

Methods, Instruments and Scales Used for Country Image Measurement: A Literature Review

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Abstract

The current paper addresses country image from the evaluation and/or assessment perspective. The literature offers a plethora of definitions and conceptualizations of country image - thus the lack of consensus regarding the best way in approaching the most relevant tools and scales in measuring it. This subject was chosen due to the importance and increased impact that a country's image has on all its functional sectors (tourism, immigration, foreign investment etc.), thus influencing people's quality of life. The aim of the paper is to offer an overview of the methods, tools and scales used in measuring country image as a basis for a further, newer and improved scale and research model to be built - encompassing wider dimensions of the country image itself.

Key words: country image, scale, measurement, country image evaluation, country image assessment

J.E.L. classification: M31, M39, Z32

1. Introduction

The approached topic represents an essential one in the field of country image research - mainly due to the importance given to the image of a country within the globalization context.

The importance of properly assessing the image of a country both inside and outside its borders, perceived as a first step in the nation branding process, lies in understanding the need to adapt to international standards by capitalizing on the vast heritage that the country has: national wealth, cultural heritage and human resources. Considering this, the current paper represents a result of the author's scientific concerns regarding country image evaluation from an interdisciplinary approach (marketing, management and tourism).

The scientific literature proves the increased interest researchers show to the evaluation of countries since the first decades of the last century (the first articles on the subject: Katz and Baley, 1933; Klingberg, 1941); even so, the subject became of real interest only later, in 1960, once with the emergence of the "country of origin" concept. Dichter (1962) was the one who anticipated the need to focus on the differences and similarities between consumers in different parts of the globe.

Although the country image does not have a standard definition, the authors agree that each country has its own image. Interpreting the existing definitions, it is easy to notice that some of the researchers give the terms a narrow, customized meaning, while others cover a wider area, describing the image as an umbrella concept.

2. Literature review: qualitative and quantitative approaches in country image evaluation - methods and tools

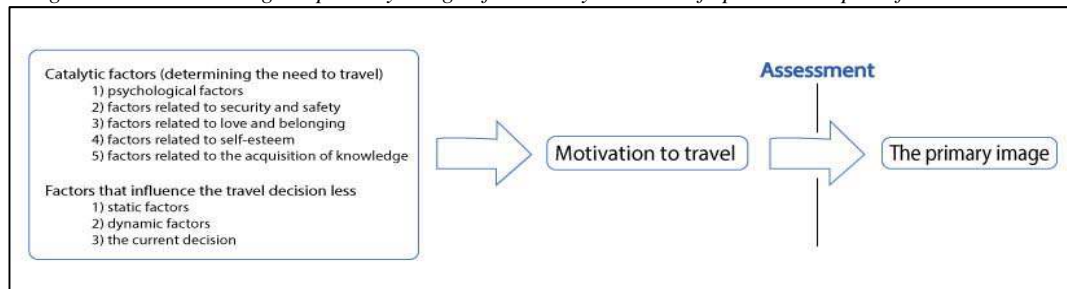
Most studies that address the assessment of the country image consider the image of a nation as a consequence of many factors that form a hierarchical structure that leads to the formed image (Elliot et al., 2011; Nejad and Winsler, 2000 cited in Jenes, 2012). Given the literature, there are three structural levels that address the assessment of the country image: one that addresses the image of the country in a broad sense, taking into account the dimensions of the country image and its elements, a second that takes into account strictly the factors that influence the perception of the country image and a third, which evaluates the effect of the country image on consumer behavior.

Most research aimed at assessing the country's image has been carried out, especially in the early stages, by quantitative methods. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) proposed studying the dimensions of the country image and evaluating them through a model that could not typically be based on quantitative research methods - given the premise that the image of destinations is a specific set of attitudes, emotional, cognitive and global impressions regarding the analyzed destination.

Thus, the cognitive evaluation of places, countries, destinations represents the intellectual processing of the knowledge and information held by the individual about the destination, while the affective evaluation refers to the processing, through the emotional filter, of all feelings that an individual has related to the destination in question (Setyowardhani and Khairani, 2009).

Chon (1990) developed the theory of favorable factors ("Push factors") and those that slow down ("pull factors") the process of evaluation and analysis of organic and induced images relative to a country. Favoring factors, in his opinion, are associated with the theory of needs developed by Maslow, while the other factors refer to the attractiveness of the destination. These factors are evaluated based on empirical data collected from respondents - respectively visitors, strictly through semi-structured interviews. The relationship between the factors identified by it and the construction and evaluation of the country image is expressed in Figure no. 1.

