

Unique Image of a Destination: exclusive attributes of the destination of Ilhéus, BA, Brazil

Lílian Dominguez Santana^a
Marlusa de Sevilha Gosling^b

Abstract

This study aims to develop a scale of measurement of the unique image of a tourist destination based on the perception of workers directly related to local tourism. We researched the tourist destination of Ilhéus, the main city of the touristic zone of the Costa do Cacau (Cocoa Coast), in the state of Bahia. The qualitative research had 14 participants (university professors and workers related to the tourism industry in Ilhéus). With content analysis, we verified that the unique image of the destination is mainly related to three aspects: natural environment, attractions and local environment. The results indicate that the uniqueness of the destination Ilhéus when compared with other similar destinations is compatible with the images that are commonly associated with the destination (Jorge Amado, beaches, cocoa, chocolate). However, other aspects that represent opportunities to promote the destination were also identified. Lastly, the 14 attributes determined compose a scale of measurement of the unique image of the destination Ilhéus, which could be applied to future studies related to different stakeholders from the tourism industry.

Keywords: Unique image of a tourist destination; Ilhéus (BA); Jorge Amado; Cocoa.

Resumo

Imagem única de destino: atributos exclusivos do destino Ilhéus, BA, Brasil

Este estudo tem por objetivo desenvolver uma escala de mensuração da imagem única de um destino turístico a partir da percepção de profissionais diretamente ligados ao turismo local. O destino turístico pesquisado foi Ilhéus, principal cidade da zona turística Costa do Cacau no estado da Bahia, e realizou-se pesquisa de cunho qualitativo com 14 profissionais (professores universitários e profissionais ligados ao turismo de Ilhéus). A análise dos dados deu-se por análise de conteúdo, a partir da qual verificou-se a imagem única do destino principalmente relacionada a três aspectos: ambiente natural, atrativos e ambientação. Os resultados apontam que a singularidade do destino Ilhéus em relação a outros destinos semelhantes condiz com imagens comumente associadas ao destino (Jorge Amado, praias, cacau, chocolate); porém, também surgiram outros aspectos que representam oportunidades para promoção do destino. Por fim, os 14 atributos identificados compõem uma escala de mensuração da imagem única do destino Ilhéus que pode ser aplicada em estudos futuros relacionados a diferentes atores turísticos.

Palavras-chave: Imagem única de destino turístico; Ilhéus (BA); Jorge Amado; Cacau.

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- Master's Degree in Business from Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). Specialist in Strategic Marketing (FTC). Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil. E-mail: liliandominguez@ufmg.br
 - Postdoctoral Degree in Tourism Management from Universidade do Algarve. Doctor's Degree in Business from UFMG. Associate Professor of Marketing at UFMG and coordinator of the Center of Studies and Strategies of Integrated Communication of Marketing and Tourism (Necim-TUR). Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil. E-mail: marlusa@ufmg.br

Resumen

Imagen única de destino: atributos únicos del destino Ilhéus, BA, Brasil

Este estudio tiene como objetivo desarrollar una escala de medición de la imagen única de un destino turístico desde la percepción de los profesionales directamente relacionados con el turismo local. El destino investigado fue Ilhéus, principal ciudad de la zona turística de la Costa del Cacao en el estado de Bahía, donde hemos llevado a cabo una investigación cualitativa con 14 profesionales (profesores universitarios y profesionales vinculados al turismo en Ilhéus). El análisis de datos ha sido llevada a cabo a través del análisis de contenido, desde el cual se verificó la imagen única del destino, relacionada principalmente con tres aspectos: entorno natural, atractivos y ambientación. Los resultados muestran que la singularidad de Ilhéus con respecto a otros destinos similares se condice con las imágenes comúnmente asociadas al destino: Jorge Amado, playas, cacao, chocolate. Sin embargo, surgieron también otros aspectos que representan oportunidades para promover el destino. Por fin, los 14 atributos identificados en esta investigación forman una escala de medición de la imagen única Ilhéus que se puede aplicar en futuros estudios con diferentes destinos turísticos.

Palabras clave: Imagen única del destino turístico; Ilhéus (BA); Jorge Amado; Cacao.

INTRODUCTION

When different services are offered to consumers, they need to compare and assess the offers and attribute different values to each of them (LOVELOCK; WIRTZ; HEMZO, 2011). In this assessment, according to Lovelock, Wirtz and Hemzo (2011), consumers analyze three types of attributes: search attributes (tangible characteristics that allow customers to evaluate a product before purchase); credence attributes (characteristics that are difficult for customers to evaluate); and experience attributes (characteristics that cannot be evaluated before the purchase). Tourism products are part of the last category. As highlighted by Petrocchi (2004, p. 42), "they cannot be proved or tested in advance."

According to Qu, Kim and Im (2011), uniqueness provides a compelling reason why travelers should select a destination over alternatives. Based on this statement, the authors point out that the original or unique image is one of the dimensions of destination image. They explain that since consumers are generally offered destination choices that provide similar features, it is essential for the destination to be differentiated, with unique characteristics, in the minds of the target market.

