

Abstract

UKRAINE'S DESTINATION IMAGE AS PERCEIVED BY U.S. COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

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July, 2010

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The present study is an exploration of Ukraine's destination image as viewed by U.S. college students. Student market is a rapidly growing one and presents opportunities for emerging destinations like Ukraine. A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was utilized to investigate the image of Ukraine and build a three-dimensional destination image model. Respondents were asked to answer three open-ended questions and rate the level of their agreement with pre-developed statements that pertain to Ukraine. Concepts conveyed by both methods were distributed along three continuums that comprise the destination image model. Implications for promotional and marketing efforts were suggested.

*Keywords:* destination image, Ukraine, student market

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Recreation and Park Administration

by

Svitlana Iarmolenko

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother who gave all of herself to help me accomplish my goals and become a person I am today. Thank you for believing in me, constantly supporting with kind advice, and never letting me give up. You are the most important person in my life.

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## CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Today, the tourism industry is developing at unprecedented rates, exceeding expectations of leading tourism organizations. The United Nations World Tourism organization (UNWTO, 2007) reported the number of tourist arrivals has grown from 800 million to 900 million in 2005-2007, a growth rate of over six percent. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2009) forecasts that by 2018 global tourism will exceed \$10.8 trillion in tourism expenditures and 296.2 million in jobs. Rapid development of the tourism industry has created new challenges for tourism marketers. In the climate of growing competition, one of the major tasks for destination marketing specialists lies within the area of building an effective destination positioning strategy. And the core element of this positioning mechanism is creating a positive perception, or image, of the destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).

Regardless of the impressive number of destination image studies, researchers have little agreement as to the definition of the destination image concept. The absence of a solid definition, in its turn, makes it difficult for the researchers to agree on a common list of components that make up destination image, as well as optimal ways to measure it. These determinants led to the fact that a universal conceptual/theoretical framework for destination image has yet to be developed (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002; Pike, 2002; Son & Pearce, 2005).

Despite this, destination image perceptions have proven to be good predictors of consumer decision making patterns (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Thus, measuring tourist attitudes towards certain geographic regions, countries, areas or resorts has become an important topic of scientific inquiry (Bonn, Joseph & Dai, 2005; Boo & Busser, 2005; Brown, 1998; Chaudhary, 2000; Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Javalgi, Thomas & Rao, 1992; Sirgy & Su, 2000). In today's

world, where tourists have many diverse options readily available, effective and thoughtful marketing strategy is increasingly essential. An understanding of destination image provides marketing practitioners with invaluable information on which to base their marketing strategy and promotion efforts.

Information about destination perceptions and destination positioning is of particular interest to Eastern European countries that opened their borders to international tourists in 1991 after the fall of the “iron curtain”. The concept of the Iron Curtain was artificially created by USSR political leaders and symbolized the ideological and physical boundary separating Eastern Europe from the rest of the world from the end of World War II in 1945 until the end of the Cold War in 1991.

After opening the borders to the Western World, countries like Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland have experienced steady growth in tourist arrivals and revenues brought by the tourism industry. In 2005, three East European countries, Poland, Croatia, and Ukraine, were included in the United Nations World Tourism Organizations (UNWTO) Worlds’ Top 25 Tourism Destinations List (UNWTO, 2005). Ukraine, being the largest of these countries and one of the oldest nations in Europe, is positioned well for tourism. The country encompasses a variety of natural landscapes and boasts a multitude of heritage monuments and landmarks of great historical importance and of interest to tourists. However, the strengths and weaknesses of Ukraine’s destination image have yet to be explored, making it difficult to identify the most effective ways of marketing the destination to past and potential international travelers.

To date, most tourism research focused on mature (ages 50 and over) tourists, as they were believed to have sufficient funds and time to travel (Sirakaya, Sonmez & Choi, 2001). However, students have become increasingly active in international travel, as well. The

Federation of International Travel Organizations estimated that students constitute approximately 20% of all international travelers and the student travel market is a multibillion dollar business (FIYTO, 2003). Since it may be challenging for emerging destinations like Ukraine to compete for the traditional mass tourism market, it would be highly beneficial for destination marketers to focus their attention on the growing market of student travel. Ukraine is a country with rich heritage and unique culture. If destination promoters manage to tailor positioning strategy so as to attract young tourists, Ukraine can highly benefit from the growth of this market segment. Since image has significant impact on a person's decision to travel for pleasure (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999), specialists need to know what image students have of a country and what motivates them to travel. This knowledge will allow destination managers to develop a distinct student-oriented marketing strategy and capitalize on the lucrative student market (Sirakaya, Sonmez & Choi, 2001).

### Statement of the Problem

Destination image is an important element of promotion mix. Further, the ability to determine and manage a destination image gives managers of Destination Management Organizations keys to making destinations more competitive. However, destination image is a complex multifaceted notion which is often not easy to operationalize and measure. Attitudes towards a destination are dependent on numerous factors including sociodemographic characteristics of visitors, tourists' countries of origin (Brown, 1998; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Son & Pearce, 2005), and previous visitation (Bonn, Joseph & Dai, 2005). For countries that recently opened to international travel, like Ukraine, determining destination image is a major challenge.

Increasing attention has been paid to destination specific research (Bonn, Joseph & Dai 2005; Brown, 1998; Chaudhary, 2000; Haahti & Yavas, 2001; Javalgi, Thomas & Rao 1992; Son

& Pearce, 2005). However, research has primarily focused on North American and Western Europe/United Kingdom destinations (Pike, 2002). A limited number of studies have examined the destination image of countries and cities in Eastern Europe and the former USSR (Young & Kaczmarek, 1999). A review of available research indicates a gap in the literature with regard to the destination image of Ukraine and the attitudes of international tourists towards the country. Knowledge of foreign tourists' attitudes and perceptions would be highly beneficial for the Ukrainian government and tourism administration, as it will allow to develop a successful marketing strategy and attract large number of tourists. Knowledge of students' attitudes and image will allow to elaborate distinct, student-oriented marketing strategy and benefit from the growth of student travel market.

#### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to determine Ukraine's destination image as viewed by U.S. college students through adopting the conceptual framework proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). It investigated U.S. college students' familiarity with Ukraine and whether they perceived it as a potential destination for their travel. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was utilized. Components of the destination image were determined using the following characteristics: functional (i.e., characteristics that are directly observable and measurable), psychological (i.e., characteristics of destination image that are not observable or measurable, but exist in people's minds), common (i.e., impression of a core group of traits), unique (i.e., characteristics based on unique features and events of a destination), attribute-based (features), and holistic (i.e., mental pictures and imagery of the destination). Components of the image were determined and distributed along three continuums. Students' willingness to visit Ukraine for pleasure purposes was learned. Further analysis determined the importance of

Ukraine's destination image information for tourism promotion. It was determined whether a three-dimensional diagram is appropriate for Ukraine. The objectives of this study were:

1. Investigate U.S. college students' familiarity with Ukraine as a tourist destination and their willingness to visit the country.
2. Determine attributes that characterize Ukraine's destination image as viewed by American college students.
3. Distribute characteristic attributes of destination image employing three-dimensional diagram of destination image - as described by Echtner and Ritchie (1993).
4. Offer recommendations about intensity, character, and direction of promotion efforts for Ukraine's tourism industry.

#### Research Questions

- Q1. What are the common and unique components of Ukraine's destination image?
- Q2. What are the functional and psychological components of Ukraine's destination image?
- Q3. What are the holistic and attribute-based components of Ukraine's destination image?
- Q4. How willing are U.S. college students to visit Ukraine as a travel destination in next five years?

#### Limitations

Limitations of this study were:

1. Due to time and resource constraints, the study utilized web-based survey to reach subjects and facilitate qualitative and quantitative data input and analysis. However, according to Dillman (2000), web-based surveys presented following limitations:

a. Coverage error – not all units of the study population have the same known nonzero probability of inclusion of the sample that is drawn to represent the entire population. Thus, some units may have no chance to be included in the population, whereas other may have multiple chances.

b. Sampling error – sampling only portion of the sampling population rather than all of its members.

c. Measurement error – results from inaccurate answers to survey questions that result from poor wording, survey mode effects, and attitude of respondents towards web-based surveys.

d. Nonresponse error – survey mode (web-based) results not including some people in the sample. These people, had they been included, may have provided different distribution of answers.

2. Ukraine is an emerging tourist destination and little effort has been focused on promotion of tourism. Therefore, respondents may have low awareness about the country and be reluctant to complete the survey.

3. The researcher was the instrument when analyzing the open-ended questions and distributing attributes along three destination image continuums. Thus, personal bias might have affected the objectivity of these procedures.

4. While completing the web-based survey, respondents had access to the World Wide Web and may have used it for looking up information about Ukraine. This influenced the level of awareness respondents demonstrated in the survey.

5. Students were more likely to participate than not participate in the survey since the link was distributed by a professor.

## Delimitations

The study was delimited to full-time students enrolled in five universities in different geographic regions of the United States. These regions are: North, Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, and the Pacific coast. The sample was drawn from persons who qualified for this study: those who had not previously visited Ukraine and have no familiarity with the country.

## Definition of Terms

Attribute – an individual feature of a product or service (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

Awareness – having heard of or recognizing the name of a vacation destination (Milman & Pizam, 1995).

Common characteristics – characteristics of destination image composed of the impressions of a core group of traits on which all destinations are commonly rated and compared (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991).

Familiarity – a) having previously visited the destination (Milman & Pizam, 1995); b) combination of amount of information and previous experience, including multiple visits (Baloglu, 2001).

Functional characteristics – characteristics of destination image that are directly observable or measurable (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

Holistic characteristics – characteristics of destination image based on mental pictures and imagery (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

Image – (a) the set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person holds of an object (Kotler, 1991); (b) image is comprised of the ideas of conceptions held individually or collectively of the destinations under investigation. Image may comprise both cognitive and evaluative components (Embacher & Buttle, 1989).

Psychological characteristics – characteristics of destination image that are not observable or measurable, but exist in people’s minds (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

Unique characteristics – characteristics of destination image based on unique features and events (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991).

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid development that the tourism industry has experienced during recent decades has created new challenges for tourism managers. As new tourist destinations emerge, existing destinations evolve, and modes of transportation become more efficient, consumers are presented with expanded choices. Therefore, one of the major tasks for destination managers lies in determining effective market strategy. For a destination to be competitive among the many available choices, it must be differentiated from its competitors and favorably positioned in the minds of consumers. The core element of this positioning mechanism is creating and maintaining positive perception, or image, of the destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).

The concept of product/service image does not genuinely belong to the tourism industry. It originated in retailing, as marketing specialists emphasized the necessity of creating distinct images for stores and consumer goods (Lindquist, 1975; McDougall & Fry, 1975). They utilized the concept of imagery in psychology to create a favorable perception of products and companies (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). However, destination promoters are increasingly adopting the technique for branding and promoting tourist destinations.

The concept of destination image has been a focus in tourism promotion, however little agreement exists among researchers with regard to its definition. The ambiguity in defining the concept causes difficulties in determining the components that make up destination image and the ability to measure them. Difficulty in definition and measurement may be factors in why a solid conceptual/theoretical framework for destination image has not been developed yet (Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Pike, 2002; Son & Pearce, 2005).

Despite this, destination image perceptions have proven to be good predictors of consumer decision making patterns (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Thus,

measuring tourist attitudes towards certain geographic regions, countries, areas, or resorts has become important research topic (Boo & Busser, 2005; Brown, 1998; Chaudhary, 2000; Sirgy & Su, 2000). Applying a number of data collection and analysis techniques, researchers assessed how tourists perceive the destination (Brown, 1998; Chaudhary, 2000; Javalgi, Thomas, & Rao, 1992), what factors influence their perceptions and how they are formed (Boo & Busser, 2005; Sirgy & Su, 2000), and how they impact destination choice (Bonn, Joseph & Dai, 2005). Understanding destination perceptions and how they impact destination choice provides marketing practitioners with invaluable information on which to base their promotion efforts. However, most studies have focused primarily on North America and Western Europe, leaving South and Central America, Africa, and Eastern and Northern Europe unstudied (Pike, 2002).

Competition between travel destinations is growing rapidly, requiring destination managers to explore new market segments and niches. According to Sirakaya, Sonmez, and Choi (2001), managers and market specialists were mostly focusing on older travelers, who were thought to have more means to travel. Now, however, they are starting to realize that a younger segment of the travel market enjoys the necessary funds and time to buy tourism services and participate in travel. Statistical data provided by Federation of International Youth Travel Organizations indicate the growing potential of the aforementioned market segment: in 2003, the student market accounted for about 20 percent of total international arrivals (FIYTO, 2003). Students are also characterized by the Federation as loyal repeat customers with a high per capita average spending. The college students' spring break tradition brings an influx of money to U.S. travel industry as well. Therefore, if destination managers want to benefit from this market segment, they need to understand students' preferences, motives, and images they have of various destinations (Sirakaya, Sonmez & Choi, 2001). As there is an increasing competition for

traditional mass travel markets, the developing youth travel segment is even more important for emerging tourist destinations like Ukraine.

### Image and Imagery

Image and positioning were first applied in retailing to differentiate consumer goods and stores. McDougall and Fry (1975) suggested that the importance of the store image is evident, as the more appealing the image is, the more likely customers will return to the store. They defined image as the personality of the store, which was comprised by all meanings and relations that characterize the store to people. Their study compared two stores in London, Ontario, while combining semantic differential and open-ended techniques of image assessment. It appeared that both research techniques had certain limitations, but, when combined together, produced a comprehensive picture of the customers' image perceptions. Lindquist's (1975) research focused on the attributes that constitute store image, and how these are grouped. He proposed several managerial implications for practitioners regarding store image promotion. Results indicated that consumer behavior is not directed by knowledge and information, but by images and perceptions: people do not act on a basis of what is true, but what they believe to be true.

Image concept is rooted in the psychological theory of imagery, defined as "an experience of perception in absence of corresponding physical stimulus" (Sack et al., 2005, p. 702) or "a way of processing multisensory information in working memory" (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003, p. 39). It is often referred to as "mental picturing", but in fact all human senses are involved in creating the image. The final image of a product is comprised of both perceptions of individual attributes and overall impression. McInnis and Price (1987) argued that consumers, when faced with a choice of several products, may at first use discursive thought and rationale to reduce the number of alternatives. But after that overall holistic impressions, or image, is being

used to make the final decision.

An interesting view was presented by Lawson and Bovy (1977), who defined image as “the expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, and emotional thoughts an individual or a group have of a particular object or place” (as cited in Milman & Pizam, 1995, p. 21). This “knowledge and impressions of a particular place” eventually evolved into a concept of destination image, widely used in contemporary tourism industry.

### Destination Image

The concept of image found wide application in the fields of destination marketing and positioning. Extensive choice of destinations raised competition and required active promotional efforts from marketers (Bonn, Joseph & Dai, 2005; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Milman and Pizam (1995) noted that in highly competitive markets tourism suppliers seek to develop a positive image of their product. This way they can capture certain market segments and stimulate visitation to the destinations they manage. On the other hand, if a destination already possesses a negative image, it is important to take steps to mend it. Dahles (1998) conducted an extensive study of the tourist image of Amsterdam and concluded that capitalizing on representations of the red light district, tolerance and liberalism, and the gay scene does not benefit the city’s travel industry. On the contrary, the image of a polished, sophisticated European capital with rich historical past and vibrant ambiance has to be developed in order to attract tourists.