Figure no. 1. Evaluating the primary image of a country in terms of "push" and "pull" factors



Source: adapted by the author after Lubbe, 1998

In contrast to his theory, it has become common to use Likert-type scales or differentiated scales to measure and evaluate the image of countries. Studies based on structured methods usually measure attributes characteristic of the analyzed destinations and thus produce measurements of the scores obtained by each attribute. Examples of evaluating the image of a destination in terms of structured research methods include the studies of Hunt (1975) - involves researching the image of four US states -, Andreu et al. (2000) - concerning Spain - or the study by Sonmez and Sirakaya (2002), on Turkey. Many of the scales developed by them are the result of an exploratory qualitative analysis that had the role of identifying the important attributes and determinants of the image perceived by individuals in relation to a particular country/destination (Beerli and Martin, 2004).

Even so, these methods have certain limitations, like any other research model: sometimes respondents may have to express opinions on certain attributes that are not part of the image they formed in relation to a specific country or destination (Tapacchai and Waryszak, 2000).

From the research conducted until 1993, the only author who used open-ended questions in the study of the image of a destination was Reilly (1990). Later, Echtner and Ritchie (1991 and later 1993) suggested that the image of a destination is composed of three dimensions: 1) characteristic - holistic, 2) functional - psychological and 3) common - unique. They developed a measurement system using qualitative and quantitative research methods, respectively a set of scales for measuring the common attributes of destinations, along with functional and psychological dimensions, and aimed, in parallel, to evaluate the elements that give uniqueness to the evaluated destination. In particular, their reported study of image components provides a list of 35 attributes measured via scales. The list was generated through two methods - by reviewing the literature and by focus group and represents a complete set of attributes characteristic of a destination.

Murphy (1999), asking members of the target group to name ten countries visited and using the diagram developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1991) to identify the main features of the country, he developed a distinct system on which they subsequently focused their studies. Moreover, there are papers that have mainly used qualitative research methods to study the evaluation of the country /

destination image (for example, the analysis of the content of brochures) (Pike, 2002). For example, several recent studies have used for the evaluation of the image destinations destinations taken by tourists during their trips or the words used by respondents when completing the questionnaires (Ryan and Cave, 2005). By applying three different methods, Prebensen (2007) explored tourists' perceptions of the image of lesser-known destinations. They used 1) word combinations, 2) photo combinations and other images 3) exploratory techniques in colleges and universities.

This type of methodology can be criticized, since it offers limited possibilities for statistical analysis and provides subjective results. A new methodology, based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of images (illustrations, pictures, etc.) contained in a tourist guide was brought to the fore by Espelt and Benito (2005). The main studies identified in the literature on country image assessment address quantitative research methods. Table no. 1 indicates a number of authors who study the image of the country and its related concepts, as well as the number of items and the type of scale used to complete the studies undertaken by them.

Table no. 1. Scales used in the study of the country image

Variable	Source	Number of items, type of scale
The country image	Nadeau et al. (2008) Papadopoulos (1990, 1993) Martin – Eroglu (1993)	10 items, Likert scale, 7 points
The image of people	Nadeau et al. (2008) Papadopoulos (1990, 1993) Martin – Eroglu (1993)	10 items, Likert scale, 7 points
Awareness, sensitization about the country	Papadopoulos (1990, 1993) Pappu – Quester (2010)	60 items, Likert scale, 7 points
Associations regarding the country	Pappu – Quester (2010)	3 items, Likert scale, 7 points
Loyalty to the country	Pappu – Quester (2010)	4 items, Likert scale, 7 points
Evaluating the country as a destination	Nadeau et al. (2008)	6 items, Likert scale, 7 points
The dimensions of the country image	Papadopoulos (1990, 1993) Martin – Eroglu (1993)	5 items, Likert scale, 7 points

Source: developed by the author based on bibliographic references

That being said, we believe that the complementary use of qualitative and quantitative methods in assessing the image of the country is the most effective way to study the image of destinations. Moreover, most specialists in the field consider that they are complementary and necessary in this regard. Table no. 2 indicates the existing approaches in the literature regarding the methodology followed in the studies assessing the country image.