Based on these considerations, how is it possible to identify the unique attributes of a tourist destination? The aim of this study was to identify the unique or exclusive attributes of Ilhéus (BA) in order to compose a scale of measurement of the destination's unique image. Thus, we performed a qualitative research with people from the tourism industry of Ilhéus to obtain free form descriptions, which according to Ecthner and Ritchie (1991) is a suitable methodology to capture unique features. We decided to limit the research to those directly linked to the tourism industry because it is necessary to know more about the history and features of the destination in order to define the unique attributes that set it apart.

The destination of Ilhéus, located in the south of the state of Bahia, was chosen for two reasons: researchers are interested in it and it is the main destination of a tourism zone in Bahia called the *Costa do Cacao* (Cocoa Coast). The results of

the research not only help to identify the unique attributes of Ilhéus – which can be singled out in strategies to promote the destination – but also to expand the discussion on the unique dimension of the destination image.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Image of a tourism destination: unique image

What is destination image? Tasci and Gartner (2007) explain that image is a mental construction developed by the tourist based on their impressions or information. Therefore, the image of the tourism destination is a mental image that influences how the person perceives the environment, which interferes in the decision-making process, since it considers the options of destinations for their tourism experiences. Especially in the case of complex services, such as tourism destinations, image is essential for the evaluation (CASTRO; MARTÍN ARMARIO; MARTÍN RUIZ, 2007).

Gallarza, Saura and García (2002) proposed a theoretical model for the concept of destination image and identified its complex, multiple, relativistic and dynamic nature. The complex nature is related to the concepts of the components that form the overall image of a destination (cognitive, cognitive-affective) or even to its own conception – if it results from collective or personal impressions. The multiple nature is related to the multiplicity of factors or variables that compose the destination image. In fact, there is no consensus regarding the conviction that an image should be measured based on attributes or on a holistic/overall perspective. Relativistic nature, in its turn, is related to the simultaneous involvement of a subjective evaluation (that results from the internalization of a few perceptions) and a comparative evaluation of many objects. Lastly, the destination image has a dynamic nature, i.e., non-static, mainly because of two factors: time and space. It encompasses from the influence of the geographic localization of the individuals with respect to the destination to the process (time) of image formation (GALLARZA; SAURA; GARCÍA, 2002)

The tridimensional model proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1991) enables the association of the proposed dimensions with at least three aspects of these features of the destination image: the complex, multiple and relativistic natures. The functional-psychological axis can be related to the complex nature of the image, indicating that the evaluation of a destination image encompasses functional and rational elements (cognitive elements) and more abstract (psychological) and emotional (affective) elements. The holistic-attributes axis is related to the multiple nature of the image, indicating that the destination image can be measured based on the evaluation of specific attributes or on a more overall (holistic) view. The common-unique axis is related to the relativistic nature of the image, which indicates that the features of a destination (whether functional, psychological, specific or holistic) can be analyzed in comparison with other destinations, thus being called “common” or “unique.” In this context, the dynamic nature could be verified with a longitudinal study or by comparing the image of a non-visitor with that of a visitor, for instance.

The complex nature of the image can be verified in the study of Balogly and McCleary (1999), who proposed one of the main models for the formation of the

destination image. It defines the global or overall image of a destination as the one that is preceded by the “cognitive” evaluation, which consists in a set of beliefs and knowledge about the destination, and by the affective evaluation, which refers to the feelings towards the destination. The overall image (positive or negative) would then be a combination of cognitive and affective factors (BEERLI; MARTÍN, 2004). According to San Martín and Rodríguez Del Bosque (2008), at first only the cognitive dimension was considered by studies on destination image (traditional cognitive approach). Later on, the cognitive-affective nature was proposed and considered by researchers.

While the “cognitive” and “affective” evaluations, or images, are widely acknowledged by literature as dimensions of the destination image, another dimension was incorporated by Qu, Kim and Im (2001). Based on the concept of brand image, they proposed a conceptual model in which cognitive and affective images are added to the unique image – meaning original, exclusive or singular – to form the overall image of a destination. This corroborates the model proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1991).

For Qu, Kim and Im (2011), when associated with knowledge (cognitive image) and feeling (affective image), the perception of uniqueness (unique image) is determinant for the formation of the overall image of a destination. They state that since many destination choices provide similar features, such as quality accommodations, beautiful scenic views and friendly people, none of that is enough for a destination to stand out. The minds of the target market need to perceive it as a differentiated destination with unique features. Uniqueness provides a compelling reason for travelers to select the destination over alternatives.

Since the unique image refers to the unique attributes of the destination, Qu, Kim and Im (2011) travel literature on destination image researched in promotional brochures. After that, they identified the attributes that made the destination unique from neighboring locations. The authors explain that, although some of the measures used to capture unique and cognitive images are similar, they should be considered as different measures because cognitive image measures perceptions of general quality tourist experiences in the destination, while the unique image focuses more on comparing the destination with other similar destinations. According to the authors, it is possible for an attribute perceived strong in cognitive image to be less strong when compared with other destinations. For instance, beach, sun and tropical climate may be important elements in the characterization of a certain destination, but not as important when the respondent is asked to compare similar destinations.

The destination of Ilhéus: brief history and previous research

Four hundred and eighty years after its foundation and 133 after its political emancipation, Ilhéus is the main destination of the tourist region called Cocoa Coast, in the south of the state of Bahia. The population of the city of Ilhéus is estimated to be 178,210 people (IBGE, 2016), in a territory of 1,584.693 km² (IBGE, 2015). Its economy is mainly based on services (IBGE, 2013).

