>Positive Congruity</u></p> <p><u>Beautiful Scenery</u> <u>Political Situation</u></p>	<p><u>Positive incongruity</u></p> <p><u>Irish Music and Dance</u> <u>Good Nightlife</u> <u>Humour/Craic/Banter</u> <u>Fishing</u> <u>Golfing</u> <u>Castles/Crosses</u></p>
<p><u>Negative Incongruity</u></p> <p><u>Friendly People/</u> <u>Welcoming</u> <u>Irish Pubs/</u> <u>Drink/Guinness/Harp</u> <u>Historic/Nostalgic</u> <u>Relaxing/Tranquil</u> <u>Laidback/Slow pace of life</u> <u>Accessible/Easy to Tour</u></p>	<p><u>Negative Congruity</u></p> <p><u>Expensive/Cost</u> <u>Weather</u> <u>Family orientated</u> <u>Hen and Stag Destination</u></p>

Figure 24: Tourists' post-visitation evaluation of Ireland as a tourist Destination

The attributes are discussed according to whether they received a positive or negative evaluation when the pre- and post-visitation results were compared and an attempt is made to account for these changes.

8.3.1 Positive Evaluations of pre- and post-visitation results compared.

Beautiful scenery was identified as the most important attribute in the destination selected process and it also received the highest pre- and post-visitation performance ratings of all attributes. There was a slight positive difference between the pre- and post-visitation mean scores (+.1) implying actual performance exceeded the already high level of

anticipated performance. Eight other attributes surpassed the expected or pre-visitation performance ratings; namely, Irish music and dance (+.71), political situation (+.04), fishing (+.14), night life (+10), castles and crosses (.07), humour/Craic/banter (37), golfing (21) and weather (+.01). Most notably Ireland was viewed significantly more positively in terms of Irish music and dance, humour/Craic/banter and golfing. For example, on the basis of a binomial test, there is sufficient evidence at the .01 significance level to conclude that the expected proportion rating 'Golfing' as 'good/very good' is significantly different from the actual proportions rating 'golfing' as 'good/very good'. In other words, the data suggests that, to 99% confidence, there is a (positive) difference between the actual and expected proportions rating 'golfing' as 'good/very good'. This may be due to a combination of increased inward investment as a consequence of recent prosperity engendered by the Celtic tiger and the traditional image projected of Ireland as a pre-modern entity as discussed in Chapter 5. However, in spite of the positive post-visitation evaluations received, three attributes, namely castles and crosses, golfing and fishing scored lowest in terms of importance when choosing a non-sun holiday destination. Thus, while the direction of image change for these attributes was positive, it should not be overstated, as half of these attributes are not rated very important by the sample group as ideal destination attributes. Also, while Irish music and dance and the political situation were viewed as important variables, they were both rated negatively pre-visitation which implies that visitors travelling from Britain had doubts about Ireland with regard to standards and availability of Irish music and dance and were sceptical of the current political situation. Nonetheless, actual performance perceived post-visitation exceeded the importance scores with regard to these two attributes. This was more pronounced in the case of Irish music and dance suggesting that tourists pre-visitation image was negative but the reality was perceived to be positive. A positive incongruity was the result which according to Chon (1990) provides the highest possible evaluation results post-visitation.

8.3.2 Negative Evaluations of pre- and post-visitation results compared

The welcome of the people was identified as the second most important attribute in the destination selection process yet, the pre-visitation performance rating was lower than its importance mean rating, which may indicate that negative reports regarding the Irish welcome are being received by potential travellers. The performance mean fell substantially further after visitation (-.36). Also, on the basis of a binomial test, there is sufficient evidence at the .02 significance level to conclude that, the expected proportion rating 'Friendly People/Welcoming' as 'good/very good' was significantly different from the actual proportions rating 'Friendly People/Welcoming' as 'good/very good'. In other words, the data suggests that, to 98% confidence, there is a (negative) difference between the actual and expected proportions rating 'friendly People/Welcoming' as 'good/very good'. This indicates that one of the key elements of Ireland's appeal does not reach expectations, thereby corroborating anecdotal evidence outlined in Chapter 5 from media reports as well as findings from the most recent Visitor Attitudes Survey (Tourism Ireland 2004b) regarding threats to Ireland's tourism image. The negative evaluation of the people attribute will obviously have negative consequences with respect to the fundamental basis of tourism development in Ireland. A number of other attributes, namely; Irish pubs/drink/Guinness/Harp (-.13), historical/nostalgic (-.09), relaxing/tranquil (-.04), laidback/slow pace of life (-.03), family orientation (-.08) and accessible/easy to tour (0.27) did not reach the pre-visitation expectation performances level at the destination. This infers that the major marketing strengths of Ireland as the friendliness of the people and its orientation to time, with notions of a pre-modern society, need to be readjusted. Such findings question the longevity of the continued re-using of certain traditional and quaint depictions of Ireland and the Irish themselves. Finally, the perception of two variables i.e. hen/stag destination and expensive/cost remained static pre- and post-visitation. As both were rated low pre-visitation, the destination did not fail to meet expectation but at the same time, it is not considered a positive outcome as their (low) expectations were not exceeded.

To further understanding of how such perceptions are formed, it is necessary to analyse the relationship between the different components of the perceived image and the factors that influence its formation. In the first instance, these will include both primary and secondary sources of information and the extent (if any) such sources are dependent on nationality and/or national identity pre- and post-visitation.

8.3.3 External sources of information used before and during the trip

As Table 44 (pg 275) indicates a considerable variety of organic, induced and autonomous sources of information were used during the trip even though such sources were also selected before the trip. Organic sources were even more popular during the trip than pre-visitation. In particular, reliance on word of mouth increased during the visit which may suggest increased recognition of a need for credible and non-biased information, prompting a reliance on this source. Notably, the Internet was used considerably less during the trip than before the trip was taken. However, while the Internet had relatively low usage during the trip the main users were those who were on, at least, their third trip to Ireland. As findings indicate, in the pre-visitation study, consumers are utilizing the Internet and online resources more and more for their information needs, yet only 8% considered the Internet the source used most often during the trip. The popularity of this medium pre-trip may reflect the degree of convenience for first-time tourists to gather information about Ireland from the Internet in the comfort of their own home.

Furthermore, these findings may be symptomatic of increased investment in technology by tourism businesses in Ireland where the current level of connectivity according to a Quantification of the Out-of-State Marketing Expenditure report commissioned by the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation (ITIC 2004), is that over 90% of the industry uses new, and more cost efficient, promotional and distribution channels. According to ITIC (2004), an estimated four out of every five tourism businesses in Ireland currently have a presence on the WWW which the ITIC suggest is greatly helped by linkages from high

visibility sites such as those of Tourism Ireland, Failte Ireland, the Irish Hotels Federations and a number of on-line travel merchants. Yet, the ITICs findings indicate that the Internet as a new channel or medium for interactions between suppliers and customers has fundamentally re-shaped the tourism sector's value chain. This has been achieved through the relatively low monetary cost of online searches, increased accessibility and ease at which information can be retrieved (ITIC 2004). However, consumers still have to spend time, pay for Internet services and invest a significant amount of effort in processing what they find. Undoubtedly, increased spending on new on-line channels of distribution estimated by the ITIC (2004) to be in the region of 50 million euro in 2004 has resulted in growing sales via the web. Air and sea carriers combined, continue to be the top investors in the e-commerce market-place. Air and sea carriers concentrate more on direction communication with customers with limited emphasis on traditional forms of destination marketing (ITIC 2004). This may explain, in part at least, the significant use of the Internet pre-visitation. While acknowledging that accommodation, attractions and other tourist service providers are also turning to new channels of promotion and sales, the shift is less marketed than in the case of the carriers (ITIC 2004), which may contribute to the reduced dependency on the Internet during the trip. Also, locating and/or organising internet provision during a stay away from home may add to the level of effort the tourist is unwilling to spend. Thus, while the Internet is readily available and lowers the cost of search pre-visitation, the same benefits are not necessarily perceived to be true during the trip.

The use of travel and guidebooks increased significantly during the trip although this increase was more pronounced for repeat visitors than for those taking the trip for the first-time. These textual representations according to Fakeye and Crompton (1991) are purchased prior to arrival, inferring that the text are to be consumed as part of the experience during the stay. Similarly, film and/or radio was cited more frequently as the main source of information during the trip, than pre-visitation. For example, those identifying themselves as Welsh and Scottish did not use these sources pre-visitation at all but cited travel books and film/radio as their main information sources while on holiday.

Usage of newspapers and magazines increased during the visit presumably due to increased availability as well as developing understanding of Irish current affairs.

Meantime, Tourism Ireland and tour operator brochures were noted much less frequently, indicating tourists reduced reliance on, or lack of importance, attached to this source during the visit.

Overall, the findings suggest that travellers from Britain to Ireland conduct an external information search before they make their vacation and destination selection, and ongoing searches are undertaken during the visit. This analysis indicates that as the number of visits increases, the time taken to make the decision to travel reduces, and yet the amount of information search did not decrease with experience. As such, the analysis did not show an effect of prior experience on risk reduction-related efforts and as a result these findings seem to be counter-intuitive. This is because the consumer behaviour literature notes that people engage in search behaviour to minimise five types of risk in purchasing decisions (Solomon 1996): monetary (losing or wasting income), functional (does not meet the need physical (personal illness or injury), social (is unfashionable or lowers status), and psychological (damages self-esteem or engenders guilt or damages a good experience). Tourism is known for its intangibility, and the quality of the eventual experience is unknown at the time of purchase. The degree of the risk is further increased in long-haul travel, where significantly more time and money is invested and the level of uncertainty is greater. Prior knowledge and experience should help reduce the risk associated with long haul-travel. Therefore, it was expected that there would be a negative relationship between past experiences and planning endeavours. In other words, as prior knowledge of the destination increases, the uncertainty level should decrease, resulting in a decreased level of trip planning effort. However, the results did not support this assumption.

There are some possible explanations for this counter-intuitive finding. From past experiences, repeat tourists may have learned the advantages of discount tickets and more reasonably priced accommodation that can result from earlier trip planning.

Although better informed, repeat tourists may still need as much travel information as first-time or infrequent tourists, but the type of information needs are different. As such, it is suggested that experienced consumers perform more efficient information searches primarily because they use a greater variety of information sources, while requiring less time between making the decision to travel and the actual trip. While previous visitation influences information acquisition, this study contends that national identity also mediates such behaviour. Thus, repeat visitation and national identities held, are factors that impact on the way travellers make their vacation decisions before and during their trip.

Table 60 summarises the sources of information used most both pre-visitation and during the trip, indicating the considerable influence that national identities have on mediating information search behaviour. These findings are consistent with results that culture is one of the factors that impact on the way travellers make their vacation decisions (Block, Sherrell and Ridgeway 1986; Chen and Gursoy 2000; Fodness and Murray 1997). The pre- and post-visitation data analysis results have identified four market segments based on the information search behaviour of British tourists to Ireland.

The first segment consists of travellers identifying themselves as British, English and French. This segment is more likely to use Tourism Ireland brochures and to a lesser extent Tour Operator brochures before and during the stay than any other segment for external information search. Destination marketers who wish to target the first segment need to work closely with government travel offices since they distribute the Tourism Irelands' tourist information leaflets and brochures in both the origin and destination countries. Also, even though, according to Chen and Gursoy (2000) the importance of travel agents and tour operators have been diminishing rapidly in recent years, several studies suggest that European travellers are still using tour operators and travel agencies as one of the main external information sources (Chen and Gursoy 2000). Also, as guidebooks were frequently mentioned as an information source during the visit, it would be useful to catalogue more practical details such as attractions and events so as to influence the behaviour of the visitor while at the destination.

Pre-visitation sources of Information	National Identity	Post-visitation sources of Information
Failte Ireland/Tour Op	British <i>Segment 1</i>	Tourism Ireland/ Guidebooks/Film&Radio
Failte Ireland/Tour Op	English <i>Segment 1</i>	Tourism Ireland/Guidebooks
Internet/Guide Books	Welsh <i>Segment 2</i>	Film & Radio/Newspapers/ Travel Books
Internet/Guide Books	Scottish <i>Segment 2</i>	Film&Radio / Travel Books
Tourism Ireland/Tour Op	French <i>Segment 1</i>	Guide Books/Tourism Ireland
Guide Books/Internet	German <i>Segment 3</i>	Guide Books/Travel Books
Failte Ireland/Film&Radio	American <i>Segment 4</i>	Film&Radio/Newspapers
Guide Books/Internet	Irish <i>Segment 2</i>	Guide Books

Note: only the most frequently cited sources of information based on national identity held are included

Table 60: Information sources used pre- and post-visitation compared

The second segment, travellers holding Welsh, Scottish, and Irish identities are more likely to use the Internet and Guidebooks pre-visitation, and film and/or radio during the visit. While those of Welsh and Scottish identity preferred travel books, and those holding Irish identity relied more on guidebooks during the visit, it is concluded that all three identities shared similar information search behaviour given that they all used guidebooks albeit to differing degrees of frequency. The third segment includes those who identified themselves as German and displayed some similar information search behaviour to segment two particularly in their use of the Internet and guidebooks pre-visitation.

