

Image and Risk Perception of Mozambique as a Tourism Destination: A Segmentation Study

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Abstract

Tourism has been recognised as one of the main industries in the world. It creates opportunities for developing tourism destinations; however, it also requires adaptation to new challenges in constant evolution. In this context, there is a continuous need to identify and explore new tourism markets, take advantage of emerging opportunities, and create products that offer innovative and differentiating tourism experiences. Mozambique is betting on the development of tourism as a factor of economic and territorial dynamism. This article aims to present a destination image-based segmentation study of potential visitors to Mozambique. A questionnaire was administered to a sample of 382 potential visitors to Mozambique. The application of a hierarchical cluster analysis based on the perceived destination image allowed the identification of three clusters: “nostalgic”, “destination lovers”, and “concerned”. The results highlight differences in terms of perceived risk and intentional behaviour among the clusters identified. The paper ends with important practical implications to improve the image of Mozambique as a tourism destination.

Keywords: Image perception, Risk perception, Segmentation, Tourism destination image, Mozambique

Introduction

Tourism is considered one of the main economic activities in the world and is highly vulnerable to internal and external stressors. In recent decades, tourism worldwide had practically an uninterrupted growth, enriching countries with investments, foreign exchange earnings, employment opportunities, and allowing for social inclusion and regional development (World Tourism Organization - UNWTO, 2019). As a result, it has reached higher figures than traditionally established activities (e.g. chemical industry) (World Travel and Tourism Council - WTTC, 2018). However, despite its economic and social role, the tourism industry is quite vulnerable to crises, such as economic recessions, natural disasters, terrorism, international conflicts and health epidemics (Baker, 2014; Faulkner, 2001; Ritchie, 2004; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). The history of crises that have affected tourism is relatively vast, but possibly no crisis



resembles the present one generated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2020). The pandemic has contributed to the decline of 440 million international arrivals in the first half of 2020, and generated an estimated loss of around 460 billion USD in revenues from international tourism (UNWTO, 2020). These figures exceed five times the global losses originated by the economic and financial crisis of 2009. Considering that the effects of these crises contribute to a growing sense of insecurity and generalised uncertainty, understanding how tourists behave in these situations is paramount in upholding the tourism destination management capacity (Amorim, Soares & Tarlow, 2015; Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Hall, Timothy & Duval, 2003; Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006).

Previous studies suggested that tourism destinations associated with adverse events are perceived as unsafe and, consequently, have a negative image that prevents them from attracting tourists and developing local tourism, regardless of the variety of tourism attractions (Kanokanga, Marian, Oliver & Ndoda, 2019; Perpiña, Camprubí, & Prats, 2019; Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2017; Rindrasih, 2018). In this context, studies on tourism image perception have assumed relevance insofar as they can provide relevant information to guide the management and the adoption of policies that encourage the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism destinations (Chagas, Júnior, & Duarte, 2013; Pike, 2002; Ritchie & Crouch, 2010; Tsai, Wu, Wall, & Linliu, 2016). The focus of these studies includes, among others, the discussion of concepts, measurement and image formation of tourism destinations, as well as the impacts on tourist behaviour (e.g. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Chagas *et al.*, 2013; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Ekinci & Hosany, 2008; Foroudi *et al.*, 2016; Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002; Kim & Chen, 2015; Marine-Roig, 2015; Truong, Lenglet, & Mothe, 2018; Styliadis & Cherifi, 2018). In contrast, few studies on African countries explore the issue of tourism destination image. Their results have shown the existence of a generalised risk image (e.g. Brown, 2000; George, 2017; Kimbu, 2013; Lepp, Gibson & Lane, 2011). In this context, it is imperative to analyse the perception of the image of potential visitors to these destinations, especially when many of the African nations have bet on tourism as an important tool for economic development and eradication of poverty (Lepp *et al.*, 2011; Pike, 2002).

Mozambique was selected to carry out this study because it is considered one of the only African countries that offer a combination of natural and cultural resources favourable to attract tourists with diverse motivations and interests (Azevedo, 2013). In addition, the country's geographical location, close to the region's largest air entry point – Johannesburg in South Africa – makes it possible to connect with regional and international tourism markets (Ministério de Cultura e Turismo -MICULTUR, 2015). Moreover, tourism in Mozambique is of historical importance. It remains a strategic priority for the government in fighting poverty, strengthened by the establishment of a Ministry of Culture and Tourism that has managed the sector for nearly two decades (Azevedo, 2013; Cabrita, 2014). Mozambique is also one of the nations that invest in tourism to boost its economy, aiming at reaching, by 2025, more than USD 2.8 billion in foreign tourism revenues and more than 1.8 million international arrivals, and contributing with more than 83 thousand direct jobs (MICULTUR, 2015).

The evolution of this sector was marked mainly by the unfavourable political situation associated with other economic, social and environmental factors, which detained the country's development, especially in the tourism sector (Batey, 2014). Mozambique achieved peace in 1992. But after 16 years of civil war, and despite efforts by the national government to design tourism development strategies and to have declared this sector as one of the priority development sectors for the 2014-2019 five-year period (Governo de Moçambique, 2015), there is a general perception of an unsafe tourism destination, mainly caused by political instability, a series of socioeconomic problems and high mortality rates, particularly of infectious diseases,

such as malaria and HIV-AIDS (Astill-Brown & Weimer, 2010; Silva, 2013). Additionally, its geographical location on the south-eastern coast of Africa and downstream of several relevant rivers makes the country prone to recurrent natural disasters, such as floods, tropical storms, droughts and earthquakes (Instituto Nacional de Gestão de Calamidades - INGC, 2014). Therefore, modifying these perceptions based on image restoration strategies can be vital to position Mozambique as an attractive tourism destination for the international tourism market. However, the lack of research on the perception of the image of Mozambique as a tourism destination makes it challenging to establish marketing strategies that can increase tourism competitiveness (MICULTUR, 2015). Finally, the absence of studies evaluating the image of Mozambique as a tourism destination perceived by potential international tourists opens new research opportunities to analyse the current stage of tourism, the challenges that the sector faces, and present strategies to strengthen this activity for the development of the country. For these reasons, studying Mozambique's image perception by potential international tourists is of utmost relevance to guide actions that may strengthen the sector.