The history of Ilhéus began when Brazil was discovered in 1500 and when the Portuguese colony was divided into hereditary captaincies by King João VI. The

Captaincy of São Jorge de Ilhéus was donated in April 24, 1534 to Portuguese nobleman Jorge Figueiredo Correia. In 1535, it was raised to the category of village, later becoming the richest and most prosperous village of the country. Ilhéus became a city in June 28, 1881, after a decision of the Provincial Legislative Assembly of Bahia (ILHÉUS, 2014a; 2014b; 2014c).

In the late 19th century, at the same time Ilhéus became politically emancipated, cocoa plantation expanded in the region, starting a period of great prosperity. The plantation rapidly became the economic base of the south of Bahia. The city, which had only basic infrastructure – with few paved roads, rustic houses, few multi-story houses, one main church, one cemetery, one jail and two elementary schools – went through a major restructuring (ILHÉUS, 2014b). At that time, street lighting with kerosene lamps were implemented, and thousands of rural workers found jobs at the cocoa farms, which were quickly expanding. Many traders from other parts of the Northeast and of the world were attracted to the region, contributing to the significant increase of the population. In the 20th century, the city was remodeled, with streets and squares being paved. Moreover, electric lighting, piped water supply and sewage services were implemented. The iron road to Itabuna (BA), which had approximately 59 km, and the Cine Teatro (a music hall) were also inaugurated at that time (MOREIRA, 2013b).

With the construction of the maritime port in 1920 (which was reformed in 1940 and inaugurated in 1970) and the stronger ties with Europe, the European influence became more evident, affecting the behavior of the population and architecture such as the large mansions and buildings of colonial or neo-gothic style (like Instituto Nossa Senhora da Piedade). The considerable wealth made the cocoa “coronels” invest in the modernization of the city with renovations and buildings of churches and mansions, often hiring European professionals for that end (NEVES, 2009). Those were the results of progress, as described by Jorge Amado in his work *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*:

Progress was the word most commonly heard in Ilhéus and Itabuna back then. It came out of all mouths, insistently repeated. It was seen in newspaper columns, in the daily life, in the weekly paper, it was mentioned in the discussions at Papalaria Modelo stationery store, in bars, in cabarets. The inhabitants of Ilhéus repeated it referring to the new streets, the squares with gardens, the buildings in the commercial centers and the modern beach households, the *Diário de Ilhéus* newspaper, the buses leaving to Itabuna in the morning and in the afternoon, the trucks that transported cocoa, the well-lit cabarets, the new Cine Teatro Ilhéus, the football fields, Dr. Enoch’s school, the starving lecturers coming from Bahia or even from Rio, Clube Progresso with its tea dances. It is the Progress! They said it with pride, aware of their role in the great changes in the city’s appearance and its habits. There was an air of prosperity everywhere, a vertiginous growth. New streets gave access to the sea and to the hills; gardens and squares were born; houses, multi-story houses and mansions were built. (AMADO, 1975, p. 34-35)

With its status of prosperous city, Ilhéus became a model of regional development and an inspiration for literature. For many decades, cocoa was a synonym of luxury, wealth and prestige for the locals. However, the cocoa plantation has

gone through an unprecedented crisis since the 1980s (NEVES, 2009), caused by many factors such as the first breeding ground of the fungus popularly known as “Witches’ Broom” (*Moniliophthora perniciosa*; former *Crinipellis perniciosa*), discovered in cocoa farms in 1989. The crisis expanded, causing the bankruptcy of many producers, the poverty of great part of the population that worked at the cocoa farms, the impoverishment of all the middle class and economic stagnation (MOREIRA, 2013b).

However, “Destination Ilhéus” came to be in the middle of the crisis of the cocoa plantation in the south of Bahia. With the literature of Jorge Amado, Ilhéus went from a territory governed by cocoa to a territory characterized by tourism. Ilhéus was no longer the “Cocoa Capital,” but the “Land of *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*” or the “Land of Jorge Amado.” With the crisis, the city started to focus on tourism, taking advantage of its infrastructure. Because of the cocoa plantation, it already had an airport, a port, roads, basic sanitation and mansions from the 19th century, in addition to its nature, with its coast having 100 km of beaches (MOREIRA, 2013b). It is important to highlight that tourism in Ilhéus did not begin only after the cocoa crisis – what happened was a redefinition of the tourism activity not only in Ilhéus, but in Brazil as a whole (MOREIRA, 2013a).

The fingerprints of the cocoa plantation can be seen in the history, culture and architecture of Ilhéus. Some buildings are directly related to the golden age of cocoa and are part of the city tours of Ilhéus: Igreja Matriz de São Jorge, Catedral de São Sebastião (symbol of the historic center of Ilhéus), Igreja de Santana in Rio do Engenho (one of the oldest churches in Brazil, declared national heritage by the IPHAN – National Historical and Anthropological Heritage Institute), the architectonic ensemble of Instituto Nossa Senhora da Piedade, the building of the Adonias Filho Library and the Casa dos Artistas. Nowadays, the Port of Ilhéus, strongly related to the transportation of cocoa, receives many transatlantic cruises that bring hundreds of tourists to the city. As a strategy to increase expectations about the city and interest in local culture, the city’s Secretariat of Tourism organized a structure with actors dressed as the characters from Jorge Amado’s novel, such as Nacib and Gabriela, to welcome tourists at the port (MOREIRA, 2013b).

