

Comparing Methods of Measuring Image Change: A Case Study of a Small-Scale Community Festival

Introduction

The unprecedented growth in the tourism industry during the last several decades has created major challenges in destination marketing (Li & Vogelsong, 2003). More and more nations, regions, and cities are involved in tourism competition with the aim of benefiting from tourism development. While tourists may be glad to face a myriad of destination options, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) find it is becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate their own destination products from those of neighboring or foreign competitors. Thus, establishing a unique place identity, or image, has become a major concern of tourism scholars, industry practitioners, and destination marketers. In the past three decades, numerous research efforts have been focused toward understanding, creating, and enhancing destination image (e.g., Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Bramwell & Rawding, 1996; Chen & Hsu, 2000; Chon, 1990; Crompton, 1979; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Mackay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998).

Event and festival tourism has long been considered as “one of the most exciting and fastest growing forms of leisure, business, and tourism-related phenomena” (Getz, 1997, p. 1). By increasing publicity, generating tourism demand, developing supply and infrastructure, enhancing community pride (Getz, 1999) and integrating local resources, hosting events and festivals is proposed to be an effective image promotion strategy (Carlsen & Williams, 1999; Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993; Li, 2001).

Among a number of researchers who recognize the linkage between special events and image (Carlsen & Williams, 1999; Getz, 1999; Ritchie, 1984; Ritchie & Smith, 1991), Ritchie

(1984) first included the short and long term enhancement of a destination or region image as a political impact of hallmark events. Ritchie and Smith (1991) conducted a 5-year study on how the 1988 Calgary Olympic Winter Games impacted the international levels of awareness and image of the host city. They reported dramatically increased levels of awareness and a substantially modified image of Calgary. Similarly, Getz (1999) proposed that one of the objective roles of mega events is to become an image-maker (i.e., to create wide awareness and project a positive image of the host country and community). Though a non-tourism study, Deutsch and Merritt (1966) concluded that there are 6 kinds of possible effects of external events upon images, which include: reinforcing the image, producing no significant change in the image, adding explicit information, clarifying the image by reducing uncertainty, reorganizing the image, and changing the importance of the image.

Despite the wealth of literature conceptually stressing the importance of events on destination image creation and upgrading, there are few empirical studies showcasing an event's influence on destination image. Even fewer targeted small-scale community festivals as research object. On the other hand, local authorities, destination marketers, and event organizers need to know whether holding special events will be beneficial to their place image. Due to the relative rarity of mega-events, research focusing on small-scale festivals may provide more operational significance to the majority of communities and managers who host events. Therefore, the authors of the present study proposed two methods in measuring destination image change, if at all, as a result of a small scale community festival. The purpose of the paper is hence to compare the validity of two methodologies in the measurement of the image change.

Theoretical Background

Tourist Destination Image

The term “destination image” in tourism literature typically refers to tourist-based image, as opposed to the marketer-based one. To date, no less than 30 definitions of tourism destination image can be found in the tourism literature. A vast majority of researchers agree that destination image is the overall or total impression of one place (Ahmed, 1996; Crompton, 1979; Dichter, 1985; Hunt, 1975; Kotler, *et al.*, 1993). For instance, Fakeye and Crompton (1991) maintain that image is “the mental construct developed by a potential visitor on the basis of a few selected impressions”, and it is “the total perception of the destination...” (p. 10). In their study on pictorial elements of destination in image formation, MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997) defined image as “a composite of various products (attractions) and attributes woven into a total impression” (p. 538).

However, disagreements arise when discussing what factors contribute to the composition of a destination’s image. (Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002). Crompton (1979) first revealed the cognitive components of destination image. Several researchers then argued that destination image should not only reflect one’s ideas about the physical properties of a place (termed as designative image or cognitive / perceptual image), but also their feelings and evaluation of the destination (variously termed as affective image, appraisive image, or evaluative image) (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Walmsley & Young, 1998). Eventually, the cognitive (beliefs) and affective (feeling) evaluations jointly form an overall image of the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a). Other researchers (Dann, 1996; Gartner, 1996) contended that there exists a third component: the conative image. Furthermore, Milman and Pizam (1995), from another perspective, suggested that the image of a destination is

the mixture of three components: the product (quality of attractions, price), the behavior and attitude of the hosts, and the environment (e.g. the natural environment, and other supporting facilities).

