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An Empirical Investigation of Gaming Destination Images: Implications for Branding

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AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF GAMING DESTINATION IMAGES: IMPLICATIONS FOR
BRANDING

INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years, gaming venues have evolved from a few isolated places to a booming business located in almost every state in the United States. As a result of the presence of gaming in almost every state, coupled with an increase in gaming participation, the competition for business becomes fiercer. Gaming destinations need to know how people view their destinations in relation to other competing destinations to more effectively position themselves and build sound marketing strategies (Ahmed, 1991; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Calatone, di Benedetto, Hakam, & Bojanic, 1989; Javalgi, Thomas, & Rao, 1992). In addition, being able to determine if the perceptions travelers hold are in line with the offerings of each gaming destination will help marketers to identify any gaps between brand image (demand-side image) and brand identity (supply-side image) (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b). Building a strong destination image is central to the destination branding process and strategy (Aaker, 1991). The goal of branding efforts is to differentiate one destination from other competitive destinations through cognitive and affective image building efforts, and to develop a unique identity in the market (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2004; Hossany, Ekinici & Uysal, 2006; Park & Petric, 2006; Prebensen, 2007). A destination brand can be defined as “perceptions about a place as reflected by the associations held in tourist memory” (Cai 2002, p. 273). Destination branding has become a relevant research topic in tourism today (Blaine, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005). If a destination, whether it is a city, country, or state, is to remain competitive to other, similar destinations, a distinctive brand or “unique identity” is more important than ever (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2003).

It is crucial to assess actual and potential tourists’ images of destinations – place, city, region, or country – for brand development process and efforts. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine images and perceptions of four selected gaming destinations - Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Chicagoland (IL, IN), and Connecticut - to reveal their perceived strengths and weaknesses, i.e. unique identities.

While a plethora of research has been conducted on destination image, gaming areas as a destination have not been studied. Several researchers have looked at important factors in riverboat and Indian casinos (Pfaffenberg & Costello, 2002; Turco & Riley, 1996;) but no research exists that analyzes gaming destinations across all types- commercial, riverboat, and Indian gaming. As a result of this gap in the literature, no inferences have been drawn between factors that are perceived strengths and weaknesses of a destination in relation to the selection of a gaming destination. This study will focus on determining how people perceive gaming destinations in terms of important cognitive attributes, of a destination- such as safety and climate- and also gaming attributes- such as variety of games and casino promotions. Affective evaluations, overall image, and intentions will also be assessed. Overall, or global image, may be similar to or different from, the affective and cognitive evaluations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Gartner, 1993).

The results of this research will allow each of the chosen destinations to evaluate what they are offering to their patron’s (supply) with what their gaming patrons are demanding. Disagreement between the supplied offerings and the demanded offerings of each gaming destination is an area of immediate attention and improvement. This research will provide more opportunities for further academic research on gaming destinations, combined with image and perception.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout the growing composition of tourism literature, the topic of destination image and positioning has been widely studied. Authors have researched everything from tourism destination choice (Papatheodorou, 2001; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000; Woodside &

Lysonski, 1989), awareness and familiarity of a destination (Milman & Pizam, 1995), destination attractiveness (Hu & Ritchie, 1993), destination image formation (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martin, 2004a; Beerli & Martin, 2004b), the measurement of destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Gallarza, Gil, & Calderon, 2002), assessing destination image and positioning through photographic images (Dann, 1996; Day, Skidmore, & Koller, 2002; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000), destination image and the role of culture (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000), image segmentation in tourism destinations (Leisen, 2001), destination positioning and perceived images (Beerli & Martin, 2004a; Beerli and Martin, 2004b; Chen & Hsu, 2000; Pike & Ryan, 2004), image formation process and destination selection (Gartner, 1993; White, 2004), affective images in destinations (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997), image differences between types of visitors (Awaritefe, 2004; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991), convention destination images (Oppermann, 1996), and association meeting planners perceptions and intentions of convention cities (Baloglu & Love, 2005).

Pike (2002), in a review of the destination image literature from 1973-2000, concluded that over half of the studies measured perceptions of a single destination and offered no comparisons to other destinations. This review also found that countries were the most popular destination to be studied, as opposed to states or cities, and that there is a disagreement about which attribute lists are used to determine destination image.