Also from the cocoa age, the Bar Vesúvio and the Bataclan were part of the novel *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (AMADO, 1975). Bar Vesúvio was declared city heritage by the City Government of Ilhéus. The Bataclan was a brothel, cabaret and casino, which closed in 1950 when games became illegal in Brazil. Later, it was transformed into a nightclub and an apartment building before being abandoned. It was rebuilt between 2000 and 2004 for tourism purposes, being transformed into a museum with a replica of the room of Maria Machado (owner of the place when it was a cabaret, and a character of Jorge Amado’s novel), a cafe and a regional handicraft shop. It was revitalized in 2007 to become the Espaço Cultural Bataclan, with sociocultural projects, capoeira lessons, art expositions, theatre presentations, dances, soirées and book launches, while still having the museum, café and bar, in addition to a store specialized in decoration articles (NEVES, 2009).

The government played an essential role in promoting tourism in the city of Ilhéus and its surroundings, as well as in remodeling the city. To ease access to historic buildings, some streets were closed for traffic and transformed into car-free

zones, while other streets had improvements in the basic structure for tourists, with new payphones, kiosks offering services and street lighting. The city center had an increase in the number of businesses and services, such as restaurants, bars, cinemas, travel agencies and handicraft shops. Most of them are located on avenue Soares Lopes, by the sea, which is also where the Centro de Convenções Luiz Eduardo Magalhães is located, a venue for concerts, expositions, conventions and shows.

Moreover, roads and areas with beach houses, resorts, hotels, inns, and luxury condominiums were paved. The Jorge Amado Block, divided into two tours – the Cravo tour and the Canela tour, in a reference to the author's novel – was an initiative of the city's Secretariat of Tourism, and it includes buildings and monuments mentioned in the author's works (MOREIRA, 2013b).

In a research carried out on the Capes Journal Database, when the keyword "Ilhéus" was searched in the titles, 91 articles and 13 dissertations about the city were found. Of this total, 14 articles and four dissertations discussed the city from the point of view of tourism, analyzing: the social hierarchy of the city and how it relates to tourism (PINTO, 2005); tourism in the city as a segment of events and businesses (SCHIAVETTI et al., 2006) and as a segment of sports tourism (BAHIA; ÁVILA, 2001); the impact of technology, literature and media on the city's tourism (NASCIMENTO, 2006); how the destination is portrayed on postcards on sale (SOUZA, 2006); how cultural tourism takes place in Ilhéus in terms of African-American culture (CAMPOS NEVES, 2008); and a proposal of cooperative tourism among the owners of Private Reserves of Natural Heritage – RPPNs, government bodies, cooperatives and financial institutions (SANTOS; PÁDUA; NEIMAN, 2013). The expectations of those who live in the city with respect to tourism were also analyzed (NOIA; AVILA; MIDDLEJ, 2009) as well as child sexual exploitation and sexual tourism, with the work of a government program aimed at these issues as the object of study (SILVA; ÁVILA, 2010).

However, the most discussed issue is the transformation that Ilhéus went through: from its economy and culture based on cocoa to its consolidation as a tourist destination. The transition from "Cocoa Capital" to the "Land of Jorge Amado" or the "Land of *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*" (MOREIRA, 2013b) was analyzed as well as the construction of the historical and cultural heritage of the city (NEVES, 2009) and of its urban space (MOREIRA, 2013a). The factors that determine the tourism offered in the city during the high season (CERQUEIRA; FREIRE, 2010) and the low season (CERQUEIRA, 2002) were identified, but only one article was found that aimed to identify specifically the tourism image of the destination Ilhéus (SANTOS; CRUZ, 2013).

These three last studies provide an evaluation of the destination Ilhéus from the point of view of the visitor in two different moments: the high season and the low season. Without considering the differences in the design of the researches, in a general way it is possible to analyze the results of the studies to provide an overview of Ilhéus as a travel destination in the years of 2002, 2007 and 2013 (when the respective research were performed). It is a period of more than ten years, in which it was discovered that the natural attractions of the destination are its strongest feature. However, during the period, public services (especially safety, cleaning and signs) remained inefficient, entertainment alternatives remained insufficient – especially at night – and the expected popular manifestations remained weak or inexistent.

METHODOLOGY

To discover the exclusive and unique attributes of Ilhéus based on the point of view of workers directly or indirectly related to the tourism industry, we carried out a qualitative investigation. The research was performed with an online form² with open-ended questions.

This research aims at developing a scale of the unique image of Ilhéus as a travel destination. Thus, the researchers decided to analyze the points of view of influent stakeholders. As an initial sample, workers related to education, tourism and information were chosen with the purpose of obtaining a more critical and realistic view of the destination, since they experience it directly and discuss it. A total of 59 participants were invited: 26 professors at the State University of Santa Cruz – UESC, five professors at the Technology and Science College and the Culture and Education Metropolitan Union, eight Geography students from UESC, editors from *Boletim Informe Geográfico*³, five workers from the Secretariat of Tourism of Ilhéus, 14 workers from the hotel business and one executive worker at TV Santa Cruz.