Destination Image Change

In comparison to the extensive attention focusing on the concept and composition of image, image change, often associated with the image formation process, is obviously under-researched. Tyagi (1989) maintained that image is not static. His baggage-packing metaphor portrayed the image change process:

Tourists fill their suitcase with all types of clothes, all sorts of medicines, and bath accessories. However, they use only the ones that the conditions permit. Accordingly tourists carry all sorts of varied images but not all remain alive or meaningful during the trip. The images change as unimagined conditions emerge.

(Quoted in Milman & Pizam, 1995, p. 21)

Although the dynamic nature of image has been universally acknowledged (Gallarza, *et al.*, 2002; Milman & Pizam, 1995), there still lacks consensus on why and how image changes.

Researchers studied image changes mainly from two approaches. Some studies tried to explain image changes with a static image formation model. To them, image variances identified among different groups are the result of a modification process. Thus, whether a destination image will change or not is contingent on the image holders' position in the formation cycle. Pearce (1982) compared tourists' pre- and post-travel image of Greece and Morocco. Results showed that visitation experiences did change the travelers' image, when compared to a control group of non-travelers. A similar conclusion was reached by Fakeye and Crompton (1991), in their investigation of the image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors. Their findings confirmed Mishler's (1965) assertion that once individuals have spent enough

time at a destination, and gained enough exposure to various dimensions of the image via direct contact with locals and facilities, they tend to develop a more complex and differentiated image.

To another group of researchers, factors contributing to an image change function are beyond the scope of a static formation model. Gallarza, *et al.* (2002) believed that TDI changes over temporal and spatial dimensions, while temporal influences on image change have attracted more research attention. Gartner (1986) examined the temporal influences (5 months) on Americans' impression of four states in the intermountain west. He hypothesized that environmentally dependent activities or attractions would be more likely to be time sensitive, which make them fluctuating image components. However, within the limits of his research design, very little image change is observed resulting from short-term seasonal differences. Gartner and Hunt (1987) examined Utah's image changes between 1971 and 1983, and concluded that the evolvement of image would continue at a rate contingent on the relative strength of an area's induced and organic factors, unless disastrous impact of great significance emerges.

Researchers from other disciplines also reported some interesting findings. Smith's (1973) experiment proved the international images to be highly vulnerable to mass communications. He also discovered the importance of a target audience's social background in understanding the process of international image change, based on the role played by the audience's original expectations. Alimaras (1976) found that a negative first impression could change in a more positive direction, if perceivers were made aware of some degree of proximity and/or similarity to the source of that impression.

Most studies have indicated that the change of a destination's overall image can not be realized quickly (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1986; Gartner & Hunt; 1987), and that

changing an image is very likely to be a “difficult, costly, and time-consuming” (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991, p. 10) process. This conclusion can find some real world support. For example, local authorities of some places in the UK have given up external promotion and have turned to internal promotion because of the difficulty of a perception change and the little success obtained (Young & Kaczmarek, 1999). Smith (1973) attributed the difficulty in achieving an image change to “audience rejection of messages contrary to existing predispositions, the anchorage of already existing images in group affiliations, the ineffectiveness of communications stemming from low credibility sources, and audience resistance to perceived manipulation attempts” (p. 116).

Gallarza *et al.* (2002) also mentioned that space, typically a distance variable, is a contributing factor to image changes. However, this statement could be conceptually questionable. Studies they cited to support the statement (Crompton, 1979; Telisman-Kosuta, 1989) used respondents from different origins to assess the relationship between geographical location and image. However, these may only prove that the space variable plays a role in differentiating image held by different groups. In other words, space is attributable to image variance, rather than image change.

Finally, another stream of studies on image change focuses on the strategy of correcting negative image or changing perceptions. Ahmed (1991) proposed six techniques in repositioning a destination’s image, which are: capitalizing on positive images of component parts, scheduling mega-events, organizing familiarization tours, using selective promotion, bidding to host international travel and tourism conventions, and taking advantage of a negative image. Young and Kaczmarek (1999) evaluated the place promotion efforts for image improvement in Lodz,

Poland. They concluded that “reimaging” of a place is of great importance, although an investigation on the appropriateness of the strategies is needed.