Thus, there is a primary need to identify the specific image attributes of the destination (Beerli & Martín, 2004) that may influence tourists' future behaviour. To increase knowledge about the image perception of Mozambique as a tourism destination, the present study has two main objectives: (i) to segment potential visitors from Mozambique based on the image perception, and (ii) to characterise the segments in terms of risk perception, familiarity with the destination, and behavioural intentions. Thus, it contributes to understanding the heterogeneity of the potential international tourist market concerning the perception of Mozambique's cognitive image as a tourism destination. Furthermore, the results obtained in this study are relevant for the definition of tourism development strategies in Mozambique.

This article is organised into five sections. After this first introductory section, the second section presents the literature review, focusing on the construction of the destination image and the segmentation of the tourism market based on image. In the third section, we present the methods used in data collection and analysis. In the fourth section, the results obtained are presented and discussed. Lastly, the article ends with the main conclusions and contributions of the study, the limitations, and the possibilities of future research.

2. Literature review

2.1 Tourism destination image: Concept, characteristics, and formation process

Research on the "tourism destination image" construct has proved important in recent times, both for academics and tourism professionals, essentially due to its significant influence on tourist behaviour. The results of these research highlight the crucial role that destination image plays in the process of choosing a destination, in the level of tourist satisfaction and/or loyalty (e.g. Beerli & Martín, 2004; Chagas *et al.*, 2013; Hosany, Yuksel & Uysal, 2007; Stylidis, Belhassen & Shani, 2017; Stylidis & Cherifi, 2018; Truong, Lenglet, & Mothe, 2018). However, according to some authors (e.g. Chagas, Dantas & Fernandes, 2010; Gallarza *et al.*, 2002), the exercise of studying this construct is complex. The challenges in this regard are related to the characteristics of the tourism product (in this case, intangibility, and inseparability, which involves a subjective evaluation of the image), making it difficult to reach a consensus about the concept. In this sense, Gallarza *et al.* (2002) identify four characteristics that describe this construct: (i) the complexity of different image components; (ii) the multiplicity of elements and processes; (iii) the relativistic from the subjective nature of image; and (iv) the dynamic of the components, as the image varies over time and space. This implies a limited theoretical framework that can support research on the image of a tourism destination.

The complexity and multidisciplinary of the image concept allow it to be approached with different focuses, among which the image of a tourism destination, brand identity, brand

value, territorial image, brand positioning and brand loyalty stand out (Brea & Cardoso, 2011; Kislali, Kavartzis, & Saren, 2016). It is also studied in several areas of knowledge, namely marketing, psychology, anthropology, sociology and geography (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002; Pike, 2002). However, widespread agreement on the literature is that the study of tourism destination image emerged from Hunt's work in 1971, which considered it a perception maintained by potential visitors about an area (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002). Generally, the destination image is defined as the “sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has about a given destination” (Crompton, 1979:18). However, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) presented a more integrative definition by referring that destination image is the general image that an individual carries in his/her mind based on the attributes of the destination and the holistic perception about it.

Given the importance of destination image for tourism marketing professionals, many scholars have dedicated their efforts to understand which factors influence destination image formation to guarantee tools for its management. In this sense, the two-dimensional model explains the destination image components (cognitive and affective) (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004) that are part of the image formation process of a tourism destination. The cognitive component denotes knowledge and beliefs of the destination based on its tangible attributes, while the affective component comprehends emotions and feelings about the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Crompton, 1979; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Kim & Chen, 2015). Echtner and Ritchie (1991) explain this duality (cognitive and affective) in the formation of the tourism destination image through three dimensions, namely the functional/psychological, common/unique, and holistic imagery/attributes. Based on these dimensions, Gallarza *et al.* (2002) analysed 25 empirical studies conducted between 1979 and 1999. They concluded that there were no significant differences between the functional and psychological dimensions. The most relevant and outstanding attributes include the hospitality of the residents, the landscape surroundings, and cultural attractions. Although the destination image is a complex phenomenon, most researches on this subject have focused on the cognitive image (Pike, 2002). Nevertheless, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) argued that the cognitive image is also influenced by environmental and psychological elements, allowing a third dimension that permits the general assessment of the destination image. In addition, researchers like Gartner (1994) and Pike and Ryan (2004) have proposed the conative image as the third dimension in constructing the destination image. This third element reflects the probability of destination selection within a certain period. In fact, the cognitive and affective components of the destination image influence the conative elements of the destination image, which in turn play an important role in targeting potential tourists (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004).

The destination image is considered a critical factor that influences the selection of tourism destinations by tourists. However, the perception is determined by several factors (Becken, Jin, Zhang, & Gao, 2017a; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Karl & Schmude, 2017). The analysis of the image formation process of the tourism destination, carried out by previous studies, highlights two main determining factors of this process, namely personal and destination factors, often identified as push and pull factors, respectively (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Crompton, 1979; Gallarza *et al.*, 2002; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). Push factors involve psychological (values, motivations, personality) and social (age, sex, education, marital status) determinants. Pull factors include the influence of external stimuli, physical objects, and previous tourism experiences (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Within the study about destination image measurement carried out by Echtner and Ritchie (1991), the tangible (as functional) and intangible (as psychological) attributes are distinguished. In this perspective, the construction of the destination image is made based on a set of impressions, knowledge and emotions that



an individual develops concerning a specific place (Jenkins, 1999). It can result from the accumulated experience and the information collected during the decision-making process (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999), which can stimulate positive or negative effects on the future behaviour of the tourist and affect the degree of success of a given destination (Kastenholz, 2002). In this way, the image of a destination can be considered an important segmentation variable, as deemed by Cooper *et al.* (1994), since it affects an individual's motivation and behaviour regarding the choice and selection of products, services, and services and tourism destinations. According to Prayag and Jankee (2013), tourism destination image is analysed in three perspectives: (i) analysis of image components, (ii) competitive analysis, and (iii) segmentation analysis. The present study falls into the segmentation category based on the destination's image, which key issues are discussed below.