A review of the present literature on destination image also revealed a split consensus on the components of image formation and the image formation process. Of the literature assessed, the majority mentioned cognitive and affective elements of image formation (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Baloglu & Love, in press; Beerli & Martin, 2004a; Beerli and Martin, 2004b; Dann, 1996; Day et al., 2002; Gartner, 1993; White, 2004). Baloglu and McCleary (1999b) define the cognitive and affective component of image according to Genereux, Ward, and Russel (1983). "Knowledge about the place's objective attributes is represented by the perceptual/cognitive component, whereas the affective component is knowledge about it's affective quality" (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b). In their study of destination image formation, Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) hypothesized that perceptual/cognitive and affective evaluations influence a person's evaluation of a particular destination. In the present study, cognitive evaluations represent a respondent's knowledge of a destination (i.e. restaurants, shows, or location) whereas affective evaluation represents a person's feelings about a destination (i.e. pleasant, unpleasant, or nice).

There is often debate about the extent to which destination brand is related to destination image (Tasci & Kozak, 2006). Some argue that the two are completely related (Pritchard & Morgan, 2001) while others argue that image is created by branding (Cai, 2002; Jenson & Korneliusson, 2002; Ravinder, 2003; Groves, 2003). Destination image has also been found a vital component of customer-based brand equity models (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). While brand equity models have been used for many years, and adapted to many research projects, all of the models have basic elements in common:

The power of a brand lies in the minds of consumers and what they have experienced, learned, and felt about the brand over time; brand equity can be thought of as the "added value" endowed to a product in the thoughts, words, and actions of consumers (Leone, Rao, Keller, Luo, McAlister, & Srivastava, 2006, p. 126).

What is missing from such models, however, is, as Konecnik & Gartner (2007) argue in their study, image.

The concept of previous visitation to a destination has also become highly debatable in terms of its affect on overall destination image formation. Gartner (1993) argued that "experience through prior travel to an area is not necessary for attitudes to be formed toward the type of image projected or acquired about a destination" (p. 192-193). Beerli and Martin (2004b) reiterated the importance of previous visitation when

they argued that destination image has a tendency to have a more positive outcome when the visitor has prior experience with the destination. The authors then state the importance of perceived destination image in the post-trip and intent to re-visit stage. The majority of research evaluated controlled for previous visitation in order to get a more accurate look at the differences previous visitation might have on the image formed of a specific destination (Awaritefe, 2004; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Baloglu & Love, in press; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1996; Day, Skidmore, & Koller, 2002; Etchner & Ritchie, 1993; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Hunt, 1975; Milman & Pizam, 1995; Oppermann, 1996; Phelps, 1986; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000).

METHODOLOGY

The target population for this study, obtained from Survey Sampling International (SSI), a company specializing in statistically drawn telephone and online samples (www.surveysampling.com), was comprised of adults (21 years or older) who had previously expressed an interest in gaming. A total of 300 surveys were gathered with 222 (response rate of 11.1%) used for data analysis. The remaining 78 surveys were incomplete and not used in the analysis. Data was collected for the four top gaming markets: Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Chicagoland (IL, IN), and Connecticut. These gaming markets were selected because they were the top four markets in terms gross revenue, as published by the American Gaming Association in the 2005 Casino & Gaming Market Research Handbook.

Nineteen attributes were selected to assess the cognitive perceptions and image of the four selected gaming markets. The selected items were generated based on an extensive review of existing literature, message board postings on gaming-related websites and groups, and discussions with various professors. The importance of the attributes for each gaming market was measured on a 5-point scale on which 1 meant "Poor", 2 meant "Fair", 3 meant "Good", 4 meant "Very Good" and 5 meant "Excellent" as well as a "Don't Know" option to avoid response bias. Respondents were asked to rate each gaming destination, even if they had not visited the destination. To evaluate the respondents' previous experience with each of the gaming markets, they were asked to indicate whether or not they had ever visited each of the gaming markets, and if they had either lived, or were living, in the gaming areas.

To measure the affective images and perceptions of each gaming market, a 5-point bipolar scale (Pleasant-Unpleasant, Arousing-Sleepy, Exciting-Gloomy, and Relaxing-Distressing) was used along with a "Don't Know" option. To measure the overall image of each gaming market, respondents' were asked to rate their image on a 5-point scale with an anchor of 1 being "Poor" and 5 being "Excellent." Behavioral Intention was measured by asking if the respondent would recommend each gaming market to family and friends and if they would consider visiting, or revisiting, each of the gaming destinations. They were measured with an anchor of 1 being "Not Recommend At All" and 5 being "Definitely Recommend" and with 1 being "Definitely Not" and 5 being "Definitely Will," respectively. Both the overall image and behavioral questions had a "Don't Know" option included. The questionnaire also included several open-ended questions in which respondents' were asked: "What words or image come to mind when you think of the following places as a gaming market?"