The Impacts of Special Events on Image Change

As aforementioned, previous studies have shown sparse proof that event can successfully create and enhance positive destination images (Ahmed, 1991; Bhardwaj & Bhardwaj, 1999; Getz, 1997; Hall, 1992; Kotler, *et al.*, 1993; Suh, 1996). Different research designs were chosen to track the changes of destination image influenced by an event. Ideally, pre and post event tests on participants will provide the most straightforward results. However, the lack of access to prospective (pre) festival participants (especially non-residents) limits this method from being practiced. Alternatively, some researchers used pre (or during) and post event tests on non-attendees (Gartner & Shen, 1992; Mossberg, 1997; 1999; Ritchie & Smith, 1991). For example, Gartner and Shen (1992) measured China’s image change (in terms of impression on attractions and services) before and after the Tiananmen Square conflict (a political event, not a tourism event), by repeating a structured questionnaire survey on a similar sampling population. An overall declined image was reported, while not all image components changed equally. The authors concluded that an event could make tourists change their image rapidly, contingent on its magnitude and media coverage.

Similarly, Mossberg (1997; 1999) compared the image of Goteborg, Sweden, before and after World Championships in Athletics, with the findings that there was basically no change identified between the pre- and post-event image held by on-site foreign non-attendees. Nevertheless, the survey implied that both structured and unstructured methods could be suitable to evaluate potential image change at different times. Mossberg (1999) also estimated a different result if event participants were involved or targeted in the survey. Although this design holds

promise for mega-events which receive a great deal of media attention, they could hardly be applied to measuring image change over a small community event, to which most non-participants receive little exposure.

Another method compares image held by on-site participants and non-attendees after the event. Suh (1996) evaluated the impact of the 1995 Smith's Balloon Festival on the image of Park City, Utah. The targeted image holders were on-site festival participating tourists and excursionists, compared with a group of on-site nonevent participating tourists after the festival. The study results revealed that event participators had a significantly lower destination image rating of Park City than did nonevent visitors, contrary to the hypothesized direction. These negative impacts on image, according to the author, were justified by the poor organization of the event studied. Thus, the results supported the claim that special events can impact a destination's images in either a positive or negative direction. The researcher assumed that the image disparity between these two groups depends only on attending the event or not. Although this assumption holds its validity, it has been argued that people are more likely to compare something reliably by referring to their own experiences (Kozak, 2002). In other words, testing same subjects' image change should provide more reliable results. Furthermore, none of the previous studies provided satisfactory reasons why an image change occurs, other than a subjective analysis.

Based on the review, it may be concluded that two factors are essential to successfully assessing special events' impacts on destination image: a sophisticated image measurement instrument to identify any image change, and a feasible research design to trace the impacts of an event. In addition, a successful methodology should not only discover an image change, but also help explain why this change occurs. It is expected that at least one of the two proposed methods

in this paper would address problems previously identified by targeting the same participant group over time, and incorporating questions regarding contributive factors to the image change.

Methodology

The target event for this study was the inaugural Jacksonville Riverwalk Festival held in August, 2002. This first time festival, occurring over a summer weekend, was designed to showcase Jacksonville's new "Riverwalk" promenade, which connects the downtown area to the community waterfront. The event included a variety of food and craft vendors, local and regional exhibitors, children's programs, a regatta, and several concerts. Approximately 10,000 people attended the two-day festival, which was reportedly lower than expected due to undesirable weather condition (both days were above 100°F). Jacksonville itself is a mid size community with a population of 75,000 and is located just inland of popular coastal tourism communities. It is primarily a military community that serves Camp Lejeune Marine Base, and is struggling to upgrade its reputation associated with adult-businesses catering to young men.

The subjects for this study were adult visitors (aged 15 or above) to the Jacksonville Riverwalk Festival. Although everybody can potentially be an image holder of any destination, it is acknowledged that general non-experimental research design (as the present one) has limited sensitivity in identifying vague image. For a community event like the Riverwalk Festival, its testable influence on destination image, if any, may only reach two highly overlapped groups: participants and locals. Moreover, the primary focus of this study is to compare two research methods in investigating festival-related image changes, rather than image measurement. Thus, it was decided that only festival participators were included as the sampling population of this study.

Data were collected for this study through both on-site interviews and mail-back questionnaires. The on-site survey, incorporating 7 questions, took approximately 6-8 minutes to administer. In addition to the image questions, the questionnaire also includes basic visitor profiles relating to their festival participation. The more in-depth mail-back questionnaire was composed of five sections: visitor satisfaction, economic information, decision-making information, image evaluation, and visitor demographic information. It is important to bear in mind that the present image study is part of a larger project attempting to evaluate the overall impacts of the inaugural Riverwalk Festival.