2.2 Tourism market segmentation based on destination image

Segmentation identifies groups of people who are relatively similar to each other and somewhat different from other groups (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Lindon, Levendrevie, Lévy, Dionísio, Rodrigues, 2009). In this way, market segmentation divides a heterogeneous market into smaller homogeneous groups with different characteristics (e.g., preferences or perceived attributes), allowing a company to satisfy identified groups more efficiently (Gomezelj & Mihalič, 2008; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Many authors consider segmentation to be a central marketing issue where effective segmentation plans are considered extremely important for the success of marketing products, services and tourism destinations as a whole (Molina, Gómez, & Martín-Consuegra, 2010; Pike & Page, 2014).

In tourism, according to Dolničar (2004), two segmentation approaches have been used: “*a priori*” and “*a posteriori*”. “*A priori*” or “common sense” segmentation involves grouping people based on profile descriptors. On the other hand, the “*a posteriori*” or “data-based” segmentation is based on statistical techniques, including cluster analysis, correspondence analysis and discriminant analysis to identify and outline customer segments (Dolničar, 2004). According to previous knowledge, there is a long history of *a priori* studies, leading to the identification of groups of tourists derived from the division of the population. The variables commonly used in the *a priori* segment of the tourism market are the sociodemographic or geographical characteristics of tourists and/or frequency of visitation (e.g., Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Liu, 2014). In the case of subsequent segmentation, the travel motivations, experiences and destination image stand out (e.g., Fuchs, 2019; Prayag, 2012; Styliadis, 2018; Truong, Lenglet, & Mothe, 2018). Although both approaches can be useful, considering their advantages and disadvantages, their joint application is proposed to better understand the market (Dolničar, 2004).

Previous image-based segmentation studies compare the segments obtained in terms of sociodemographic characteristics, cultural background, familiarity with the destination, evaluation of natural and artificial attributes of the destination, motivation, previous experience, and behavioural intentions (e.g., Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2019; Bruwer, Prayag, & Disegna, 2018; Dolničar, 2004; Fuchs & Pilkkemaat, 2019; Leisen, 2001; Liu, 2014; Prayag, 2012). These studies show a direct relationship between the perceived image and the probability of visiting a particular destination. For example, Leisen (2001) indicates that the segments with a more positive image of the tourism destination are the most likely to visit it. Prayag (2012), in turn, states that the segments satisfied with the attributes of the destination image are those that most recommend or most likely revisit the destination. In this context, there are no known image-based segmentation studies that compare the obtained segments in terms of perceived risk.

Risk perception has been addressed separately as the basis for segmentation (e.g., Jarumaneerat, 2021; Prayag & Jankee, 2013; Ritchie, Chien & Sharifpour, 2017; Seabra, Dolnicar, Abrantes & Kastenholtz, 2013) and not as a variable to compare the segments identified using tourism destination image. For instance, Ritchie *et al.* (2017) indicate that tourism destination familiarity enables risk reduction strategies and increases the possibility of visiting and recommending the destination. Prayag and Jankee (2013) show an existing negative relationship between risk perception, satisfaction, and future behaviour. Contrarily, Seabra *et al.* (2013) found no significant differences between the seven identified segments regarding sociodemographic variables and travel experiences, unveiling differences regarding income, travel motives and nationality. In this context, studies on image-based and risk-based segments are conducted separately, and the identified segments are compared using the abovementioned variables. Then the results show the relationship between image perception or risk perception towards tourist behaviour.

Nevertheless, some researchers (e.g., Alvarez & Campo, 2014; Becken, Jin, Zhang & Gao, 2017; Chew & Jahari, 2014; Lepp, Gibson & Lane, 2011; Perpiña, Camprubí & Prats, 2019) have taken integrated research on destination image and risk perception. Although these studies are not segmentations studies, the results can elucidate the relationship between these two constructs. For example, Alvarez and Campo (2014) and Becken *et al.* (2017) have shown in their research that a specific risk negatively impacts destination image and, consequently, the intention to visit the destination. On the other hand, Chew and Jahari (2014) show that socio-psychological and financial risk influence cognitive and affective destination image.

Although several studies use tourism destination image as a segmentation basis, there is a lack of studies that compare these segments in terms of perceived risk. Moreover, research in this matter focusing on Mozambique is scarce. In this context, this study aims to increase knowledge in this topic, providing relevant theoretical contributions in terms of tourism destination marketing and relevant practical implications to the tourism development of Mozambique.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection

As mentioned before, the aim of this research is twofold. The first objective is to segment the market for potential international tourists based on the perception of Mozambique's image as a tourism destination. The second objective is to characterise the segments obtained in terms of familiarity, risk perception and behavioural intentions. To meet these objectives, a questionnaire was developed and applied to a sample of individuals aged 18 years or over, who were not residing in the country at the time of the study.

The questionnaire includes four sections, namely: (i) knowledge and sources of information about Mozambique; (ii) familiarity with the destination; (iii) perception of Mozambique as a tourism destination (image and risk perception); and (iv) sociodemographic profile of respondents. In terms of risk perception, 28 risk situations that may occur during a visit to Mozambique were used using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely). The selection of risk items was based on an extensive literature review of studies on risk perception associated with tourism (e.g., Lepp *et al.*, 2011). Regarding the destination image perception, 28 items of destination image, using a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree; 7 – completely agree), were also used to assess the image perception of potential visitors to Mozambique. The selection of destination image items included in the questionnaire was also supported by an extensive literature review of published studies on tourism destination image (e.g., Alvarez & Campo, 2014; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Becken *et al.*, 2016; Beerli

& Martín, 2004; Blanch, 2017; Chew & Jahari, 2014; Gallarza *et al.*, 2002; Lepp, Gibson, & Lane, 2011).