The participants were invited with an electronic mail that contained a link to the form. The e-mail explained the research and asked for it be shared with other people who worked in the tourism industry in Ilhéus (academically or professionally). The goal was to expand the sample through their contact network. However, data collection was defined considering theoretical saturation – the point in which we notice that the answers of the participants start to repeat themselves, without adding new elements to the research (FONTANELLA *et al.*, 2011). Thus, the research had a total of 14 participants. The demonstration of the point of saturation verified in the research is shown in Chart 1.

The script was based on questions from the research of Machado (2010) and divided into two main sections. The first section was defined with open-ended questions and questions in which sentences related to the destination should be completed. The first question presented a clear field for the participant to express what they considered a unique/exclusive feature of Ilhéus as a tourist destination. The following question, also open-ended, asked what other destinations from the Northeast coast had that Ilhéus did not have; the main goal of this question was to enable the exclusion of attributes mentioned by other participants which were already defined as deficient. Then, there were four sentences that were to be completed. They were written in a way that guided the answers: “Ilhéus is a city...;” “in Ilhéus, the tourist finds...;” “Ilhéus is a destination characterized mainly by...;” and “tourists should visit Ilhéus because...” To end this first section, a question was included to extract more abstract elements related to the environment of the destination. The respondent was asked to inform how they would describe Ilhéus if they were a tourist.

The second section showed images which are commonly associated to the attractions of the destination and to themes that the bodies in charge of promoting tourism associate with Ilhéus (Figure 1): “Cocoa Capital,” “Land of Jorge Amado,” “Land of *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*,” “Chocolate Paradise” (VIVER BAHIA, 2011). This section was separated from the first in order to not influence the free-form

2. Available at: <<https://goo.gl/forms/oecP38Wruh7WJS0a2>>.

3. Available at: <<http://informegeografico.blogspot.com.br/>>.

answers. The respondent was asked to inform which image better represented the destination of Ilhéus. Then, the respondent was asked to rank the images according to how well they represented the destination and to describe if the images showed features which are unique/exclusive of the destination.

Figure 1 - Images related to the attractions of the destination used in the research



Source - Elaborated by the authors.

Qualitative data were analyzed based on the method of content analysis with a cumulative approach. The first step was to count the frequency of words, then to analyze the latent content (ROSSI; SERRALVO; JOÃO, 2014). According to Bardin (1994, p. 42), the content analysis is a “set of techniques to analyze communications, which uses systematic procedures and goals of describing the content of the messages.” She states that content analysis encompasses three phases: the pre-analysis of the data, the exploration of the material, and the treatment of the results, inference and interpretation (BARDIN, 1994). In the case of this research, the pre-analysis of data included the exportation of the answers provided in the online questionnaire and the previous reading of the gathered observations. The transcription of the forms was unnecessary because of the instrument used (Google Forms), which enabled direct access to the answers. The exploration of the material and the treatment of the results involved the verification of the frequency of sentences with indicators of unique characteristics of the destination of Ilhéus as well as the categorization of these sentences into groups with similar meanings or connotations. Lastly, based on these categories, the indicators of the unique image of the destination were extracted. Due to the small number of participants and questions, it was unnecessary to use a specific software. The codification was carried out in an Excel spreadsheet, and the counting of the frequency was performed with the assistance of dynamic tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the stages suggested by Bardin (1994), after the previous reading of the provided answers, the codification was made according to themes or to statements made by the interviewees about the destination of Ilhéus. Based on each affirmation, we extracted attributes and elaborated a chart for their compilation and to remove duplicate attributes. Chart 1 presents these attributes. The chart 1 indicates (in italic) those that were duplicated and the saturation point of the answers based on the observations of the last respondent.

Chart 1 – Unique attributes of the destination of Ilhéus identified by qualitative research

RESPONDENT 1	RESPONDENT 2
It stands out for being a destination that combines nature and culture	One of the highlights is the beaches with fine white sand
It's an attractive city	It stands out because of the beauty of the city
It stands out because of its history	It stands out because of its beautiful landscapes
It is a fun/playful destination	It stands out because of the great weather
It's a sensual destination	<i>It stands out because of its beautiful beaches</i>
It stands out because of its beautiful beaches	One of the highlights is the abundant nature
It stands out because of the rich works of Jorge Amado	One of the highlights is the extension of its coast
One of the highlights is the cocoa culture	It stands out for being a mysterious destination
	It stands out for being a charming destination
	One of the highlights is the magnificence and the beauty of its historical and cultural heritage
	<i>It stands out because of the rich works of Jorge Amado</i>
RESPONDENT 3	RESPONDENT 4
It stands out because of its natural beauty	<i>One of the highlights is the cocoa culture</i>
<i>It stands out because of its history</i>	<i>It stands out because of its beautiful beaches</i>
It stands out because of its culture	<i>It stands out because of its beautiful landscapes</i>
One of the highlights is the location, in a preserved area of Atlantic Forest	<i>It stands out because of its history</i>
<i>One of the highlights is the cocoa culture</i>	<i>It stands out because of its culture</i>
One of the highlights is the rich historical literature	It stands out because it is a pleasant destination
<i>It stands out because of the beauty of the city</i>	<i>It stands out because of the beauty of the city</i>
One of the highlights is the human warmth	<i>One of the highlights is its historical and cultural heritage</i>
<i>It stands out because of its beautiful beaches</i>	<i>Ilhéus is a rustic destination</i>
It stands out because it is a calm destination	

(continues...)