However, the most notable difference between these segments relates to segment three's lack of reliance on film and radio as a source of information. Hence those who identified themselves as German were considered a separate segment. Film and Radio is therefore important to the construction of place imagery for segment two while at the destination. Several respondents in this segment mentioned 'Ryan's daughter', 'Angela's Ashes', 'Father Ted', 'King Arthur', 'Braveheart' and 'Ballykissangle', which although artificial and fictional, appear to influence consumers' perception to a great extent. Interestingly, film and radio appear to be important only whilst at the destination. This may suggest either increased exposure during the visit or a more sharpened awareness of remembering previous exposure to the medium after the trip. Regardless, film and radio seem to be one of the major vehicles for visitors to construct and transmit meanings of Ireland. As such, the importance of film and radio in influencing information search behaviour of this segment should not be underestimated by destination marketers. However, developing web pages that contain useful and practical information about the destination and its activities may help increase the number of travellers from both segments. Presenting on-line information in German, and translating guidebooks and travel books for segment three may be beneficial. Also, interest in newspapers and travel books increased for segment two while on holiday.

The impact of film and radio in influencing information search behaviour is even more apparent for the fourth segment, which includes those who identify themselves as American. This segment considered film and radio a major information source both before and during the trip, by increasing this awareness of the destination and perhaps having tourist-inducing effects. Also newspapers were considered a prime information source during the vacation for this group. To an extent, this validates Hyounggon and Richardson's (2003) claim that the role of autonomous image formation agents appears to have particular powerful effects on destination image formation. News coverage and popular culture (as in films, radio and television programmes) can provide substantial information about a place in a short period of time. Additionally, respondents may be likely to evaluate the information as relatively unbiased when compared to traditional

advertising. Further, news and popular culture products are so deeply embedded in everyday life that they have high market penetration.

According to Brown and Singhal (1993), the impact of popular films and television programmes on individual and societal beliefs and behaviours will continue to increase as cable television and video use diffuse rapidly. Likewise, Butler (1990) argues that what is shown in movies, videos and television will become even more important than print media in shaping images of, and visitation to, places, due to expanding accessibility and high credibility of these information sources. Similarly, Schofield (1996) suggests that contemporary tourists' organic images of places are shaped through the vicarious consumption of film and television without the perceived bias of promotional material. Finally, in light of Margarets' (1996) suggestion that the Disney-driven culture, consisting of films, songs and resorts has impacted Americans' ways of seeing nature and place, this is particularly relevant given that the national identity of this segment is American. Although few empirical studies of the effects of popular culture on image formation have been conducted, considerable anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a strong relationship (Hyounggon and Richardson 2003). While this study does not attempt to comprehensively assess the processes by which type/s of film and radio shows in particular influence destination images and related decision-making, it does recognise that Ireland's image as a tourist destination for this segment (and to a limited extent for segment two) is partly developed through depiction in film and radio. Thus, portrayals of Ireland in news and popular culture can alter the destination's image.

Finally, these results are in contrast to the previously discussed ITIC (2004) report, which suggests that the use of the Internet as an information source is highest in the British market. In this instance, the British market relates to all travellers from British irrespective of national identity held, and consequently the British market is deemed to be one cohesive group. At the same time, while new information and communication technologies (ICT) have expected to replace printed brochures and promotional materials, the report also indicates that there is 'little evidence, other than in the case of airlines, that

tourist providers have as yet effected significant savings on print and distribution' (ITIC 16). This may infer that usage of ICT has increased for some providers and consumers but not for all, and as the evidence suggests, in this study, information acquisition behaviour involves the use of a variety of sources across market segments. Also it may, in part, explain the greater dependency on the Internet pre-visitation than during the stay. Thus, in analysing information search behaviour of visitors travelling from Britain to Ireland, it is not sufficient to assess the market as one unified group. Rather it is contended that using national identity to segment the market is considered a more accurate barometer than using country of origin or passport held alone. In prioritising individual's national identity, the formation of destination image is influenced not only by the information obtained from different sources, but also by other characteristics or internal factors of the individual. According to Um and Crompton (1990), beliefs about the attributes of a destination are formed by individuals being exposed to external stimuli, but the nature of those beliefs will vary depending on the internal factors of the individuals. Therefore, the perceived image of a destination will be formed through the image projected by the destination and the individuals' own needs and motivations. In this way, the individuals build their own mental picture of the tourist destinations which gives rise to their own, personal perceived images (Bramwell and Rawding 1996). As such, it is useful to determine if internal factors such as motivation to travel and travel intensity are influenced by national identity and/or nationality pre- and post-visitation.

8.3.4 Travel Motivation and Travel Intensity

In considering the findings of questions relating to motivation and travel intensity in the pre- and post-visitation questionnaires, it is clear that while holiday is the primary motivational reason, the pre-visitation analysis indicates that there are multiple types of holidays. These include religion, fun, relaxation, culture and sport. Thus, in agreement with a variety of researchers (Crompton 1979a; Mayo and Jarvis 1981), tourists' motivations are multi-factorial, which highlights that Ireland as a destination offers a

variety of products and services to attract visitors and each tourist has an opportunity to choose from the set of offerings. Answers to both the open-ended and closed questions emphasised the push and pull factors associated with Ireland. What is regarded in this study as push factors were noted as origin related and refer to the intangible, intrinsic desires of the individual travellers. For example, the desire for escape, rest and relaxation. Similarly, pull factors were also evident and relate to the attractiveness of Ireland as a destination in terms of visiting friends and relatives. Consequently, using both types of questions demonstrates the benefits of combining different styles of questioning to explore this theme.

The study also demonstrates that the exploratory factorial analysis produced four types of motivations: (1) culture/history, (2) pleasure seeking/fantasy, (3) relaxation, and (4) physical. In terms of dimensionality of holiday motivations, this study provides some evidences to correspond with other comparable studies. In the Goodalls' (1998) categorisation, motivations are classified under four headings as physical (search for health and sport), cultural/history (wish to learn about foreign places), pleasure seeking/fantasy (escape from the present reality) and relaxation (search for repose). The first three items are fully consistent with the results of this study, which also fit into the physical and cultural categories of tourist motivations described by McIntosh and Goeldner (1990). The category of relaxation parallels Ryan and Glendon's (1998) relaxation motivation category in terms of the context of its items.

Individual motivations for travel to Ireland appear to be culturally based. This may suggest that there is congruence between the tourists' motivations and the nature of the destination. These results are consistent with those of Baloglu and McCleary (1999) who suggest that, when there is agreement between the tourists' motivations and the nature of the destination, the affective image is positively influenced. However, motivational factors also appear to be influenced by passport held. The primary motivational factors for those holding British and American passports indicated that their main motivations in considering Ireland as a destination is cultural such as visiting historical and cultural sites,

increasing their knowledge of new places, meeting local people, getting close to nature and local history. Those holding German and French passports were more motivated by pleasure seeking/fantasy yet were the least motivated by culture and history. The German and American passport holders reported more than any other group, to be motivated by physical activities such as sport and walking in the countryside. To date, there has been no empirical study undertaken in the tourism literature focusing upon these specific markets with which the findings of this research could be compared. However, findings of other relevant studies provide clues to understand the characteristics of the German passport holder. For instance, Weber (1997) found that landscape was a significant predictor of German tourists' satisfaction with their holidays in Australia. Based upon this finding, it may be suggested that German tourists are likely to be involved in nature-based physical tourism activities. Consequently, there is potential for variability among different national identities in terms of tourist motivations.

To varying degrees, pleasure seeking/fantasy relaxation was considered by all passport holder types as important pre-visitation, while holidaying was considered the most important reason for the trip post-visitation. This may be as a result of the notion that relaxation and pleasure are the prime reasons for joining in tourism activities in summer time, regardless of the types of destinations and tourists from different nationalities/national identities. It is clear that people tend to take holidays to relax, spend time with family and friends, as well as to be emotionally and physically refreshed. Consistently, Krippendorf (1987) states that relaxation and getting away from routine life are the first two psychological reasons for taking a vacation. In a family life-cycle research, relaxation and escape motivations were found to be the most important reason for travelling to different destinations (Hill, McDonald and Uysal 1990). To some extent these categories compare favourably with Hofstede's (1980) four subjective cultural aspects; including *power distance* (culture/history), *individualism-collectivism* (pleasure seeking/fantasy), *masculinity-femininity* (physical) and *uncertainty avoidance* (relaxation/stress avoidance).

Moreover, it could be speculated that Ireland attracts primarily allocentrics and near allocentrics which corresponds with Plog's (1974) and Ryan's (1997) related statements, The allocentric personality is expected to travel independently, prefer cultural and environmental differences from their norm while enjoying cultural and adventurous activities. While those holding British and American passports exhibit allocentric traits, those with French and German passports may be accurately described as near allocentrics as they appear to be more motivated by a combination of pleasure seeking, fantasy and relaxation. Also the majority of respondents travelled independently during the off-season either alone or as part of the couple to enjoy a 'non sun' vacation. This could be a reflection of a mix of 'the explorer' and 'the drifter' tourists postulated by Cohen (1974) which seems to be further emphasised in pre-visitation activity intentions. 34% of respondents expected to visit a heritage/visitor centre, 21% suggested that they wished to see a house and/or a castle, while 12% thought a museum/art gallery would be of interest before the visit. However, only 10% of visitors actually went to a heritage/visitor centre and no respondent mentioned a museum or art gallery on their return, suggesting that motivations for the reasons trip do not necessarily correspond with activity at the destination. However, as 71% of respondents are first-time visitors to Ireland, this finding also supports Bryan's (1977) claim that when people make their first trip to a place, they tend to display more general interests, perhaps trying to experience and sample the whole country.

Thus, it is suggested that, allocentrics/near allocentrics, explorers and drifters appear to describe visitors to Ireland during the off peak season. The results of the semiotic and content analysis suggest that the intended projected image targets this type of tourist as there is little doubt that Ireland is heavily marketed to attract the 'cultural tourist'. Such classifications typically seek to get off the beaten track, attempting to get as far from home and familiarity as possible (Boniface and Cooper 1987). However, Ireland is considered by 62% of respondents to be a familiar with the destination, and as Hu and Ritchie (1993) suggest familiarity with a destination is a major influence on destination perceptions and attractiveness.

8.3.5 Destination Familiarity

Perceived levels of destination familiarity are important in terms of propensity to travel, and the results indicate that levels of familiarity are not based solely on visitation or knowledge of tourist attractions. Familiarity is based on the images and impressions of visitors that include a romanticising determination to engage with those aspects of Irish culture which confirm beliefs and stereotypes already held. The semiotic and content analysis revealed that such projected images are firmly rooted in the tradition of 'stage Irish' and the rural idyllic. While these are not necessary images which Failte Ireland have chosen to promote, they dominate the tourist discourse of Ireland, as many of these representations are drawn from popular cultural resources. As such, both the intended projected image and actual projected image of Ireland is conditioned and influenced by the nationality of the product. Thus, the nationality of the product influences perceived levels of familiarity which, in turn, influences the how images are perceived and understood.

Passport held influences assumed levels of familiarity, while perceived national identity also strongly contributes to positive notions of familiarity with those of Scottish, Welsh, American/Irish, Irish/British and Irish identities inferring a more sharpened awareness of Ireland as a familiar destination. Such self-identification confirms that visitors from Britain to Ireland very often hold several identities. Thus, relying solely on the nationality of the passport, as a classification of one's identity is to disregard the significance of national identities held by visitors. As such, using previous experience to define and measure familiarity is far from capturing the familiarity level of travellers about the destination. However, this study does not dismiss the importance of previous experience, but instead highlights that a traveller's image after experiencing a tourist destination will be dependent upon a blend of knowledge before visitation and destination experience. At the same time, however, irrespective of the nationality of passport, respondents' perceived national identity strongly predicts positive notions of familiarity. Those identifying themselves as Welsh, Scottish, Irish American, Irish British and Irish consider themselves more familiar

with Ireland than those of French, German and British identity. Thus, segmenting the British market by nationality and national identity provides more accurate and detailed information than identifying the British market as one homogenous group.