Active attention to the destination image concept encouraged a considerable amount of research on defining and measuring it. However, the vague and evasive nature of image generally and destination image in particular, prevented researchers from agreeing on one universal definition. Some of them do not define it at all (Bonn, Joseph & Dai, 2005; Govers,

Go & Kumar, 2007), others avoid direct definition, expressing destination image through its components (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Murphy, Moscardo & Benckendorff, 2007). A summary of definitions suggested in destination image literature is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

*Destination Image Definitions*

Reference	Definition
Govers, Go & Kumar (2007)	Image is formed by few impressions chosen from a flood of information
Murphy, Moscardo & Benckendorff (2007)	Image is comprised of perceptions about a place reflected by tourist's associations with it
Ryan & Cave (2005) Boo & Busser (2005)	Destination image is a set of cognitive, affective attitudes, and overall impression
Mazanec & Strasser (2007)	Sum of cognitive, conative, and affective perceptions
Sirgy & Su (2000)	Stereotypic image about a country
Echtner & Ritchie (1993)	Destination image is comprised of attribute-based and holistic components
Reilly (1990)	Image reflects the overall impression of destination in people's minds
Hunt (1975)	Perceptions potential visitors hold of place or area
McDougall & Fry (1975)	Image is the 'personality' of the product, complex of meanings and relationships people hold about it
Son & Pearce (2005)	"An individual's subjective beliefs, feelings, and multi-sensory representations toward a tourist destination" (p. 24)
Gartner (1989)	"Image is an underlying concept which when formed correctly will force a destination into a traveler's evoked set" (p. 16)
Reynolds (1965)	A mental construct based upon a few impressions chosen from a flood of information
Milman & Pizam (1995)	"Visual or mental impression of a place, a product, or an experience held by the general public" (p. 21)
World Tourism Organization (in Milman & Pizam, 1995)	"An aura, an angle, a subjective perception accompanying the various projections of the same message transmitter" (p. 21) Destination image can exist only if there is at least some small amount of knowledge about it

Upon examination of the table, it becomes evident that most researchers define destination image quite vaguely, through a set of impressions or perceptions, or sum of attitudes tourists have towards a destination. They never refer to whether they define destination image in

terms of attributes or overall impression. So a universal comprehensive definition of destination image is still to be developed.

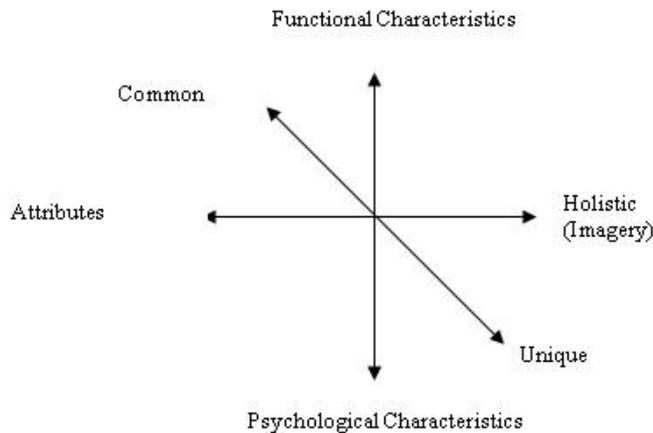
### Destination Image Components and Formation Process

Being a multifaceted notion, destination image encompasses a number of components. Boo and Busser (2005) argued that image structure is reflected by the manner individual attributes are synthesized to become the image of an entity. They suggested that cognitive images (perceptual/cognitive evaluations), affective images (affective response), and overall images are blended in consumers' minds to form the complete image of a destination. The idea that destination image is comprised of cognitive, affective, and conative images was supported by a number of researchers. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) defined cognitive images as a knowledge about a place, whereas affective images are feelings towards, or attachment to it. Murphy, Moscardo, and Benckendorff (2007) argued that cognitive images are translated into rational benefits of the destination, while affective images are translated into emotional benefits. While considering cognitive and affective perceptions, Mazanec and Strasser (2007) also examined organic and induced images as components of destination image.

Another approach to defining destination image components is found in the works of Echtner and Ritchie (1993; 2003). They envisioned destination image as having two main elements: attribute-based and holistic. These elements contain functional (more tangible) and psychological (more abstract) characteristics, which can range from those based on 'common' traits to those rooted in unique traits. The authors developed a three-dimensional framework, with continuums representing attribute-holistic, functional-psychological, and common-unique aspects of image. The model is illustrated in Figure 1. Please note this figure should be envisaged in three dimensions.

Figure 1

*The Components of Destination Image*



Sirgy and Su (2000) argued that there are both controllable and uncontrollable attributes to destination image. Controllable cues are related to the four P's of marketing: a) the destination (product), b) prices of tours and services (price), c) location of the destination (place), and d) the efforts of destination promoters (promotion). Uncontrollable cues mostly pertain to visitors' individual characteristics. Murphy et al. (2007) suggested that there can be both absolute and relative images, and in order to get realistic measures of destination image, researchers should give respondents an opportunity to compare several destinations, just like when they choose a place to go on vacation in real life.

Based on works of previous researchers, Milman and Pizam (1995) concluded that an image of a tourist destination is an amalgam of three components: a) the product (i.e., quality and variety of attractions at the destination, price levels, distinctiveness, user categories); b) the behavior and attitude of tourism industry employees who are in firsthand contact with the

visitors; and c) the environment, such as physical characteristics of the destination (weather, scenery, landscape), quality and type of accommodations, restaurants, and physical safety. If destination managers can successfully address all three components while creating a marketing strategy, they have much higher chances of attracting large number of tourists.

Formation of a travel destination image undergoes several stages. Reynolds (1965) described development of image as a construction of a mental picture based on few impressions chosen from a flood of information. This flood of information is comprised of a) media (newspapers and television), b) tourism promotional materials, and c) opinions of family and friends. Echtner and Ritchie (2003) presented Gunn's (1988) model of the seven phases of travel experience: a) accumulating mental images about a destination; b) receiving further information and modifying images; c) deciding to travel to the destination; d) taking a vacation trip; e) participating in different experiences while at the destination; f) returning home; and g) modifying images based on the vacation experience. Of those seven phases, three (a, b, g) pertain to the formation of destination image. While image formed during phase a) is an "organic" image (based upon non-commercial sources), the one formed during phase b) is "induced" (based upon promotional materials, advertisements and brochures). The authors recommended that researchers separate those people who visited the destination from those who did not, because visitation ultimately influences the image tourists have about a destination.

Several models of destination image formation have been developed by researchers. Govers, Go, and Kumar (2007) created the 3-gap tourism destination image formation model, which takes into account cognitive, affective, and conative images and reflects both guest's and host's perspectives. Two models of destination image formation were developed by Baloglu and McCleary (1999). The General Framework of Destination Image Formation reflects the impact

of stimulus factors (e.g., information sources, previous experience) and personal factors (e.g., psychological and social) on cognitive, affective, and global aspects of image. The Path Model of the Determinants of Tourism Destination Image Before Actual Visitation shows how type and variety of information, age, education, and travel motivations influence overall image through perceptual and affective evaluation. In their research of destination image, Gallarza et al. (2002) took into account two approaches to the destination image formation process: static and dynamic. The first pertains to the relation between image and tourist behavior (satisfaction and destination choice), while the second deals with the formation and structure of the destination image itself.

While destination image is being formed in the minds of tourists, there are many factors that influence it. Boo and Busser (2005) created a table of influential variables on destination image which include previous visitation, distance, purpose of visit, word-of-mouth, demographic variables, thrill, knowledge, and prestige. Javalgi, Thomas, and Rao (1992) determined that presence of landmarks, opportunity to experience cultural variety, and price policies are those factors American tourists consider while forming their opinions of a destination. However, for tourists from other countries these factors would be different, as nationality, cultural background, and self-perceptions have an impact on image formation, as well (Brown, 1998; Hooley, Shipley & Krieger, 2001; Sirgy and Su, 2000; Son and Pearce, 2005). Milman and Pizam (1995) also noted that perceptions of destination image deviate among various market segments.

A number of researchers agreed that prior knowledge and previous visitation are important factors of destination perceptions formation, as people who have traveled to a certain place have a more realistic image than those who gathered information from media and word of mouth (Bonn, Sacha & Dai, 2005). This idea is supported in study of image perceptions of prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to Lower Rio Grande Valley by Fakeye and Crompton

(1991), who found significant differences between the subsamples. Authors also concluded that the length of stay had an impact on image, as did Ahmed (1991) in his study of the tourist image for the state of Utah. Kerstetter and Cho (2004) analyzed prior knowledge and provided evidence of it being a multidimensional construct that impacts the search for vacation-related information. In fact, individuals with greater prior knowledge are less likely to use web-based sources of travel information. Baloglu (2001) introduced a concept of familiarity, which is a combined amount of information used and previous destination experience, and argued that familiarity plays a vital role in tourist destination selection process.

#### Destination Image Perceptions Measurement

There has been scientific discussion on what methods are best for measuring complex, multifaceted destination images. No single universal method on collecting data regarding tourists' perceptions of travel destinations has been developed. Echtner and Ritchie (1993; 2003) defined two basic approaches to image measurement: structured (attribute-focused) and unstructured (free form descriptions); they emphasized the necessity of using both for complete operationalization of destination image. They developed a questionnaire with a series of open ended-questions for free elicitation for providing qualitative data and a number of scales to measure attribute-based components of destination image. After testing the questionnaire on a sample (n=600), they concluded that open-ended questions were successful in revealing holistic and unique aspects of destination image and provided more distinctive, unique and detailed impressions. Along with surveying large samples of respondents, researchers find focus groups and expert opinions to be helpful in operationalizing destination image (Haahti & Yavas, 2001).

Gallarza et al. (2002) carried out a taxonomic review of procedures for measuring destination images and concluded that multivariate techniques are predominant, as they allow for

comprehensive image assessment. However, researchers acknowledge the importance of combining several methods of data collection and analysis (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Reilly, 1990; Son & Pearce, 2005). For example, Driscoll, Lawson, and Niven (1994) compared the two response formats (scaled and grid) on a self-administered questionnaire and found that while both formats are reliable, they are not equivalent. The study allowed to conclude that research findings utilizing different data collection forms cannot be compared. Coshall (2000) argued that Repertory Grid Analysis is a better tool for eliciting components of tourists' images of potential destinations than Semantic Differential or Likert Rating scales. Unlike the latter ones, Repertory Grid Analysis is much more personalized and flexible in allowing respondents to use their own language to describe what is relevant to them. The author suggested that being couched in George Kelly's psychological Theory of Personal Constructs, the Repertory Grid Analysis technique frees respondents from restrictions imposed by bipolar and Likert-type scales.

Modern software packages are gaining in popularity and are effective tools in the interpretation of survey responses and analyzing destination image. Various functions of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) are used to prove reliability, consistency, and validity of findings: t-tests, regression, and factor analysis. Govers, Go, and Kumar (2007) and Ryan and Cave (2005) utilized self-organizing artificial neural network software packages (CATPAC or TextSmart) when working with large amounts of qualitative data. These programs allow analyzing responses to open-ended questions and drawing out key words to describe an image of a travel destination. Since destination image perceptions are greatly influenced by cultural background, MacKay and Fesenmaier (2000) suggested that multidimensional scaling (MDS) is a successful way of exploring these perceptions. Since MDS is effective in cross-cultural psychology, it would show great results in cross-cultural tourism study as well. They surveyed

graduate students from the United States and Taiwan on their destination image of Alberta, Canada and found that people of different cultures have different aesthetic tastes. Moreover, MDS proved to be useful in demonstrating cross-cultural differences. Gartner (1989) agreed on the effectiveness of this method and suggested that MDS ALSCAL is one of the most accurate programs when performing multidimensional scaling as a way to analyze destination image. Boo and Busser (2005), Gartner (1989), and Sirgy and Su (2000) applied modeling techniques to create visual models of either destination image or connections between image attributes. The summary of most frequently used methods of collecting and analyzing data in destination image perceptions is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Destination Image Perceptions. Data Obtaining Techniques and Data Analysis Methods*

Reference	Quantitative (Likert-type scales, structured)	Qualitative (free elicitation, open-ended)	Interviewing	Focus Groups/ Panel Discussions/ Expert opinions	Questionnaires/ Surveys (mailed, self-administered, on-line, on-site)	Repertory Grid	Visual Modeling (Maps/ Schemes/ Charts)	CarPac /TextSmart	Multidimensional scaling (MDS ALSCAL, SYSTAT)	Descriptive statistics/ frequencies	ANOVA/MANOVA	Factor analysis
Murphy, Moscardo, & Benckendorff (2007)	*	*	*							*		
Ryan & Cave (2005)			*				*					
Mazanec & Strasser (2007)	*				*		*					
Bonn, Joseph, & Dai (2005)	*	*	*	*						*		
Son & Pearce (2005)	*	*			*					*		
Boo & Busser (2005)	*				*		*					
Echtner & Ritchie (1993)	*	*		*	*		*					
Baloglu & McCleary (1999)	*				*			*	*		*	
Gartner (1989)	*				*			*				
Haathi & Yavas (2001)	*			*	*		*					
Reilly (1990)		*	*							*		
Hooley, Shipley, & Krieger (1988)		*		*	*		*					
Hunt (1975)	*				*			*				
McDougall & Fry (1975)		*	*							*		

Brown (1998)	*		*							*		
Chaudhary (2000)	*				*					*		
Driscoll, Lawson, & Niven (1994)	*				*	*				*		
Javalgi, Thomas, & Rao (1992)		*	*							*		
Govers, Go, & Kumar (2007)		*			*			*				
MacKay & Fesenmaier (2000)	*				*			*				
Chen & Kerstetter (1999)	*				*					*	*	*
Coshall (2000)						*						*
Baloglu (2001)	*				*					*	*	*
Chen (2001)	*	*			*							
Milman & Pizam (1995)				*	*					*	*	
<b>Total - 25</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>

### Student Travel Market Segment

The youth and student travel market has increasingly been recognized as growing in importance both by researchers and practitioners (Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2007). According to U.S. Census Bureau, almost 18 million people were enrolled in American universities and colleges in 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Neither travel entities, nor tourist businesses can ignore the significant number of potential tourists represented in student market segment. Field (1999) argued that highly competitive market conditions urge market specialists to deliver purpose-adapted products. Evans, Campbell, and Stonehouse (2008) noted that one of the most important aspects of competitive strategy is the way in which an entity relates to its markets; and the definition and outlines of an entity's markets are a key starting point for the formulation of strategy.

For a mass tourism consumer market that is getting more experienced and has higher travel expectations, distinctive advertising campaigns or specifically tailored travel experiences gain importance (Field, 1999). The significance of finding out consumers' preferences and attitudes in order to correctly position marketing strategies for various destinations is emphasized. Thus, to make destinations attractive to the student market and tailor tourism

products for students, practitioners need to know what attracts students, what they seek in their traveling experiences, and what images they have of various destinations.