A total of 232 systematically selected festival attendees (every nth visitor), were interviewed and agreed to participate in a mail-back follow-up survey. The on-site interview forms, as well as the mail-back surveys were coded to insure that both sets of responses could be matched to the respondents. With incentives and two rounds of reminders, 130 completed mail-back questionnaires were collected at the cut-off time, generating a response rate of 56%. A demographic profile of the sample is provided in Table 1, which indicates that the typical respondent for this study was white, married, over 40, and most likely female (see Table 1). Characteristically, the respondent received (some) college education, and maintains an annual household income exceeding \$50,000. The mean distance traveled by visitors to the Festival was 57.26 miles, with around two thirds of visitors (64%) traveling 10 miles or less.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Image Change Measurement

Consistent with most extant TDI studies, the present survey measured image change in a structured manner (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Pike, 2002). That is, the researchers developed a list of image attributes, and asked respondents to evaluate the particular destination(s) by rating

each attribute with semantic differential and / or Likert scales. The structured approach enjoys advantages such as flexibility, suitability for coding, and ease of analysis (Selby & Morgan, 1996). Several survey questions here were adapted from previous studies by Baloglu and Mangalolu (2001), and Echtner and Ritchie (1993).

Two different series of questions were employed in an effort to determine image change:

Method 1: Following previous image change studies (Gartner & Shen, 1992; Mossberg, 1997; 1999; Suh, 1996), respondents were presented a list of 23 destination image attributes (such as “convenient transportation”, “relaxing atmosphere”, etc.) derived from a comprehensive literature review and modified to the festival sight both during the on-site survey as well as in the mail-back questionnaire. In both phases, they were asked to describe their “impression of Jacksonville as a tourist destination by grading its features/ attributes listed below (from ‘1’ as ‘offers very little’ to ‘5’ as ‘offers very much’).”

Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide a “don’t know” response to any of the attributes. Though not a true pre-test/post-test design, it was postulated that differences between on-site and mail-back measurements would be largely attributable to respondent’s festival experiences.

Method 2: As indicated earlier, it is assumed that asking same participants to directly report their image change, if any, could provide reliable results (Kozak, 2002). Thus, in the mail-back phase, respondents were asked “Do you think your experience at Riverwalk Festival changes your impression of downtown Jacksonville?”, with five potential choices from “My impression gets much better because of the Festival” to “My impression gets much worse because of the Festival.” If they indicated any changes in impression, respondents were then asked what, among the 23 image attributes, were the

key factors contributing to their image changes (with the original question as “If your impression of Jacksonville was changed by the Festival, the change is in which aspects? (please circle the top 3 among the following factors)”).

Findings

In Method 1, respondents were asked to rate their impression of Jacksonville on both the on-site interview and the mail-back survey grading 23 attributes on a scale of 1 to 5. In order to test the relationship between on-site and mail-back perceptions of image attributes, a dependent t-test was performed on the 23 image attributes. Table 2 provides the results of this analysis.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Among participants’ on-site and mail-back responses, the means for 18 out of the 23 image items are all positive (greater than 3), indicating an overall positive view of Jacksonville as a destination. However, this measure of comparing on-site and mail-back rankings of image attributes showed that there were very few significant changes in how respondents viewed the host community. In fact, the only significant changes that did occur were negative (i.e., mean image ratings decreased from on-site to mail-back measurement periods), hinting that the festival actually worsened the image of the host community.

As an alternative way of identifying image change, Method 2 asked respondents to report whether their image of the host community was improved, remained unchanged, or worsened because of the event. Overall, 77.9% of mail-back respondents reported an improved impression of Jacksonville (impression was “much better”, or “better”) due to their Riverwalk Festival experience (see Table 3). Around one fifth (21.3%) of the respondents claimed that their festival participation did not change their impression, and only one respondent reported that his/her impression of Jacksonville was worsened because of the festival.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

As mentioned previously, respondents who reported a changed image resulting from their festival experiences were then asked to identify the main reasons for the image change. Table 4 provides a summary of these reasons. “Hospitality /friendliness of locals”, “exciting festivals and events”, and “cleanliness” were the top three factors contributing to image changes. On the other hand, “convenient transportation”, “well-known destination/ attraction”, and “folk culture, customs and arts” played practically no role in the change.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

The findings from this study provide an interesting example of the complexity of measuring image change. Examined independently, the more objective measure of image change (Method 1) provides results suggesting that the festival actually worsened attendees’ image of Jacksonville, while the more subjective measure (Method 2) indicated that the vast majority of respondents felt that the festival improved their image of the host community. These contrasting results are perplexing and difficult to interpret.