Chart 1 – Continuation

RESPONDENT 3	RESPONDENT 4
<i>It stands out because of its historical and cultural heritage</i>	
<i>It stands out because of the rich works of Jorge Amado</i>	
<i>It stands out because of its beautiful landscapes</i>	
<i>It is a rustic destination</i>	
RESPONDENT 5	RESPONDENT 6
<i>It stands out because its culture is spatially connected to the works of Jorge Amado</i>	<i>It stands out because of its natural beauty</i>
<i>It stands out because of its culture</i>	<i>It stands out for its geographical beauty</i>
<i>It stands out because of the beauty of the city</i>	<i>It stands out because of its beautiful beaches</i>
<i>It stands out because of its beautiful beaches</i>	<i>One of the highlights are the parties</i>
<i>The gastronomy is also a highlight of Ilhéus</i>	<i>It stands out because of its culture</i>
<i>One of the highlights is the cocoa culture</i>	<i>The gastronomy is also a highlight of Ilhéus</i>
<i>The chocolate is also a highlight of Ilhéus</i>	<i>It stands out for being a cozy destination</i>
	<i>It stands out for being a relaxing destination</i>
	<i>It is a sensual destination</i>
	<i>The chocolate is also a highlight of Ilhéus</i>
	<i>It stands out because of the rich works of Jorge Amado</i>
RESPONDENT 7	RESPONDENT 8
<i>It stands out for being where the rich works of Jorge Amado are set</i>	<i>It stands out because of its natural beauty</i>
<i>It stands out because of its natural beauty</i>	<i>It stands out because of its rich history</i>
<i>It stands out because of its culture</i>	<i>It stands out because of its culture</i>
<i>It stands out because of the constant weather all year long</i>	<i>It stands out because of its importance for the Brazilian economy in the age of cocoa</i>
<i>It stands out because of its rich history</i>	<i>It stands out because of the beauty of the city</i>
<i>It stands out because of its beautiful beaches</i>	<i>It stands out because of its beautiful beaches</i>
<i>It stands out for the richness of its immaterial and material culture</i>	<i>It stands out because of the pleasant weather</i>
<i>One of the highlights is the location, in a preserved area of Atlantic Forest</i>	<i>It stands out because of the rich history of cocoa</i>
<i>It stands out because of its beautiful landscapes</i>	<i>It stands out for being the background of the works of Jorge Amado are set</i>
<i>It is a rustic destination</i>	
RESPONDENT 9	RESPONDENT 10
<i>It stands out for its rich nature: sun, beach, river, Atlantic Forest</i>	<i>It stands out because of its rich history</i>
<i>The chocolate is also a highlight of Ilhéus</i>	<i>It stands out because of its natural beauty</i>
<i>It stands out because of the beauty of the city</i>	<i>One of the highlights is the rich historical literature</i>
<i>It is a sensual destination</i>	<i>It is a magical destination</i>
<i>One of the highlights of Ilhéus is the cocoa culture</i>	<i>It is a destination full of surprises</i>

(continues...)

Chart 1 – Continuation

RESPONDENT 9	RESPONDENT 10
Cocoa is one of the highlights of the gastronomy in Ilhéus	<i>It stands out because of its beautiful beaches</i>
	<i>It stands out because of the beauty of the city</i>
	<i>It is a sensual destination</i>
	It is a naturally beautiful destination
	<i>It stands out because of the rich works of Jorge Amado</i>
	<i>One of the highlights is the cocoa culture</i>
	It is a destination that combines phantasy and nature
	<i>It is a rustic destination</i>
RESPONDENT 11	RESPONDENT 12
<i>It stands out for being where the rich works of Jorge Amado are set</i>	<i>One of the highlights are the farms from the golden age of cocoa</i>
One of the highlights is the easy access to the beaches	It stands out for its rich history related to the cocoa and colonels
One of the highlights are the farms from the golden age of cocoa.	<i>It stands out because of its beautiful beaches</i>
One of the highlights are the different architectural styles	<i>It stands out because of its natural beauty</i>
One of the highlights are the historical mansions	It stands out for being a city which is part of the country's history
<i>One of the highlights is the cocoa culture</i>	It is a mature destination
	<i>It stands out because of the rich works of Jorge Amado</i>
	<i>One of the highlights is the cocoa culture</i>
RESPONDENT 13	RESPONDENT 14
It stands out because of the exclusive architectural heritage from the golden age of cocoa and colonels	<i>It stands out for being where the rich works of Jorge Amado are set</i>
<i>It stands out because of its beautiful landscapes</i>	<i>It stands out because of its natural beauty</i>
<i>It stands out because of the beauty of the city</i>	<i>It stands out for being a destination that combines nature and culture</i>
<i>It stands out because of its history</i>	<i>It stands out because of the beauty of the city</i>
<i>It stands out because of its beautiful beaches</i>	<i>It stands out because of its beautiful beaches</i>
<i>It is a mature destination</i>	<i>It stands out because of the constant weather all year long</i>
<i>One of the highlights is the cocoa culture</i>	<i>One of the highlights is the cocoa culture</i>
<i>It stands out because of the rich works of Jorge Amado</i>	

Source – Research data

These statements were categorized according to themes: cocoa, environment, beaches, Jorge Amado, city, nature, culture, history, gastronomy, landscapes, climate, history and culture, Atlantic Forest, architecture, nature and culture, parties, and phantasy and nature.