Regardless of its growing importance, student market segment has not received a great deal of attention from researchers (Field, 1999; Kim, Oh, & Jogaratham, 2007). Chadee and Cutler (1996) noted with regard to international travel, that research has concentrated on the general patterns of all travelers without making specific observations about the student population. Authors assured that the student market possesses sufficient size and creates notable enough economic impact so that it should not be overlooked. Evans, Campbell, and Stonehouse (2008) argued that a growing market is usually more attractive than a static one, as growing market allows opportunities for entities to expand in line with the growth of the market. Thus, a growing market of student travel is of great interest to destinations like Ukraine as it may present numerous opportunities for entities in country's tourism industry.

Kim, Oh, & Jogaratham, (2007) conducted an extensive literature review and concluded that there is scarcity of research dedicated to the student market. The authors found that previous research focused on five broad areas: students' travel motives and their influence on travel decisions, associations between motivation and related variables, travel patterns and preferred activities, levels and source of travel satisfaction, and others. Researchers did not find any evidence of previous attempts to test pre-existing models of travel behavior or travel motivation within the student market.

The student travel market is quite distinct from the rest of the travel industry as it has a well-organized group of travel specialists who cater precisely to students, including STA Travel and Federation of International Youth Travel Organizations (Chadee & Cutler, 1996). Kim, Oh, and Jogaratham (2007) examined travel motives of university students in the U.S. Results

suggested that students are motivated by push factors such as knowledge, sports, and adventure. Knowledge was defined as learning new things, experiencing a new style of living, and getting to know history and heritage places. Moreover, Kerstetter, Confer, and Graefe (2001) noted that there has been a general increase in Americans' interest to visiting heritage sites and that there are even "specialists" within heritage tourism. Sport was defined as participating in and watching sporting events and physical activity, and adventure as seeking thrill and excitement, and being daring and adventurous.

Push motives related to knowledge and adventure can be found in Ukraine. Ukraine's rich centuries-old history, and numerous museums and galleries provide the opportunity for learning new things, experience a new style of living, and getting to know historical places. The many unexplored and exotic parts of Ukraine provide opportunities for tourists to experience adventure. Therefore, the country possesses an opportunity of capturing the student travel market by offering push motives that are important for students.

### Critique of Previous Research

High demands for destination differentiating and popularity of destination image and brand ideas have resulted in extensive research in this area. However, there are still inconsistencies in research findings, as well as topics that have not been covered by researchers or have been touched upon fragmentarily.

Due to image concept ambiguity researchers experienced difficulties with defining, operationalizing, and conceptualizing the image. There has also been a large number of measurement methodologies applied to destination image. Son and Pearce (2005) noted that image studies suffer from definitional and methodological differences, and that this has greatly affected the quality of research results. Difficulties of image assessment were pointed out by

Gallarza, Saura, and García (2002), including complexity and multidimensionality of the tourism product, great subjectivity of images, and intangibility of tourism service. Bonn, Joseph, and Dai (2005) argued that various cultural backgrounds impact the image formation, as people from different countries of origin hold different perceptions of the same destination. Echtner and Ritchie (1993) suggested that both structured and unstructured methods of data collection should be applied to fully capture the multifaceted character of destination image.

Generalization of findings is another issue with image research. Echtner and Ritchie (2003) argued that destination image research is piecemeal and cannot be generalized. Once researchers identify the attributes and influencing factors of the image formation, they are unable to apply the results to other destinations, as these attributes are unique for each region or country. Haahi and Yavas (2001) analyzed tourists' perceptions of Finland and several other European destinations. They found that different countries have unique advantages and disadvantages in the minds of travelers; therefore, it is hard to generalize the obtained results for broader range of destinations.

Bella (1989) argued that many scientific methodologies are androcentric and do not take women's perspectives into account. Studies of destination image have suffered from this lack of gender sensitivity as well. Researchers included gender items in their surveys and questionnaires (Chaudhary, 2000), but failed to analyze data for men and women separately. However, gender might be an important characteristic influencing image formation: when making choices, men use their rationale, while women tend to base their perceptions on emotions (Bella, 1989).

Country-specific destination image studies tend to focus on certain geographic areas, while other areas receive no attention from scientists. Pike (2002) analyzed 142 papers on destination image and found that the most popular region for study was North America (58

papers), followed by United Kingdom/Europe (45), Asia (25), Australasia (19), Africa (14), Central America/Caribbean (9), South Pacific (5), and South America (1). Of those in the category United Kingdom/Europe, most studies pertain to countries of Western and Northern Europe – France, Germany, Finland, and the Netherlands. Furthermore, none of the studies examined destination image of Eastern European countries, so measuring image of these countries is a future challenge for researchers.

### Conclusions

The image concept has found wide application in the field of travel destination marketing. Scholars agree that destination image is a set of beliefs/attitudes/perceptions about a destination in tourists' minds. Different data collection (e.g., interviews, surveys, focus groups, expert opinions) and analyzing (e.g., multidimensional scaling, statistic analysis, visual modeling, and text analyzing neural network software) techniques have been utilized to assess the image of regions, countries, and resorts. Although extensive research was made in order to define, operationalize, and conceptualize destination image, there are still inconsistencies and gaps that need to be attended to. Researchers concentrated their efforts on measuring image of North America and Western Europe, leaving vast areas unstudied. Thus, evaluating destination image of Ukraine, one of the countries in Eastern Europe with steady growth in arrival numbers, is an important contribution to this field of research.

The emerging market segment of student travel has not received a great deal of scientific attention either. However, it becomes more and more important as students have means and time to travel and are interested in exploring destinations all over the world. Therefore, determining their perceptions towards various places can be largely beneficial for travel destinations, especially emerging destinations such as Ukraine.

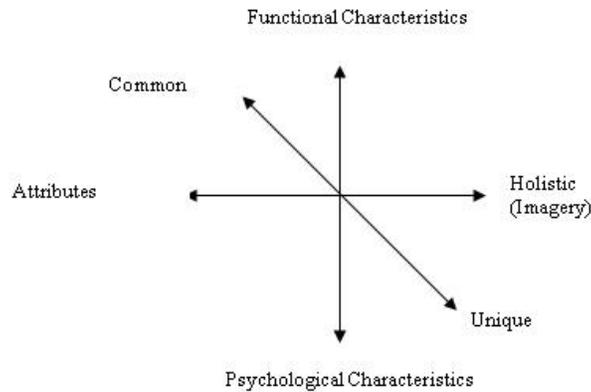
## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Growing competition in the tourism industry requires differentiation and strategic positioning for travel destinations to compete effectively. Successful marketing campaigns start with a thorough investigation of current destination image: identifying strengths and weaknesses of a country's image helps to direct promotional efforts. Correcting a negative destination image as well as enhancing positive and appealing image is an ultimate goal of every destination marketing organization. This is especially vital for emerging travel destinations like Ukraine. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2009) forecast for 2009, travel and tourism in Ukraine is expected to see a decline of 14.8% in direct industry gross domestic product, 13.5% in direct industry employment, 6.4% in personal travel, 9.8% in business travel, and 24.2% in capital investment. As shown by these figures, the industry is obviously in need of money influx and steady arrival numbers. This destination image investigation will help to direct promotion efforts and, eventually, attract international tourists.

The current study was focused on exploring Ukraine's destination image as viewed by U.S. college students. The conceptual framework used to investigate the image is one developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and is illustrated in Figure 2. Please note this figure should be envisaged in three dimensions.

Figure 2

*The Components of Ukraine's Destination Image*



The model consists of three intersected continuums: 1) attribute-holistic; 2) functional-psychological; and 3) common-unique. Determining all the characteristics is essential for a thorough examination of the destination image. Eventually, image concepts determined through data collection will be distributed along the three continuums and Ukraine's destination image model will be developed.

Design of the Study

This research project is a non-experimental mixed methods exploratory study focused on determining Ukraine's destination image as viewed by U.S. college students. As suggested by Echtner and Ritchie (1993), a combination of qualitative and quantitative data was obtained from respondents to identify attributes of the country's image. This synthesis allowed for an in-depth analysis of tourists' attitudes to fully capture components of destination image. While structured methodologies (i.e., scales) are effective for measuring common and attribute-based components of image, unstructured methodology (i.e., open-ended questions) is useful in capturing the unique and holistic components (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Thus, both types of questions were utilized in the current study.

An online survey was chosen as the most appropriate instrument as it allowed the researcher to reach subjects nationwide. Also, a large amount of qualitative data were obtained through open-ended questions on the online survey. Administering the questionnaire online simplified data input and analysis, as well as minimized error in data entry. Due to time constraints it was important to minimize the data analysis period.

### Population and Sampling

To ensure broad geographic representation, students of five universities in different geographic regions of the United States were selected into the study population. This method provided a broad geographic spectrum from which the sample was drawn (Leisen, 2001). A convenience sample proportional to the size of the student population was conveyed. The population size of the college students has been identified through the 2007 Census Bureau data on school enrollment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Colleague professors at the five universities were contacted and asked to distribute the link to web-based survey to students in their classes. Students were ensured that participation in the survey was voluntary to avoid any coercion or pressure.

### Instrumentation and Distribution

A combined qualitative/quantitative web-based questionnaire was utilized to survey subjects. Subjects received emails including an encouraging message, a description of the study purpose, instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, a link to the survey page (see Appendix A).

An address contained in the email message directed respondents to the web survey. The survey was designed through a survey design application provided by East Carolina University

and hosted at the university server. Hosting at the '.edu' domain allowed the invitation email to pass some spam protection filters. According to Dillman (2001), respondents are expected to be likely to trust university-based surveys more than private or commercial surveys as well.

Following Dillman's (2000) recommendations, a respondent-friendly survey design was developed. It took into account some respondents' inability to receive and respond to web questionnaires with advanced programming features and was kept as simple as possible without losing visual aesthetics. Animation and sound effects that required advanced programming were avoided. Dillman suggested that all surveys should be designed considering their possible use in mixed-mode survey situations. The survey on the destination image of Ukraine was developed so that it could be used as a paper-based questionnaire, if necessary.

Principles for designing web questionnaires (Dillman, 2000) were applied to the survey in this study. All questions were presented in a conventional format similar to the one used in paper-based surveys and familiar to most respondents. To avoid any pressure, respondents were not forced to answer certain questions in order to proceed to subsequent ones, and were allowed to skip questions they were not comfortable answering.

### Survey Development

The questionnaire was comprised of three sections: 1) demographic information, 2) open-ended questions, and 3) scale items. In demographic section respondents were asked to provide their age, gender, race (ethnic group), education, and marital status. Additionally, respondents were asked a set of questions about their travel experiences: whether they had traveled internationally (outside the 50 states of the U.S.) in the past two years, and whether they had previously visited Ukraine for pleasure purposes. Previous visitation (familiarity) and awareness are important factors as pre-visitation destination image significantly differs from post-visitation

image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Bonn, Sacha & Dai, 2005; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Milman & Pizam, 1995). The study focused on pre-visitation image; therefore, questionnaire responses from previous visitors to Ukraine were not included for data analysis.

### Free Elicitation

Three open-ended questions comprised the second section. Adopted from Echtner and Ritchie (1993), they were aimed at conveying functional holistic, psychological holistic, and unique components of Ukraine's destination image. The following questions were asked:

1. When you think of Ukraine as a travel destination, what images or characteristics come to your mind? (functional holistic component)
2. When you think of Ukraine as a travel destination, how would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience there? (psychological holistic component)
3. Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions, events or personalities that you can think of in Ukraine? (unique component)

The first question allowed respondents to communicate their overall perception of the country. Answers to this question covered more functional characteristics, while responses to the second question mostly pertained to holistic psychological component – atmosphere or mood of the destination. Lastly, the third question was asked to allow respondents mention the attractions that they find were distinctive or unique to the destination.

### Scale Items

Attitudes towards functional attributes and common characteristics of Ukraine as a travel destination were identified through scale items. Respondents were asked to indicate the level of

their agreement with statements about Ukraine on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Since the awareness of respondents about Ukraine was expected to be low, the response option “Neutral/Not Sure” was provided. It allowed the researcher to identify lesser known information segments about Ukraine and to suggest effective directions for marketing and promotional efforts.

Following recommendations of Chen and Kerstetter (1999), attributes used for creating scale items were drawn from various sources. Most attributes were adopted from the list of attributes suggested for developing scales by Echtner & Ritchie (1993, 2003). Authors followed eight steps to create attributes: 1) specifying the domain; 2) generating sample of items; 3) collecting data; 4) purifying measure; 5) collecting data; 6) assessing reliability; 7) assessing validity; and 8) developing norms. The result was a list of 35 destination image attributes that are more or less common for all destinations. Not all of them were used in developing scale items for this study. The researcher included the attributes that are appropriate for Ukraine in the final list and eliminated ones that less characteristic for the country. The choice of attributes was verified by an expert Ukrainian professor from a university in the southeastern United States.

To identify attributes that are characteristic for Ukraine, data from several Ukrainian tourism web sites ([www.ukraine.com](http://www.ukraine.com), [www.ukraine.org](http://www.ukraine.org), [www.tourism.gov.ua](http://www.tourism.gov.ua)) was analyzed by the researcher. Concepts that captured important characteristics of Ukraine as a travel destination and were often mentioned at the websites were suggested for addition to the scale items list. Three experts reviewed these items and made corrections and additions. Experts included a Ukrainian professor and Ukrainian student at a university in the southeastern United States, and an employee of a Tourism Information Center in Kyiv, Ukraine.

The final list of attributes for developing scale items to measure components of Ukraine’s

image contained 28 items. Not being comprehensive, this list captured most common attributes that are important factors of choosing a destination. The items are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Final List of Attributes Used for Developing Scale Items*

---

**Functional (physical, measurable)**

1. Scenery/Natural attractions/Mountains/Grasslands
2. Climate
3. Cost/Price levels
4. Local infrastructure/Transportation
5. Sports facilities/events
6. Architecture/Buildings/Castles
7. Historic sites/Museums/Archaeological sites
8. UNESCO World Heritage List Sites
9. Religious sites/Shrines
10. Battle sites/Memorials
11. Abandoned Sites
12. Famous personalities
13. Cities
14. Cleanliness
15. Personal safety
16. Accessibility
17. Hospitality/Friendliness/Receptiveness
18. Culture/Customs/Traditions
19. Local arts and crafts (pottery, embroidery, woodcarving)
20. Traditional cuisine/Food and drink
21. Modern art
22. Restful/Relaxing
23. Exotic atmosphere
24. Opportunity for adventure
25. Opportunity to increase knowledge
26. Family oriented
27. Quality of service
28. Fame/Reputation

**Psychological (abstract)**

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Measurement

To explore Ukraine's destination image and its components, as well as respondents' awareness of Ukraine as a travel destination, it was important to identify an effective means to

measure and examine each variable in the context of this study. Both structured and unstructured techniques were employed to explore these variables, which include combinations of holistic (overall), attribute-based, functional, psychological, common, and unique elements of Ukraine's image.

#### Free Elicitation

Respondents were asked a series of an open-ended questions originally developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). They described images that came to their mind when they thought of Ukraine as a travel destination and characterized the atmosphere or mood they would expect to experience while visiting the country. Respondents also listed distinctive or unique attractions that they knew about in Ukraine. Thus, answers to open-ended questions provided a measure of functional holistic, psychological holistic, and unique components of destination image.

Responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed with CATPAC software (Ryan & Cave, 2005) – an intelligent program that can read text and summarize its main ideas, as well as come up with keywords. These keywords were verified and classified by the researcher. Most common keywords were determined with CATPAC program. These were included in the list of concepts used for creating the conceptual model of Ukraine's destination image.