Method 2 asked respondents to directly report their image change, and choose the contributing factors of the change. Although unfavorable weather influenced participants’ attendance and satisfaction levels, a considerable majority of respondents indicated an improved image occurred because of their festival experience. This is consistent with the fact that “hospitality / friendliness of locals”, “exciting festivals and events”, and “cleanliness” were chosen as the top three factors contributing to this change. A very straightforward explanation of this result is that participants’ image may only be influenced by those aspects that associate directly to their festival experience.

However, when these same respondents' rating of image attributes during and after their event participation was compared, the only changes identified are negative, contradicting the proceeding results. The fact that all eight significantly changed image attributes declined implies that the result is not a statistical fluke, but a discovery deserving further research analysis. These eight attributes ("relaxing atmosphere", "good nightlife and entertainment", "high quality of service", "folk culture, customs, and arts", "exciting festivals and events", "impressive architecture/ building", "various recreation activities", and "opportunity to increase knowledge") are difficult to reduce into any single category. The decreases found in this measurement could be justified from several perspectives: Perhaps certain attributes are more susceptible to change than others. Non-festival related factors may have influenced some, instead of all, image items. Or, changes of some image attributes may be more time sensitive than others, so that the fairly short time between the on-site and mail-back surveys didn't allow all the image changes to complete. An interesting question posited by Garter and Shen (1992) is probably worthy to be recalled here— "Are image changes as a result of 'autonomous' agents, regardless of the focus, likely to affect all attractions equally or are certain types more at risk than others?" (p. 51).

The design of this study may also have affected the results. As indicated, Method 1, which was conducted during and after the festival, is not a true pre-test/post-test design. Although it is postulated that differences between on-site and mail-back measurements would be largely attributable to respondent's festival experiences, to assume that on-site survey results are representative of pre-event images may not be valid. It is possible that the on-site images had already been improved by the festival, while the mail-back instruments provided an image measurement that had reverted to somewhat between this inflated measure and the original baseline.

Another potential reason to the decline of some image ratings is on-site bias. That is to say, respondents tend to give higher ratings when they are at the destination. This phenomenon has been reported repeatedly in various studies on visitor satisfaction. Quite possibly, this same occurrence is happening with image studies. The fact that although only 8 of the attributes showed a significant change, all 23 items decreased from pre to post testing lends support to either of the above possible explanations.

Extant literature have indicated that a variety of respondent characteristics may affect image change, such as their familiarity with destination (Baloglu, 2001; Fakaye & Crompton, 1991; Milman & Pizam, 1995), proximity to destination (Crompton, 1979; Hunt, 1975), travel motivation (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b), length of stay (Fakaye & Crompton, 1991), and so on¹. For instance, it seems to be understandable that those who are more familiar with the destination tend to be more reluctant to change their image, no matter what experiences they have. To illustrate such an influence, a T-test was run, using image change as a dependent variable, and respondents' residency (i.e., they are residents or nonresidents) as the independent variables. This resulted in an observed level of significance of 0.651 (df =125) (see Table 5). It is thus shown that no significant relationship is identified between festival participants' familiarity to Jacksonville and the extent of their image change. Besides, the readers should be reminded that this study is to measure image change due to an event, rather than develop a baseline image. Therefore, while familiarity and other respondent factors may have played a part in the image formation and change process, they should not be attributable to the conflicting results reported in this paper.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

¹ We thank a reviewer for pointing this out.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study was limited to one community festival with a fairly small sample size. Due to time and resource constraints, this study doesn't include a formal pilot study. The case event – Jacksonville Riverwalk Festival, being held for the very first time in 2002, is a brand new name to the market. This resulted in a pretty low non-resident attendance, i.e., non-resident survey response rate. As mentioned earlier, visitors' previous knowledge about the destination, and other related characteristics could influence their extent, speed, even direction of image change. The types of the festival (e.g., free, ungated versus ticket-required, gated festivals; first-time versus famous established events; festivals with cultural, sports, or other themes) may also play a role in this change process. Further study on a different location for different types of event is hence needed. Moreover, a longitudinal study that the authors have been working on may help answer questions related to repeated participation, and the long term impacts of the same festival on destination image.