All of the open-ended questions were content analyzed based on the most frequently referenced words and or images for each of the gaming markets- Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Chicagoland (IL, IN), and Connecticut. All of the most frequently referenced words were then separated into two categories – affective and cognitive. Affective evaluations were determined by comparing the words with those proposed as affective by Russell & Lanius (1984). The remaining words were coded as cognitive attributes. In addition to noting the cognitive and affective evaluations, special attention was also paid to responses that indicated that the respondent had no image of a particular gaming destination.

Following the qualitative analysis, a series of independent sample *t*-tests were conducted to see if differences exist between visitors (or those who had lived or are living in a particular gaming market) and non-visitors (or those who have not lived in a particular gaming market).

The quantitative data was analyzed using the General Linear Model (GLM) Repeated Measures procedure available in the SPSS 12.5. Repeated measures analysis allows the researcher to evaluate a situation in which respondents are measured in more than one instance (Grimm & Yarnold, 1995). In this case, the repeated measures analysis was used to compare each respondent's answers for multiple destinations. When using repeated measures MANOVA, a supplementary assumption, called the sphericity assumption, must be met. It concerns the "difference variables that are created from the original dependence variables" (Grimm & Yarnold, 1995, pg. 270). Mauchly's test of sphericity, which is automatically displayed for a repeated measures analysis, was used to test that assumption. If the test is significant (probability level is less than 0.05), the corrected (adjusted) *F*-values (Greenhouse-Geisser or Huynh-Feldt) should be used (SPSS, 1999).

The GLM repeated measures analysis was employed in order to compare the cognitive, affective, and overall image perceptions, as well as behavioral intentions for the four gaming places. The perceptions and intentions for each gaming market were then compared, if significant differences are found, by using independent sample *t*-tests with the Bonferroni inequality correction. The Bonferroni multiple comparison tests, set at an alpha level of 0.05, were used in an effort to understand how each of the gaming cities differed from each other on each of the variables. In terms of the cognitive evaluations, because there were a total of nineteen different variables, the significance level was corrected by the number of variables to help decrease Type 1 error.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Histograms of variables and residuals, and Cook's Distance, indicate that no significant violations of normality, and no outliers, existed. The sphericity assumption (homogeneity of variance of the differences between any two levels of a within-subject factor) was violated for all variables (i.e. Mauchly's tests were significant) and therefore, the corrected *F*-ratios and their associated probabilities were used.

Prior to testing hypotheses, a series of independent sample *t*-tests were executed to see if Previous Experience (visitation and living) with the destinations should be controlled. No significant differences were found for any of the cognitive items for each destination between visitors (or those who had lived or were living in a particular gaming market) and non-visitors (or those who have not lived in a particular gaming market). In a comparison between those respondents who had previously visited and those who had not, Las Vegas was different in affective, overall image, and behavioral intentions. There were no significant differences for Atlantic City. Chicagoland (IL, IN) produced differences between visitors and non-visitors in affective evaluations and behavioral intentions. Differences between visitors and non-visitors were also found for Connecticut in terms of affective perceptions, overall image, and behavioral intentions. The majority of differences were small and there were not enough respondents for three gaming destinations to make a meaningful comparison. Because of the repeated measures design, excluding the respondents was not possible, either. Therefore, analysis was conducted on the whole data set given the reasons above and to take advantage of statistical power.

The majority of survey respondents were male (64.9%) in the 36-50 age range (35.1%), followed closely by the 21-35 age range (32.0%). Approximately 40% of the respondents stated their education level to be Some College/Associate Degree, 59.5% were married, and 28.4% (the largest percentage) had an income under \$35,000. Respondents were from 42 different states with the highest percentage living in California (10.8%), followed by Florida (8.1%), and then New York (6.8%).