#### Scale Items

To measure the attribute-based and common functional and psychological characteristics, respondents were asked to rank how strongly they agreed with statements about Ukraine on a 5-point Likert-type scale ("Strongly Agree" - 5, "Agree" - 4, "Neutral/Not Sure" - 3, "Disagree" - 2, and "Strongly Disagree" - 1).

The statements were analyzed with principal component factor analysis and varimax

rotation (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999). This analysis resulted in several factor solutions (Choi, Chan, & Wu, 1999). The purpose of the factor analysis was to incorporate the questionnaire statements into a set of factors that reflected the image facets of Ukraine. Items with factor loadings less than 0.4 were dropped (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Choi, Chan & Wu, 1999) from further analysis. According to Hair et al. (1998), factor loadings above .6 are considered “high”, and those below .4 “low”. Cronbach Alpha tests were used to test internal consistency of each factor. Factors with Cronbach Alpha values less than 0.6 were not regarded acceptable (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999). Factor loadings were utilized to ascribe a name to each factor. Items with larger loadings were considered of higher priority because they had greater impact on factor naming (Hair et al., 1995). These factors were eventually coded by the researcher according to the quadrants of the destination image model that they belonged to.

#### Pretest

The researcher pretested the survey on a sample of 20 students in an undergraduate program before distributing it to respondents. Students enrolled in an introductory level recreation and leisure studies class received a paper-based version of the questionnaire. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and provide any relevant feedback on its quality. For example, students offered feedback on the wording of the survey, whether the survey was easy to read and comprehend, and if any questions were too complicated or ambiguous. The feedback was then incorporated into the survey prior to launching the web-based version.

#### Analysis

This study measured U.S. college students’ perceptions of Ukraine’s destination image.

Since it focuses on pre-visitation image, surveys completed by non-visitors only were included in the analysis.

As depicted in Figure 2, the components of destination image are distributed along three continuums of the model. Since it is problematic to analyze the model in three dimensions, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) suggested separating the components of destination image into a series of two-dimensional diagrams. These diagrams capture intersections of two continuums and reflect all possible variants of such intersection. Diagrams are depicted in Figures 3a, 3b, and 3c.

Figure 3a

*Functional/Psychological and Attribute-Based/Holistic Continuums*

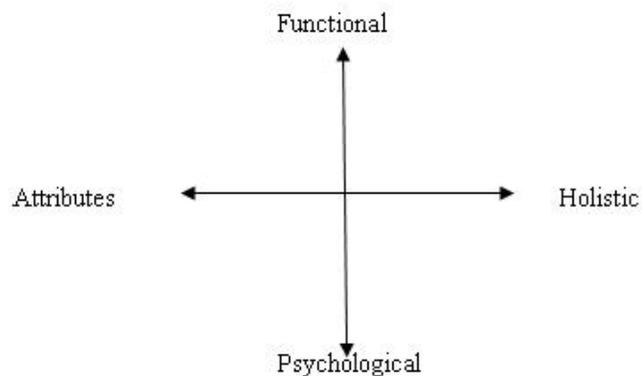


Figure 3b

*Functional/Psychological and Common/Unique Continuums*

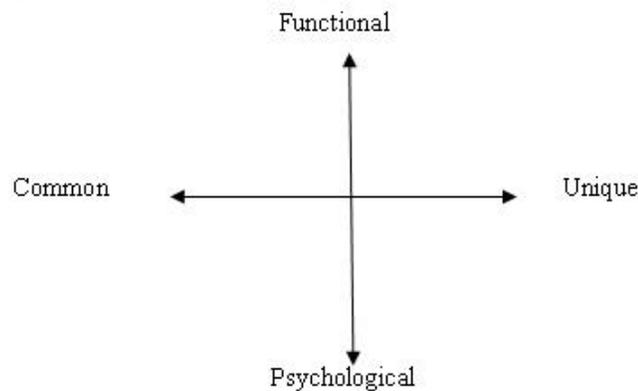
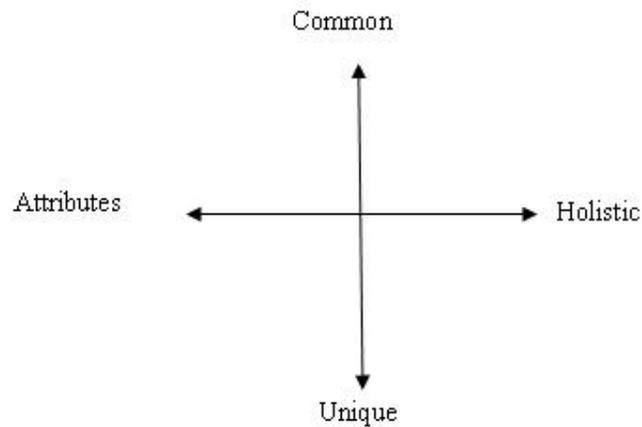


Figure 3c

*Common/Unique and Attribute-Based/Holistic Continuums*



Intersection of the continuums within every two-dimensional model creates four quadrants. Each of those quadrants represents a facet of destination image to be explored.

Overall, twelve quadrants were completed with concepts reflecting Ukraine's destination image:

1. functional holistic quadrant;
2. functional attribute-based quadrant;
3. psychological holistic quadrant;
4. psychological attribute-based quadrant;
5. common holistic quadrant;
6. common attribute-based quadrant;
7. unique holistic quadrant;
8. unique attribute-based quadrant;
9. unique functional quadrant;
10. unique psychological quadrant;
11. common functional quadrant;

12. common psychological quadrant;

Concepts used to supply information for the quadrants were conveyed from both responses to open-ended questions and ratings of scale items. Seven quadrants were supplied with concepts conveyed from open-ended questions, while five quadrants were supplied with concepts conveyed from scale items. The source of concepts for each quadrant is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Source of Concepts for Quadrants*

Items supplied by open-ended questions	Items supplied by scale items
functional holistic	functional attribute-based
psychological holistic	psychological attribute-based
unique functional	common functional
unique psychological	common psychological
common holistic	common attribute-based
unique holistic	
unique attribute-based	

Concepts conveyed from open-ended questions and scale items were coded by the researcher according to their meanings and placed in the matching quadrant. Codes were assigned to the concepts respectively to the quadrant they belong to:

1. functional holistic quadrant – FH;
2. functional attribute-based quadrant – FAB;
3. psychological holistic quadrant – PH;
4. psychological attribute-based quadrant – PAB;
5. common holistic quadrant – CH;
6. common attribute-based quadrant – CAB;

7. unique holistic quadrant – UH;
8. unique attribute-based quadrant – UAB;
9. unique functional quadrant – FU;
10. unique psychological quadrant – PU;
11. common functional quadrant – FC;
12. common psychological quadrant – PC;

Eventually, concepts were distributed within quadrants of each two-dimensional model according to the codes assigned to them and model of Ukraine's destination image was developed.

#### Inter-Coder Reliability

One of the study limitations is connected to the researcher being the main analysis instrument. In attempt to overcome this limitation an inter-coder measure was utilized to ensure reliability and consistency. Two other researchers were asked to code attributes of destination image according to the quadrants they belonged to. The percent of agreement between coders was calculated. If the percent of agreement between primary researcher and each of the two researchers was 70% or more, coding by the primary researcher was considered valid.

## Data Analysis Techniques

Statistical procedures used to analyze research questions are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

### *Analysis of Research Questions*

Respondents' eagerness to visit Ukraine	Frequencies Mean
Functional holistic component	CATPAC text analysis
Psychological holistic component	Frequencies
Common holistic component	Researcher as an instrument
Unique holistic component	
Unique attribute-based component	
Unique functional component	
Unique psychological component	
Psychological attribute-based component	Principal component factor analysis
Functional attribute-based component	Varimax rotation
Common attribute-based component	Cronbach's alpha (internal consistency)
Common functional component	
Common psychological component	
Intercoder reliability	Frequencies, percentages

Generally, two main types of analysis were employed. Components of destination image supplied by open-ended questions were extracted by means of working with text analyzing software and calculating frequencies for key words and phrases. Components supplied by scale items were translated into factors by means of principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation, which resulted in several factor solutions. The internal consistency of each factor was examined by Cronbach's alpha tests. For inter-coder reliability, the frequencies of matching codings and percent of agreement were calculated.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The invitation to participate in the web-based survey was distributed by university professors to 500 students in five universities across the United States. The web-based survey was active from noon December 12, 2009 until midnight February 23, 2010. The survey was accessed by 218 students during this period, which resulted in a response rate of 43.6%. Some students accessed the survey, but did not leave any responses. Surveys that contained no responses were eliminated and a sample of 200 usable surveys was obtained. Partially completed surveys were included in the analysis since they contained valuable free elicitation data or responses to scale items. Following Dillman's (2000) recommendations, two reminders were sent to students to encourage participation: the first one after winter break on January 10, 2010, and the second month later, on February, 10, 2010.

### Respondent Profile

As shown in Table 6, 130 respondents (65%) were female and 69 respondents (34.5%) were male. Most of the respondents were of White/Caucasian ethnicity (67%). There was less representation of Black/African American and Latino ethnicity (13.5% and 10.0%, respectively), and very few respondents of American Indian or Alaskan Native and Asian ethnicity (2.0% and 1.0%, respectively). Most of the respondents had completed some college work (90.5%) and some were college graduates (6.5%). As is typically characteristic for the college population, the majority of respondents were single (78%) with a small percentage being married (12.5%).

In the web-based survey, respondents were provided with the option to enter their birth year through an open-ended question format. The age was then calculated as part of analysis and determined as actual age in the year 2010. The majority of respondents fell into the age categories under 21 (37.5%) and 22-24 (38.0%). Twenty respondents (10%) were aged between

25 and 27, 9 respondents (4.5%) were aged between 28 and 30, and 17 respondents (8.5%) were over the age of 30. A presence of respondents over 25 in the college population sample may be explained by the increasing number of non-traditional students who return to pursue their college degrees after spending some time working in the industry. A detailed respondent profile is provided in Table 6.

Table 6

*Respondent Profile*

Respondent profile (n = 200)			
	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex			
	Male	69	34.5
	Female	130	65.0
Age			
	Under 21	75	37.5
	22-24	76	38.0
	25-27	20	10.0
	28-30	9	4.5
	31 or over	17	8.5
Ethnicity			
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	4	2.0
	Asian	2	1.0
	Black or African American	27	13.5
	Hispanic or Latino	20	10.0
	White/Caucasian	134	67.0
	Prefer not to answer	5	2.5
	Other	8	4.0
Education level			
	Some college	181	90.5
	College Graduate	13	6.5
	Post Graduate Work	1	.5
	Other	5	2.5
Marital Status			
	Single	156	78.0
	Married	25	12.5
	Have a partner	11	5.5
	Divorced	2	1.0
	Other	6	3.0

## Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach's Alpha analysis was conducted in order to test the reliability of the scale items. Most of the items were adapted from those developed Echtner and Ritchie (2003) for destination image analysis scales. Those specific for Ukraine were determined through analysis of Ukraine travel related websites, and reviewed and confirmed by experts. The final scale consisted of 28 items.

The overall Cronbach's Alpha for the scale was .941. None of the scale items, if eliminated, decreased the Alpha below .937. Therefore, all original items were retained in the scale. Cronbach's Alpha loadings for each item if deleted are provided in Table 7.

Table 7

### *Cronbach's Alpha Loadings*

Item	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted
There is a lot of opportunity to observe natural beauty in Ukraine (e.g., mountains, grasslands).	.939
Ukraine has comfortable climate that favors traveling.	.939
Prices in Ukraine are reasonable.	.941
Local infrastructure and transportation networks are well-developed in Ukraine.	.938
One can see beautiful architecture in Ukraine (e.g., buildings, castles).	.938
There are plenty of historic sites, museums, and archaeological sites in Ukraine.	.938
Ukrainian cities are interesting and offer varied activities.	.937
There are important religious sites and shrines in Ukraine.	.938
You can visit numerous battle sites and memorials.	.940
You can visit abandoned sites (e.g. Chernobyl).	.940
Important sport events are held in Ukraine (e.g., Euro-2012).	.939
There are UNESCO World Heritage List items in Ukraine.	.939
You can enjoy modern art events and exhibitions.	.939
Many famous people were born in Ukraine.	.940
The country is generally clean.	.939
You don't have to worry about personal safety in Ukraine.	.941

The country is easily accessible.	.940
People in Ukraine are friendly and hospitable.	.938
You can observe local culture (e.g., customs and traditions) in Ukraine.	.940
You can sample tasty traditional cuisine.	.939
You can observe people making traditional crafts (e.g., pottery, embroidery, woodcarving) and buy souvenirs.	.938
The general atmosphere of the country is restful and relaxing.	.937
Country holds exotic atmosphere.	.939
Ukraine offers opportunity for adventure.	.938
Ukraine offers opportunity to increase knowledge.	.938
Ukraine is a family-oriented travel destination.	.938
Businesses in Ukraine offer high quality of service.	.938
Ukraine has a good reputation as a travel destination.	.939

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### Free Elicitation Analysis

Answers to open-ended questions were analyzed with the CATPAC software, an intelligent program that can read text and summarize its main ideas, as well as come up with keywords (Ryan & Cave, 2005). CATPAC analysis was conducted for each of the open-ended questions. Free elicitation data were stored in .rtf files since this is the format required by CATPAC. Analysis results were stored in three separate files, which allowed determining keywords and themes for imagery, atmosphere, and attractions components.

Several steps of data cleaning were performed for each set of data before CATPAC analysis could be conducted. For all three files stop words such as “I”, “know”, “that”, “in”, “the” were eliminated since they would have the highest frequencies and become outliers in the results. Appropriate usage of uppercase and lowercase formats was ensured, as well as consistent spelling of attraction names. For example, it was important to have the name of the capital, Kyiv, spelled consistently, as there are two versions of the name – “Kyiv” if translated from Ukrainian and “Kiev” if translated from Russian. Since respondents used both formats, the format “Kyiv” was chosen as default.

Some of the word forms were changed so that words that convey the same meaning were accounted as one by CATPAC. Thus, “poorer” and “poverty” were changed to “poor”, “mountain” and “mountainous” changed to “mountains”, “European” was changed to “Europe”, and “Russian” to “Russia”. The word combination “not friendly” was changed to “unfriendly” to make ensure that negative connotation was preserved. Otherwise CATPACT would count the “not” particle separately and recognize the word “friendly” as a positive connotation. The most frequent keywords for all three questions are presented in Table 8. For each open-ended question, the responses given by at least 3% of respondents were included in the table. For Questions 1 and 2, the responses that were provided by more than 5% of the respondents and were utilized to determine stereotypical holistic images were grouped separately.