The questionnaire was distributed online using a snowball sampling approach, from initial contacts who forwarded the link to specific groups of friends and blogs. The validation of the questionnaire was carried out through a pre-test that took place in March 2019 to a group of 22 potential visitors to Mozambique. Based on the pre-test results, minor changes were made in the questionnaire, namely in structure and wording. Considering the main inbound markets to Mozambique, the questionnaire was first prepared in Portuguese and then translated by native speakers into English, French, Spanish, and Mandarin. Data collection was carried out for seven months, from April to October 2019. The respondent's anonymity was guaranteed since the questionnaire was released online, eliminating the interviewer's bias and the likelihood of obtaining socially desirable answers.

3.2 Data analysis

Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 25). First, to identify the dimensions of Mozambique's image perceived by potential international tourists, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was carried out. Subsequently, a Hierarchical Clusters Analysis was carried out, based on the factors obtained in the PCA, to identify homogeneous groups of potential international tourists from Mozambique. Finally, ANOVA and Chi-square tests (χ^2) were used to identify differences among the clusters identified. When ANOVA's assumptions were not observed, the Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test was used. When ANOVA identified differences between the clusters, Schaeffer's posthoc test was used to identify these differences.

4. Results

4.1 Sample profile

A total of 382 valid responses were obtained. The average age of the interviewees is 41 years old, with the sample reasonably balanced concerning gender (men represent 43.6% of the sample). Most respondents have a higher education background (62%), are employed (40.6%), and have a monthly income between €500 to €3,000 (78.4%). Half of the respondents (50.8%) has already visited Mozambique, and most of them (83%) have travelled accompanied.

4.2 Segments based on the image perception of Mozambique

The 28 items used to measure the image perception of Mozambique were subjected to a PCA analysis to identify the dimensions of the image (Table 1). This analysis allowed identifying six factors: F1 – “country's political and economic stability, basic infrastructure, and services”, F2 – “tourism infrastructure and information services”, F3 – “cultural resources and entertainment services”, F4 – “natural resources”, F4 – “hospitality and gastronomy” and F5 – “adventure and exotic destination”. The factors obtained explain about 65% of the variation of the destination image items. The results of this PCA reveal that this analysis is adequate based on the values of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Bartlett test, as well as the commonalities. Moreover, the Cronbach-alpha values indicate a good internal consistency of the factors found.

Among the six image factors, the ones with the highest score are “natural resources” (\bar{x} = 6.12), “hospitality and gastronomy” (\bar{x} = 5.44) and “adventure and exotic destination” (\bar{x} = 5.43) (Table 1). These results corroborate the literature (e.g. Gallarza *et al.*, 2002; Beerli & Martín, 2004) that reveal that the most relevant attributes include residents' hospitality, landscape surroundings and cultural attractions. “Political and economic stability, basic infrastructures and services” is the factor with the lowest average score (\bar{x} = 3.53), therefore negatively weighing in the image's assessment. According to Foroudi *et al.* (2016), issues of



political stability, quality of basic infrastructures and qualified services are considered critical elements for the destination’s reputation. When these are not evaluated positively, they negatively affect the destination image perception and revisit intentions. Therefore, the six identified destination image factors were used as segmentation variables.

Table 1 – PCA of tourism destination image attributes

Tourism destination image attributes	Image factors								
	Mean	Communalities	Country’s political economic stability, infrastructure, and services	and basic information services	Tourism infrastructure and information services	Cultural resources and entertainment	Natural resources	Hospitality and gastronomy	Adventure and exotic destination
Developed economy	3.010	0.674	0.779						
Stable politics	3.460	0.584	0.730						
Clean country	3.240	0.618	0.687						
Good health services	2.860	0.683	0.665		0.438				
Country with a good reputation	3.800	0.598	0.661						
Good infrastructure (roads, airports, telecommunications)	3.280	0.578	0.644		0.354				
Good value for money	4.010	0.423	0.537						
Modern cities	3.410	0.627	0.537		0.505				
Quality human resources	4.080	0.618	0.504		0.344	0.361		0.329	
Quality services	4.160	0.596	0.504		0.355			0.382	
Good F&B infrastructure	4.350	0.760			0.776				
Good tourism accommodations	4.310	0.728			0.760				
Good spaces for shopping	3.780	0.728			0.689	0.391			
Good tourist information service	3.670	0.657	0.380		0.584	0.396			
Attractive historical and cultural resources	4.500	0.677			0.303	0.695			
Interesting local events (fairs and festivals)	4.780	0.632				0.687			
Interesting nightlife and entertainment	4.410	0.609				0.664			
Interesting museums and monuments	4.030	0.613			0.368	0.624			
Great cultural diversity	5.430	0.548				0.500		0.439	
Beautiful landscapes	6.400	0.757					0.841		
Quality beaches	6.200	0.705					0.801		
Good weather	6.140	0.589					0.734		
Vast and rich rural spaces	5.740	0.649				0.367	0.682		
Cosy country	5.030	0.654						0.743	
Rich and different local gastronomy	5.490	0.655				0.321		0.714	
Interesting, friendly, and hospitable people	5.800	0.605						0.555	0.374
Adventure destination	5.360	0.805							0.857
Exotic destination	5.500	0.739							0.784
Eigenvalues			9.760		3.001	1.904	1.241	1.160	1.047
Variance explained (%)			34.857		10.718	6.798	4.432	4.143	3.739
Cumulative variance explained (%)			34.857		45.575	52.373	56.810	60.948	64.687
Cronbach			0.896		0.867	0.820	0.796	0.718	0.794
Mean			3.530		4.031	4.641	6.119	5.438	5.432

Note: KMO = 0.911, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity = 5600.539 (sig = 0.000)

To segment potential visitors to Mozambique according to the image perception of the country as a tourism destination, a Hierarchical Cluster Analysis was carried out, using the Ward method and the Euclidean Square Distance. By analysing the agglomeration table and the dendrogram, three clusters can be identified: C1 – “nostalgic” (representing 59.7% of the total of the respondents), C2 – “destination lovers” (18.8%), and C3 – “concerned” (21.5%) (Table 2).