Table 1
Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 222)

	Number	%
Age		
21-35	71	32.0
36-50	78	35.1
51-65	49	22.1
66+ years	24	10.8
Total	222	100.0
Gender		
Male	144	64.9
Female	78	35.1
Total	222	100.0
Education Level		
No College	29	13.1
Some College/Associate Degree	90	40.5
Bachelors Degree	71	32.0
Post Bachelors Degree	32	14.4
Total	222	100.0
Marital Status		
Single (Never Married)	43	19.4
Single (Divorced, Separated, Widowed)	42	18.9
Married	132	59.5
Other	5	2.3
Total	222	100.0
Annual Household Income		
Under \$35,000	63	28.4
\$35,001 - \$55,000	56	25.2
\$55,001 - \$75,000	45	20.3
\$75,001 - \$95,000	29	13.1
Over \$95,000	29	13.1
Total	222	100.0

Each survey respondent was asked to answer an open-ended question about the four gaming markets. Respondent's were asked, "What words or images come to mind when you think of (Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Chicagoland (IL, IN), or Connecticut) as a gaming market?" The top ten words mentioned for each destination included a combination of cognitive perceptions and affective evaluations. The most often cited word for Atlantic City was Boardwalk with 43 responses. Following were Beach/Ocean (23), Dirty/Seedy/Scary (21), Casino (21), Old (20), Trump (19), Gamble (18), Dirty (17), Money (15), Shows (11), and Fun (10). With the exception of Fun, all of these images are cognitive evaluations. Forty six respondents indicated that they had no experience with, nor with they familiar with, Atlantic City well enough to provide an appropriate answer to the question. Such responses included, but were not limited to: Never Been, Don't Know, Unsure, Nothing, and N/A.

Table 2
Top Ten Responses to Open Ended Image Question for Atlantic City

Affective	Cognitive	Number of Responses
	Boardwalk	33
	Beach/Ocean	23
	Dirty/Seedy/Scary	21
	Casino	21
	Old	20
	Trump	19
	Gamble	18
	Money	15
	Shows	11
Fun		10

Chicagoland includes casinos in Indiana and Illinois. Interestingly, over half (132) of the respondents indicated that they had no image of casinos in Chicagoland. Phrases that were used included: Never Heard Of, Never Been, None, Nothing, Don't Know, and Haven't Heard Of. The remaining respondents conjured up images mostly relating to weather. Twenty eight respondents used the words Weather/Cold/Windy. Other words used to describe Chicagoland's image were Money (13), Crowded (9) Casinos (8), Crime (7), Exciting (7), Fun (7), Riverboats (6), and Boring (6). While the majority of the words describing Chicagoland are cognitive, three of them are affective (Boring, Fun, Exciting).

Table 3
Top Ten Responses to Open Ended Image Question for Chicagoland (IN, IL)

Affective	Cognitive	Number of Responses
	Weather/Cold/Windy	28
	Money	13
	Crowded	9
	Casinos	8
	Crime	7
Exciting		7
Fun		7
	Riverboats	6
	Boring	6
	Slots	5
	Close-By	5
	Gamble	5

Two of Connecticut's top ten variables are affective. They are Fun (12) and Boring (8). Indian/Native American (23), however, was the most often cited word, followed by Gambling (22), Cold/Snow (19), and Casino (13). Rounding out the top ten were Countryside/Rural/Land (11), Foxwoods/Mohegan Sun (9), Close-By (7), and Money (6). These last seven variables are all cognitive. As with Chicagoland, many respondents (107) indicated that they have no knowledge of gaming in Connecticut. Responses included, but were not limited to: Don't Know, Never Been, none, not familiar, Nothing, Not sure, and no idea.

Table 4
Top Ten Responses to Open Ended Image Question for Connecticut

Affective	Cognitive	Number of Responses
	Indian/Native American	23
	Gambling	22
	Cold/Snow	19
	Casinos	13
Fun		12
	Countryside/Rural/Land	11
	Foxwoods/Mohegan Sun	9
Boring		8
	Close-By	7
	Money	6

Contrary to the three previous gaming destinations, only one respondent indicated that they were not familiar with Las Vegas as a gaming market and, therefore could not answer the question. Otherwise, respondents provided many words to describe their image of Las Vegas. The most often cited variable, which is a cognitive variable, was Lights with 66 responses. In the number two and three position are two affective variables, Exciting/Excitement (47) and Fun (40). The rest of the list includes Shows (39), Money (38), Gambling (29), Entertaining/Entertainment (22), Bright (21), Big (19), Casinos (15), and Great (15). With the exception of Great, all of the remaining variables are cognitive.