Table 8

*Most Frequent Responses to Open-Ended Questions*

- 
1. Images and characteristics coming to mind when thinking of Ukraine as a travel destination
    - cold (20.0%)
    - Russia (8.3%)
    - mountains (7.1%)
    - Europe (5.8%)
  
    - people (4.6%)
    - buildings (4.2%)
    - culture (3.8%)
    - poor (3.8%)
    - snow (3.8%)

2. Description of the atmosphere expected while visiting Ukraine
    - cold (9.4%)
    - people (7.8%)
    - friendly (6.5%)
    - fun (5.3%)
  
    - happy (4.5%)
    - different (4.1%)
    - unfriendly (3.7%)
  
  3. Distinctive or unique tourist attractions, events or personalities in Ukraine
    - Kyiv (13.2%)
    - church (8.8%)
    - St. Sophia Cathedral (5.9%)
    - city (4.4%)
    - St. Michael Golden Domed Cathedral (4.4%)
- 

### Factor Analysis

The 28 Likert statements included in the survey were explored by principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation, which resulted in a six-factor solution. The purpose of factor analysis was to integrate the statements into a set of factors that would represent some of the image facets of Ukraine. None of the items had factor loadings less than 0.4; therefore, none were dropped from the further analysis. However, some items cross-loaded on two factors at once. These items were included in the factors to which they contributed more (see Table 9). All cross-loadings made sense from the solution interpretability point of view. For example, “The general atmosphere of the country is restful and relaxing” from Factor 1

“Comfort/security” also loaded on Factor 2 “Cultural difference” – relaxing atmosphere is both comforting and might be regarded as a cultural difference by the United States students who are used to the fast-paced environment. Similarly, the item “Ukraine has a good reputation as a travel destination” cross-loaded on Factor 1 “Comfort/security” and Factor 5 “Atmosphere”, since a good reputation gives a feeling of security and can contribute to the overall atmosphere of the destination.

The internal consistency of each factor was examined using Cronbach’s alpha test. All the alpha coefficients were above 0.5 which signified moderate correlation between items. The final Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.901, Bartlett’s significance less than 0.05, and communalities ranged from 0.507 to 0.777. The total variance explained was 67.79% with eigenvalues of each factor above 1.0.

Factor loadings were taken into consideration when assigning names to factors. Items with higher factor loadings were considered as having more influence on factor naming. Factor 1 consisted of eight items related to the level of comfort and security a visitor would feel while at the destination. Examples of higher factor loadings for this factor were “One doesn’t have to worry about safety”, “The country is generally clean” and “Good reputation as a travel destination”. The only item that seemed controversial was “Many famous people are from there”. However, its presence might signify that travelers are more secure about a destination if they know famous people who were born there and associate the destination with these people.

Factor 2 emphasized unique aspects of Ukraine’s culture and its difference from other cultures; and it contained five items. Items such as “One can sample tasty traditional food”, “One can observe local culture”, and “One can observe making of traditional crafts” all scored high on this factor. The idea of cultural distance is further accentuated by the presence of items

that relate to adventure experiences and increasing knowledge.

Five items in Factor 3 related to aspects of both natural and cultural landscape. This was reflected in high scores on items such as “One can see beautiful architecture in Ukraine”, “Ukrainian cities are interesting” in relation to cultural landscape, and “There is a lot of opportunity to observe natural beauty in Ukraine” in relation to natural landscape.

Factor 4 contained four items which were associated with attractions and places of interest tourists can visit in Ukraine. Presence of such attractions was reflected in high scores on items “One can visit numerous battle sites and memorials”, “One can visit abandoned sites (e.g. Chernobyl)”, “There are UNESCO World Heritage List sites in Ukraine”, and “Important sport events are held in Ukraine (e.g., Euro-2012)”.

Factor 5 is comprised of three items. Although varied, they all described different features of the atmosphere in Ukraine. High scores were acquired by items such as “Country holds exotic atmosphere”, “People in Ukraine are friendly and hospitable”, and “The country is easily accessible”. Although the latter two items do not directly describe atmosphere, friendliness of local people and ease of accessibility both contribute to the general positive atmosphere of the destination.

Three items comprising Factor 6 were also varied in character: “Prices in Ukraine are reasonable”, “Ukraine has a comfortable climate that favors traveling”, “Local infrastructure and transportation networks are well-developed in Ukraine”. However, they all in one way or another pertain to the country’s physical accessibility: reasonable prices allow to book hotels, dine and shop; comfortable climate permits traveling most times of the year; and good infrastructure and transportation networks facilitate visitor’s stay and make traveling within the country more comfortable. The naming of this factor corresponds with the item “The country is

easily accessible” in Factor 5. However, while the item was regarded as an emotional component contributing to the factor of atmosphere, Factor 6 “accessibility” pertains to the physical accessibility of the destination.

Table 9

*Factor Analysis of Image Items*

Factor name and items	Mean	S.D.	Factor loading	Alpha	Eigen value
<i>Factor 1: comfort/ security</i>	2.83			0.88	11.0
Safe place	3.13	0.87	0.76		
Famous people	2.87	0.76	0.74		
Clean country	2.77	0.70	0.69		
Family-oriented destination	2.86	0.73	0.65		
Good reputation	3.06	0.81	0.64		
Art events/ exhibitions	2.43	0.76	0.63		
High quality service	2.86	0.66	0.63		
Restful and relaxing	2.65	0.77	0.50		
<i>Factor 2: cultural distance</i>	2.36			0.87	2.6
Tasty traditional food	2.32	0.75	0.83		
Local culture	2.22	0.70	0.79		
Traditional crafts	2.43	0.72	0.68		
Opportunity for knowledge	2.36	0.80	0.58		
Opportunity for adventure	2.49	0.75	0.54		
<i>Factor 3: landscape</i>	2.41			0.88	1.9
Beautiful architecture	2.27	0.87	0.77		
Religious sites	2.50	0.85	0.69		
Beautiful cities	2.56	0.75	0.67		
Historic sites/ museums	2.26	0.80	0.63		
Natural beauty	2.44	0.77	0.59		
<i>Factor 4: attractions</i>	2.55			0.85	1.3
Battle sites/ memorials	2.53	0.78	0.84		
Abandoned sites	2.41	0.78	0.80		
UNESCO World Heritage List sites	2.69	0.69	0.80		
Important sport events	2.58	0.83	0.65		
<i>Factor 5: atmosphere</i>	2.77			0.73	1.1
Exotic atmosphere	2.73	0.82	0.70		
Friendly/ hospitable people	2.77	0.73	0.57		
Ease of accessibility	2.82	0.72	0.51		
<i>Factor 6: accessibility</i>	2.91			0.72	1.0
Reasonable prices	2.81	0.60	0.79		
Comfortable climate	2.98	0.83	0.60		
Good infrastructure/ transportation	2.93	0.70	0.52		

The summated mean of all six factors was above 2.5, which indicated a more positive than negative image of Ukraine. Factors of cultural distance (2.36) and landscape (2.4) had summated means below 2.5, which indicated a more negative perception of these factors by respondents. The highest summated means were obtained for the factors of accessibility (2.91) and comfort/security (2.83). Respondents had a more favorable image of Ukraine's physical accessibility, quality of infrastructure, and levels of comfort and security. Factors of atmosphere (2.77) and attractions (2.55) had more neutral perceptions.

#### Destination Image Model

The destination image model was created by distributing items produced by responses to open-ended questions as well as scale items along the destination image continuums. The destination image model suggested by Echtner and Ritchie (1993) is three-dimensional. However, since it is problematic to reflect results within a three-dimensional model, authors suggested presenting the model in series of two-dimensional diagrams. Figures 4a, 4b, and 4c separate the components of destination image in such two-dimensional diagrams. While answers to open-ended questions provided more descriptive and detailed unique impressions, scale items mostly pertained to common, attribute-based components of destination image.

Figure 4a reflects the attribute-holistic and functional-psychological continuums of the destination image model. Scale items were a source of data for both functional and psychological aspects of destination attributes. On the other hand, the holistic functional and psychological imagery were reflected in answers to open-ended questions. Mean scores for functional attributes of Ukraine are presented in the upper left quadrant of the model and include scores on cleanliness, service quality, and food. The mean scores for such psychological attributes as safety, good reputation, and relaxing atmosphere are provided in the lower left

quadrant. With the help of scale items, respondents were able to provide their image of Ukraine through a comprehensive set of attributes.

Echtner and Ritchie (1993) suggest that data from Question 1 of the destination image questionnaire primarily produced the functional holistic image, while responses to Question 2 provided psychological characteristics of the holistic image. These items were reflected in upper and lower right quadrants of Figure 4a.

Answers to Question 3 of the questionnaire, which asked respondents to name distinctive attractions of Ukraine, are the source of data for upper and lower right quadrants of Figure 4b. In this figure the functional-psychological and common-unique continuums intersect. The scale items proved to be effective in reflecting the common characteristics of destination image both in functional and psychological terms. These items are illustrated in the upper and lower left quadrants. In terms of functional characteristics, the capital city Kiev and two cathedrals – St. Sophia and St. Michael Golden Domed – can be considered unique to Ukraine. City landscapes, association with Europe, culture, and strong bond with religious life were prominent unique psychological characteristics.

Finally, in Figure 4c, the attribute-holistic and common-unique continuums are illustrated. In this figure, unlike the two previous ones, scale items provided data only for the upper left quadrant of the model – the one encompassing the common attributes. Standardized scale items were not able to provide sufficient depth when covering distinctive or unique attributes. Therefore, responses to open-ended questions were utilized to provide unique attributes both along functional and psychological dimensions.

Figure 4a

*Functional/Psychological and Attribute-Based/Holistic Continuums of Ukraine's Image*

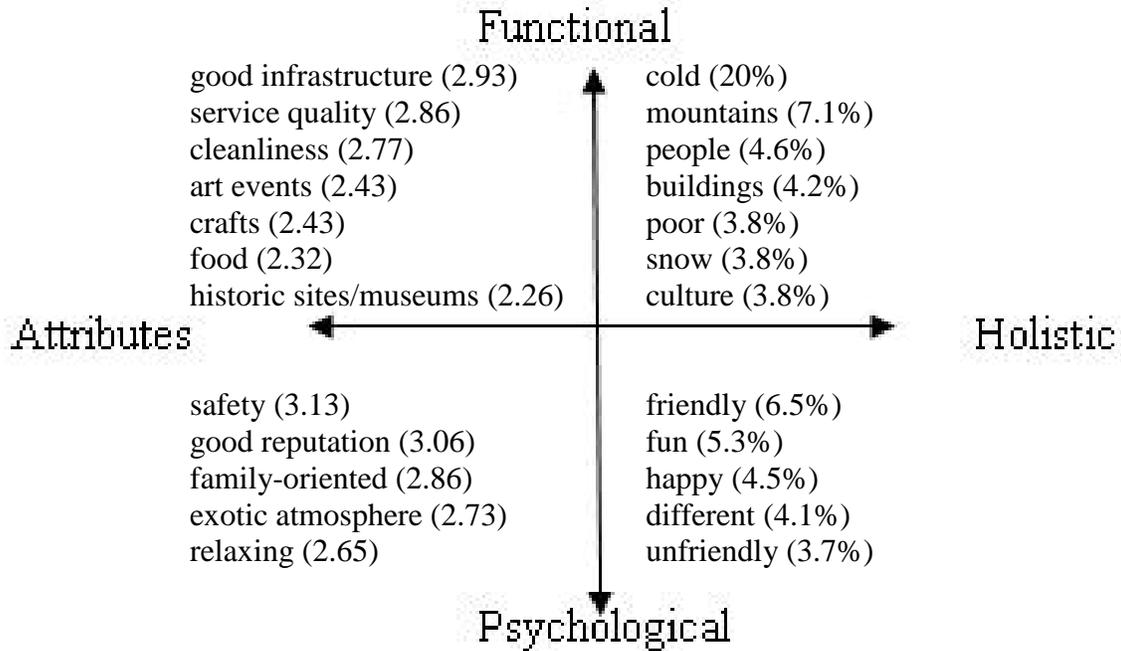


Figure 4b

*Functional/Psychological and Common/Unique Continuums of Ukraine's Image*

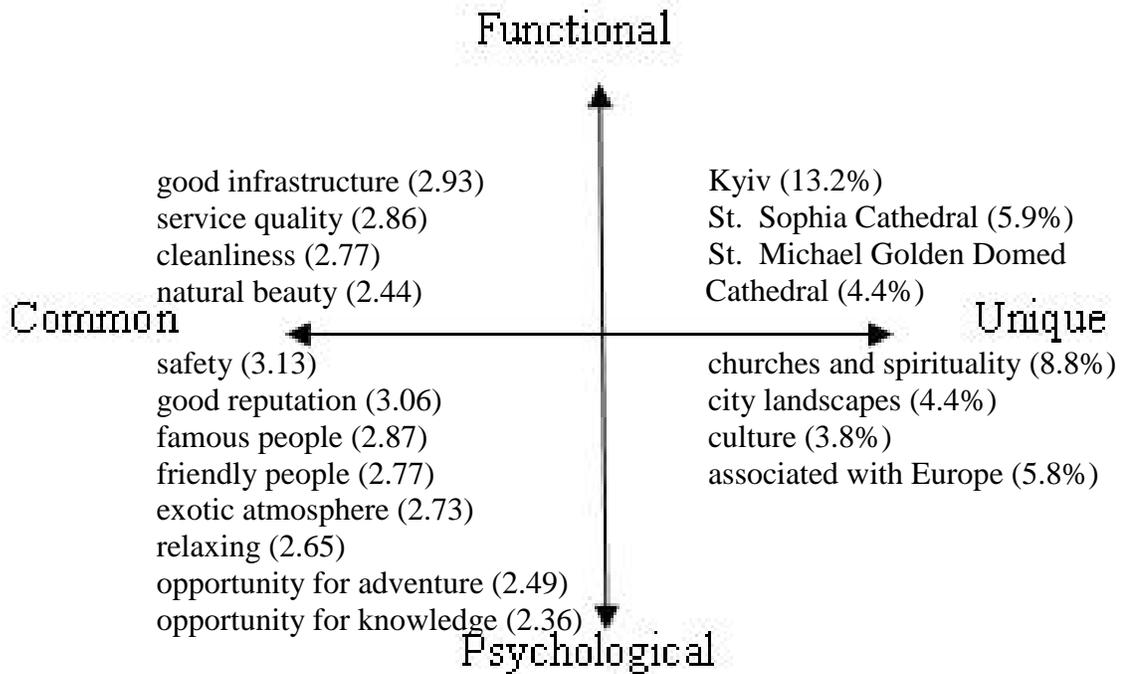
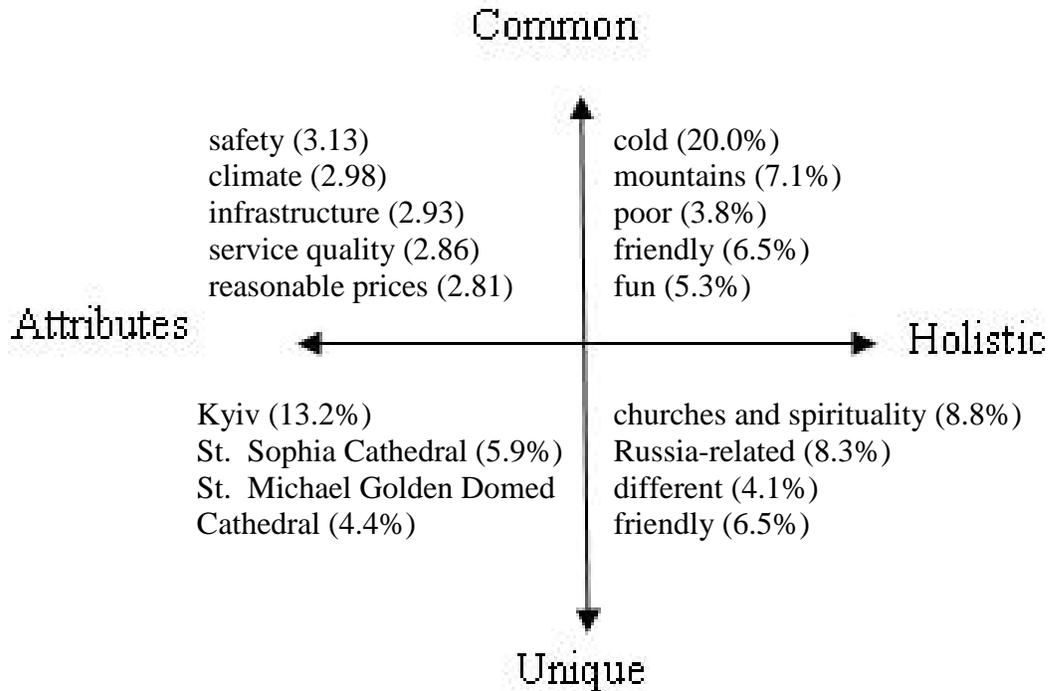


Figure 4c

*Common/Unique and Attribute-Based/Holistic Continuums of Ukraine's Image*



Inter-Coder Reliability

The researcher is the main instrument of analysis since researcher manually distributes free elicitation and scale items along the destination image continuums. In an attempt to overcome the subjectivity of the process the measure of inter-coder reliability was utilized. Two researchers were asked to code the items according to the destination image model quadrant that they belonged to. One of the researchers had experience in the field of destination image and the second one was familiar with Ukraine as a travel destination. Therefore, both coders could provide valuable insight and a unique perspective on the item distribution.