The “nostalgic” cluster includes individuals attached to the beauty of the beaches and the flavour of the local cuisine. “Destination lovers” represent individuals who attribute the highest scores on all image factors, focusing specifically on the destination’s natural and cultural resources, hospitality, and gastronomy. The “concerned” represents individuals who attributed the lower scores on all image factors, essentially on political and economic stability, infrastructure and basic services, tourist infrastructure and information services, as well as cultural and entertainment resources. Concerning the overall image of Mozambique, statistical differences were found between the three clusters identified (Table 2), with “destination lovers” scoring the highest and, in contrast, the “concerned” perceiving the destination image less positively. Most respondents belong to cluster 1 (“nostalgic”), which indicates an overall assessment of Mozambique’s image as a tourism destination of about 5 on a 7-point scale (Table 2).

Table 2 – Differences among the segments identified concerning the destination image – ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis

	Total	Cluster 1 – “Nostalgic”	Cluster 2 – “Destination lovers”	Cluster 3– “Concerned”	ANOVA		Kruskal-Wallis	
	(N=382)	(N=228)	(N=72)	(N=82)	f-value	P-value	f-value	p-value
Image factors								
F1 – Country’s political and economic stability, basic infrastructure, and service	3.530	3.344 ¹	4.689²	3.028 ¹			94.257	0.000
F2 – Tourism infrastructure and information services	4.031	3.765 ²	5.626³	3.369 ¹	139.745	0.000		
F3 – Cultural resources and entertainment	4.641	4.547 ²	6.156³	3.573 ¹	173.619	0.000		
F4 – Natural resources	6.119	6.195²	6.715³	5.381¹			72.386	0.000
F5 – Hospitality and gastronomy	5.438	5.573 ²	6.361³	4.252 ¹	101.172	0.000		
F6 – Adventure and exotic destination	5.432	5.807 ²	6.090²	3.811 ¹			147.814	0.000
Overall image rating	4.660	4.630 ²	5.710³	3.840 ¹	49.602	0.000		

Note: When means have different superscripts, there are statistically significant differences between the means (significance level of 5%). The highest values are presented in bold.

4.3 Differences among the segments identified

4.3.1 Sociodemographic profile

Prior studies have shown that sociodemographic characteristics, such as age, gender, marital status, education, and income, are differentiating factors in the destination image (e.g. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Prayag, 2012). However, in the present study, only statistically significant differences in terms of “monthly income” and “country of residence” were observed (Table 3).

Regarding monthly income, comparing with the other segments, the “nostalgic” contains significantly more respondents (26.3%) that earn more than 3,000 Euros. In contrast, nearly half (47.5%) of “destination lovers” earn up to 1,000 Euros. In the three clusters, most respondents live in European countries. According to MICULTUR (2015), Mozambique’s main inbound markets are European countries, namely Portugal, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Italy. However, statistically significant differences among the clusters may be observed. For example, “destination lovers” have a higher proportion of respondents residing in African and American countries than the other two clusters. This fact may justify the high score of the destination image, as highlighted in the studies of Becken *et al.*(2017) and Promsivapallop and Kannaovakun (2017). These results show the influence of geographical proximity on destination image, with markets closer to the destination having a more positive image than geographically distant markets (Becken *et al.*, 2017; Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2017). Understanding these differences allows

marketers to identify different segments and adjust the tourism product according to the needs of these segments (Dolnicar, 2005).

Although some studies (e.g., Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Gallarza *et al.*, 2002) reveal that sociodemographic characteristics, including age, influence the tourism destination image perception, the results obtained in this study show no differences in terms of age among the identified segments. For this reason, it cannot be used as a differentiator in image perception or future travel behaviour, thus corroborating Becken *et al.* (2017), who indicate that the relationship between age and image perception may be inconclusive.

Table 3 – Differences among the segments identified concerning the sociodemographic profile - ANOVA and χ^2 tests

Sociodemographic characteristics	Total	Cluster 1 – “Nostalgic”	Cluster 2 – “Destination lovers”	Cluster 3 – “Concerned”	ANOVA	
	(N=382)	(N=228)	(N=72)	(N=82)	f-value	p-value
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean		
Age	40.78	41.591	40.191	39.781	1.257	0.286
	Total	Cluster 1 – “Nostalgic”	Cluster 2 – “Destination lovers”	Cluster 3 – “Concerned”	χ^2 tests	
	(N=382)	(N=228)	(N=72)	(N=82)	χ^2	p-value
	% by Colum	% By Colum	% By Colum	% by Colum		
Sex						
Female	56.3	52.7	64.3	59.3	3.279	0.195
Male	43.7	47.3	35.7	40.7		
Educational level						
No higher education	11.8	10.4	18.6	9.9	3.815	0.148
Higher education	88.2	89.6	81.4	90.1		
Marital status						
Single/divorced/widower	40.2	39.6	37.1	44.4	0.908	0.635
Married/Living with partner (common law)	59.8	60.4	62.9	55.6		
Employment situation						
Employed	76.3	76.6	71.4	80.0	1.535	0.464
Other	23.7	23.4	28.6	20.0		
Monthly income						
up to 1000 Euros	33.0	29.7	47.5	28.6	11.811	0.019
1,001-3,000 Euros	45.8	44.0	42.4	54.0		
more than 3,001 Euros	21.2	26.3	10.2	17.5		
Continent of residence						
Africa	19.5	19.4	21.7	17.7	18.319	0.019
America	12.4	9.5	21.7	12.7		
Europe	64.6	68.5	53.6	63.3		
Australia	1.1	1.8	0.0	0.0		
Asia	2.4	0.9	2.9	6.3		

Note: The highest values are presented in bold.