8.4 Summary of main research findings

In summary, this research empirically examined changes in the images of Ireland over two points in time among tourists travelling from Britain. Respondents had already decided to visit Ireland, and so their images were, not surprisingly, positive pre-visitation. However, while a positive image was generally maintained post-visitation, evidence suggests that image modification did indeed occur. This modified after image will determine whether Ireland is considered for a future purchase and for recommendation to friends and relatives. The desired image of 'people, pace and place' has been identified but its application needs to be reconsidered in light of present reality and resources. Also a number of image gaps have been identified, particularly in relation to friendly people and cost at the destination. This points to the need for an overall image modification plan and awareness that images cannot be changed overnight. As Sussmann and Unel (1999) contend, images tend to be long lasting even after real changes in the destination, since people, have difficulty changing their pre-existing perceptions. Actual experience should be the most effective image modifier, since personal experience has been shown to be the most credible information source. Thus, this study has attempted to conduct an accurate assessment of the current image of Ireland using national identity and nationality as discriminating variables which this research considers a necessary prerequisite to establishing any image modification strategy for Ireland as a tourist destination in the British market. The concluding chapter will outline the theoretical and practical implications of the findings of this study.

Chapter 9 Conclusions and Recommendations

Tourism in Ireland has undergone significant development over the last twenty years and it is suggested that the success of Irish tourism is dictated by four major source markets: Britain, the United States, Germany and France. However, current trends suggest that visitor numbers from Britain have peaked, and thus in an increasingly competitive tourism environment, the role of destination image is paramount to the sustained growth of the numbers of tourists travelling from Britain. Changing consumer profiles and continued reliance on the 'people, pace and place' image highlights the need for research to assess all the components of Ireland's destination image. Few studies have focused specifically on Ireland's destination image and none have analysed the current image of Ireland as a tourist destination in Britain. Furthermore, investigations of this nature have rarely concentrated on the influence of nationality and national identity on the perceived and projected images of tourist destinations even though, the findings of past research confirm that variables such as tourist perceptions of a destination, satisfaction levels, demographic profiles and tourist activities may vary according to countries of origin (Huang, Huang and Wu 1996; Dahaner and Arweiler 1996, Becken and Gnoth 2004; George 2005).

Moreover, little attempt has been made in the tourism literature to understand the relationship between the nationality of the place itself and its influence on the construction and representation of the destination in and through tourism imagery. Consequently, this thesis has attempted to redress this knowledge deficit in the context of tourists travelling from Britain to Ireland, focusing specifically on the influence of nationality and national identity on the creation and interpretation of such imagery. In an attempt to summarise the study's key findings, this chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section will provide a brief reminder of the study's main research questions. Secondly, the empirical and theoretical contributions of the study's results are identified by demonstrating how the study's findings will contribute to the literature in this field of study as well as highlighting how such contributions could be extended. Thirdly a number of

practical implications are outlined in an attempt to progress the marketing strategy of Ireland as a tourist destination. Fourthly and finally a number of potential research avenues are proposed and the research limitations of the thesis are addressed before presenting a brief conclusion.

9.0 Research Questions

As previously outlined (see Chapter 1, pg 17-18), three research questions directed this study. Firstly, the influence of the nationality of the tourist on pre- and post-visit interpretations of Ireland's destination image from the perspective of tourists travelling from Britain was assessed by employing pre- and post-visitation questionnaires. Secondly, the influence of the nationality of the product on pre- and post-visitation was explored by drawing on the results of pre- and post-visitation questionnaires. A semi-structured interview with Tourism Ireland, established the intended projected image of Ireland while a combined semiotic and content analysis was employed to explore the projected image. Thirdly, the results of each research instrument were evaluated to examine the implications for interpretations of Ireland's destination image whilst at the same time, highlighting the significance of the nationality and the national identity of both the place and the visitor. The following section will outline the empirical contribution of these findings.

9.1 Empirical contribution

This study has identified and addressed a number of empirical gaps that exist in the literature. Firstly, while it is acknowledged that in relation to Ireland, the evolution of images in literature, tradition and Irish tourism promotion has received some attention (Nash 1993; Quinn 1994, Bell 1995, Gaffey 2004), few studies concentrate on the image of Ireland solely from the perspectives of visitors travelling from Britain. Secondly, a minority of pre- and post-visitation studies exist in tourism research (Veal 1997), and no

study has considered the pre- and post-visitation image of Ireland as it exists in Britain using the same sample of tourists. The thesis concludes that this approach is an excellent way of studying trends, both in terms of behaviour or attitudes as it offers greater precision and enables the researcher to measure not only net changes, but in addition, to identify and study variables which influence such changes. Thirdly, while the projected image and the identification of the image perceived by the tourist is fundamental in determining a destination's competitiveness (Mayo and Jarvis 1981, Ahmed 1991, Ruiz *et al* 1999), it is not enough, however, to consider these two concepts on an individual basis; rather, this study has demonstrated that it is important to analyze the relationship between the two concepts of projected and perceived image. This is because there is a lack of research into the relationship between both concepts (Ashworth 1988, 2005). Also, the existence of external and internal factors affecting the individual condition perceived images in such a way that there can be disagreement between perceived images and images that are projected (Moutinho 1987). Consequently, the research approach adopted in this thesis has assisted in identifying differences and similarities that exist between the projected image, the intended and actual projected images as well as the perceived image in the context of the British market in one study. While these findings highlight their empirical contribution, this study has also contributed to the theoretical development of this field of study.

9.2 Theoretical developments

This study has contributed to the theoretical development of the relationship between nationality and national identity by acknowledging the usefulness of combining nationality, national identity and passport held in the study of tourist behaviour. This was achieved by highlighting a number of limitations associated with applying nationality and national identity independently. Firstly, it is concluded that the concept of nationality is limited because tourism is a global phenomenon and generating and destination societies are no longer culturally uniform. Secondly, many tourists possess multiple nationalities and not all people who have the same nationality and were born in the same country have

identical cultures. Thirdly, just as tourists may possess multiple nationalities so too nations can be pluralistic in their cultures. Yet, nationalism is based on a number of assumptions, namely that nations are 'natural units' of society, that nations have a right to territory or homeland, and that every nation needs its own sovereign state to express its culture. In other words, nationalism presupposes that the nation and the state are destined for each other, that neither is complete without the other and that each nation has the right to autonomy, freedom and security (Gellner 1983). As such, this is an ideal rather than reality as there are few places where state boundaries actually match those of a national community in which all citizens share one culture (Johnson, Pratt and Watts 2000). Yet, a unified national identity can be created in a diverse country because diversity itself becomes an aspect of national identity (Robins 1996). However, the concept of national identity is also limited because definitions of identity change over time and are influenced by factors such as age, gender and race (Palmer 2003). Further, like nationality, identities may be subject to invention depending upon the prevailing cultural and political climate (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983, Chambers 2002). Where political units and national unites are mismatched, minority groups often experience various forms of social, economic, cultural or political exclusion or injustice.

As a result, all round the world nationalist groups are drawing on imaginings of national identity to pursue the aim of achieving self-determination or to lay claims to particular territories in which they perceive their history to be embodied. Consequently, care is always needed when discussing the characteristics of a particular identity, since alternative interpretations will always exist. However, Anderson's imagined community which represents a conscious effort to make a multicultural population homogenous requires the establishment of a unified national identity. This national identity Spencer and Wollman (2002: 57) define as 'the extent to which people may be seen or see themselves as members of a given nation'. Thus, while nationality and national identity are separate concepts each with their own limitations, this study contends that it is important to view both together because in reality both concepts can and do overlap. Consequently, as nationality and national identity are mutually constituted, this study

reveals that combining both concepts provides a more accurate and complete understanding of the tourist. Furthermore, the passport held does not automatically represent the perceived national identity or nationality of the holder as the self-identification of respondents demonstrated. Thus, to rely solely on the nationality of the passport as a classification of one's identity is to disregard the significance of how the tourist views themselves. Therefore, this study argues that national identity combined with nationality and passport held is a more accurate tool for segmenting the market than considering nationality alone.

This study has also contributed to the theoretical development of the relationship between nationality and national identity in the context of tourism destination imagery. In so doing, the study developed and tested a conceptual model (see Figure 1, pg 83) based on the relationship between destination image and nationality and national identity. This model as outline in Figure 25 has been modified according to the research findings. As such, it has added to the existing knowledge by providing evidence for the elements contributing to the development and interpretation of tourism destination images.

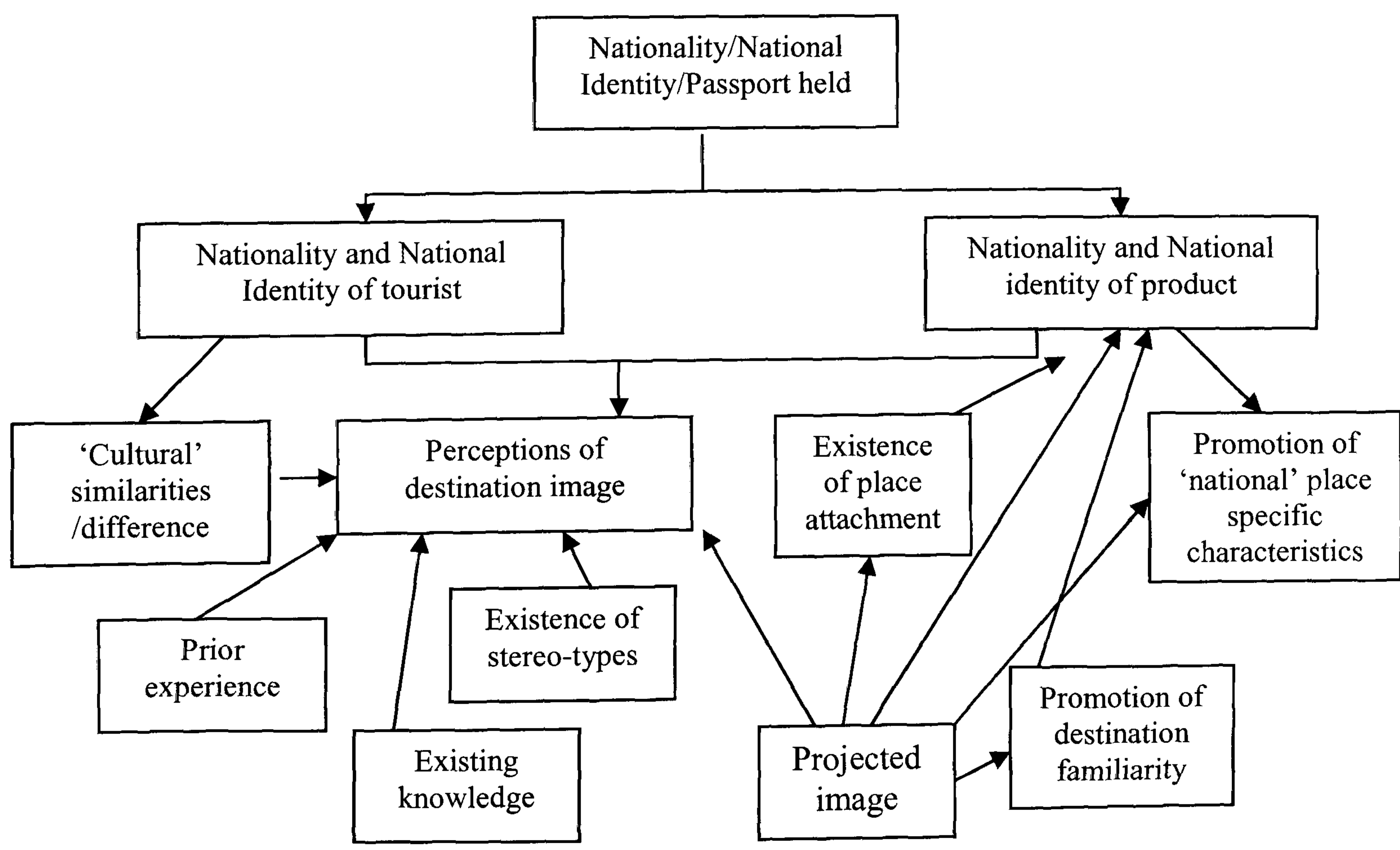


Figure 25: Conceptual Model (Modified)

In this sense, it was found that a destination image was formed by both consumer characteristics and stimulus factors. The study's uniqueness was to shed some light on the relationship between a tourist's national identity and/or nationality as well as the destination's nationality and/or national identity with interpretations of destination imagery in a number of ways:

Firstly, the study revealed that the overall image of Ireland pre- and post-visitation did not alter substantially supporting previous studies which suggest that the overall image of a tourism destination does not fluctuate much over time, even though components of the image may be changeable (Crompton and Lamb 1986, Gartner and Hunt 1987, Andsager and Drzewiecka 2002; Baloglu 2001). Secondly, the results indicate that perceived levels of familiarity, sources of information, passport held and national identity are closely related and have an influence on perceived image of a destination. Thirdly, motivational factors are, in part, determined by perceived levels of national identity which to a limited extent compare favourably with Hofsted's (1980) four subjective cultural aspects. Arguably, the most widely utilized dimensions of culture are the five presented by Hofstede (2001) which are based on the power-distance index (PDI) as a measure of social inequality across societies (Yoo, McKercher and Mena 2004). As a result of such work, the cultural effects at the country level have been examined in various conceptual and empirical studies in marketing and other social sciences, yielding many important and interesting insights (Alden, Hoyer and Lee 1993; Smith and Bond 1993; Tse, Lee, Vertinsky and Wehrung 1998; Tse and Crofts 2005). However, Hofsted's (1980) PDI is based on country of origin only and assumes that societies are homogenous groups, thus failing to consider the influence of perceived national identities of individuals within these societies. In other words, even though this study is based on one country of origin with differing national identities, it nonetheless compares favourably with Hofsted's power-distance index. This suggests that basing the Index on national identity and nationality may provide more accurate and detailed findings than basing the Index on country of origin alone. This may reflect the claim that although a number of papers exploring the relationship of culture and

consumer behaviour have been increased (You, O'Leary, Morrison, Hong 2000), relatively little cross-cultural research has been conducted in the context of tourism marketing.