Both coders received training on the coding structure. They were given handouts containing lists of free elicitation and scale items to distribute, instructions on how to distribute

these items, definitions of terms, and two-dimensional diagrams. The training was give to each coder individually by the primary researcher to eliminate the possible interaction between the coders and ensure their individual input.

After receiving the training, both coders individually distributed the items according to quadrants they considered appropriate and returned the results to the primary researcher. The percent of agreement between coders and primary researcher was calculated and is presented in Table 10.

Table 10

*Inter-Coder Reliability Agreement Percentage*

Quadrant	Percent Agreement with Coder 1	Percent agreement with Coder 2	Overall agreement
Functional holistic quadrant	87.6%	75.0%	81.3%
Functional attribute-based quadrant	50.0%	80.0%	65.0%
Psychological holistic quadrant	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Psychological attribute-based quadrant	30.0%	60.0%	45.0%
Common holistic quadrant	40.0%	100.0%	70.0%
Common attribute-based quadrant	57.0%	80.0%	68.5%
Unique holistic quadrant	50.0%	60.0%	55.0%
Unique attribute-based quadrant	100.0%	50.0%	75.0%
Unique functional quadrant	60.0%	30.0%	45.0%
Unique psychological quadrant	0.0%	30.0%	15.0%
Common functional quadrant	20.0%	50.0%	35.0%
Common psychological quadrant	77.8%	100.0%	88.9%

The percent of agreement was calculated individually for each of the destination image model quadrants. If all the items provided by coder in the given quadrant matched the items

determined by the primary researcher, the percent of agreement was calculated as 100%. If some of the items included by the coders were not included in the same quadrant by the primary researcher, the percent of matching items was calculated. The overall agreement for each quadrant was determined as an average value between percent agreement with the first and the second coder.

The total agreement for all twelve quadrants was higher for the second coder (67.9%) than for the first coder (56%). As previously mentioned, the first coder had considerable experience in the field of destination image and the second coder was familiar with Ukraine as a travel destination. Therefore, the familiarity with the destination characteristics produced more agreement in coding destination model items than expertise in the field of destination image studies. The higher percent agreement between the second coder and the primary researcher might indicate that persons who are familiar with the destination have more sensibility in determining the characteristics and components of Ukraine's destination image.

The highest agreement (100.0%) was reached for items in the psychological holistic quadrant, as items such as "friendly", "fun", "different", and "happy" were included by both coders and the primary researcher. Agreement higher than or equal to 70% was also reached for the common psychological quadrant (88.9%), functional holistic quadrant (81.3%), unique attribute-based quadrant (75.0%), and common holistic quadrant (70.0%). Overall, more concordance was established in quadrants related to psychological or holistic features, and less agreement in those associated with functional and attribute-based features of Ukraine's destination image.

Quadrants that received the lowest agreement were the unique psychological (15.0%), common functional (35.0%), and psychological attribute-based (45.0%). Most difficulties were

encountered when naming the unique items, which is understandable as unique items present the highest level of controversy for almost every destination. The quadrants that received less than 70% agreement were altered by the primary researcher by adding the items indicated by the coders. Adding the missing items allowed the researcher to improve the agreement and ensure that opinions of independent experts were accounted for while developing Ukraine’s destination image model.

### Respondent Awareness of Ukraine

While rating scale items in the destination image questionnaire, respondents had an option of choosing “Neutral/Not Sure” as their answer. The researcher predicted that respondents might have low awareness of some characteristics of Ukraine and in that case they should not be forced into choosing between “Agree” and “Disagree” options. The “Neutral/Not Sure” answer reflected the lack of knowledge on certain topic and served as the measure of respondent lack of awareness. The percentage of this answer was calculated by means of frequency analysis for each of 28 scale items. Results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

#### *Lack of Respondent Awareness of Ukraine*

Scale item	Percentage of “Neutral/Not Sure” Answer
There is a lot of opportunity to observe natural beauty in Ukraine.	52.0%
Ukraine has comfortable climate that favors traveling.	57.5%
Prices in Ukraine are reasonable.	77.0%
Local infrastructure and transportation networks are well-developed in Ukraine.	72.0%
One can see beautiful architecture in Ukraine (e.g., buildings, castles).	42.0%
There is plenty of historic sites, museums, and archaeological sites in Ukraine.	42.0%
Ukrainian cities are interesting and offer varied activities.	58.5%
There are important religious sites and shrines in Ukraine.	57.0%
You can visit numerous battle sites and memorials.	63.5%

You can visit abandoned sites (e.g. Chernobyl).	52.5%
Important sport events are held in Ukraine (e.g., Euro-2012).	58.0%
There are UNESCO World Heritage List items in Ukraine.	76.5%
You can enjoy modern art events and exhibitions.	48.5%
Many famous people were born in Ukraine.	65.0%
The country is generally clean.	67.5%
You don't have to worry about personal safety in Ukraine.	62.5%
The country is easily accessible.	64.0%
People in Ukraine are friendly and hospitable.	66.0%
You can observe local culture (e.g., customs and traditions) in Ukraine.	33.0%
You can sample tasty traditional cuisine.	40.5%
You can observe people making traditional crafts and buy souvenirs.	47.5%
The general atmosphere of the country is restful and relaxing.	57.0%
Country holds exotic atmosphere.	50.5%
Ukraine offers opportunity for adventure.	50.0%
Ukraine offers opportunity to increase knowledge.	44.0%
Ukraine is a family-oriented travel destination.	67.5%
Businesses in Ukraine offer high quality of service.	76.5%
Ukraine has a good reputation as a travel destination.	64.0%
Overall unawareness	57.6%

The results indicate that respondents were more unaware than aware of Ukraine as a travel destination and mostly unfamiliar with the country's characteristics as reflected in 57.6% of "Neutral/Not Sure" responses. In more than half instances respondents were not sure whether the particular item was characteristic for Ukraine or not. The items with the highest awareness level (lowest percentage of "Neutral/Not Sure Answers") were those pertaining to architecture (42.0%), historic sites and museums (42.0%), local customs and traditions (33.0%), and traditional cuisine (40.5%). Respondents were more likely to express a certain opinion on these items and either agree or disagree with the statements. The items respondents were least aware of were those of reasonable prices (77.0%), presence of UNESCO World Heritage List items (76.5%), and quality of services being offered by Ukrainian businesses (76.5%). These were very particular items that required more than superficial knowledge about a country's currency system, business operations and heritage attractions. Only a little over 20% of respondents were able to express an opinion on whether given items were characteristic for Ukraine as a travel

destination.

### Respondent Willingness to Visit Ukraine

Respondents were asked whether they would consider visiting Ukraine for pleasure purposes in the next five years. This time span was chosen considering respondents' status as students and financial situation that might not allow them to travel long distance while still being in college. The responses to this question were analyzed by means of frequency analysis. Although awareness analysis illustrated that respondent awareness of Ukraine was low, over half the respondents (56.5%) still expressed their interest in Ukraine and answered that they would like to visit the country in the next five years. On the other hand, 41.0% of respondents would not consider Ukraine as a destination for their trip in the near future.

Table 12

*Respondent Willingness to Visit Ukraine*

---

Respondent willingness to visit Ukraine (n = 196)		
Item	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	113	56.5
No	82	41.0

---

These results have practical implications for management efforts since the willingness to visit Ukraine can be further enhanced by means of promotion and become a basis for steady inbound tourism flows.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Although Ukraine is considered as one of the top travel destinations by WTO (WTO, 2005), it has not to date received sufficient attention from the research community. Therefore, the current study partly fills the existing gap by investigating the country's destination image as viewed by U.S. college students – a prospective market for emerging destinations like Ukraine. The impressions and images produced by students while responding to open-ended questions and giving ratings on scale items were used to create a three-dimensional destination image model. Further, the characteristics of the destination image model were analyzed and became a foundation for practical implications of promotion and destination management efforts.

### Destination Image Model Applicability

The current study focused on employing the methodology suggested by Ecthner and Ritchie (1993) to develop a destination image model of Ukraine. Results proved the suggested model to be appropriate for determining the image of Ukraine and useful in investigating the attitudes of research subjects towards the country. The study population of college students was surveyed through a web-based questionnaire that requested them to answer several open-ended questions pertaining to the image of Ukraine and to submit ratings for the image related scale items. The results obtained from the questionnaires were examined with free elicitation analysis software and factor analysis techniques, and formed a basis for creating Ukraine's destination image model.

One of the limitations of the model determined in the current study is related to the data sufficiency. Since the respondent awareness was low, especially in terms of providing names for unique or distinctive attractions, the researcher encountered a difficulty in filling the quadrants of the model created by the unique continuum. For future studies it is suggested that a bigger

sample size is obtained, which is likely to result in larger amount of free elicitation data. If more respondents are surveyed, they might mention more unique attractions at the given destination.

### Respondent Awareness of Ukraine

One of the most prominent features discovered by the current study is significant lack of respondent awareness about tourist characteristics of Ukraine. The attention and resources allocated by Ukrainian State Tourism Administration for tourism promotion and development has been minimal in comparison to other destinations worldwide. The State Program of Tourism development for 2002-2010 allocated less than USD 3 billion for all eight years of the Program duration, which had to cover promotion of the country as a whole, different regions as tourist destinations, and stand alone resorts and attractions (Cabinet of Ministry of Ukraine, 2002). Moreover, the tourism industry of the country is regulated by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which is responsible both for tourism development and cultural affairs. Traditionally, most efforts of the Ministry were directed towards the latter, leaving the former without proper attention.

The lack of attention from official authorities towards tourism development is rooted in the socialist past of the country. Similar situation was reported by Light and Dumbraveanu (1999) in their studies of Romanian tourism in post-communist period. Authors argued that during the communist period the concern for quality of tourism accommodations was little since all properties were owned by the state. Adequate legislation was a low priority in the early post-communist period as well, as countries were faced with more pressing issues of economic transition and social reforms. This overall lack of attention towards tourism planning and regulation led to significant delays in the industry development and put the countries of Eastern Europe on the background of the European travel map.

As described by Hall (1991), tourism in socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has gone through several stages of evolutionary development. In the early socialism period (the early 1920s to the 1950s) the government put severe constraints on tourism and traveling, and trade union-sponsored group travel and domestic tourism were the only forms of tourism allowed. The situation improved during the 1950s, known as the middle socialism period, when intra-bloc international tourism spawned along with considerable maturation of domestic tourism. Only in the late socialism period of the 1960s and the 1970s some countries of the socialist block attempted to attract western tourists; still those efforts were strictly limited and closely monitored by the central government.

With the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the fall of the “iron curtain”, countries of the socialist block opened their borders to tourists from around the globe. They have experienced continuous interest from western tourists and increase of inbound tourism flows. However, almost 20 years later, governments of independent countries have yet to embrace the importance of tourism promotion efforts. Used to the limiting policy and prevalence of domestic tourism, government officials do not see the pressing need of strategic tourism marketing as reflected in very low financial support for tourism development programs. Such strategic marketing, however, will help the emerging destinations of the region, Ukraine included, establish themselves on the world stage and compete successfully with other destinations.

One of the results of insufficient promotional efforts and advertising is reflected in the lack of awareness about the country’s tourist features. Such lack of awareness is vividly proved by the current study, as over 57% respondents chose “Neutral/Not Sure” when rating scale items in the destination image questionnaire. Thus, respondents indicated that they were not aware if certain items are characteristic for Ukraine as a travel destination. This is a very low level of

awareness reflecting the lack of even basic knowledge about the country.

A similar study of destination image of Russia was conducted by Stepchenkova and Morrison (2006). Authors investigated Russia's destination image among American pleasure travelers utilizing the same theoretical framework as the current study: the three-dimensional destination image model suggested by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). The percent of "Do Not Know" answers in the study by Stepchenkova and Morrison was only 19%, which is considerably lower than the percentage of "Neutral/Not Sure" answers in the current study. The higher level of knowledge about foreign countries might be explained by the study population – members of a large private travel club who have traveled abroad and might be familiar with faraway destinations. Also, more than 70% of the respondents were over 55 years old and have considerably more life experience than college students, who were a focus in the current study. It is still quite obvious that U.S. residents have more awareness of Russia than of Ukraine as a travel destination.

The level of awareness expressed by the respondents varied between items. Thus, 77.0% of respondents chose "Neutral/Not Sure" as their answer when asked to agree or disagree whether prices in Ukraine are reasonable. Several types of money have been adopted in Ukraine during independence and the country is still experiencing little stability in exchange rates with major world currencies, including U.S. dollar. Therefore, it might indeed be difficult to estimate the price levels for various goods and services, and whether those are reasonable or not. Also, people usually realize whether prices are reasonable or not after having actually visited the destination. The current study, however, focused on respondents without previous visitation to Ukraine.

Almost the same lack of awareness (76.5%) was expressed by respondents when they had

to indicate whether the items from UNESCO World Heritage List were present in Ukraine. The same 76.5% respondents expressed doubt about service quality. Since very little promotion is in place to market components of hospitality industry in Ukraine, it is understandable why respondents were unsure if the services offered by Ukrainian businesses were of high quality.

On the other hand, the survey respondents had more awareness of the items pertaining to cultural characteristics of the destination. Only 42.0% respondents were unaware if one can see beautiful architecture in Ukraine and if there was plenty of historic sites, museums, and archaeological sites. There was also more knowledge about local customs and traditions (33.0% unawareness) and traditional Ukrainian cuisine (40.5% unawareness). A content analysis of Ukraine related travel websites indicated that there is considerably more data available online with regard to the country's history, culture, and cuisine than practical information on prices, visa regulations, and services (Iarmolenko, 2010). Therefore, if a potential visitor would like to gain knowledge of Ukraine, he or she would more likely come across culture-related information than practical travel advice. The results of current study support these findings while showing that survey respondents were more aware of cultural features of Ukraine than price levels and service quality in the country.