Table 5
Top Ten Responses to Open Ended Image Question for Las Vegas

Affective	Cognitive	Number of Responses
	Lights	66
Exciting/Excitement		47
Fun		40
	Shows	39
	Money	38
	Gambling	29
	Entertaining/Entertainment	22
	Bright	21
	Big	19
	Casinos	15
Great		15

Cognitive Perceptions

The repeated measures analysis was performed on cognitive perceptions of Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Chicagoland (IL, IN), and Connecticut. The multivariate tests of Pillai's Trace and Wilks's Lambda were significant at 0.0001 probability level. Mauchly's test of Sphericity indicated that, for each of the nineteen cognitive variables, the observed probability level was below 0.05, thus violating the assumption. As a result, the Greenhouse-Geisser and Huynh-Feldt corrected *F*-values were used and found significant at 0.0026 or lower probability level for all nineteen variables, which indicated that at least one pair of gaming destinations are different.

The Bonferroni multiple comparisons revealed significant differences among all four destinations (Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Chicagoland (IL, IN), and Connecticut) and the following attributes: Variety of games, Shows/entertainment, Weather, Casino comps (Freebies), Player Clubs, and Shopping. Respondents gave the highest average ratings to the Variety of games variable and the Shows/entertainment variable for Las Vegas and Atlantic City. The Weather dimension produced the highest average rating for Las Vegas and the lowest average rating for Connecticut. Casino comps (freebies) and Player Clubs were rated slightly higher for Las Vegas and Atlantic City than for Chicagoland and Connecticut. The variable Shopping was rated the highest for Las Vegas followed by Chicagoland.

For the variable Proximity of attractions it was found that Atlantic City and Chicagoland were not significantly different from one another. Differences were found, however, between Las Vegas and Connecticut. Las Vegas received the highest mean score. On the Restaurant/dining dimension, no significant difference was found between Atlantic City and Chicagoland, but, again, differences were found between Las Vegas and Connecticut. The respondents see the restaurant offerings in Las Vegas to be very different than those offered in Connecticut, but they see the dining options in Atlantic City and Chicagoland to be very similar. The variable Casino Promotions showed no significant difference between Chicagoland and Connecticut. Las Vegas received the highest mean score on all three variables.

The component of Safety and security showed no significant difference between Atlantic City and Chicagoland or Las Vegas and Connecticut. Las Vegas was rated the highest in terms of safety and security, while Atlantic City received the lowest rating among the four destinations. The variable of Cleanliness of environment produced the same results as the Safety and security variable with no significant differences being found between Las Vegas and Connecticut or Atlantic City and Chicagoland. This cognitive variable was the only attribute in which Las Vegas did not receive the highest average mean score, with Connecticut edging out the other three destinations.

The variable Ease of travel to had Las Vegas rated the highest among the four destinations, with no significant difference between Atlantic City and Chicagoland. The "Variety of attractions" dimension showed no significant difference between Atlantic City and Chicagoland, with Las Vegas being rated the highest and Connecticut the lowest.

In terms of the Customer service variable, this study found no significant difference between Atlantic City and Connecticut. Chicagoland was rated the lowest in terms of customer service. The dimension of Value for money also reported no significant difference between Atlantic City and Chicagoland. Las Vegas was given the highest average score of 3.56, while the other gaming markets were rated in the 2's.

The variable Group tour appeal found no significant difference between Chicagoland and Connecticut, with Las Vegas scoring higher than a 3.5 average score. For the dimension Family appeal, no significant difference was found between Atlantic City and Connecticut or Chicagoland and Connecticut. This can be interpreted to mean that the only gaming market that is not viewed the same in terms of family appeal is Las Vegas. The respondents of this study view Las Vegas as an option for family vacations and gave it the highest average rating among the four gaming markets. The component of Adult appeal found no significant difference between Chicagoland and Connecticut. Las Vegas was given the highest average rating, followed by Atlantic City.

Lastly, the final cognitive variable measured was Affordable room rates. For this variable no significant difference was found between Atlantic City and Chicagoland or Chicagoland and Connecticut. Las Vegas was given the highest average rating across the four gaming markets.

Affective Perceptions

A total of sixteen *t*-tests were performed (4 variables X 4 gaming markets) to test the affective perceptions. The repeated measures analysis was performed on the affective perceptions of Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Chicagoland (IL, IN), and Connecticut. The multivariate tests of Pillai's Trace and Wilks's Lambda were significant at 0.0001 probability level. Mauchly's test of Sphericity was significant for each of the four affect variables indicating that the variance differences between gaming markets are not equal across the sixteen variables. Thus, the Greenhouse-Geisser and Huynh-Feldt corrected *F*-values were used and were significant at 0.012 or lower probability level for all four variables, which indicated that at least one pair of gaming destinations are different on each affect variable.