Fourthly, the present study promotes combining semiotic and content analysis to assess the projected image by selecting pictorial stimuli to address the effects of promotional visuals on the beliefs and images held about a destination. This approach suggested that the intended projected image is not always consistent with the image actually projected. Although, it is recognised that destination image is conveyed through multiple channels, including verbal messages and managerial practices, it is suggested that future research could focus specifically on the pictorial element in destination image formation. Fifthly, it is evident that the influence of stereotypes on interpretations are not reinforced by visitation, while at the same time, this study also shows that such stereotypes are not necessarily dismantled by actual experience. As such, it is concluded that images tend to be long lasting even after real changes in the destination, since people, have difficulty changing their pre-existing perceptions. At the same time, however, this research demonstrated that while the overall image did not change to a large extent, image modification did occur post-visitation in relation to certain individual variables, thereby corresponding with the results of previous empirical studies (Kozak 2002, MacKay and Fesenmaier 2000). The results confirm that inbound tourists are not homogenous and thus differentiated marketing strategies need to be applied according to nationality and national identity, both in terms of promotions and in product development.

Finally, by suggesting that the process of representation is informed by dominant socio-economic and historical practices this study highlighted the importance of context by examining the extent to which tourism imagery influences, and is influenced by, a wide range of social, economic, political and historical forces. As a result, this study reveals how Ireland as a tourist destination is also a society which is constantly evolving and possesses a history with several layers of meaning. While Tourism Ireland is challenged with responsibility for developing and marketing the Island of Ireland abroad, the complete tourism product is also determined by other agencies such as music, brewing and

distillery businesses making the communication of a clear and consistent message to all market segments difficult. In addition, as societies cannot be engineered or places manufactured solely for tourist consumption, the distribution of power and exercise of control involved in the processes of defining and implementing brands and the impacts of these decisions on the tourist destination is not entirely under the remit of the national tourism agency. As such, the nationality of the product and how that nationality is perceived influences both the intended image and actual image projected. Thus, devising and implementing a meaningful 'Brand Ireland' remains a challenge for Ireland encompassing discussion of images held in the minds of tourists and the attempts of the tourism industry to direct their information. Additional areas for exploration in the light of the 'tiger economy' reputation include the relationship between image and reality in the tourist experiences and contested notions of authenticity. These are matters for further attention in the 21st century as the competition for tourists becomes ever more intense for Ireland and indeed amongst destinations world-wide. However, this study also recognises that certain attributes that are performing poorly, such as price and litter, are attributes that policy makers and industry can influence. Consequently, based on the research findings, this study highlights a number of practical implications which may assist in facilitating a gradual reorientation of Ireland's tourism destination marketing strategy.

9.3 Practical Implications of results

The findings indicate that the reality of a rapidly-expanding economy, driven by high-tech developments increasingly centred on a now quite cosmopolitan Dublin, is out of step with the projected images of the destination which are eschewed in favour of pre-modern imagery. While the touristic representations of Ireland continue to celebrate icons drawn from its rural and agricultural past, and its people appear as genial farmers and almost peasant-like girls, the destination is changing and from these findings so too are tourist perceptions.

The study has indicated the appropriateness of classifying the target market using national identity outlining four segments, namely; British/English and French as segment one, Welsh/Scottish/Irish as segment two, segment three includes those identifying themselves as German and segment four represents those holding American identities. To target each segment a number of suggestions are proposed:

Firstly, tourism marketers should focus on tour operators/travel agencies both in Britain and at the destination itself to enable them to attract segment one. To further penetrate the market guidebooks containing more detailed information on activities and attractions should be promoted and readily available to such tourists both at the country of origin and during their visit.

Secondly, developing web pages that contain useful and practical information about the destination and its activities may help increase the number of travellers from segment two and three. Presenting on-line information in German and translating guidebooks and travel books for segment three may be beneficial. It is also worth noting that even though the Internet was not commonly used by any visitor whilst on holiday, segment two used the Internet most during the holiday suggesting that greater availability of on-line services will enhance demand for services at the destination. Interest in newspapers and travel books increased for this segment whilst on holiday. This may suggest that the destination needs to work with newspaper publishers to make sure that their offers are up-to-date, attractive and competitive. This may be in the form perhaps of more extensive and frequent inclusion of newspaper travel supplements with listings of popular travel books in order to more comprehensively target this audience.

Thirdly, the reliance of film and radio as a source of information is particularly relevant in the case of segment four and to a lesser extent but nonetheless significant for segment two. Recognising that this medium can enhance awareness of Ireland and affect decision-making processes, marketers are advised to work with film and radio producers to promote Ireland as possible film locations and broadcast more Irish related radio items

to extend their marketing influence. However, unlike other traditional promotional tools, destination marketers have less control about the way Ireland is portrayed. Thus, it is important to develop or adjust their image management strategy depending on the way Ireland is projected.

This research highlights the significant contribution that varying combinations of traditional and modern forms of communication make to destination marketing. As a means of enquiry both pre-visitation and during the visit what is relevant in marketing Ireland in Britain is the identification of which communication combinations are most appropriate in targeting the four main market segments outlined to expand exposure to and interest in the destination.

The majority of tourists to Ireland travelling from Britain are first-time visitors travelling alone or in a couple, staying for a relatively short period of time holding a British, French, German, American or dual passport. Passport held was shown to influence assumed levels of familiarity and motivational factors. For example, the British and American passport holder considers him/herself much more familiar with Ireland than the French and German counterparts. However, respondents' perceived national identity also strongly predicts positive notions of familiarity. As increased levels of familiarity are shown to have a positive effect on propensity to travel, marketers need be attentive to different levels of familiarity among those holding different passports as well as having knowledge of passport holder's national identities. Similarly, while holidaying and culture/history are cited as the main reason for travel, motivational factors differed according to the four types of passports and national identities expressed. For example, the primary motivational factors for those holding British and American passports indicated that their main motivations in considering Ireland as a destination is cultural such as visiting historical and cultural sites, increasing their knowledge of new places, meeting local people, getting close to nature and local history. Those holding German and French passports were more motivated by pleasure seeking/fantasy yet were the least motivated by culture and history while the German and American passport holders reported more

than any other group to be motivated by physical activities such as sport and walking in the countryside. However, with the exception of visiting friends and relatives considerably fewer tourists admitted post-visitation participation in activities such as visiting a house/castle or a museum/art gallery than predicted pre-visitation.

Also, national identities appear to be a strong predictor of activity participation patterns. While this may be due to time restrictions or reduced interest, it is also likely to be as a result of lack of information at the destination, product provision or destination image.

This further emphasises the need to extent opportunities for information acquisition not just pre-visitation but also to target consumers using diverse sources of information while at the destination. As such, successful positioning of the destination depends on informed decisions and this research demonstrates that destination behaviour patterns change and vary across different national identities, which invoke different demands and requirements unique to those visiting Ireland from Britain. The destination managers need to concern themselves with whether the destination should enhance its offerings by widening product lines (providing a greater variety of activities) or by deepening its offerings (focusing on a specific type of activity for improved quality and value for money). This strategic decision should be based upon the destination's resources and customers characteristics and preferences with particular emphasise on using national identity, nationality and passport held to identity customer preferences.

Given the significance of nightlife entertainment and the predominately adult market the trade effects of the controversial smoking ban introduced in January (2004) remain to be seen. While this may have a positive impact in terms of attracting adults opposed to smoking in pubs particularly those travelling with children, the recently introduced legislation prohibiting those under sixteen being in a pub after 8pm may have a negative effect in targeting the family market. Also given the significance of word of mouth particularly for first time visitors, it is important that the messages transmitted in the market match reality of the destination. In this context, the development of the image must be based on reality; otherwise Ireland will not succeed in satisfying the tourists,

which will in turn have a negative effect on the image that they will transmit by word of mouth. However, findings also suggest that those on repeat visitation and those of Welsh and Scottish identity enjoy a greater variety of activities and attractions at the destination are also apparent. To stimulate increase involvement at the destination, it may be concluded that destination management should promote more accurately attributes that best match tourist motivations by concentrating on market segments based on national identities and/or visit intensity where tourist motivations and destination resources match each other. In agreement with Laws (1991) and Chon (1989), it is suggested that the examination of benefits which are important to tourists (in this case based on segmenting tourists by national identity and repeat visitation) is essential for promotion and planning studies at the destination.

Finally, this research has identified gaps between the desired attributes and the perceived pre-visitation image of Ireland as well as gaps between the perceived images of Ireland post-visitation. To address these gaps, the following suggestions are advised in the formulation of an image modification plan:

- a. Capitalise on the post-visitation positive images e.g. beautiful scenery, Irish Music and Dance, Nightlife, Political situation, Humour/Craic/Banter, Fishing, Golfing, Castles/Crosses by differentiating these variables from the overall image to emphasise the positive aspects
- b. Schedule more mega-events such as sport and cultural festivals, food fairs to focus media attention on Ireland as a tourist destination while bringing resources to the improvement of the tourism infrastructure. For example, Seongseop and Morrision (2003) in discussing the national image of South Korea contend that an internationally significant event can change the image of a tourism destination in a short time period. Their study concluded that tourism destination mages could be enhanced positively through international events and actual visits.

- c. Use selective promotion to target the four main segments previously outlined differentiating the individual positive attributes in all promotional efforts and literature. At the same time, reduce emphasise on friendly people/welcoming and compensating with the promotion of nightlife, pub and musical events including both contemporary and traditional activities.
- d. Examine current pricing mechanisms taking advantage of the costly image by promoting higher quality facilities and attractions to justify the expense.

9.4 Future research avenues

The general findings of this research indicate that tourist behaviour may vary according to country of origin, nationality and national identity. Consequently, further study should try to expand this line of enquiry and a number of research strands are proposed.

Firstly, the research approach adopted in this thesis could be used to study the relationship between place and visitor in the context of other destinations and identities. In agreement with Yoo, McKercher and Mena (2004) understanding of the relationship between trip characteristics and behaviour of visitors embracing different nationalities and national identities can provide marketers with a better idea of how to position themselves and more accurately target and communicate to each market.

Secondly, this study explored the intended projected image of Ireland by drawing on the results of a semi-structured interview with a representative of Tourism Ireland while the findings of a semiotic and content analysis of brochure material established the projected image. This could be extended to include more wide ranging sources of projected images including other government agencies and private companies rather than solely relying on the views and brochures of Tourism Ireland.

Thirdly, while perceptions of a limited number of pictures pre-visitation were explored, future research could be extended to explore post-visit interpretation of images to verify if

such representations match the reality of the place visited, and the degree to which such interpretations are mediated by nationality and national identity. This would advance understanding of the extent to which interpretation and meaning of the pictorial element contribute to tourist's expectations which are used in assessing image perception, by comparing what was expected with what was experienced. In acknowledging that research has recognised the media's impact in creating projected images, it has largely failed to assess the impact these have on the tourists themselves (Ashworth 2005). Thus, it is anticipated that such an approach may expose differences of interest and even conflicts, arising from projected place images. These may be between tourists and residents, locals and more distance governments, the goals of local political legislation and externally orientated economic development.