#### Components of Ukraine's Destination Image

The purpose of the current study was to determine the components of the destination image of Ukraine as viewed by U.S. college students. Utilizing the three-dimensional model proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993), the functional, psychological, holistic, attribute-based, common, and unique components of Ukraine's destination image were determined. These components were investigated through content analysis of respondents' answers to open-ended questions and factor analysis of ratings on predetermined scale items.

In the three open-ended questions, respondents were asked to characterize images that come to mind when they think of Ukraine as a travel destination, what atmosphere they would expect to experience once visiting the country, and what unique attractions, places or people they know of in Ukraine. As noted in the original study by Echner and Ritchie (1993), the answers to the first question mostly produced the functional holistic image, while the responses to the second question supplied information regarding the psychological holistic image of Ukraine. The third question was the formation source of unique functional and psychological image. Answers to this question also produced the unique attribute-based image, as scale items did not provide enough depth to characterize unique attributes of the destination.

A variety of answers were given by respondents with regard to the images evoked in their imagination by Ukraine. A significant part of these images were in one or another way associated with Russia:

*“Russia....It makes me think of Russia and atmosphere like Russia”*

Many respondents had images reflecting the Socialist past of Ukraine and connection with USSR and communism:

*“I think of a dark, wet, post-communist country that has poor infrastructure in place”*

*“Slavic culture with former soviet era structures. Various landscapes, mass poverty”*

A general perception of poor infrastructure, unsatisfactory quality of life, and low levels of technology was a prominent feature in the imagery provided by respondents:

*“Dirt roads, low technology, Rural/Farm region, not a lot of high-tech jobs”*

Although being independent since 1991, Ukraine is still strongly associated with Russia and the USSR among the college student population. The images respondents hold of the country have strong linkages to the communist past; they are not up-to-date with the current

situation in Ukraine as an independent country and with the transformations that took place over last 20 years.

Positive images of Ukraine emerged in the responses to first question as well. These were mostly related to rich culture and traditions in Ukraine. Respondents mentioned specific architecture, arts and crafts, and atmosphere of history and ancient times. An aspect of deep religiosity and spirituality of Ukrainian people is present as well. There is a prominent impression of perceived “difference” and “cultural distance” as respondents felt that culture in Ukraine is significantly different from what they are used to in their home country. This perceived difference can be traced in the following statements:

*“I think of a complex environment or population and cultural differences. I think of medieval times, with large castles, kings and queens”*

*“Culture, scenic, religious”*

*“Lots of hand-made items and different looking buildings”*

The second open-ended question of the destination image questionnaire asked respondents to describe the atmosphere they would expect to experience in Ukraine. The perceptions of atmosphere ranged from neutral

*“I would imagine Ukraine to be like most European nations”*

to mistakenly negative

*“It sounds scary! BOMBS”.*

Many of the respondents indicated that they had no knowledge of Ukraine and found it very difficult to imagine atmosphere of the country or even evoke any reflections or associations. On the other hand, some respondents did express opinions that included items not characteristic for Ukraine:

*“There are many natural wonders and water and rain forest”.*

Ukraine is a country located in the temperate climate zone under influence of dry continental air masses and has limited access to the shores of Black and Azov seas. Therefore, the country does not offer any tropical landscapes. There are natural wonders in the Carpathian Mountains and on the Crimean peninsula, but no rain forest.

From the responses given to this question it also became obvious that media has a large impact on the formation of opinion about Ukraine. One of the respondents characterized Ukrainian people as following:

*“From movies, they seem a little mean and that there is always something shady going on”.*

Although characters in films do not necessarily reflect the true characteristics of Ukrainians and are used for the sake of diversifying the plot, movie images are accepted as genuine by viewers and impact the way they expect Ukrainian people to be.

The survey respondents did not come to an agreement whether Ukrainian people were friendly or not. Some opinions were highly positive, with expectations of hospitality, friendliness, and assistance from the local population:

*“I would expect to have people teaching me and helping me to understand the different culture along the way”.*

On the other end of the continuum, respondents expressed doubt that they would be welcomed in Ukraine and that local residents would be friendly or helpful:

*“I don't feel that the native people would be very enthusiastic about people coming there for a tourist attraction”.*

Obviously, there is no strong national identity or image of the Ukrainian nation that

would be recognized by respondents and reflected in their evaluations. There is no single point of view as to whether Ukrainians are hospitable or not, whether they are excited to see tourists visiting the country, and whether they are willing to be helpful and reach out to visitors.

The most confusion and the least knowledge were expressed by respondents when asked to describe the unique attractions or famous people they know of in Ukraine. While able to evoke certain images and expectations of atmosphere experienced in the country, respondents found it difficult to come up with names of actual attractions. The response “I do not know” was the most frequent one for this question. Some respondents even admitted they had more knowledge of the neighboring countries than of Ukraine:

*“Around a bunch of other countries I know around it, but not much I know about Ukraine.”*

Very few respondents expressed very detailed knowledge of Ukrainian attractions, which however were mostly located in or associated with the capital city of Kyiv:

*“If I travel to Ukraine, I would visit these most popular tours attractions: National Opera House, Kiev Pecherska Lavra, St. Sophia Cathedral and The Horodetsky Building.”*

Interestingly, there was no medium level of knowledge detected in the responses: students either knew absolutely nothing about Ukraine, or knew very specific attractions and could provide their names. Thus, the level of awareness was either extremely low or extremely high. Such result indicated the absence of a basic set of facts or general information about Ukraine of which the majority of the student population would be aware.

Within the scale items, the overall rating shows a more positive than negative image of Ukraine. The summated means of all six factors produced as a result of factor analysis was above 2.5, with only two items having ratings below 2.5, and four factors above this mean. The

factors that received the lowest ratings were cultural distance and landscape. Indeed, this is supported by responses to the open-ended questions, as students often imagine Ukraine as a cold country, with snowy, mountainous landscapes, gray skies, and gloomy atmosphere. At the same time, while some respondents expect Ukraine to be culturally rich and its people to be hospitable, others await hostility, unfriendliness, and nothing exciting to visit. These perceptions explain why the two abovementioned factors received the lowest scores and were rated as poor by respondents.

The overall positive image of Ukraine is supported by the respondents' willingness to visit the country. When asked whether they would consider visiting Ukraine in the next five years, 56.5% respondents gave a positive answer with only 41.0% refusing such a possibility. Obviously, more than half respondents have an interest in Ukraine as a travel destination and, circumstances permitting, would like to visit the country. These results have very important practical implications: although sometimes respondents have mistaken or negative images of Ukraine, there was still strong interest in the country as a travel destination. If measures are taken to remedy the negative and reinforce the positive aspects of Ukraine's image, it might result in significant increase in future visitation.

The three-dimensional destination image of Ukraine was derived from students' responses and represented through twelve quadrants of the destination image model. Each of the quadrants was created by the intersection of two continuums and represented a distinctive facet of Ukraine's image. Distributed by the primary researcher and confirmed by two independent coders, free elicitation and scale items filled the quadrants and created dimensions of Ukraine's image as a travel destination.

The functional attributes and common functional characteristics pertaining to Ukrainian

image that had positive mean scores included items of cleanliness, service quality, and good infrastructure. The positively rated psychological attributes and common psychological items encompassed those of safety, good reputation, relaxing and exotic atmosphere, and family-oriented destination. The respondents generally expressed high opinion of Ukraine's atmosphere, safety, and reputation. These results are great news for destination marketers since there is already a favorable basis for building a strong positive country brand.

Unlike the positive impressions of attribute-based images, the functional holistic component of Ukraine's destination image were expressed through descriptives such as cold, mountainous, poor, snowy. On the other hand, holistic psychological images mostly pertained to Ukrainian people and included characteristics such as friendly, fun, happy, and different. Thus, although respondents see the country itself as cold, mountainous and gloomy, they expect Ukrainians to be fun and happy. In terms of marketing implications, this might mean that there is a sense in reinforcing the images of local people as fun and friendly, and portraying them as being hospitable and welcoming. Such images are highly attractive to travelers interested in the country's culture and might encourage visitation.

Both functional and psychological image aspects were strongly linked to religion and spirituality of Ukraine. St. Sophia Cathedral and St. Michael Golden Domed cathedral were named by more than 4% respondents and included by the primary researcher and independent coders in the functional unique and functional attribute-based quadrants. The unique psychological and holistic quadrants also included the items of churches, religion, and spirituality, mentioned by almost 9% survey respondents. Eastern Orthodox traditions and shrines were recognized as prominent features of Ukraine's image and should be widely used in country's promotional campaigns and tourist brochures.

Some other unique characteristics included city landscapes. Indeed, urban centers in Central and Eastern Ukraine can boast numerous monuments, unique architectural compositions, and items of industrial heritage. Interestingly, both associations with Europe and Russia were present within the unique component of Ukraine's destination image. For the longest time in Ukrainian history its Western and Eastern neighbors competed for influence over the country, and for centuries Ukraine was divided with its territories being parts of Poland, Hungary, and Russia. This legacy is carried into the present day as anecdotal evidence suggests that almost half of the Ukrainian nation feels more connection with Russia and the other half is looking towards joining the consolidation efforts in Europe. Although a source of certain instability, this aspect can be marketed as a strength since Ukraine offers travelers to a unique opportunity to experience East and West within one country.

The components of Ukraine's destination image discovered within this study and attitudes of the survey respondents towards the country comprise valuable information for the State Tourism Administration. Knowledge of the current perceptions will assist in shaping the destination management strategy that will remedy the flaws of country's image and reinforce the positive aspects. Some of the practical implications for destination management are offered in the following subsections.

### Practical Implications

#### Promotion

Destination promotion is one of the key aspects of destination management strategy. Its goal is to create a message conveying an attractive positive national image and deliver it to potential visitors. Such a promotional route is especially important for Ukraine since the awareness of the study population is low. Promotional efforts should be directed towards rising

the awareness levels as well as establishing a positive image of the country. There are several aspects of promotion efforts that can remedy the current negative image: conducting entry interviews, destination re-imaging, utilization of social media as a means of communicating with younger populations, engaging past visitors and utilizing word of mouth, and destination benchmarking as a way of differentiating from the image of Russia.

*Entry interviews.*

The perceptions of Ukraine held by the international travelers are important beacons for State Tourism Administration in shaping the promotion efforts. It is crucial to elicit these perceptions, and constantly monitor them. One cost effective way to monitor perception is to distribute entry questionnaires to the passengers of incoming international flights. These short questionnaires should be distributed by the flight attendants together with customs declarations. Questions should cover the basic demographic information (including previous visitation to Ukraine), as well as inquire about respondents' anticipated experiences. Such entry interviewing will track visitors' perceptions and expectations of Ukraine as a travel destination.

*Destination re-imaging.*

With Ukraine still being strongly associated with its socialist past and being regarded as part of Russia, the re-imaging stands out as a main priority within destination promotion efforts. Hall (1999) noted that re-imaging of the entire Eastern European region faces a number of common challenges. First of all, there is a need to create a European image and association of the region with the charm and attractiveness of Europe. Second, it is necessary to create an atmosphere of safety and comfort, and project a friendly and hospitable environment. The long background of socialist regime and political and economic instability are reasons why potential travelers think poorly of the safety of the region, as reflected in the survey responses. Lastly,

development of niche tourism products needs to happen in order to meet the needs of varied tourism demand.

The promotion efforts of the State Tourism Administration, therefore, should focus on reinforcing the positive national image and moving away from the negative post-communist image. Linking the image of the country with a friendly, hospitable national identity is the key to attracting more visitors eager to get to know Ukrainian culture and people. Such re-imaging efforts will ultimately result in creating a recognizable national brand that will appeal to travelers worldwide. According to Hall (1999), a core objective of destination branding is to produce a consistent communication strategy. This objective is especially important for Ukraine since lack of communication with potential visitors and, as a result, lack of awareness, stand out as major barriers to future visitation. However, there are several barriers that countries of Eastern European region have to overcome while building a destination brand (Hall, 1999). The main barrier is the lack of financial support for marketing efforts, which is rooted in the socialist past of the region. Also, destination marketers are forced by the government to produce short-term results while overlooking the concepts of sustainability and long-term benefits. Since countries of the region are moving to market economies and larger independence in businesses and products, it is more difficult to manage all the separate parts and develop a coherent brand.

Ukraine faces all the above-mentioned challenges like all the countries in the region. Insufficient financial support from the government limits the efforts of the State Tourism Administration in creating a recognizable brand and successfully communicating it to overseas tourists. Finally, scattered tourism service providers are difficult to manage and include in creating a national brand. Therefore, involving these businesses in the development of the country brand and persuading them to buy into the idea of positive national image is crucial to a

successful branding process.

*Social media.*

Focusing on the images of Ukraine held by the U.S. college students, the current study found that many of these images are mistaken (bombs and rainforest), and others are negative (unfriendly and cold). Against the background of general low awareness of the study population, such results are alarming and call for targeted promotion and information distribution. Since the subject of geography is an elective in many high schools and colleges, some students might never have access to the information about Ukraine as a country or as a potential travel destination.

The traditional methods of promotion, such as brochures, usually have low effectiveness with younger populations. However, students are increasingly using social media tools and online communities as reliable sources of information. Multiple businesses advertise themselves through creating company pages on Facebook or posting updates on Twitter. Most musicians and bands, as well as recording companies, increase visibility through profiles and playlists on MySpace. These social media tools allow for broad representation among the younger population and successfully target the college student market.

Destination promotion can successfully occur through online social media tools, as well. The State Tourism Administration would benefit from creating an informative page on Facebook with multiple photos and scenic videos, descriptions of possible heritage and adventure routes, and practical travel information on visas or currency exchange. Such a page is likely to bring more student attention to Ukraine than a brochure or travel book, and raise awareness and interest of students towards the destination.

*Word of mouth.*

As previously discussed, the Ukrainian government allocates very limited funding for the purpose of tourism development. Therefore, the State Tourism Administration is forced to look for low cost methods of promotion. Boulding et al. (1993) suggested that consumers' perceptions and expectations are greatly influenced by the word-of-mouth. Being a low cost and effective method of promotion, the word-of-mouth might help raise the awareness about Ukraine among potential visitors. Travel stories and pictures of Ukraine, shared by the past visitors through blogs and online travel communities, would be a trusted source of information for individuals who are only considering a trip. And for individuals who know very little, or nothing, about the country, such journey descriptions would be intriguing and would persuade them to look for further information.

*Destination benchmarking.*

As seen in the survey responses, the image of Ukraine as a travel destination is strongly linked to the image of Russia in the minds of the student population. This linkage is reflected in many of the responses to the first two open-ended questions to the extent that some respondents indicated that they do not know anything about Ukraine other than the fact that it is located next to Russia.

Destination benchmarking is suggested as one of the effective means of making the image of a country stand out. Benchmarking has been widely used in the fields of the manufacturing and service industry, but to date had been mostly limited to hotels (Kozak, 2002). The two major types of benchmarking encompass quality benchmarking and differentiated benchmarking. While implementing both would be beneficial for Ukraine, differentiated benchmarking is the one crucial in separating the image of the country from that of Russia.