On the Pleasant/Unpleasant scale, Las Vegas was rated more positively than Atlantic City, Chicagoland, and Connecticut. There was no significant difference among other destinations. Each of the four gaming markets were seen as different on the Arousing/Sleeping scale, with Las Vegas receiving the highest average score on the Arousing/Sleepy scale. Connecticut, on the other hand, received the lowest average score. The Relaxing/Distressing scale determined that Atlantic City was not significantly different from Chicagoland, and Atlantic City was not significantly different from Connecticut. Las Vegas once again was given the highest average score.

On the Exciting/Gloomy scale, there was no significant difference between Chicagoland and Connecticut. However, Las Vegas and Atlantic City were perceived to be more exciting than Chicagoland and Connecticut with Las Vegas rated as the most exciting destination. Overall, in terms of the affective evaluations, the destinations from the most to least favorable were as follows: Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Connecticut, and Chicagoland.

Overall Image

The repeated measures analysis was performed on the overall image perceptions of Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Chicagoland (IL, IN), and Connecticut. Mauchly's test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.05$) for overall image, indicating that the variance differences between gaming markets are not equal. Since the sphericity assumption for repeated measures analysis was violated, the corrected *F*-values were used. The Greenhouse-Geisser and Huynh-Feldt corrected *F*-values were significant at 0.05 or lower probability level, which indicated that at least one pair of gaming destinations have different overall images. The Bonferroni main effect results showed that Las Vegas had the highest average score for overall image, followed by Atlantic City, and then Connecticut and Chicagoland together. These findings are consistent with the cognitive and affective perceptions which rated Las Vegas first, followed by Atlantic City on the majority of variables. Las Vegas had the highest average mean score on all cognitive and affective variables with the exception of Cleanliness of environment, so it is logical that Las Vegas would be rated first in terms of overall image as well. The affective evaluations placed Las Vegas highest in terms of pleasantness, arousing, relaxing, and exciting which, together with the cognitive evaluations, helped to form the respondent's overall image.

Behavioral Intentions

The repeated measures analysis was performed on the behavioral intentions of Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Chicagoland (IL, IN), and Connecticut. For each behavioral intention variable, the observed probability level for Mauchly's test of Sphericity was below 0.05, which indicated that the variance differences between gaming markets were not equal. Since the sphericity assumption for repeated measures analysis was violated, the corrected *F*-values were used. The Greenhouse-Geisser and Huynh-Feldt corrected *F*-values were significant at 0.025 (0.05/2) or lower probability level for both variables, indicating that at least one pair of gaming destinations are different on both recommendation and visitation intention variable.

With regard to recommending each of the gaming markets to family or friends and intention to visit or revisit, no significant difference was found between Chicagoland and Connecticut at 0.025 probability level. The respondents perceived both Chicagoland and Connecticut to be the same in terms of giving recommendations and visiting for the first time or revisiting in the future. Las Vegas received the highest average score on both variables with scores in the 4's and Atlantic City received the second highest average