Fourthly, this study has drawn its inspiration from the paradigm of semiotics and content analysis, but despite its usefulness, this combined approach in all areas of tourism remains to be unexplored. This study has provided a framework to encourage future research in one area of study, namely tourism marketing. However, similar research frameworks could be fruitfully developed and pursued in all social science disciplines studying the tourism phenomenon. As such, a combined semiotic and content analysis approach offers many future challenges and rewards for tourism researchers.

Fifthly, although not investigated in this study, it may be worthwhile investigating the extent to which (if any) different types of film and radio programmes attract different audience segments. Potential results may in turn imply that a destination marketer might be able to predict the possible tourism segment attracted by the film or radio show. Therefore, analysing the content of the material and identifying possible symbols portrayed in them will enable marketers to make appropriate plans. It is anticipated that the phenomenon of film and radio-induced tourism will continue to grow as participation in leisure pursuits by emerging global markets expands, and other forms of mass media are internationally distributed and viewed. Popular motion pictures according to Hyounggon and Richardson (2003) may be particularly critical elements of popular culture in creating

places images since they often serve to mystify places by imbuing them with myth and meaning through drama. This may generate audience involvement and consumption to spread across all the market segments identified in this study, thus allowing meaning to be created from the representation. Similarly, the expectation is that the web will continue to develop as an information source and a business transaction medium within the industry (ITIC 2004) but as yet, findings in this study indicate that its influence as an information provider, particularly whilst on holiday in Ireland is limited. Thus, the role of more traditional sources of information such as guide books, travel books and brochures are not as the ITIC (2004: 16) note 'now defunct', rather they are central to the consumption experience.

Finally, the results confirm that inbound tourists travelling from Britain to Ireland are not homogenous and it is suggested that Hofstede's (1980) PDI could be adapted to extend understanding of differences in tourist behaviour. As Hofstede's (1980) PDI is based on country of origin only, it is advised that basing the Index on national identity and nationality may provide more accurate and detailed findings than basing the Index on country of origin alone. However, irrespective of the significant contribution and potential contribution of this research to the study of tourist behaviour, a number of limitations need to be acknowledged.

9.5 Research Limitations

Firstly, the perceived image of Ireland from the perspective of tourists travelling from Britain was based on a sample of visitors who had already decided to visit Ireland. To gain a truly accurate sample it would have been necessary to distribute pre-visitation questionnaires to potential travellers before they had decided to visit Ireland. Secondly, two variables, ethnic origin/decent and occupation were excluded from the analysis due to the disproportionate number of respondents identifying themselves as white and in professional and managerial employment. Thirdly, the combined semiotic and content

analysis approach can, and in the context of this study did, allow considerable analytic freedom and creativity in terms of methods and procedures. Thus, in view of the lack of an acknowledged procedure and objective criteria, questions often arise on how to validate the outcome of any given analyses. This uneasiness tends to be particularly pronounced with those researchers more comfortable with positivist paradigms. Finally, Ashworth (2005: 2) suggests that all too often in heritage and identity studies emanating from Ireland, whether North or South, a tendency towards a 'navel-gazing exceptionalism, as if similar situations do not exist elsewhere and nothing can be learned from, or taught to, other places'. However, in defence of this study standing accused of such 'navel-gazing exceptionalism', the thesis consistently recognised the context of the history, nature and magnitude of tourism in Ireland and acknowledged social and economic influences on the interpretation of the perceived and projected images of Ireland as a tourism destination from the perspective of those travelling from Britain.

9.6 Conclusion

In summary, this study has concluded that images measured over two points in time can vary through the influence of such factors as actual travel experiences with a tourism destination, the amount and kind of information or promotional efforts and changes in the social environment. Other factors mediate the perceived image pre-and post-visitation of a tourism destination and include the perceived national identity held by visitors, nationality of passport held, the role of promotional media, levels of familiarity as well as purpose of trip and travel intensity. While previous empirical studies identified that the perceived images or attractiveness of tourism destinations differ according to nationality, Kozak (2002) suggests that such studies are especially limited. Thus this study has attempted to explore the role of nationality and more specifically the influence of national identity on perceived images pre-and post-visitation as well as assessing the degree of image change and the extent to which that image change is mediated by national identity. As this study has been amongst the first to assess the link between nationality/national

identity and interpretations of tourism destination imagery in the context of Ireland, both the methodology and findings could be helpful for other researchers who may undertake future similar research.

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Appendix 1

Preliminary Questionnaire

IMAGES OF IRELAND

Hello, my name is Catriona Murphy and I am a doctoral student at the University of Plymouth. This brief survey is being carried out in order to appraise the image of Ireland as a tourism destination held by visitors travelling from Britain.

Your answers to the following question will be used to develop a more detailed questionnaire which aims to establish how nationality and national identity influences the perception of Ireland as a tourism destination.

Q1. List three words OR expressions that come to mind when you think of Ireland.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Q2. Name three symbols that in your opinion captures the essence of Ireland as a nation?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Q3. Name three characteristics that in your opinion captures the essence of Ireland as a nation?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Q4a. What is your image of Ireland as a tourist destination?

Q4b. How have you formed this image of Ireland as a tourist destination?

Q5. Select three of the following pictures that you think most represent Ireland. Please tick the appropriate boxes and explain your choices

- 1. Golfing: _____
- 2. Fishing: _____
- 3. Horse and Trap: _____
- 4. Bridge: _____
- 5. Music: _____
- 6. Beach Hut: _____





4.

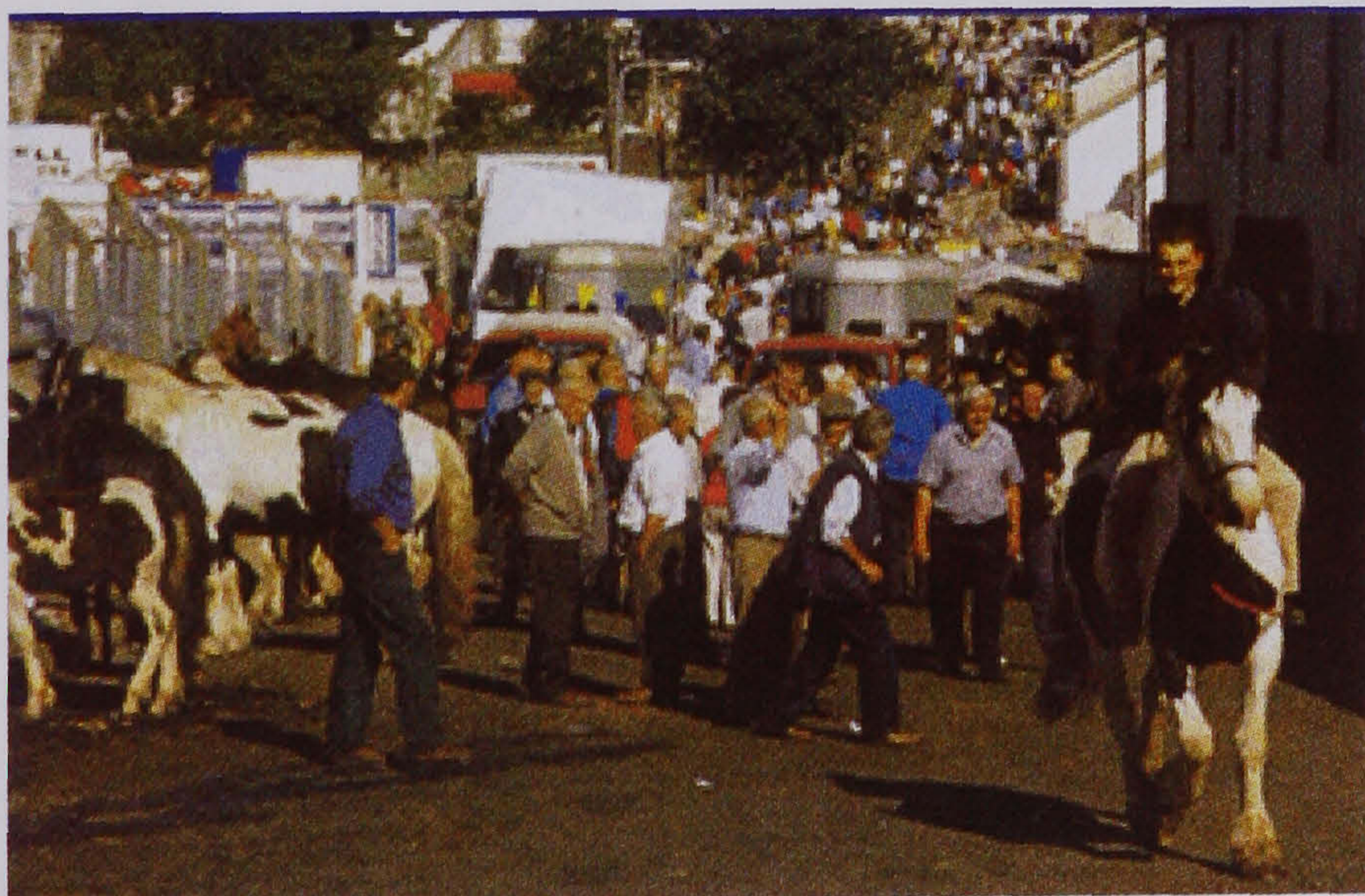


5.



6.

Q6. What emotions and/or feelings do you experience when you see the following photographs:



1.



2.



3.

Photo

1. _____

Photo

2. _____

Photo

3. _____

Q7a. Which ONE of the following photographs in your view best represents Ireland?



1.

Photo 1



2.

Photo 2



3.

Photo 3

Q7b. Please explain your choice

Q8. Looking at the photographs below, in your opinion what messages are being sent about Ireland as a tourist destination?



1.



2.



3.

Photo

1. _____

Photo

2. _____

Photo

3. _____

Q9. Do you hold a British passport? Yes ___ No ___

If No, which national passport do you hold?

Q10. Do you hold a dual passport? Yes ___ No ___

If Yes, indicate which countries you hold a passport for?

Q11. Which nationality do you most identify with?

Q12. What is your nationality?

Q13. What is your mother tongue/first language?

Q14. Which group best describes your ethnic origin or descent by ticking one of the following boxes?

White

e.g.
British
Irish
Welsh
Scottish
English
Other

Black or Black British

e.g.
Caribbean
African
Other

Chinese or other ethnic group

e.g.
Chinese
Japanese
Other

Mixed

e.g.
White and Black Caribbean
White and Asian
White and Black African
Other

Asian or Asian British

e.g.
Indian
Bangladeshi
Pakistani
Other

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

Appendix 11

Pre-Visitation Questionnaire

IMAGES OF IRELAND

Hello, my name is Catriona Murphy and I am a doctoral student at the University of Plymouth. This survey is being supported by the Research Development Committee at Plymouth University in order to appraise the image of Ireland as a tourist destination held by the British people.

Please answer all the questions unless otherwise indicated.

Q1. What images come to mind when you think of Ireland?

Q2. Describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting Ireland?

Q3. Identify the key characteristics that capture the essence of Ireland?

Q4. What symbols do you associate with Ireland?

Q5. What emotions/feelings do you experience when you think of Ireland?

Q6. How many times have you visited Ireland? Please tick the appropriate box

- 1st visit (*if 1st visit go to Q 8*)
- 2nd visit
- 3-5th visit
- 6-10th visit
- More than 10th visit

Q7. If you have already visited Ireland, what is the main reason you decided to return?

Q8. What unique or distinctive tourist attractions in Ireland do you already know of? Please list

Q9. Which of the following tourist attractions have you heard of and/or visited?
(Please tick all appropriate options)

Tourist Attraction	Not Heard of	Heard of but not visited	Visited
Trinity/Book of Kells	_____	_____	_____
Dublin Zoo	_____	_____	_____
Bunratty Castle Folk Park	_____	_____	_____
Blarney Castle	_____	_____	_____
Waterford Crystal	_____	_____	_____
Rock of Cashel	_____	_____	_____
Dublin Castle	_____	_____	_____
Japanese Gardens	_____	_____	_____
Clonmacnoise	_____	_____	_____
Aillwee Caves	_____	_____	_____
Lough Key Forest Park	_____	_____	_____
Glendalough	_____	_____	_____

Q10. Were you influenced by any specific activities in your decision to visit Ireland this time?