Considering the small scale of the case festival, and the feasibility in administrating surveys, both the two methods proposed in this study employed structured approaches. However, it was argued that the predetermined questions and answers used in structured approaches may prevent respondents' individualistic description of destinations (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Choi, Chan, & Wu, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Selby & Morgan, 1996). This lack of subjective feedback could lead to uncertainty in determining what exactly attracts the tourists to their chosen destination (Coshall, 2000; Embacher & Buttle, 1989; Selby & Morgan, 1996). For instance, the incompatibility between Method 1 and 2 may be owing to the failure of developing a complete image attribute list for Method 1. As mentioned earlier, destination image has been seen as a comprehensive or total assessment of one place (Ahmed,

1996; Bigné, Sánchez, & Sánchez, 2001; Crompton, 1979; Dichter, 1985; Hunt, 1975; Kotler, *et al.*, 1993). Some site-specific image factors that were not included in the attribute list of Method 1, may actually influence image changes during the festival. They may precisely be the cause of the subjectively declared image improvement in Method 2. Perhaps a more appropriate question is: Will quantitative methods (like Method 1) be sufficient in the measurement of image change?

Several recent studies have added unstructured questions to sufficiently assess the different dimensions of a destination image (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Choi, *et al.*, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Future research should employ both structured and unstructured questions in examining image changes, as long as the condition allows.

Further, methods used in this study provided information primarily focusing on cognitive image changes. Would image change be dimension-specific (i.e., is cognitive or affective image more likely to change)? What kinds of factors tend to influence cognitive or affective images? Future study using more sophisticated methodology on affective image testing (e.g., Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001) may help identify the dimensional changes of image.

Future studies will still confront two major difficulties in assessing image change resulting from a small-scale community festival: How to avoid blurring the line between the image of the hosting destination and the image of the festival per se? And, how to get more nonresidents to take the survey, when the majority of participants are local citizens? Some factors that haven't been fully investigated in this project should be taken into account, including temporal factors (e.g., the length of the duration between on-site and mail-back measurements), and spatial factors (e.g., participants' travel distance). Researchers need to focus on site-specific

attributes associated with destination image, as well as have valid and reliable baseline data on a destination's image.

Conclusion

To measure the extent and direction of image change due to an event could be of vital importance to the event development organization in gaining local support, as well as in assisting the host community to help define itself for marketing purposes. The prevailing theories in tourism and event studies imply that a successful event should lead to a positive destination image (Suh, 1996). It is suggested that events, when appropriately organized, can be a successful tool in creating and enhancing positive destination images (Ahmed, 1991; Getz, 1997; Hall, 1992; Suh, 1996). By increasing publicity, generating tourism demand, developing supply and infrastructure, enhancing community pride (Getz, 1999) and integrating local resources, events can be applied as a major image promotion strategy (Carlsen & Williams, 1999; Kotler *et al.*, 1993; Li, 2001). However, most of these statements are conceptual or assertive in nature. The present study empirically examined participants' image changes on a destination. Somewhat surprisingly, the current study did not provide consistent supports to the general belief. From a methodological perspective, this exemplified the complexity of measuring destination image. The contrasting results from the two methods indicated that the present methodologies might not yet be sophisticated enough to accurately measure changes resulting from a single small-scale event, in fairly short duration. Theoretically, results from this study challenged the traditional understanding that hosting events could readily improve the image of one place. On the other hand, the belief that image change is slow, subtle, and complex is confirmed. It is naïve to expect “artificial” efforts such as hosting a festival could upgrade or transform an established image

overnight. Even when such a change does occur, it may be highly fragile and easy to decay, if there are no follow-up marketing efforts.

Future research efforts should continue to refine measurements used to capture destination image and image change, keeping in mind that image is a rather subjective concept. Although there are advantages in measuring image and image change through quantitative methods, unless these methods can completely capture all of the attributes and feelings that may lead to the creation of an image, they are likely to lead to an incomplete understanding of how participants/visitors view a destination. Furthermore, whenever possible, confirmatory measures should be incorporated into image studies to assist with the interpretation of data.