4.3.2 Familiarity with the destination

Several studies have explored the relationship between the destination’s familiarity with the perceived image (e.g., Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Chagas, Júnior & Duarte, 2013; Chen & Phou, 2013). Familiarity with a tourism destination may be influenced by previous visits and exposure to information related to the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). In this context, the present study examined the information sources used by the respondents and their travel experience to Mozambique to explore the familiarity with the tourism destination under analysis. “Friends and family” is the primary source of information used by the three segments, having a significant impact on the process of perceiving the destination image, corroborating previous studies (Becken *et al.*, 2017; Chew & Jahari, 2014; Khan, Chelliah, Haron, & Ahmed, 2017). TV news emerges as the second most important information source. These results are of utmost relevance for Mozambique’s tourism marketing



managers, allowing them to design more effective communication and promotion strategies. Concerning “social networks” and “previous visits” as a source of information, there are statistically significant differences among the segments identified (Table 4).

In the case of social networks, the “concerned” use more frequently this information source, followed by the “nostalgic”. On the other hand, the “nostalgic” use more their knowledge from previous visits when compared to the other clusters. It is no surprise as this segment incorporates the highest number of respondents who had already travelled to Mozambique (53.9%). The “concerned” has the least travel experience to the destination (40.2%).

Given that destination image formation goes through several stages (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999), tourists who have not visited the destination tend to focus on the destination’s generic, functional and common characteristics (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Previous studies (e.g., Becken et al., 2017; Chew & Jahari, 2014; Khan *et al.*, 2017) show that social networks can play a relevant role in potential visitors’ destination image formation. Since the respondents who have a more negative image of Mozambique (the “concerned”) use this information source more frequently, it is of utmost relevance that marketing managers know what is being disseminated in this source of information.

Table 4 – Differences among the segments identified concerning the familiarity with the destination - χ^2 tests

	Total (N=382) % by column	Cluster 1 – “Nostalgic” (N=228) % by column	Cluster 2 – “Destination lovers” (N=72) % by column	Cluster 3– “Concerned” (N=82) % by column	χ^2 tests	p-Value
					χ^2	
Information sources						
TV news	44.0	43.9	43.1	45.1	0.070	0.966
Travel TV shows	14.7	16.2	18.1	12.2	1.111	0.574
Social networks	29.3	28.1	22.2	39.0	5.649	0.059
Travel blogs	8.6	10.1	6.9	6.1	1.539	0.463
Travel websites	11.3	13.2	8.3	8.5	2.048	0.359
Newspapers and magazines	21.7	21.5	23.6	20.7	0.206	0.902
Official tourism publications	6.8	7.5	9.7	2.4	3.583	0.167
Friends and relatives	57.6	60.1	56.9	51.2	1.957	0.376
Previous visits	32.5	37.3	27.8	23.2	6.364	0.041
Travel agencies and tour operators	4.5	4.4	4.2	4.9	0.510	0.975
Tourism official websites	4.2	3.9	4.2	4.9	0.130	0.935
Travel experience to Mozambique	50.8	53.9	52.8	40.2	4.672	0.097

Note: When means have different superscripts, there are statistically significant differences between the means (significance level of 5%). The highest values are presented in bold.

4.3.3 Risk perception

Although no statistically significant differences among the segments were observed concerning the variable “general risk assessment”, differences in terms of types of risks were identified. In this case, the risk factors with greater expression for the “nostalgic” and the “destination lovers” are the possibility of transport delays. In contrast, for the “concerned”, the greatest risk is the possibility of being involved in a bribe during the stay at the destination (Table 5). The risk factors often disclosed by social media and official reports as being the most impactful on the image of Mozambique are malaria, political instability and natural disasters (INGC, 2014; MICULTUR, 2015). However, they had relatively lower ratings compared to other risks such as the possibility of communication difficulties (Internet, telephone), especially for the “nostalgic” and the “concerned”. At the same time, these factors are less important for the “destination lovers” than the possibility of being involved in a bribery act. Thus, in general, the



segment with the highest risk perception is the “concerned”, followed by the “nostalgic”. “Destination lovers” is the segment with the lowest risk perception concerning Mozambique as a tourism destination. However, as the positive perception of the general image increases, the risk perception has an inverse behaviour (Table 2). The “concerned”, who evaluated Mozambique as a high-risk destination, attributed a less positive image. In turn, the “destination lovers”, who considered Mozambique as a lower risk destination, have a more positive image.

Table 5 – Differences among the clusters identified concerning risk perceptions – ANOVA

	Total	Cluster 1 – “Nostalgic ”	Cluster 2 – “Destination lovers”	Cluster 3– “Concerned”	ANOVA	
	(N=382)	(N=228)	(N=72)	(N=82)	F-value	P- value
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean		
Risk factors						
Transport delays (flights, transfers, taxis)	4.48	4.8²	3.9 ¹	4.11 ¹	9.373	0.00 0
Lost luggage	3.73	4.03²	2.93 ¹	3.62 ²	12.852	0.00 0
Mechanic problems in transportation	3.90	4.22²	3.00 ¹	3.79 ²	16.660	0.00 0
Accommodation with low quality standards	4.05	4.29²	3.15 ¹	4.21 ²	14.132	0.00 0
Difficulties with communication (Internet, telephone)	4.24	4.56²	3.19 ¹	4.28 ²	16.973	0.00 0
Becoming ill, contracting malaria or another infectious disease	4.13	4.32²	3.53 ¹	4.13 ²	6.026	0.00 3
Food problems	3.46	3.64 ²	2.5 ¹	3.78²	14.203	0.00 0
No access to drinking water	3.35	3.53 ²	2.38 ¹	3.68²	14.619	0.00 0
Problems with cleanliness and hygiene	3.83	4.11²	2.87 ¹	3.89 ²	14.485	0.00 0
Being involved in a terrorist attack	2.39	2.42 ^{1,2}	1.94 ¹	2.70²	4.754	0.00 9
Being involved in political conflicts	2.79	2.79 ^{1,2}	2.39 ¹	3.15²	4.072	0.01 8
Outbreak of war in Mozambique or in a neighbouring country	2.87	2.96 ¹	2.43 ¹	3.00¹	3.150	0.04 4
Being a victim of a generalised crime (harassment, robbery, or assault in the street)	4.13	4.36²	3.33 ¹	4.22 ²	9.850	0.00 0
Being a victim of kidnaping	3.25	3.33 ^{1,2}	2.74 ¹	3.45²	3.488	0.03 2
Being involved in a corruption act, having to pay a bribe	4.21	4.37²	3.6 ¹	4.33 ²	4.124	0.01 7
Being a victim of a natural disaster	3.32	3.39	2.99	3.44	1.928	0.14 7
Having a road accident	3.42	3.62²	2.78 ¹	3.45 ²	7.857	0.00 0
Being attacked by a wild animal	2.39	2.52²	1.89 ¹	2.49 ²	5.383	0.00 5
Hostile natural environment	2.61	2.71 ²	1.97 ¹	2.89²	8.560	0.00 0
Problems and conflicts emerging from cultural differences	2.64	2.66 ²	1.96 ¹	3.18²	12.376	0.00 0
Getting lost and miscommunication problems because of the language barriers	2.52	2.5 ²	1.82 ¹	3.21³	12.983	0.00 0
Unfriendly locals	2.15	2.07 ¹	1.68 ¹	2.79²	12.956	0.00 0
Harming self-image	1.74	1.69 ¹	1.42 ¹	2.17²	7.546	0.00 1
Having a disappointing experience	2.32	2.35 ²	1.63 ¹	2.87³	16.593	0.00 0