Yes _____ No _____

If 'yes', what are they?

Q11. Do you have any association/s with specific places in Ireland?

Yes _____ No _____

If Yes, please explain the association

Q12. Do you have any association/s with people living in Ireland?

Yes _____ No _____

If Yes, please explain the association

Q13. Do you consider yourself to be familiar with Ireland in terms of any of the following: (please tick all appropriate options)

- general knowledge of the whole of Ireland
- knowledge of specific places in Ireland
- experience of people living in Ireland
- none of the above

Q14. What regions in Ireland are you most familiar? (please tick all appropriate options)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dublin | <input type="checkbox"/> Kilkenny/Waterford |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cork/Kerry | <input type="checkbox"/> Wicklow/Wexford |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Galway/Mayo | <input type="checkbox"/> Clare/Limerick/Tipperary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ |

Q15. Which of the following are you most familiar with? (please tick all appropriate options)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> places to eat/drink | <input type="checkbox"/> tourist attractions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tourist accommodation | <input type="checkbox"/> shops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irish music/dance | <input type="checkbox"/> Irish language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irish heritage/culture | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape/scenery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> none of the above | |

Q16. During your holiday in Ireland do you expect to visit a

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> House/Castle | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic monument |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heritage/Visitor Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> Museum/Art Gallery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Festival/Cultural event | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Cultural site |

Q17. Do you expect to undertake any other activities? Yes ___ No ___

If yes, please give details _____

Q18. Where did you hear about these activities?

Q19. Please rate each of these elements from 1 to 5 according to the importance they hold for you in choosing a holiday destination

(1 = 'not at all important' 5 = 'very important')

Attribute List	Rate each element from 1 to 5 i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Shamrock	
Beautiful Scenery	
Irish Pubs/Drink/Guinness/Harp	
Friendly People/Welcoming	
Irish Music & Dance	
Folklore and Myths	
Troubles/IRA/War	
Relaxing/Tranquil	
Religion	
Rain	
Humour/Craic/Banter	
Fishing	
Laidback/slow	
Flag	
Horseracing/equine	
Blarney Kissing Stone	
Good Night Life	
Irish Accent/expressions	
Family orientated	
Irish Sport/GAA	
Historical/Nostalgic	
Expensive	
Surfing	
Physical appearance	
Luck of the Irish	
Irish Food	
Hen & Stag destination	
Accessible/easy to tour	
Gypsy/Travelling community	
Romantic/Mysterious	
Castles/Crosses	
Aer Lingus	
Golf	

Q20. Why did you decide to visit Ireland?

Q21. What factors influenced your decision to visit Ireland this time?

Q22. Does Ireland have any advantages for you over other destinations?

Q23. What source of information have you used most in organising your trip to Ireland? (tick one box only)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bord Failte Brochure/s | <input type="checkbox"/> Guide Book e.g. Lonely Planet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Word of Mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> Film/Radio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tour Operator Brochure/s | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers/Magazines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel books e.g. McCarthy's Bar etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____ | |

Q24. Please evaluate the performance of Ireland according to each of the following elements (1 = 'very poor performance' and 5 = 'very good performance')

*** It is not necessary to have visited Ireland in order to respond this question**

(1 = 'very poor performance' and 5 = 'very good performance')

Elements	Rate each element from 1 to 5 i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Shamrock	
Beautiful Scenery	
Irish Pubs/Drink/Guinness/Harp	
Friendly People/Welcoming	
Irish Music & Dance	
Folklore and Myths	
Troubles/IRA/War	
Relaxing/Tranquil	
Religion	
Rain	
Humour/Craic/Banter	
Fishing	
Laidback/slow	
Flag	
Horseracing/equine	
Blarney Kissing Stone	
Good Night Life	
Irish Accent/expressions	
Family orientated	
Irish Sport/GAA	
Historical/Nostalgic	
Expensive	
Surfing	
Physical appearance	
Luck of the Irish	
Irish Food	
Hen & Stag destination	
Accessible/easy to tour	
Gypsy/Travelling community	
Romantic/Mysterious	
Castles/Crosses	
Aer Lingus	
Golf	

Q25. What emotions and/or feelings do you experience when you see the following photographs:



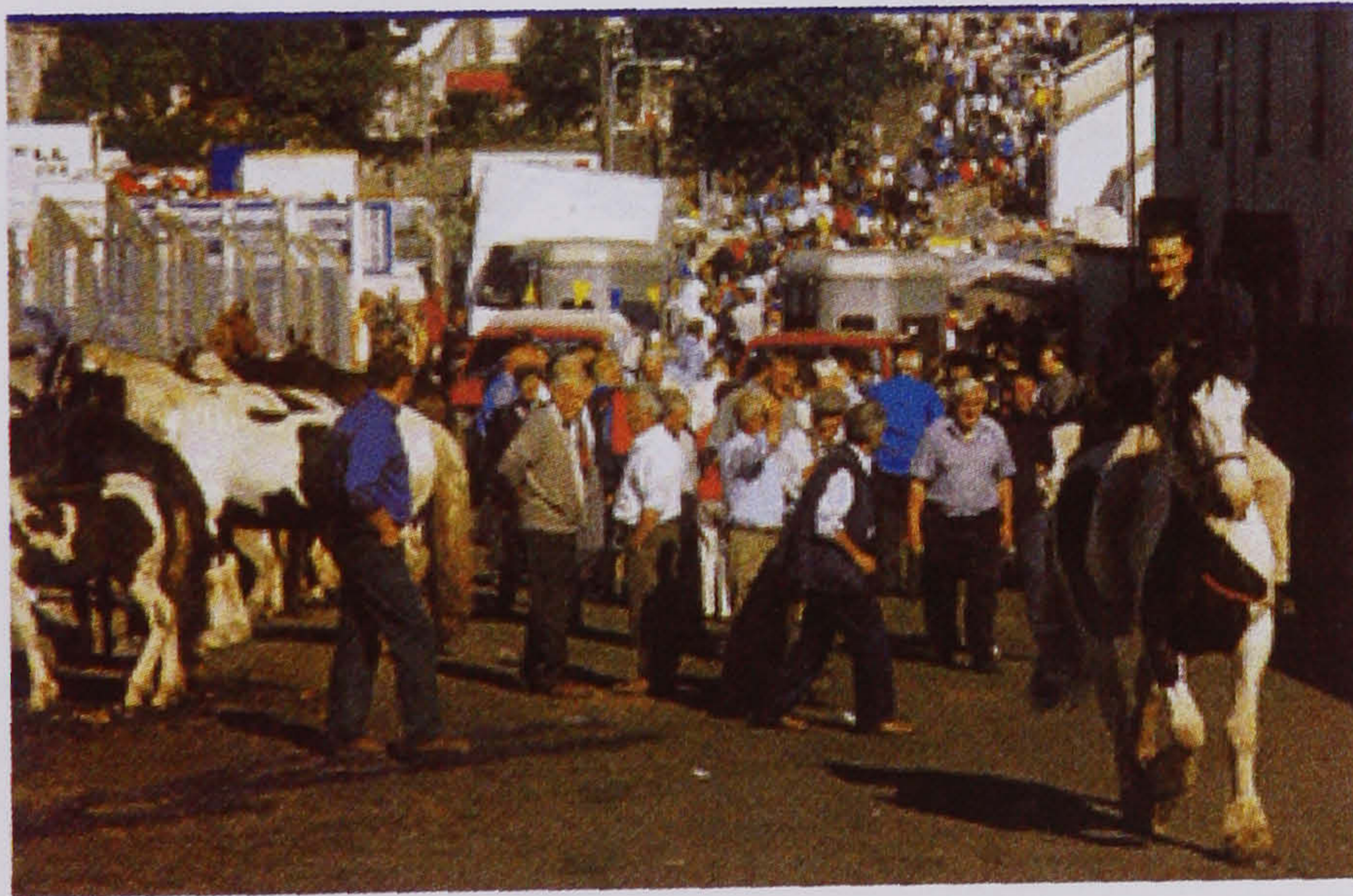
1.



2.



3.



4.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Q25. Do you hold a British passport? Yes ___ No ___

If No, which national passport do you hold?

Q26. Do you hold a dual passport? Yes ___ No ___

If Yes, indicate which countries you hold a passport for

Q27. What is your country of origin?

Q28. Which national/ethnic/cultural identity do you most identify with?

Q29. What is your nationality?

Q30. Are you..... Male ___ Female ___

Q31. What age are you?

- 18-25 36-50 65+
 26-35 51-64

Q32. Which group best describes your ethnic origin or descent by ticking one of the following boxes?

White

e.g.
British
Irish
Welsh
Scottish
Other

Black or Black British

e.g.
Caribbean
African
Other

**Chinese or
other ethnic group**

e.g.
Chinese
Japanese
Other

Mixed

e.g.
White and Black Caribbean
White and Asian
White and Black African
Other

Asian or Asian British

e.g.
Indian
Bangladeshi
Pakistani
Other

Q33. How long have you lived in Britain?

- Less than 5 years 11-15 years
 6 to 10 years 16 years +

Q34. Have you visited other countries in the last 3 years? Yes ___ No ___

If yes, where?

Q35. Which group best describes your occupational status?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1.1 <u>Employers & managers in large organisations</u>
e.g. company directors, senior civil servants,
senior offices in the police or armed forces. | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <u>Smaller employers & own account
workers</u> e.g. publicans, farmers etc |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1.2 <u>Professional</u> e.g. doctors, lawyers, teachers,
social workers, clergy ... | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <u>Lower supervisory, craft & related
occupations</u> e.g. clerks, secretaries,
driving instructors, telephone fitters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <u>Lower Managerial & Professional occupations</u>
e.g. nurses, journalists, actors,
lower rank police and armed forces | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <u>Semi-routine workers</u> e.g. shop
assistants, hairdressers, bus drivers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <u>Intermediate occupations</u> e.g. clerks, secretaries
driving instructors, telephone fitters ... | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <u>Routine occupations</u> e.g. refuse
collectors, labourers & waiters |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <u>Long term unemployment or have
never worked in paid employment</u> |

Name: _____

Postal Address:

Email address: _____

Telephone No. _____

Please be assured that the above information will be treated in strictest confidence.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

Appendix 111

Post-Visitation Questionnaire

Images of Ireland

Thank you for participating in my initial questionnaire which you completed prior to your visit to Ireland. Please use the stamped addressed envelope enclosed when returning the completed questionnaire. I look forward to receiving your response to this final questionnaire.

Please answer all questions unless otherwise indicated.

Q1. How long ago did you decide to visit Ireland? _____

Q2. When did you reserve your holiday? _____

Q3. What source of information did you use most while on holiday?
(tick one box only)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bord Failte/Tourism Ireland Brochure | <input type="checkbox"/> Guide Book e.g. Lonely Planet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Word of Mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> Film/Radio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tour Operator Brochure | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers/Magazines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel memories e.g. McCarthy's Bar etc. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____ | |

Q4. What was the main reason for choosing this as a source of information on Ireland?

Q5. Did this source of information provide an accurate picture of Ireland? Yes ___ No ___

Please explain answer

Q6. Did anything about Ireland surprise you?

Q7. Was this your....

- Main Holiday Secondary Holiday

Q8. What was the main reason for your visit to Ireland? (please tick only one box)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holiday | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit family/friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ | |

Q9. How many nights did you spend in Ireland this time? _____

Q10. Did you travel alone or with other people?

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alone | <input type="checkbox"/> With family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> As part of a couple | <input type="checkbox"/> With friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Q11. Did you travel ...

- Independently With an organised tour

Q12. What regions in Ireland did you visit? (please tick all appropriate options)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dublin | <input type="checkbox"/> Kilkenny/Waterford |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cork/Kerry | <input type="checkbox"/> Wicklow/Wexford |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Galway/Mayo | <input type="checkbox"/> Clare/Limerick/Tipperary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ | |

Q13. During your holiday in Ireland did you visit a....

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> House/castle | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic monument |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heritage Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> Museum/art gallery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Festival/cultural event | <input type="checkbox"/> Other cultural site |

Q14. Did you undertake any other activities? Yes ___ No ___

if yes, please give
details: _____

Q15. What images come to mind when you think of Ireland?

Q16. Describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting Ireland?

Q17. Identify the key characteristics that capture the essence of Ireland?

Q18. What symbols do you associate with Ireland?

Q19. What emotions/feelings do you experience when you think of Ireland?

Q20. Have your ideas about Ireland changed since you arrived?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, were the changes mainly ... Positive _____

Negative _____

What caused this change?