Table no. 2. Methodologies used in the study of the country image in the literature

Authors	Approach
Wang and Lamb, 1980; Wang and Lamb, 1983; Papadopoulos, 1986; Yaprak et al., 1986; Moeller, 1997; Allred et al., 1999; Verlegh, 2001; Brijs, 2006; Lala et al., 2007; Jenes, 2012;	Revision of the literature for the development of measurement scales
Papadopoulos, 1986; Parameswaran and Yaprak, 1987; Papadopoulos et al., 1990; Pisharodi and Parameswaran, 1992; Heslop and Papadopoulos, 1993; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1994; Haubl, 1996; Li et al., 1997; Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Knight and Calantone, 2000; Papadopoulos et al., 2000; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002; Knight et al., 2003; Nebenzahl et al., 2003; Heslop et al., 2004; Laroche et al., 2005; Pereira et al., 2005; D'Astous and Boujbel, 2007; Pappu et al., 2007	Use of existing country image evaluation scales in the literature
Martin and Eroglu, 1993; Li et al., 1997; Allred et al., 1999; Verlegh, 2001; Ittersum et al., 2003; Lala et al., 2007; Jenes, 2012;	Qualitative studies - focus groups

Desborde, 1990; Martin and Eroglu, 1993; Li et al., 1997; Ittersum et al., 2003; Lala et al., 2007; Jenes, 2012;	Qualitative studies - interviews with experts in the field, deductions
Papadopoulos – Heslop, 2002; Kleppe-Mossberg, 2005; Hanna – Rowley, 2008 (country branding)	Qualitative studies - content analysis
Ittersum et al., 2003; Puaschunder et al., 2004 (in: Roth – Diamantopoulos, 2009)	Qualitative studies - in-depth interviews
Schweiger, 1988, 1990, 1992; Weber and Grundhöfer, 1991; Kühn, 1993; Chao and Rajendran, 1993; Martin and Eroglu, 1993; Schewiger and Kurz, 1997; Verlegh, 2001; Mittelstaedt et al., 2004; Brijs, 2006; D’Astous and Boujbel, 2007; Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009;	Other exploratory methods (tests, interviews, image associations)

Source: elaborated by the author on the basis of works written by Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009), Echtner and Richie (2003) and Jenes (2012)

3. Research methodology

The research methodology used for writing the current article resumes to analysing quantitative and qualitative studies published in the field of country image until 2021. The most representative findings were summarized for providing an insight into the methods, instruments and scales used for country image measurement – thus collective case studies were approached for emphasizing this phenomenon. Within this context, fundamental targeted research was used for collecting and processing (through observation, sorting, correlation-making, comparison etc.) empirical information to address the country image measurement subject.

The informational base of the current article lies in scientific articles published within dedicated international journals, book chapters and websites, among with periodicals and conference presentations.

The approached research methodology was chosen due to the purpose of the paper – to provide a research starting point for those researchers interested in the subject. The literature in the field was synthesized, while no primary data was collected, nor analyzed.

4. Findings: scales of country image evaluation in the literature

Despite the appreciable number of researches on the country image, a relatively small number of works from the last decades have been identified as aiming at the development of country image measurement scales – Table no. 3.

Table no. 3. Research undertaken to develop scales for measuring the country's image

No crt	Authors, year	Dimensions / Items to consider	Main sources used	Evaluated country
1	Parameswaran and Yaprak, 1987	Country of origin 1. General attitudes towards the country 2. General attitudes towards the product 3. Product specific attributes	Boddewyn (1981) Nagashima (1970) Bilkey and Nes (1982)	Germany Japan Italy
2	Pisharodi and Parameswaran, 1992	The image of the country of origin 1. General attitudes towards the country (divided according to the type of image to which it forms: conative, cognitive and affective) 2. General attributes regarding the product (divided into positive and negative characteristics of the product and into attributes that contribute to the formation of the positive image of the products concerned) 3. Product specific attributes	Parameswaran and Yaprak (1986, 1987)	Germany