The quantitative approach (frequency) was adopted to interpret the data, for the final elaboration of the indicators and to identify which attributes were most mentioned by the interviewees as unique features of the destination based on the categories. The analysis of the frequency of the indicators is shown in Chart 2, which also indicates the most mentioned attributes: “Ilhéus stands out because of its beautiful beaches,” “One of the highlights of Ilhéus is the cocoa culture,” “Ilhéus stands out because of the beauty of the city” and “Ilhéus stands out because of the rich works of Jorge Amado.”

Chart 2 – Unique attributes of the destination of Ilhéus: analysis of frequency

Indicators by category	Number of times they were identified
COCOA	16
One of the highlights is the cocoa culture	10
One of the highlights are the farms from the golden age of cocoa	2
Exclusive architectural heritage from the golden age of cocoa and colonels	1
Rich history of cocoa	1
importance for the Brazilian economy in the age of cocoa	1
Rich history related to the cocoa and colonels	1
ENVIRONMENT	20
It is a sensual destination	4
It is a rustic destination	4
It is a mature destination	2
It is a destination full of surprises	1
One of the highlights is the human warmth	1
It is a charming destination	1
It is a fun/playful destination	1
It is a mysterious destination	1
It is a pleasant destination	1
It is a magical destination	1
It is a relaxing destination	1
It is a cozy destination	1
It is a calm destination	1
BEACHES	15
It stands out due to its beautiful beaches	12
Easy access to the beaches	1
Beaches with fine white sand	1
Coastal extension	1
JORGE AMADO	12
Rich works of Jorge Amado	7

(continues...)

Chart 2 – Continuation

Indicators by category	Number of times they were identified
Location where the rich works of Jorge Amado are set	3
Background for the works of Jorge Amado	1
Culture spatially connected to the works of Jorge Amado	1
CITY	10
The beauty of the city	9
It's an attractive city	1
NATURE	10
It stands out due to its natural beauties	7
One of its highlights is its abundant nature	1
It's a naturally beautiful destination	1
Geographical beauty	1
CULTURE	9
It stands out due to its culture	6
One of its highlights is the rich historical literature	2
Richness of the material and immaterial culture	1
HISTORY	8
It stands out due to its history	4
It stands out due to its rich history	3
It stands out since the city is part of the country's history	1
GASTRONOMY	6
The chocolate is also a highlight of Ilhéus	3
The gastronomy is also a highlight of Ilhéus	2
The cocoa is one of the highlights of the gastronomy in Ilhéus	1
LANDSCAPES	5
It stands out due to its beautiful landscapes	5
CLIMA	4
Constant weather throughout the year	2
Great weather	1
It stands out due to its pleasant weather	1
HISTORY AND CULTURE	3
It stands out because of its historical and cultural heritage	1
Historical and cultural heritage	1
Magnificence and beauty of its historical and cultural heritage	1
ATLANTIC FOREST	3
Located in an area of preserved Atlantic Forest	2
It stands out due to the abundance of nature: sun, beach, river, Atlantic Forest.	1
ARCHITECTURE	2
Different architectural styles	1
Historical mansions	1
NATURE AND CULTURE	2

(continues ...)

Chart 2 - Continuation

Indicators by category	Number of times they were identified
It stands out for being a destination that combines nature and culture	2
PARTIES	1
One of its highlights are the parties	1
PHANTASY AND NATURE	1
It's a destination that combines phantasy and nature	1
Overall total	127

Source - Research data

These attributes are directly related to the images that are most frequently associated to the destination of Ilhéus: cocoa, beaches, Jorge Amado and chocolate. These images were also part of the research form, in which we asked participants to rank the images in order of representativeness of the Ilhéus destination. The result is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Representativeness of the images regarding the destination of Ilhéus

Order of Representativeness	Chocolate	Beaches	Jorge Amado	Cocoa	Total of participants
1	0	6	4	4	14
2	1	5	7	1	14
3	3	2	2	7	14
4	10	1	1	2	14

Source - Research data

In terms of representativeness of Ilhéus, the beaches are in first place as they were mentioned by 43% of the interviewees. In second place comes the image and work of writer Jorge Amado, mentioned by 50% of the participants. In third place comes cocoa, also mentioned by 50% of respondents, and in last place we find chocolate, mentioned by 71% of them. However, this configuration is not a consensus. Some strong positions emphasize each of the first three (beaches, Jorge Amado and cocoa) as the most representative aspect. The two last alternatives were mentioned by 29% of the participants as the first place. When defending the position of the first place, the participants highlight that: “Nowadays, [the destination is chosen] mostly because of the beaches, but Jorge Amado helped that process a lot. The beaches with fine white sand. I’ve been in other beaches in Brazil, and this is a unique characteristic” (RESPONDENT 2).