Q21. Please evaluate the performance of Ireland according to each of the following elements (1 = 'very poor performance' and 5 = 'very good performance')

Elements	Rate each element from 1 to 5 i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Beautiful Scenery	
Irish Pubs/Drink/Guinness/Harp	
Friendly People/Welcoming	
Irish Music & Dance	
Folklore and Myths	
Political Situation	
Relaxing/Tranquil	
Religion	
Weather	
Humour/Craic/Banter	
Fishing	
Laidback/slow pace of life	
Horseracing/equine	
Blarney Kissing Stone	
Good Night Life	
Irish Accent/expressions	
Family orientated	
Irish Sport/GAA	
Historical/Nostalgic	
Expensive/Cost	
Surfing	
Physical Appearance of the Irish	
Irish Food	
Hen & Stag destination	
Accessible/easy to tour	
Cultural Diversity	
Romantic/Mysterious	
Castles/Crosses	
Aer Lingus	
Golf	

Q22. Do you intend to return to Ireland?

Yes, definitely

No, probably not

Yes, probably

No, definitely not

Q23. What factors would encourage you to return to Ireland?

Q24. What factors would discourage you from returning to Ireland?

Q25. Would you consider going back to Ireland ...

Next year

After 5 years

In 2-3 years

Never

In 4-5 years

No idea

Q26. In your opinion, what other destinations are like Ireland?

Q27. Does Ireland have any advantages (for you) over the destination(s) you have listed?

Q28. Does Ireland have any disadvantages (for you) over the destination(s) you have listed?

Q29. What are the main weaknesses of Ireland as a tourism destination?

Any other
comments?

Please be assured that the above information will be treated in strictest confidence.

All completed questionnaires should be returned using the stamped addressed envelope enclosed.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

Code No: _____ (For researcher's use only)

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Ms. Catriona Murphy-Underhill
Lecturer in Hospitality and Tourism Studies
Department of Humanities
Limerick Institute of Technology
Moylish
Limerick
Republic of Ireland

Tel: (061) 206 208 ext: 405
Email: catriona.murphy@lit.ie

And

Dr Sheela Agarwal
Senior Lecturer in Tourism Management
Faculty of Social Science and Business
University of Plymouth
Seale-Hayne Campus
Newton Abbot TN12 6NQ

Tel: (01626) 325629
Email: sagarwal@plymouth.ac.uk

Nationality and interpretations of destination imagery: implications for the study of tourist behaviour

Abstract

This paper explores the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery. It reviews the concept of nationality generally, in the context of tourist behaviour and specifically, in the context of interpretations of destination imagery. In doing so, it draws attention to the fact that investigations of this nature must focus not only on how the nationality of the tourist may influence interpretations of destination imagery but also on how the nationality of the product may also influence interpretations. In addition, this paper outlines a number of implications for the future study of tourist behaviour. These involve further in-depth research of the relationship between perceived images of a destination and a tourist's nationality, the influence of stereotyping on interpretations of destination imagery and the extent to which the nationality of the product determines a destination's project image and contributes to its selling.

Tracking number: a

INTRODUCTION

The study of tourist behaviour is complex and wide-ranging. Considerable attention has been placed on the factors that influence tourist behaviour and several have been identified which relate to the individual and to the destination. The former includes gender (Carr, 1997), social class (Seaton, 1992; Thurot and Thurot, 1983), age (Shaw and Williams 1994) and nationality (Reisinger and Turner 2003), while the latter includes the characteristics of a destination (Hanefors and Mossberg, 1999) and tourism destination imagery (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991). However, despite these studies there has been relatively little synthesis of these areas of research. Consequently, little is known about the associations (if any) between factors relating to individual tourist behaviour and those that relate to the destination. This knowledge is important as a greater understanding of the tourism consumption-production nexus may help to safeguard and enhance a destination's popularity. Thus, this paper attempts to address this theoretical lacuna by exploring the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery. In the first part of the paper, the meaning and nature of nationality is discussed briefly and its influence on tourist behaviour is reviewed. Following this, nationality is explored further in relation to interpretations of destination imagery. In particular, the influence is examined of the nationality of the tourist and the nationality of the product on interpretations of destination imagery. Then some implications are discussed for the study of tourist behaviour.

THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONALITY ON TOURIST BEHAVIOUR

Nationality at its most simplest refers to a set of cultural differences that are associated with "a feeling of belonging to a nation" and it "corresponds to a political ideology which holds that the territorial or national unit should be allowed to co-exist in an autonomously congruent relationship" (Johnston, Gregory and Smith, 1988:312). Central to discussions of nationality are theories of national identity, nations and nationalism (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1983; Kedourie, 1960; Smith, 1991). These are separate but related concepts and consequently it is difficult to discuss each separately without passing over the boundaries of the other (Palmer, 1999). According to Anderson (1991) nationality and nations are cultural artefacts of an imagined political community that is both limited and sovereign. This imagined community exists in the imagination of people as a result of the technological and economic changes that reduced capitalist societies. For Anderson, the nation is part of an imagined political community precisely because 'members of even the smallest nation will neither know most of their fellow-members nor will they meet them or even hear them (p.6). National identity is thus a communion experienced through immediate family, friends and neighbours rather than through associations with the entire nation. A sense of national identity is gained through an individual's experience of this imagined national community (Tomlinson, 1990) and it emerges when individuals identify themselves in relation to a nation composed of people with similar ways of behaving, communicating and thinking. It is thus a very personal concept and according to Gellner (1983) identification requires a mixture of loyalty and a willed adherence to the rules of the group. For Smith (1991) national will is important because a nation can only exist if everyone accepts the aspirations, sentiments and goals of the nation. This does not mean that different interpretations cannot be accommodated. Rather, all must accept the 'raison d'être' of the nation (Smith, 1991).

Study of nationality and tourist behaviour is limited as focus has traditionally been placed on its influence on the choice of information sources used by travellers (Chen and Gursoy, 2000), on destination choice (Sheldon and Fox, 1988; Richardson and Crompton, 1988), on tourist expectations (Armstrong, Mok, Go and Chan, 1997) and on benefits received (Mattial, 2000). Several other studies (e.g. Pizam and Sussmann, 1995; Pizam 2000) indirectly investigate nationality by examining the perceptions that British, Israeli, Korean and Dutch tour guides had of tourists of different nationalities on escorted motor-tours. These studies showed that nationality influences the tourist culture and that there was a significant perceived difference between the nationalities (Reisinger and Turner, 2003). Nationality however has also been examined from the perspective of residents

and entrepreneurs in tourist communities and again these studies indicate the existence of perceived cultural differences between nationalities. For example, Brewer's (1984) study conducted in San Felipe, Baja, California and Mexico suggests that local residents have stereotypes of all Americans which lead to 'specific' stereotypes applying to American tourists. Boissevain and Inglott (1979) observe that the Maltese characterised Swedish tourists as misers, and French and Italians as excessively demanding, while Pi-Sunyer (1978) found that Catalans stereotyped English tourists as stiff, socially conscious, honest and dependable.

Despite these studies, there is widespread agreement that understanding of the influence of nationality on tourist behaviour is still lacking. For example Plog (1990), Armstrong *et al.* (1997), Munson and McIntyre (1979), Clark (2000), O'Halloran and Hensarling (1991), Mackay and Fesenmaier (1997) and Hall and Mitchell (2000) all emphasise a lack of research relating to the cultural differences and similarities of tourists and have suggested that the rapid globalisation of the tourist phenomenon and its international nature warrants a better understanding of the tourist. In particular however, there is a dearth of research of the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery. This is surprising given that tourism imagery is critical to the success of many destinations. Thus, with the exception of nationality, factors that influence consumer's perceived image of a destination pre- and post-visitation and the influence of imagery on the behaviour of tourists has been comprehensively analysed (Ashworth and Goodall, 1988; Mansfield, 1992; Chon, 1990). According to Johnson and Thomas (1992) destination images have an influence right from the time tourists choose their holiday destination. Dann (1996) agrees with the importance of image to destination selection and offers an extensive discussion on the degree to which destination images control and determine the behaviour of tourists. The influence of tourism image on the choice of holiday destination has been considered by various authors who developed decision-making models (Crompton and Ankomah, 1993; Gartner, 1989; Goodall, 1988; Kent, 1990; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Stabler, 1990) and these models predicate the notion that destinations with strong and positive images experience higher demand from tourists. According to Ross (1993) in the absence of knowledge or prior experience, image fulfils an important function insofar as destinations with strong, discriminatory and recognisable images have more probability of being chosen. But, it not only the pre-visit perceived image that is important. Perceptions of the destination's image post-visit also influences tourist behaviour as repeat visitation often depends on the destination's capacity to provide experiences that correspond with the tourists needs and which fits the image they have of the destination (Joppe, Martin and Waalen, 2001).

NATIONALITY AND INTERPRETATIONS OF DESTINATION IMAGERY

It is clear that investigations of destination imagery and tourist behaviour largely ignore the potential role of nationality (Pizam, 2000). Because tourism image relates to an individual's overall perception or total set of impressions of a place that results in its mental portrayal (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Hunt, 1975; Kotler, Haider and Rein, 1993; Phelps, 1986, Milman and Pizam, 1995; Seaton and Bennett, 1996), understanding the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery is crucially important for destination management. Overall, it may inform the design of more effective market positioning and segmentation strategies as on the one hand it enables a visitor profile to be constructed from which patterns of national similarity may be identified. On the other hand, it enables the identification of specific 'national' characteristics that a destination may use to attract tourists. Ultimately the study of cultural differences across nations may help to solve controversy over the degree to which marketing should be standardised globally. However, what becomes abundantly obvious here is that the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery requires an investigation from two different perspectives: first in terms of the nationality of the tourist and second with respect to the nationality of the product.

Tourist nationality and interpretations of destination imagery

Given that nationality has been credited with influencing the behaviour of tourists, it is logical to assume that it may also potentially influence the way in which destination imagery is interpreted. Interpretations of destination imagery are closely associated with perceptions which Samovar and Porter (1991) define as the process by which stimuli are selected from the external environment and interpreted into meaningful internal experiences. Such perceptions can be created without experience and knowledge of the destination and as such their meanings are subjective (Reisinger and Turner, 2003). In the absence of experience, the destination image is assessed on the basis of knowledge gained from promotion instead of first-hand experience. However, the perception of destination imagery does not merely depend on promotional activities and other external stimuli including economic and social influences but is shaped also by internal environmental factors such as demographic, psychographic and behavioural characteristics. Thus, the way people learn to perceive the world is influenced by the stimuli exposed to them. Precisely which stimuli reach awareness and influence the judgmental aspect of perceptions and the attachment of meaning to the stimuli depends wholly upon culturally determined perceptual processes (Samovar and Porter, 1988). While people respond to stimuli that are important to them, culture determines which stimuli and criteria of the perceptions are important. According to Reisinger and Turner (2003), people of similar cultures are exposed to similar experiences and respond to similar stimuli while in different cultures people tend to expose themselves to dissimilar experiences as people respond to different stimuli and their perceptions of the external world vary. Thus, cultural variations can explain differences in perceptions and Reisinger and Turner (2003) suggest that only a knowledge and understanding of cultural factors can facilitate social interaction across cultural boundaries.

Thus any investigation of the influence of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery must be undertaken within a broader context of culture. Helman (1990) defines culture as 'a set of guidelines (both explicit and implicit) which individuals inherit as members of a particular society, and which tells them how to view the world, how to experience it emotionally, and how to behave in relation to other people, to supernatural forces or gods, and to the natural environment' (pp. 2-3). Keising (1974:89) suggests that culture is not 'a collection of symbols fitted together ... but a system of knowledge, shaped and constrained by the way the human brain acquires, organises, and processes information and creates internal modes of reality'. Thus, at its most basic level, culture shapes the delivery and interpretation of verbal and nonverbal messages. Perhaps one of the most influential studies of national-culture and its impact on attitudes and values was completed by Hofstede (1980) who identified five cultural dimensions (power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance and confusion dynamism) which shaped the emergence of common beliefs, attitudes, customs, meanings and behaviour norms (Triandis, 1972) and characterised people of the same culture. The influence of these differential value structures is expressed through lifestyle, work, leisure and consumer behaviour patterns (Richardson and Crompton, 1988); therefore it would be expected that the manner in which people view images of a destination is mediated by cultural background.