3	Martin and Eroglu, 1993	The country image 1. The economic component 2. Political component 3. Technological component	The first authors identified as using open-ended questions in their research	Japan USA Germany India
4	Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1994	Image of the country of origin 1. General attitudes towards the country (divided according to the respondents' interactions with 1) the country concerned and with 2) the people of that country) 2. General attributes regarding the product (divided into positive and negative characteristics of the product and into attributes that contribute to the formation of the positive image of the products concerned) 3. Specific attributes of the product (divided into positive and negative characteristics of the product)	Parameswaran and Yaprak (1986, 1987) Pisharodi and Parameswaran (1992) Papadopoulos et al. (1990)	Germany Korea
5	Knight et al., 2003	The Image of the country of origin - assessments of: 1. People 2. Compromises made by the country 3. Promotional activities initiated 4. Distribution 5. Price 6. The political situation specific to the country of origin of the products	Parameswaran and Yaprak (1986, 1987)	Germany
6	Nebenzahl et al., 2003	The personification of the country image through the prism: 1. Quality and satisfaction seeker 2. Value seeker (economic) 3. The nationalist	Use of open-ended questions in the research undertaken.	Japan Germany South Korea
7	Anholt, 2005a	Nation Brand Index 1. Tourism 2. Exports 3. governor 4. Investment and immigration 5. Culture and heritage 6. People	Unknown	25 countries – no name mentioned
8	Laroche et al., 2005	The country image 1. Opinions about the country 2. Feelings about the country 3. Desired interaction / Targeted behavior	Papadopoulos et al. (1990) Li et al. (1997)	Japan Switzerland
9	Pereira et al., 2005	The image of the country of origin 1. General attitudes towards the country 2. General attitudes towards the product 3. Product specific attributes	Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994)	USA Germany
10	D'Astous and Boujbel, 2007	The personality of the country 1. Agreeableness 2. Malice 3. Snobbery 4. Assiduity 5. Conformity 6. Inopportune character	Use of open-ended questions in the research undertaken. Personality scales (Goldberg, 1990; Aaker, 1997; D'Astous and Levesque, 2003)	Canada
11	Lala et al., 2009	The country image 1. Economic conditions	1. Wang and Lamb, 1983; Han and Tarpstra, 1988; Heslop	China Mexico

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Conflict 3. Political structure 4. Vocational training 5. Work culture 6. Environment 7. Work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> and Papadopoulos, 1993; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1994; Haubl, 1996; 2. Jones and Ashmore, 1973; Haubl, 1996; Lee and Ganesh, 1999; 3. Wang and Lamb, 1983; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Han, 1989; Heslop and Papadopoulos, 1993; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1994; Haubl, 1996; 4. Wang and Lamb, 1983; Parameswaran and Yaprak, 1987; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Heslop and Papadopoulos, 1993; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1994; Agarwai and Sikiri, 1996; Lee and Ganesh, 1999; 5. Wang and Lamb, 1983; Parameswaran and Yaprak, 1987; Heslop and Papadopoulos, 1993; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1994; Lee and Ganesh, 1999; 6. Focus grup 7. Focus grup 	<p>Russia Scotland Singapore South Africa</p>
12	Jenes	<p>The country image</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opinions about the country 2. Feelings about the country 3. Desired interaction/Targeted behavior 	<p>Nagashima (1970, 1977) Martin and Eroglu (1993) Papadopoulos et al. (1990)</p>	<p>Hungary Germany</p>

Source: developed by the author on the basis of bibliographic references, adapted after Lu and Heslop (2008, p. 293)

Although they have a common goal (that of developing a country image assessment scale), other authors have identified several limitations in this regard, according to Lu and Heslop (2008, p. 291): 1) the use of deductive or established measures by the author, without taking into account the measures that could be established by consumers - many measurement scales borrow items from previously developed scales that have not been formally validated or use items that the authors consider to be in close connection with the image of the country; however, it must be borne in mind that consumer opinions may differ from the authors' opinions, and items should be developed in collaboration with them; 2) the works aimed at elaborating the scales for measuring the country's image have limited - from a territorial point of view - its research area - especially on the countries of North America; 3) samples used by students were most often used and 4) research focused strictly on certain categories of products or brands (from a certain country); 5) orientation and focus on the opinions of the respondents, seen as actual consumers - the unrepresentativeness of the samples and the perception of the respondents as tourists, immigrants or investors, etc., depending on the desired target group; 6) limited examination of the psychometric properties characteristic of the elaborated scales; 7) the impossibility of demonstrating the equivalence of the measurements performed interculturally, using the same scale (from the point of view of the conceptual equivalence of the construct, of the factors and items considered, of the metric, factorial and scalar invariance, etc.).