Disapproval from friends and relatives for the choice of destination	2.02	2.01 ^{1,2}	1.54 ¹	2.48²	7.489	0.001
Encountering unexpected costs	3.70	3.91²	2.86 ¹	3.87 ²	10.647	0.000
The trip would be a waste of time	1.68	1.61 ¹	1.38 ¹	2.12²	8.417	0.000
Paying more for the trip than to other international destination	3.40	3.55²	2.83 ¹	3.50 ²	4.364	0.013
Having regrets that the money was not well spent	2.11	2.06 ¹	1.64 ¹	2.66²	10.632	0.000
Assessment of the degree of general risk	3.45	3.48	3.25	3.53	0.805	0.448

Note: When means have different superscripts, there are statistically significant differences between the means (significance level of 5%). The highest values are presented in bold.

This result corroborates the studies of Chew and Jahari (2014), Khan *et al.* (2017) and Noh and Vogt (2013), which indicate the existence of an opposite relationship between the perception of a positive image and risk level in the context of tourism.

As mentioned before, studies that analyse destination image and perceived risk in an integrated way are of great relevance to support destinations managers with appropriate tools to deal with negative tourist perceptions (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998). Therefore, the need to research the relationship between risk perception and destination image has attracted researchers recently (Alvarez & Campo, 2014; Becken *et al.*, 2017; Blanch, 2017; Chew & Jahari, 2014; Khan *et al.*, 2017; Lepp *et al.*, 2011).

This study also shows a possible negative relationship between some dimensions of risk perception (e.g., health, performance, financial, environmental, weather, health, and social risks) and destination image. For example, the segment with the most positive image perception, the “destination lovers”, also perceive the lowest risks. In turn, the segment with the most negative image destination, the “concerned”, presents a list of restrictive factors that include not only performance risks (delays in transportation, accommodation with low-quality standards and communication difficulties) but also physical and psychological ones (crimes and bribes). However, the segment with an intermediate image perception, the “nostalgic”, include more travel restriction factors in their list compared to the other two segments (Table 5).

4.3.4 Behavioural intentions

Differences were also identified among the segments concerning their behavioural intentions (Table 6). The “concerned” were the least likely to visit the destination in the following two years, as well as recommending the destination to their friends and relatives. On the other hand, “destination lovers” were the ones most likely to visit the destination, as well as recommending it. These results confirm the findings of previous studies (e.g., Beerli & Martín, 2004; Campo-Martinez, Garau-Vadell, & Martinez-Ruiz, 2010; Gstaettner, 2017; Khan, Chelliah, & Ahmed, 2017), which demonstrate the relationship between a positive destination image and the behavioural intention to visit and recommend a tourism destination.

Table 6 – Differences among the segments identified concerning behavioural intentions - ANOVA

	Total (N=382) Mean	Cluster 1 – “Nostalgic” (N=228) Mean	Cluster 2 – “Destination lovers” (N=72) Mean	Cluster 3 – “Concerned” (N=82) Mean	ANOVA	
					F-value	p-value
Future behaviour						
Plan to visit in 2 years	4.36	4.48 ²	5.07²	3.41 ¹	10.920	0.000
Recommend Mozambique	5.64	5.70 ²	6.53²	4.39 ¹	14.582	0.000

Note: When means have different superscripts, there are statistically significant differences between the means (significance level of 5%). The highest values are presented in bold.

5. Conclusions and implications

The tourism industry is full of opportunities but also involves adapting to new challenges that are constantly evolving. With the increase of global competition, each destination needs to continually learn and reinvent itself to maintain its sustainability and dynamism (WTTC, 2019). Therefore, it is important to identify and explore tourism markets, take advantage of emerging opportunities, and create products that allow destinations to stand out in offering memorable tourism experiences. In addition, information and communication technologies have reshaped the operations of the entire tourism industry (WTTC, 2020). In this context, given that the destination image is one of the main influencing factors in the choice and selection of a tourism destination, segmentation studies based on the image perception of a tourism destination are of utmost relevance, especially in destinations such as Mozambique. This can provide crucial information to support the adoption and management of policies that encourage sustainability and the competitiveness of tourism destinations.

Although on a small scale, the results obtained in this study provide relevant contributions to understanding the heterogeneity of the market of potential international visitors regarding the perception of the cognitive image of Mozambique as a tourism destination. These results are very relevant inputs for the definition of tourism development strategies, explicitly marketing strategies. On the one hand, three segments with different image perceptions of Mozambique were identified. These segments show diverse characteristics in terms of income, country of residence, sources of information used about Mozambique, destination visiting experience, perception of different risks that might occur while travelling in the country, and behavioural intentions (likelihood to visit and to recommend).