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Table 1. Demographic Profile

Race	Percentage (%)	Gender	Percentage (%)
White	82.5	Male	31.2
Black or African American	6.3	Female	68.8
Mixed Race	5.6		
Hispanic or Latino	1.6	Household Income	Percentage (%)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1.6	Less than \$10,000	1.7
American Indian or Alaskan native	0.8	\$10,000-19,999	9.3
Asian	0.8	\$20,000-29,999	11.9
Other	0.8	\$30,000-39,999	14.4
		\$40,000-49,999	12.7
Education	Percentage (%)	\$50,000-74,999	24.6
11th grade or less	3.9	\$75,000-99,999	16.1
High school graduate	12.5	\$100,000 and above	9.3
Some college	36.7		
College graduate	32.0	Travel Distance	Percentage (%)
Post graduate work	14.1	0-5	35.0
Post high school technical training	0.8	6-10	29.0
		10-15	10.4
Marital Status	Percentage (%)	16-20	4.9
Married	75.6	21-25	1.0
Single	13.8	26-50	8.9
Divorced	8.1	51-300	6.4
Widow/er	1.6	>300	4.4
Partner	0.8		
Mean Age	42.29	Mean travel distance	57.26 miles

Table 2. Comparison of Image Attributes Between On-Site and Mail-Back Ratings

Image Items	N	On-site		Mail-back		t
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Folk culture, customs and arts	98	3.20	1.045	2.88	1.087	3.042*
Various recreation activities	104	3.47	1.070	3.14	1.009	2.892*
Opportunity to increase knowledge	103	3.53	1.008	3.24	1.024	2.667*
Good nightlife and entertainment	80	3.16	1.195	2.78	1.292	2.594*
Relaxing atmosphere	110	4.05	.913	3.77	.992	2.490*
Impressive architecture/building	98	3.03	1.188	2.76	1.176	2.417*
High quality of service	105	3.70	.952	3.47	1.066	2.359*
Exciting festivals and events	107	3.47	1.093	3.25	1.082	2.182*
Appealing food and drink	107	3.93	.984	3.76	1.063	1.858
Suitable accommodation/restaurants	103	4.00	.897	3.79	.956	1.829
Pleasant climate	106	3.60	1.232	3.40	1.075	1.803
Interesting cultural / historical attractions	97	3.34	1.089	3.16	1.038	1.782
Ample tourist information	98	3.50	1.018	3.32	1.109	1.604
Hospitality/friendliness	113	4.27	.907	4.11	.994	1.589
Convenient transportation	86	2.98	1.319	2.77	1.253	1.522
Inexpensive travel cost	86	3.80	.956	3.66	1.080	1.315
Satisfactory quality of the support sources	104	3.82	.943	3.68	.938	1.304
Waterfront and water sports	95	3.64	1.175	3.46	1.253	1.282
Well-known destination/attraction	101	3.05	1.236	2.93	1.168	.954
Cleanliness	110	3.86	.962	3.79	.959	.723
Safety and security	110	4.18	.815	4.12	.832	.657
Natural attractions and scenic beauty	104	3.69	1.071	3.64	1.014	.435
Shopping variety	100	3.57	1.037	3.53	1.123	.355

*Significant at .05

Table 3. Reported Image Change by Mail-back Respondents

Image Change	Total (N)	Total (%)
Much Better	36	28.3
Better	63	49.6
No Change	27	21.3
Worse	1	0.8
Much Worse	0	0

Table 4. Ranked Image Attributes Contributing to the Image Change

Image Attributes	Percentage	Image Attributes	Percentage
Hospitality/friendliness of locals	46.5%	Exciting festivals and events	43.6%
Cleanliness	37.6%	Relaxing atmosphere	26.7%
Natural attractions and scenic beauty	22.8%	Waterfront and water sports	21.8%
Safety and security	12.9%	Appealing food and drink	9.9%
Various recreation activities	9.9%	Opportunity to increase knowledge	8.9%
Pleasant climate	7.9%	Interesting cultural/historical attractions	6.9%
Inexpensive travel cost	6.9%	High quality of service	5.9%
Impressive architecture/building	5.9%	Suitable accommodation/ restaurants	5.0%
Ample tourist information	5.0%	Good nightlife and entertainment	4.0%
Satisfactory quality of the support sources (e.g. roads, water, medicare, etc.)	3.0%	Shopping variety	3.0%
Folk culture, customs and arts	2.0%	Well-known destination/attraction	2.0%
		Convenient transportation	0%

Table 5. Image Change of Residents vs. Non-residents

Residency Status	N	Image Change		t	Sig.
		Mean	St Dev		
Resident	41	1.90	.664	-.453	.651
Non Resident	86	1.97	.758		
Total	127	1.95	.727		