Various methodologies have been approached in the study of the image of countries over time: on the one hand, there are studies that address the qualitative analysis of media appearances related to the image of a country - thus being useful in sketching the created image over time. , through the media, both inside and outside the borders. At the same time, the content analysis of the presentation pages of the country in specialized magazines, tourist guides, brochures, etc.

In 2003, Grahlow and Passow developed a tool for measuring a country's reputation, entitled Reputation Quotient - Country Reputation Index (Passow et al., 2005) while, a year later, The brand science guide for destination research and RFPs appeared - a document developed by Brand Strategy, which proposes tools aimed at evaluating destinations - perceived as brands.

Related to the country –perceived as a tourist destination-, Pikkemaat (2004) proposes the evaluation of the image of Austria through the prism of an instrument destined to evaluate some series of attributes specific to the country; Konecnik and Go (2008) approach the analysis of Slovenia's image, in parallel with the analysis of the quality offered to consumers, of the country's notoriety - as a brand - and of consumers' loyalty to the country, seen as a travel destination. Focusing on Australia, Jenkins (1999) and later Dolnicar and Huybers (2007) propose other tools for assessing and measuring the image of the destination; Prebensen (2004) explores different techniques for identifying respondents' perceptions of distinct tourist destinations, while Tasci and Holecek (2007) address methods of analyzing changes in the image of countries over time. The authors also paid attention to the online presence of countries, proposing methodologies for evaluating their image according to the information content of travel websites - and not only (Govers et al., 2007).

Scales that treat the country image as a global entity measure country characteristics -the scale developed by Martin and Eroglu, for example-, while scales on which the country image is analyzed as a summary construct is based on exploring the characteristics of products from that country.

We will address, in the following, three of the reference scales used in the evaluation of the country image.

The country of origin scale, developed by Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1992)

According to Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1992), the country of origin is a structure that demonstrates that people attach to products stereotypical perceptions depending on the country in which they are manufactured, which influences consumer behavior. Moreover, the construct itself includes perceptions regarding the economic, political and cultural characteristics of the country of origin, but also perceptions regarding the product itself.

The final version of the scale developed by the two authors in 1992 consists of 24 items that can be awarded a score of up to 10 points; the scale is structured according to six distinct factors, which concern the general attitudes towards the product, the general attitudes towards the country of origin of the product and the particular attitudes nurtured for it and the particular attitudes towards the product concerned. The scale used is considered to be multidimensional, but the items found inside the factor structures reflect one-dimensional measurements.

The development of the scale consisted of 40 items, initially generated to reflect three factor structures. The responses of a large sample were used and processed to identify relevant items in order to ensure the internal consistency of the data. Through the confirmatory analysis performed through LISREL and through the ITAN package (Gerbing and Hunter, 1988), an iterative process of examining the interrelationships, factor loads and resulting dimensions took place. The final form revealed the existence of three factorial structures related to the general attributes of the products: two of them highlighted positive attributes, while one highlighted negative attributes. A total of 678 respondents participated in the study undertaken - both for the research conducted in 1992 and for the research undertaken in 1994.

The scale has changed and in 1994 another 11 items were added. Depending on the product category taken into account and their country of origin, the scale differed slightly from one assessment to another. Of course, the scores could be summed on each category of factors, in order to obtain factorial indices, but still, each item reflected a one-dimensional measurement.

Compared to the validity of the model, for the study undertaken in 1992 - which aimed at a model composed of 6 factors, the unidimensionality of each of them was demonstrated. The Alpha coefficient estimated for them had the values of 0.872 (series I of general attributes on the country), 0.849 (series II of general attributes on the country), 0.918 (series I of general attributes on products), 0.735 (series II of general product attributes), 0.796 (series III of general product attributes) and 0.819 (product-specific attributes).

The country image scale developed by Martin and Eroglu (1993)

Although initially four dimensions of the country image were conceptualized (political, economic, technological and social), the final form of the scale designed by Martin and Eroglu (1993) focuses on three dimensions, composed of 5 items that analyze the political factor, 5 items concerning the economic factor and 4 items concerning the technological factor, considering that the social dimension is reflected in the other three dimensions analyzed. All items are evaluated using a seven-point differential semantic scale. The scores obtained can be summarized within the approached dimension to result in characteristic indices for each factor (economic, political, technological) or the scores of all the fourteen items can be summed to indicate the general composite related to the country image.