“Destination lovers” have the most positive image of Mozambique in terms of its overall image, as well as in all image dimensions analysed in this study. They assess the overall image 5.71 on a 7-point scale and attribute to the destination the lowest score of risk perception (3.25) when compared to the other clusters. The primary sources of information about Mozambique for this group include newspapers/magazines, travel TV shows and official publications. As for monthly income, this group has the highest proportion of individuals with the lowest income (up to 1,000 Euros) and individuals residing in African countries.

The “nostalgic” includes respondents with a positive image of Mozambique, but lower than respondents belonging to the “destination lovers” cluster. This segment has a neutral position in the overall assessment of destination image and risk perception compared to the other two segments. The overall evaluation of the destination image is 4.63 (on a 7-point scale, where 1 is very negative and 7 is very positive), and the risk associated with the tourism destination is 3.48 (1 – very low to 7 – very high). The primary sources of information are previous visits, and travel websites and blogs. They are more experienced in travelling to Mozambique and include the largest portion of individuals with income above 3,000 Euros. It is the most diversified group in terms of country of residence; however, the vast majority live in European countries.

These two segments, the “nostalgic” and “destination lovers”, are more likely to visit and/or recommend Mozambique as a tourism destination in comparison with the “concerned”. Finally, the “concerned” include individuals with the worst image of Mozambique as a tourism destination. This segment is the most pessimistic because it attributed the lowest score on the overall image assessment (3.84) and the highest on destination risk perception (3.53). The main sources of information about the destination include TV news and social networks. They are less experienced in travelling to Mozambique, have an average income (between 1,001 and 3,000 Euros), and have the highest concentration of residents in Asian countries compared with

the other two clusters. Therefore, this segment is the least likely to visit or recommend the destination.

This study provides relevant theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical point of view, studies on image-based tourism destination segmentation are very relevant. Several authors have defended this, such as Crompton (1979), who shows the importance of identifying groups of people who share the same above-average image perception, making them a more receptive target segment. Leisen (2001) adds that identifying these groups will guide the destination's promotional campaigns, making them more effective. On the other hand, it was also possible to identify the main image factors with the most significant impact on the perception of the destination, that is, the “push and pull” factors of the image that will support the management of the destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gallarza *et al.*, 2002; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). Therefore, the results of this study are of utmost relevance to increase knowledge about the relevance of developing image-based segmentation studies and the dimensions of the image of destinations that visitors most value. This research also provides important insights into the relationship between image and risk perception. However, being this a segmentation study, the main contributions are for the stakeholders responsible for the tourism development of Mozambique.

From a practical point of view, as the “nostalgic” and “destination lovers” are the segments with the most positive image of Mozambique and those that perceive it as less risky, representing about 78.5% of the sample, the marketing strategies designed for Mozambique should try to attract these two segments. Therefore, they should be targeted as they most likely visit the country in the next two years and recommend it to their friends and relatives. The determining factors of Mozambique's image include natural resources, hospitality, gastronomy, and the perception of an adventurous and exotic destination. Therefore, these should be aspects to consider in promotional strategies for maintaining the destination image as perceived by these two segments. Nevertheless, the “concerned” segment (representing 21.5% of the sample) is the least likely to visit or recommend the destination and has the least positive image of it, emphasising less favourable image factors, such as the weak political and economic stability, deficient basic infrastructures, and poor-quality services. Hence, these factors should be considered by the Mozambican tourism authorities in developing strategies to improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of the destination. These results are similar, in part, with the findings of the few studies that examine the image of African destinations that consistently debate the existence of a generalised perception of risk with negative implications in the attractiveness of these destinations. For example, Brown (2000) highlights the regional political risk as a factor with the greatest negative impact on the image of African tourism destinations. Kimbu's (2013) study also showed that political instability in Central Africa negatively influences Cameroon's image as a tourism destination. Similarly, Lepp *et al.* (2011) identify political instability, wars and poor social infrastructure as the main negative factors influencing Uganda's image. Therefore, these are considered restrictive factors to a tourism destination's choice, selection, and/or visit. The most notable differences between segments include the sources of information about Mozambique, with the “concerned” obtaining information from TV news and social networks. Therefore, marketing policy promoters may include these information sources as part of the strategy to mitigate the negative perception of the destination image. In terms of sociodemographic characteristics, the differences between the segments include monthly income and country of residence. The “concerned” group has the largest portion of individuals with the highest monthly income and residents of European and Asian countries. To address the concerns expressed by this segment, tourism products should highlight comfort, safety, and quality of service. Finally, while highlighting the profiles of potential tourists to Mozambique, this study also offers insights as to how and where to promote

Mozambique as a tourism destination, be it mitigation risk perception or highlighting the unique tourism attractions that appeal to the different segments identified.

Despite the relevant contributions of this study and the methodology used being adequate, some limitations may be identified. Although it is believed that data collection techniques (online questionnaires) did not influence the study results, since the respondents had no difficulty answering the questionnaire, it may represent a limitation. The timeframe for obtaining responses was relatively long, and the response rate was relatively low compared to the application of face-to-face questionnaires. In addition, despite the contributions of the study, its scope was restricted to a tourism destination and the analysis of the heterogeneity of the participants concerning the perception of the Mozambique image as a tourism destination. Research on image perception, especially from African destinations, is relatively recent; therefore, more research is required. There are still many opportunities for future research on African tourism destinations, mainly in managing their image, dealing with destinations with dormant tourism potential or with little expression in this industry. Differences in image perception can be analysed in more depth, especially in specific image factors that can explain the relationships between international and domestic tourists and the attributes of the destination particularly valued for marketing actions. Lastly, qualitative research approaches can be interesting to understand better the underlying image factors, which are not so obvious or easy to categorise. The scarcity of studies in this area, particularly about Mozambique, opens many further research opportunities that provide valuable information for developing tourism marketing policies.

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