Cocoa is also frequently mentioned as the most representative element of the destination:

The cocoa plantation is what sets Ilhéus apart, it provides unique experiences with its way of production, in addition to memorable stories. [...] Just cocoa, with its history and unique way of production, which is very rich and different from all the other types of plantation in Brazil. The image of Jorge Amado is much bet-

ter explored in Salvador. The city does not have a chocolate tradition. As for the beaches, Bahia itself has more than a thousand kilometers which look just the same. (RESPONDENT 4)

The image of Jorge Amado and his works, however, may have been the aspect most strongly defended as a unique image of the destination:

In the regional context (micro-region of Ilhéus-Itabuna, composed of 41 municipalities), with respect to travel destinations located in the coast (beaches), Ilhéus stands out not much for its nature or architectural heritage, but for its symbolic representation owing to the symbolic image of Jorge Amado and his literature, which made the city famous outside of Brazil. [...] Differently from Itabuna, Ilhéus has important aspects for tourism, such as many beaches, historical architecture in the urban space associated to the golden age of the cocoa culture, churches of different architectural styles, squares, etc. Moreover, in the rural space there are some farms from the golden age of cocoa. However, these are elements also found in other cities of the region, with their own particularities. As for what Ilhéus has that is exclusive/unique when compared to other places, as I mentioned above, I see the national and international projection of the city's name through the backgrounds and characters portrayed in Jorge Amado's stories, projecting it as a true simulacrum (an image portrayed beyond reality, transformed into a spectacle in the mind of who imagines it and who wants to consume it as a tourism product), according to the definition of simulacrum developed by French author Jean Baudrillard. Thus, Ilhéus is most consumed as a tourist destination through the image created around it than through what it really has. (RESPONDENT 11)

Although it ranked last as a representative image of the destination, government bodies in charge of promoting tourism in Bahia, such as the Secretariat of Tourism, have pointed out that chocolate is a highlight of Ilhéus, calling the city a "Chocolate Paradise" (VIVER BAHIA, 2011). Thus, it is possible to combine these opinions about the representative image of Ilhéus, as mentioned by Respondent 9: "It could be a combination of all four. In this land, you find a little bit of each of them" (RESPONDENT 9).

As Bauer (2008) states, content analysis based on a quantitative approach often considers only the frequent data, not taking into account what is rare. Hence, the quantitative approach was not the only one used. Bardin (1994, p. 115-116) says that: "what characterizes the qualitative analysis is the fact that the inference [...] is based on the presence of the index [...] and not on the frequency of its appearance." Thus, the frequent statements about the destination were not the only aspects considered for the indicators.

To elaborate more abstract attributes related to its environment, we asked the respondents to characterize the destination of Ilhéus as a person. Interesting elements resulted from that question, such as the "sensuality of the destination." This indicator was extracted from the use of terms like the Portuguese word "*Brejeira*" (meaning childlike, malicious, naughty, playful, spicy, saucy), mentioned by RESPONDENT 1, "Sexy" (RESPONDENT 6) and "A tall brunette, beautiful and full of mysteries" (RESPONDENT 2).

Therefore, based on the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data, we identified the following attributes as exclusive of the destination of Ilhéus:

- Natural environment:
 - Constant weather throughout the year.
 - Location in a preserved area of the Atlantic Forest.
 - Large coastal extension.
 - Beaches with fine white sand.
 - Geographical beauty.

- Local (cultural) attractions:
 - Local chocolate.
 - Tasty local cuisine.
 - Cocoa culture.
 - Cultural, historical and architectural heritage from the golden age of cocoa and colonels.
 - Background of the rich works of Jorge Amado.

- Environment:
 - Sensuality of the destination.
 - Charming environment.
 - Rustic environment.
 - Human warmth.

Thus, there are 14 indicators that constitute the unique image of the Ilhéus destination. They are grouped into three dimensions: natural environment, local attractions and local environment.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

With the aim of identifying the unique attributes of the destination of Ilhéus (BA) in order to elaborate a scale of measurement of its unique image, we performed a qualitative research with workers from the tourism industry. After the analysis of the content of the collected data, it was possible to extract 14 indicators of the unique image of Ilhéus, related to natural environment, attractions and local environment. The analysis of the attributes mentioned during the research enables the identification of functional attributes, but also, and more predominantly, of more abstract attributes. The abstract attributes referred not only to local environment, but especially to the rich history and literature that compose the imagination and expectations regarding the destination.

Many attributes are related to images that are commonly associated to the destination, such as: the cocoa culture; the cultural, historic, and architectural heritage; the works of Jorge Amado and the beaches with fine white sand. However, there are other attributes mentioned in the results that could represent opportunities regarding the attractiveness of the destination, such as its location within the Atlantic Forest, the extension of the coast, its geographical beauty, its cuisine, the human warmth, the rustic environment and the constant weather all year long.

The identified attributes compose a scale of the unique image of the destination of Ilhéus. Based on them, it is possible to measure the perception of the uniqueness of the destination. For future studies, we suggest using the scale of the unique image of the destination created by this research in a more comprehensive study, with different players related to the destination (inhabitants, traders, businessmen, the government), as well as tourists, in order to verify if these attributes are really perceived as unique. Moreover, we suggest testing the scale of the unique image (composed of the three dimensions identified in this study) empirically and quantitatively, since due to the limitation of the method applied in this research it is not possible to generalize the result obtained. Thus, a quantitative test with an adequate probabilistic sample would enable the generalization of these findings.

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