The development of this scale took place through two distinct procedures; 60 items were initially generated, reflecting the four dimensions of the country image. In the first phase, students and faculty members were involved in generating the items, while in the second phase the knowledge of eight PhD students with extensive international training was used. The totality of the items was subsequently reduced to 29 items by focusing on the representativeness of each item for the construct under consideration. The final scale was validated by analyzing the main components and other techniques aimed at analyzing the correlations between items. In the final study, Japan, the United States, India and Germany represented the pole of interest in which the scale obtained by the two researchers was used.

The pre-test was carried out on a sample of 200 people, and subsequently, for the adjustment of fineness elements, on samples of 230 and 80 students, respectively. Compared to the validity of the scale, for the sample of two hundred people, the reported Alpha coefficient was 0.950 for all the fourteen items that make up the country image scale. The same coefficient, estimated for the economic, political and technological dimensions, ranged from 0.56 to 0.71. On the sample of 230 people, the Alpha coefficient for the whole scale (of 14 items) was 0.925. A discriminant validity test indicated correlations between the three dimensions of the country image taken into account between 0.18 and 0.51, with $p > 0.19$ for each of them.

The scale developed by Lala, Allred and Chakraborty (2009)

As mentioned earlier, it is certain that the authors of the marketing literature did not agree on the number and type of factors that make up the size of the country. However, following an analysis of the interdisciplinary literature, Lala et al. (2009) identified the most widespread 7 dimensions of the country image, included in the studied works. These include: 1) economic conditions, 2) conflicts, 3) political structure, 4) vocational training, 5) work culture, 6) environment and 7) work. The first five dimensions were obtained following the review of the literature both in the field of marketing and in other fields. At the same time, the analysis of the interviews and the results of the focus groups revealed and confirmed their importance. The last two dimensions were taken into account following the emphasis on their particularities and importance by the respondents of the qualitative research.

This scale was developed using four steps. In the first phase, all the items of the already existing scales and previously used for the evaluation of the country image were reunited. Additional items were developed and added to the list formed by qualitative analysis; thus, focus groups took place and, implicitly, the analysis of the results obtained from the interviews conducted with 148 students. Their answers served to generate other items that completed the previous list. The qualitative analysis resulted in information on the environment of the activity (labor laws, living standards, working conditions, etc.), work culture (education, training, trust, safety, ethics), elements related to the environment. environment (pollution, safety, environmental safety awareness, etc.), politics (democracy, stability, etc.) and economic environment (technological advancement and global distribution). In the next phase, three international professionals and a professor whose merits are recognized internationally tested the validity of the model created; some of the items were removed, leaving a total of 39 items, divided into 7 categories.

The data were collected using a 39-question questionnaire, the answers to which were structured on a Likert scale from 1 to 7. Six distinct countries were analyzed - in terms of geographical location and economic development (China, Mexico, Russia, Scotland, Singapore and South Africa). The validity of the model and the scale prepared by the three authors was demonstrated in “A multidimensional scale for measuring country image”, article published in 2009.

5. Conclusions

It is clear that over time, the authors who approached the assessment of the country image and, respectively, the creation of scales to measure the image of countries and/or destinations did not agree on the size of the country image and the necessary items to be taken into account in the evaluation process. However, reference works in the field (Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1992; Martin and Eroglu, 1993; Papadopoulos, 1990 and 1993), in which measurement scales were developed and subsequently taken over by other authors, have appeared more than two decades ago. Some of them approach the evaluation of a country's image in terms of products and brands that come from it, others in terms of the country perceived as a tourist destination, and others in terms of characteristics and attributes specific to the country as a whole.

Scales for assessing the image of the country based on the image of the products of the country concerned could be perceived as redundant, as there is a bilateral relationship of influence between the image of the country and the image of the products derived from it. Moreover, given the definition of the image of a country, according to which it represents "[...] the total of informational, descriptive and inferential opinions regarding a certain country" (Martin and Eroglu, 1993), the evaluation of the image of a country through the perspective of scales built on the principle of evaluating the products and brands that come from it contradict the very definition of the country image. Moreover, the assessment of the country image should be strictly addressed to those respondents who know well enough the products of the country whose image is being analyzed.

Considering all these, an improved research model that encompasses wider dimensions of the country image construct is desirable to be built.

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