Differentiated benchmarking, in its essence, includes a continuous measurement of an organization's (destination's) performance against the best in the industry (region) and constant improvement based on this measurement and information obtained (Kozak, 2002). The benchmarking approach is comprised of three consecutive steps: performance comparison, gap identification, and change of management process. To benchmark the destination image, the Ukrainian State Tourism Administration needs to analyze and compare the destination image of Ukraine to that of Russia, identify sources of similarity and matching characteristics, and develop promotion process focused on differentiation and uniqueness. One of the benchmarking methodologies, called paired comparisons, would be the most suitable for differentiation benchmarking. This methodology asks respondents to compare only two destinations directly, in this case – Ukraine and Russia. The direct comparison generates opinions that will allow marketers to determine similarities and differences in countries' images and differentiate Ukrainian image so it is not confused with the one of Russia.

#### Niche Tourism

Hughes and Allen (2005) suggested that if countries of Central and Eastern Europe try to attract tourists from main generating countries they should focus on identifying and targeting niche markets. It would be fitting and sustainable for the countries of the region to move away from a concept of mass tourism and offer niche tourism opportunities. Authors argued that all countries of the region are well suited for targeting niche markets of rural and urban tourism, sport and activity tourism, health tourism, and cultural tourism.

The niche market of cultural tourism would fit best with Ukrainian national identity and attract most tourists while augmenting the country's destination image. The tourism industry can capitalize on the country's spectacular architecture, diverse customs, and traditional food. The

State Tourism Administration can use images of rich heritage as excellent selling points to generate demand from western countries. Specific heritage tours can be developed for the unique Hutsul areas in the Carpathian Mountains, or Tatar villages in the Crimean Peninsula. Groups can be brought to visit annual craft exhibits in the Pirogovo Open Air Heritage Museum near Kyiv or the great Sorochynsky Fair in Poltava where local produce, cattle, and artwork are sold. The numerous opportunities for cultural and heritage tourism are perfect for both boosting the inbound tourism flows and establishing a recognizable image.

Many of today's tourists not only strive to broaden their horizons by exploring the world, but also seek connection with their inner self by returning to the lands of their ancestors (Russell, 2008). The segment of cultural tourists who look for insights in their own culture rather than knowledge of other cultures is referred to as nostalgic tourists. Nostalgic tourists are driven by desire to connect with their ancestral identity through consumption of cultural experiences.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over 100 million people in the U.S. annually attempt to trace their ancestral roots (Russel, 2008). This segment is large enough to present a significant market potential for counties that are sources of immigrants. There were three main waves of emigration from Ukraine to the U.S. The first one took place in the 1870s when Ukrainians were coming to work in the coal mines of Pennsylvania; the second wave coincided with the period between the two World Wars; and the third one was formed by the refugees fleeing Ukraine after the World War II. As a result, more than 370,000 Ukrainians settled in the U.S. and Canada and their descendants now constitute a considerable proportion of these countries' populations. Many of these people might be interested in exploring their roots and undertaking nostalgic trips to the land of their ancestors. Russell (2008) also noted that the sense of nostalgia can be experienced at any age, not only by elderly people. Therefore, students can

be a potential market for the niche of nostalgic tourism, as well. Heritage tours and trails, and master classes of traditional Ukrainian arts and crafts can be successfully advertised through the channels of social media to attract students of Ukrainian origin and encourage them to explore the land of their forebearers.

### Suggestions for Future Destination Management Efforts

The aforementioned suggestions are aimed at promoting Ukraine as a travel destination and distributing knowledge about the country. Raising the awareness will help the State Tourism Administration attract international visitors. However, it is crucial that, once having visited, travelers retain positive impressions of Ukraine. Such positive impressions can be created once State Tourism Administration adopts a comprehensive destination management plan, focused on customer satisfaction, and utilize place planning and design tools.

### Customer Satisfaction

Ukraine is an emerging destination struggling to move away from its negative image as a post-communist nation and develop positive perceptions of the country based on features of hospitality, rich history, and traditions. In order to be able to fulfill this goal, the State Tourism Administration needs to adopt a comprehensive destination management strategy. Currently such a strategy is not developed for Ukraine and no coordinated efforts of destination management are in place. This is one of the reasons U.S. students have very little knowledge of the country, as demonstrated by the current study.

Destination management is a complicated process that involves multiple aspects of place planning and promotion, improvements of infrastructure, and education of the local population. There are many methods for destination management suggested in the literature. Kozak (2002) argued that monitoring customer satisfaction is the key to successful destination management

and marketing. Visitors' perceptions impact the choice of the actual destination, the consumption of services and products, and the determination to return. Moreover, customer satisfaction is a great measure of performance and one of the sources of competitive advantage. Monitoring customer satisfaction would be a great first step for the State Tourism Administration in designing a destination management strategy. Customer satisfaction surveys, distributed to passengers of outbound international flights in Boryspil International Airport of Kyiv, can start the process of recording customer satisfaction. Foreign tourists can be asked questions about their stay in Ukraine and requested to describe or rate their experiences. Surveys should contain scale items that would allow visitors to rate the basic destination characteristics such as quality of services, infrastructure, and climate. Inclusion of open-ended questions would allow respondents to describe their unique experiences, moments that they remembered most. The data from these surveys could provide invaluable information for State Tourism Administration and help shape efforts in improving tourism services, and how they are perceived by foreign visitors.

#### Place Planning and Design

The survey respondents strongly associated the image of Ukraine with places and landscapes. Cold and snowy landscapes, mountains, and cityscapes were often mentioned in the responses to the open-ended questions. Obviously, the attractiveness of landscapes and places influence the perceptions of potential and actual tourists. That is the reason why tourism interests and needs should be an inclusive part of well-thought place planning and design.

Dredge (1999) argued that tourism should be integrated into the land use framework. The process of integration is challenged, however, by the fact that land use planning is usually carried out at the local or regional level, while tourism planning is developed on the regional or destination level. The author suggested three broad groups of destination planning tools. These

tools can be successfully adopted and implemented by the State Tourism Administration while integrating land use and tourism planning.

The first group of tools, process tools, is concerned with the decision theories and policy analysis and includes rational comprehensive, blueprint, mixed scanning, and other models. The second group of functional tools embraces the theories and models that explain the emergence and functioning of settlement patterns. Finally, normative tools establish connections between human values and settlement forms. Close study and adoption of all three groups of tools will help land planning offices, as well as State Tourism Administration, harmonize the interaction between tourism planning and landscaping. This harmonization will ensure that travelers have positive images of places and landscapes and eventually, the image of the destination.

#### Generalizability of Results

Generalizability of results was one of the concerns in the current study. The researcher attempted to reach a broad geographic representation by surveying students in five universities in different regions of the United States. However, it is arguable if the obtained sample of students was truly representational of the U.S. college student population. The required sample size for a population of over 10 million subjects is at least 384 respondents (Universal Accreditation Board, 2003). However, only 200 respondents were obtained for the current study. The survey respondents were drawn mostly from tourism and leisure related programs of major universities. Similar studies involving students from other fields of science, such as history or geography, might be of interest for future research. Being involved in tourism and leisure related programs, survey respondents might be more willing to visit such distant destinations as Ukraine, than an average U.S. student might have been.

Analyzing the nonresponse bias was not within the scope of this study, but there might have been significant differences between students who took the time and effort to answer the open-ended questions and scale items and those who did not. The nature of the survey link distribution did impact the response pattern as well: asked to take the survey by their college professors, students might have been more willing to participate. If a different method of distribution was chosen, the researcher might have not been able to obtain a response rate of almost 44%. The distribution method does not allow the researcher to conclude that the opinions of students who participated in the survey were representative of the entire study population.

#### Limitations and Future Research

The current study confirmed that the methodology of constructing a three-dimensional destination image proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993) can be successfully used for a vast range of destinations including emerging destinations such as Ukraine. Factor analysis conducted on a set of 28 scale items returned a six-factor solution very similar to that obtained in the original study by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). The analysis of open-ended questions produced sets of keywords that reflected respondents' images of Ukraine, its atmosphere, and unique attractions.

The study focused on the image of Ukraine as viewed by U.S. college students. However, U.S. college students are only one potential market for Ukraine's incoming tourism. Older U.S. travelers might have more knowledge of the country and therefore possess more positive images of Ukraine, as well as have more financial resources for long-haul travel. The large physical distance between Ukraine and the U.S. might have a negative impact on how Ukraine is perceived by U.S. residents. Therefore, closer countries might be better for targeted promotion efforts, since their residents already possess more accurate image of Ukraine.

Travelers from Poland, Germany, and Italy would likely be very interested in nostalgic tourism, while students from England and Netherlands would be attracted to opportunities of knowledge and adventure offered by trips to Ukraine.

Further studies should focus on obtaining a larger sample of college students to gain a deeper understanding of students' perceptions. Investigating the destination image of Ukraine as viewed by adult U.S. travelers and comparing it to students' perceptions would be of great interest, as well. A comparative study of destination image of Ukraine and Russia should be conducted in order to facilitate differentiated benchmarking and assist the State Tourism Administration in creative a distinctive image of Ukraine and positive national brand.

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## APPENDIX A: DESTINATION IMAGE QUESTIONNAIRE

### Destination image of Ukraine

Dear Respondent,

We highly appreciate your willingness to participate in our survey. The following questionnaire is aimed at determining your knowledge about and attitudes towards Ukraine. Completing it should not take more than 15-20 minutes of your time. Your input is greatly valued and will be utilized to generate Ukraine's destination image model that will help to promote the country as a tourist destination. Please answer all the questions to the best of your knowledge. All responses and demographic information that you submit will be held confidential. You will not be placed on any mailing lists or receive any advertisements due to your participation in this survey.

You are under no obligation to answer questions you are not comfortable with. However, answering all questions will help us better understand your opinion.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. All those who complete the survey will be entered for a drawing and will have a chance to win a basket of Ukrainian goods: drinks, sweets, and a book about Ukraine.

Thank you.

Section I.

1. Which of the following indicates your highest completed level of education? (please check one)

some college  
 college graduate  
 post graduate work  
 post high school technical training

2. Which of the following best indicates your race or ethnic group? (please check one)

American Indian or Alaskan Native  
 Asian  
 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander  
 Black or African American  
 Hispanic or Latino  
 White/Caucasian  
 Prefer not to answer  
 Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your gender?  Male  Female

5. What is your marital status?  Single  Married  Have a partner  
 Divorced  Widow(er)

6. Have you traveled internationally (outside the 50 states of the U.S.) in past 2 years?

Yes  No

7. Have you ever been to Ukraine?  Yes  No

Section II.

Please answer the following questions. Provide 3-5 keywords or first words that come to you mind. You are welcome to expand on the topic as well.

1. When you think of Ukraine as a travel destination, what images or characteristics come to your mind?
2. When you think of Ukraine as a travel destination, how would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience there?
3. Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions, events or personalities that you can think of in Ukraine?

Section III.

On a scale 1 to 5, with 5 being “Strongly Agree”, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about Ukraine. If you do not know whether certain item is characteristic for Ukraine, please specify as “Neutral/Not Sure”.

**How much do you agree with (please circle the appropriate number for each item):**

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	There is a lot of opportunity to observe natural beauty in Ukraine (e.g. mountains, grasslands).	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Ukraine has comfortable climate that favors traveling.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Prices in Ukraine are reasonable.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Local infrastructure and transportation networks are well-developed in Ukraine.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	One can see beautiful architecture in Ukraine (e.g. buildings, castles).	5	4	3	2	1
6.	There is plenty of historic sites, museums, and archaeological sites in Ukraine.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Ukrainian cities are interesting and offer varied activities.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	There are important religious sites and shrines in Ukraine.	5	4	3	2	1
9.	You can visit numerous battle sites and memorials.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	You can visit abandoned sites (e.g. Chernobyl).	5	4	3	2	1
11.	Important sport events are held in Ukraine (e.g. Euro-2012).	5	4	3	2	1
12.	There are UNESCO World Heritage List items in Ukraine.	5	4	3	2	1
13.	You can enjoy modern art events and exhibitions.	5	4	3	2	1
14.	Many famous people were born in Ukraine.	5	4	3	2	1
15.	The country is generally clean.	5	4	3	2	1

16.	You don't have to worry about personal safety in Ukraine.	5	4	3	2	1
17.	The country is easily accessible.	5	4	3	2	1
18.	People in Ukraine are friendly and hospitable.	5	4	3	2	1
19.	You can observe local culture (e.g. customs and traditions) in Ukraine.	5	4	3	2	1
20.	You can sample tasty traditional cuisine.	5	4	3	2	1
21.	You can observe people making traditional crafts (e.g. pottery, embroidery, woodcarving) and buy souvenirs.	5	4	3	2	1
22.	The general atmosphere of the country is restful and relaxing.	5	4	3	2	1
23.	Country holds exotic atmosphere.	5	4	3	2	1
24.	Ukraine offers opportunity for adventure.	5	4	3	2	1
25.	Ukraine offers opportunity to increase knowledge.	5	4	3	2	1
26.	Ukraine is a family-oriented travel destination.	5	4	3	2	1
27.	Businesses in Ukraine offer high quality of service.	5	4	3	2	1
28.	Ukraine has a good reputation as a travel destination.	5	4	3	2	1

Please check the appropriate response box.  
Would you consider visiting Ukraine in next 5 years?

1. Yes\_\_\_\_\_

2. No\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B: UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL



**University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board**  
East Carolina University • Brody School of Medicine  
600 Mays Boulevard • Old Health Sciences Library, Room 1L-09 • Greenville, NC 27834  
Office 252-744-2914 • Fax 252-744-2284 • [www.ecu.edu/irb](http://www.ecu.edu/irb)  
Chair and Director of Biomedical IRB: L. Wiley Nifong, MD  
Chair and Director of Behavioral and Social Science IRB: Susan L. McCammon, PhD

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**TO:** Svitlana Iarmolenko, Graduate Student  
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies  
c/o Dr. Paige Schneider  
1405 Belk Bldg.  
East Carolina University

**FROM:** UMCIRB *WBE*

**DATE:** November 23, 2009

**RE:** Human Research Activities Determined to Meet Exempt Criteria

**TITLE:** "Ukraine's Destination Image as Perceived by U.S. College Students"

### UMCIRB #09-0804

This research study has undergone IRB review on November 23, 2009. It is the determination of the IRB Chairperson (or designee) that these activities meet the criteria set forth in the federal regulations for exemption from 45 CFR 46 Subpart A. This human research activity meets the criteria for an exempt status #2. Survey Procedures where participants cannot be identified. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this non-sponsored study no more than minimal risk. This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any changes must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review prior to implementation to allow determination that proposed changes do not impact the activities eligibility for exempt status. Should it found that a proposed change does require more substantive review, you will be notified in writing within five business days.

The following items were reviewed in determination exempt certification:

- Internal Processing Form (dated 10.27.2009)
- "Ukraine's Destination Image as Perceived by U.S. College Students" thesis (Chapters 1, 2, and 3)
- Questionnaire
- Cover letter
- Faculty Recruitment Letter

It was furthermore determined that the reviewer does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

The UMCIRB applies 45 CFR 46, Subparts A-D, to all research reviewed by the UMCIRB regardless of the funding source. 21 CFR 50 and 21 CFR 56 are applied to all research studies that fall under the purview of Food and Drug Administration regulations. The UMCIRB follows applicable International Conference on Harmonisation Good Clinical Practice guidelines.