However, a number of difficulties may be encountered when using nationality to ascertain interpretations of destination imagery. Dann (1993) and Peabody (1985) highlight the limitations of using nationality and country of residence as segmentation variables in tourism research. They both suggest that tourism is now well and truly a global phenomenon and generating and destination societies are no longer culturally uniform. Dann (1993) argues that many tourists possess multiple nationalities and that not all people who have the same nationality and were born in the same country have identical cultures, while many nations are pluralistic in their cultures. These observations bring Dann to the conclusion that 'it becomes appropriate to employ alternative approaches to the analysis of tourism (Dann 1993:109). He therefore proposes alternative factors to differentiating tourists by their nationality, namely; personality, lifestyles, tourist-roles, social-class and culture. While Dann's observation about the

difficulties with national cultures is reasonable, one can also concur with his suggestion that national cultures should not be used as a sole discriminating variable. At the same time, however, the very existence of the variables Dann (1993) identifies such as social-class, is questionable. Also if accepting Dann's view that many tourists possess multiple nationalities, it does not necessarily mean that tourists' also possess multiple national identities. Thus, even though society is in the process of 'globalisation' or 'convergence', national characteristics and identities should not be totally discarded in favour of the five segmenting variables he has proposed (Pizam and Sussmann, 1995).

The study of nationality on interpretations of destination imagery may also be complicated further by the influence of stereotyping. Batra, Myres and Aaker (1996) point out that many consumers tend to utilize images and stereotype objects in order to minimise their mental load and thereby avoid complex analyses. In this sense, the perceived images of different destinations tend to be simplified in the minds of the tourists themselves, and are formed by the information they possess. Images incorporated in marketing destinations set up a genre of myths and expectations that influence how nations are perceived and interpreted (Selwyn, 1996). What tourists see, experience, and learn about cultures they visit are often conditioned by existing structures of image representations and interpretation of cultural others which can re-affirm stereotypes rather than break them down. Urry (1990) suggests that the tourist gaze is socially organised and systematised. Although many exist based in different societies and historical periods, each gaze is constructed through difference. That is, it is 'constructed in relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness'. Furthermore, tourists gaze upon places that are expected to provide 'intense pleasures' and are 'out of the ordinary' (Urry, 1990:2-3). Interviews with tourists suggest that pre-existing stereotypes are not dismantled by actual experiences, but instead serve as standards against which the visited culture is evaluated. Indeed, 'stereotyping can be so strong that it can lead a tourist to see something that is not there' (Laxson, 1991:373).

The nationality of the product

There is some evidence which suggests that the nationality of the product may also influence interpretations of destination imagery, particularly in terms of the construction of tourist representations. Both Bordas and Rubio (1993 cited in Gallarza *et al.* 2002) and Williams and Clarke (1991) for example, argue that products and places can arise in consumers' minds under the umbrella of a global image based on nationality. However, in much of the tourism literature there is an implicit assumption that tourism exists as an all-powerful, virtually 'placeless' phenomenon that, by definition, affects change, causes impacts and creates effects on 'defenceless' local places. Chang, Milne, Fallon and Pohlmann (1996) for example remark that the relationship between the global and the local is often portrayed in literature as unequal, with global forces exerting considerable influence over local conditions in creating and shaping tourism products. This privileging of the global reflects a failure to appreciate the ability of destinations themselves to initiate development, mediate and harness external tourism forces and capitalise on place-specific characteristics and resources to influence the shape of local tourism places (Quinn, 2003).

Place-specific characteristics and resources may therefore exert considerable influence in the construction and reproduction of place but their influence may also be conditioned by the national identity and nationality of the product itself. This is because the significance of tourism imagery is far wider than the impact of seeing a photograph in a brochure since the selection process conveys messages to both the visitor and the visited. MacCannell (1984:385-6) reinforces this points by arguing that certain ethnic identities are maintained and promoted over others in order to entertain the tourist. Furthermore, 'the Other' continues to be described in the terms highlighted by Spivak (1988) as 'seen but do not see, are represented but do not represent, and are photographed but do not photograph'. Thus, national and cultural identity is the hallmark of such representations or what Hall (1997:236) refers to as 'The marking of 'difference' and is "the basis of that symbolic order we call culture". This tendency to focus on and

often to appropriate the experience of 'others' is an essential component of the tourist product particularly in light of globalisation. Image is now central to creating some place 'new', it involves 'manufacturing of the exotic' (Rossel, 1998), and often results in the 'commoditisation' of cultures (Greenwood, 1978). Image constructors 'make places' by changing destinations into veritable paradises where many time-honoured themes in the depiction of the 'other' – primitivism, simplicity, sensuality, excess, harmony - are fervently recycled (Britton, 1979).

Tourism marketing in particular makes use of binary representations to label and define the world in terms of us and them, superiority and inferiority, intellect and instinct. People and places are assigned key characteristics which conform to this two-dimensional or oppositional world view (Pritchard, 1998). Marketers select and utilise particular images and aspects of society and discard others and representations are created, filtered and mediated through cultural and ideological structures. Such images focus on national identity and national cultural and are by no means neutral or mere reflections of reality. They are drawn from a stock of cultural knowledge which is highly ideological and selected. For example landscapes, castles, country houses and their associated paraphernalia of everyday life are often presented as embodying the essence of nationhood. They thus provide visitors with both a physical and an experiential link with a nation and its people (Sternbery, 1997). These symbols help to construct and convey a sense of national identity and are imaged to lie at the heart of a nation's soul (Palmer, 1999). The use of such symbol is of particular salience to countries, like England and Ireland which rely upon them as the means to attract tourists. As Horne (1984: 166) acknowledges nationality is 'one of the principle colourings of the tourists' vision'.

Tourism advertising is instrumental in constructing systems of meaning and assists in defining and describing and even limiting its audience. In tourism's case it presents and represents others for a particular audience's consumption:

...peoples and cultures have been freely appropriated by twentieth-century advertising in its promotion of goods and services in the marketplace – a marketplace that also includes ideologies in its offerings (O'Barr 1994-158).

However, tourism's use of identity goes far beyond the commercial as it goes to the heart of a people because it serves to define their cultural identity and to make this visible both to themselves and to others. Furthermore, cultural identity underpins national identity as it communicates the past and present traditions and mores of a people thus enabling their identification as a distinctive group (Palmer, 1999). As O'Connor (1993) suggests individual and personal identities are constructed through interaction with others and determined largely by the ways in which we are perceived and treated by them. Cultural and national identities are also constructed from the representations produced by people both inside and outside of a culture. Thus the way in which we see ourselves is substantially determined by the way in which others see us and this raises important issues relating to the impact of nationalistic messages on individuals within that nation conceptions of their personal identity and how the nation and its people is perceived by others.

The images of tourism thus provide the means by which local people can be identified and encountered. However, the myths and traditions of nationhood that are promoted by the tourism industry may have little to do with the 'real' lives of the people, or with how they themselves understand their national identity. Those images that enable tourists to recognise a nation may have been selected for just that purpose and may not have been meant to represent how the local people actually see themselves in the twentieth century. For example, Ireland's tourist identity is specifically constructed around themes designed to attract overseas visitors. The country is represented as a sort of pre-modern society: 'a country of 'shamrocks'... and leprechauns, a place of picturesque scenery an unspoiled beauty, of friendly and quaint people, a place which is steeped in past traditions and ways of life', in a sense a country that is in no particular hurry to catch up with the modern world (O'Connor, 1993, p.68). Indeed the tourism industry continually

emphasises specific aspects of the past as being representative of what the nation is really all about, or perhaps, what it should be about (Palmer, 1999). Such selling of a nation involves a complex mix of fact and myth enabling national identity to be experienced physically as well as mentally. Thus, Samuel's comment that the idea of nationally has a real as well as an imaginary existence is not without foundation (Samuel, 1989).

Thus, marketing tools used to promote destinations logically strive to project images and meanings to potential visitors by constructing and communicating images of the cultural and national identities of host populations. As such, destination decisions may be based on the symbolic elements of the destination (as conveyed in visual imagery) rather than the actual features portraying these elements as exotic, mysterious or in other ways different. In doing so, however, tourism imagery creates this sense of 'otherness', of difference between the intended audience and the people and culture of the destination country. For example, Jorgensen (2003) suggests that Irish tourism imagery can be seen as a discourse of Ireland and Irish identity is partly constructed by selectively representing certain features of Ireland. However, Jorgensen (2003) also argues that little attention has so far been paid to how Irishness is understood by foreign visitors and how that Irish identity is constructed or as Urry 1990:3) states how imagery is 'endlessly reproduced' through various mass media and objectified in the tourism imagery. Yet Cheong and Miller (2000) feel that Urry attributes too much of the construction of the gaze to the tourists themselves. In an elaboration of Urry's work they argue instead that the tourist gaze is constructed and controlled by powerful professionals in the tourism industry such as tourist boards, guides, hotels and writers of guide-books. These, according to Cheong and Miller, are the agents of power, who are able to select which aspects of the destination that are to be submitted to the gaze.

However, study of the influence of the nationality of the product on interpretations of destination imagery is complicated by destination familiarity. Dann (1996) identifies familiarity as a specific strategy used by the guidebooks to reassure potential tourists that they will not feel out of place because the 'natives' are friendly and speak English. The images of locals were made to 'appear safe' by presenting them as happy and catering to tourists' desires in familiar ways yet also used to add local colour, signify the host culture, entertainment from a social distance, sexual allure, and exoticism. Conversely, promotional material excludes information about ubiquitous cultural patterns, descriptions of ordinary life and discussions about contemporary socio-cultural developments. For example, in Ireland the importance of scenery, people and pace of life as key facets of Ireland's destination image are underscored by the findings of Bord Failte's Visitor Attitudes Surveys (1983, 1988, 1993, 1997, 1999, 2002). Indeed, since the 1960s, Bord Failte has promoted Ireland as a clean, green, pre-modern and friendly destination. However, the recently acquired reputation as a 'tiger economy' is in conflict with the more traditional image of Ireland and poses two problems: firstly, it serves to alienate those who were attracted to Ireland on the basis of its pre-modern character and secondly, the existence of contradictory images implies a degree of falsehood, and may result in a lack of credibility in the projected image of the destination.

In addition, establishing the influence of the nationality of the product on interpretations of destination imagery may also be difficult due to the existence of place attachment whereby symbolic meanings may be attached to particular places (Lee, Allen, Norman and Backman, 1999). For instance, national parks enjoy a special status in America that is especially rich in meaning (Brown, 1990 cited in Selwyn 1996) as they are considered an important part of American heritage. Such ideas of place attachment relate to the previously discussed notions of 'national will' and national character' and the recreation of localities and regions by endowing places with a personality and thus rendering them understandable, examinable, and memorable. Thus Anderson's (1991) 'imagined communities' can be related here to a much older idea of 'imagined places'. This line of research predominantly has addressed residents' attachment to their communities in relation to length of residence and perceived impact of tourism (McCool and Martin, 1994; Um and Crompton, 1987). Lee and Allen (1999) highlight the need to

expand the understanding of a tourism destination to include not just an aggregate of attributes but rather an assessment of the entity as it is experienced. Indeed, as Lee and Allen (1999) point out much remains to be done to understand and measure the meaning that tourists associate with the projected images of a place.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF TOURIST BEHAVIOUR

This exploration of nationality and interpretations of destination imagery from the perspective of the tourist and the product highlights a number of important implications for the future study of tourist behaviour. These implications are:-

- The necessity for in-depth investigation of the relationship between a tourist's nationality and the perceived images of a destination. This will help to elucidate the way and degree to which nationality influences interpretations of verbal and non-verbal representations of a destination and its impact on tourist behaviour;
- The urgent need for further research of the influence of stereotypes on interpretations of destination imagery as it is not clear whether pre-existing stereotypes are dismantled by actual experience, whether preconceptions are influenced by nationality, or if these preconceptions are then used as standards against which the visited nation is evaluated. Thus, investigations of this issue should seek to determine the extent to which the tourist relies on and is influenced by stereotypes in the interpretation of tourism destination imagery; and
- The need for detailed examination of the degree of influence the nationality of the product has on the construction of tourist representations. By suggesting that places can arise in consumers' minds under the umbrella of a global image based on nationality, this paper highlights a link between projected tourism images and the nationality of the product itself. However, what is not clear is that if the nationality of the product itself determines the projected image and conditions tourist perceptions of the destination, to what extent does it contribute to its selling?

CONCLUSION

This paper examines nationality and interpretations of destination imagery and identifies how nationality influences the interpretation of destination imagery in two contrasting ways. First it is contended that the nationality of the visitor is important to investigations of this nature and second it highlights the importance of considering also the influence of the nationality of the product. In doing so, this paper highlights also a number of implications for the future study of tourist behaviour which involve a more detailed assessment of the link between nationality and interpretations of destination imagery.

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