Variables	Gaming Markets			
	Las Vegas	Atlantic City	Chicagoland	Connecticut
Cognitive				
Variety of Games	4.61(.721)	4.04(.825)	3.55(.721)	3.46(.738)
Shows/Entertainment	4.65(.723)	3.38(.897)	2.71(.761)	2.71(.778)
Proximity to attractions	3.89(1.024)	3.23(.967)	3.18(.878)	2.64(.793)
Restaurants/dining	4.35(.811)	3.45(.989)	3.43(.832)	3.22(.808)
Weather	4.03(.980)	2.75(.810)	2.29(.696)	2.53(.671)
Casino Comps (Freebies)	3.61(1.045)	3.23(9.00)	2.89(.699)	2.75(.682)
Casino promotions	3.81(1.025)	3.27(.902)	2.91(.676)	2.85(.793)
Player clubs	3.91(.852)	3.32(.796)	2.95(.626)	2.66(.613)
Safety and security	3.61(.966)	2.96(.974)	2.97(.853)	3.45(.766)
Cleanliness of environment	3.68(.983)	2.82(1.030)	2.98(.704)	3.72(.730)
Shopping	3.95(1.016)	3.21(.963)	3.39(.856)	2.93(.675)
Ease of travel to	3.76(1.188)	3.32(1.059)	3.37(1.027)	2.89(.960)
Variety of tourist attractions	4.08(1.029)	3.03(.976)	3.13(.827)	2.45(.678)
Customer service	3.98(.917)	3.44(.838)	3.24(.739)	3.33(.724)
Value for money	3.56(1.075)	2.88(.968)	2.81(.746)	2.66(.789)
Group tour appeal	3.92(1.019)	3.44(.988)	3.00(.834)	2.91(.839)
Family appeal	4.51(.805)	3.96(.892)	3.33(.798)	3.32(.872)
Adult appeal	3.44(1.056)	2.98(.908)	2.87(.757)	2.83(.667)
Affective				
Pleasant/Unpleasant	4.14(1.073)	3.07(1.227)	2.86(1.032)	2.96(1.041)
Arousing/Sleepy	4.41(.922)	3.42(1.130)	2.88(1.035)	2.67(1.116)
Relaxing/Distressing	3.45(1.112)	2.96(1.084)	2.82(.942)	3.10(1.084)
Exciting/Gloomy	4.48(.911)	3.37(1.207)	2.88(1.063)	2.90(1.039)
Overall Image	4.34(1.029)	3.32(1.173)	2.75(.997)	2.76(1.091)
Behavioral Intentions				
Recommend	4.41(1.197)	3.08(1.300)	2.61(1.094)	2.71(1.105)
Visit/Revisit	4.15(1.260)	3.02(1.362)	2.59(1.247)	2.69(1.268)

score on each of the variables with scores in the 3's. Consistently, Atlantic City came in second behind Las Vegas. Connecticut received the third ranked scores, with Chicagoland producing the lowest scores on each of the two variables.

Image Differences among Gaming Markets: Repeated Measures Analysis with Multiple Comparison Tests

Variables	Gaming Markets				Greenhouse-Geiser	Huynh-Feldt	F-ratio	p-value
	Las Vegas	Atlantic City	Chicagoland	Connecticut				
Variety of games	4.16a	4.04b	3.55c	3.46d	.824	.834	213.48	0.000*
Shows/entertainment	4.65a	3.38b	2.71c	2.72d	.914	.927	440.92	0.000*
Proximity to Attractions	3.89a	3.23b	3.18b	2.64c	.865	.876	101.50	0.000*
Restaurants/dining	4.35a	3.45b	3.43b	3.22c	.961	.975	114.87	0.000*
Weather	4.03a	2.75b	2.29c	2.53d	.754	.762	273.56	0.000*
Casino comps (Freebies)	3.61a	3.23b	2.89c	2.75d	.729	.737	82.26	0.000*
Casino promotions	3.81a	3.27b	2.91c	2.85c	.796	.806	107.72	0.000*
Player Clubs	3.91a	3.32b	2.95c	2.66d	.799	.808	272.31	0.000*
Safety and security	3.61a	2.96b	2.97b	3.45a	.857	.868	56.97	0.000*
Cleanliness of environment	3.68a	2.82b	2.98b	3.72a	.856	.867	93.51	0.000*
Shopping	3.94a	3.21b	3.39c	2.93d	.855	.866	76.26	0.000*
Ease of travel to	3.76a	3.32b	3.37b	2.89c	.886	.898	39.06	0.000*
Variety of tourist attractions	4.08a	3.03b	3.13b	2.45c	.860	.871	182.59	0.000*
Customer Service	3.98a	3.44b	3.24c	3.33b	.801	.810	83.35	0.000*
Value for money	3.56a	2.88b	2.81b	2.66c	.846	.857	94.67	0.000*
Group tour appeal	3.92a	3.44b	3.00c	2.91c	.925	.938	83.70	0.000*
Family appeal	3.09a	2.50b	2.71c	2.57b, c	.852	.863	23.96	0.000*
Adult appeal	4.51a	3.96b	3.33c	3.32c	.881	.893	215.51	0.000*
Affordable room rates	3.44a	2.98b	2.87b, c	2.83c	.839	.850	48.21	0.000*
Pleasant/Unpleasant	4.14a	3.07b	2.86b	2.96b	.887	.899	97.32	0.000*
Arousing/Sleepy	4.41a	3.42b	2.88c	2.67d	.826	.836	176.34	0.000*
Relaxing/Distressing	3.45a	2.96b, c	2.82b	3.10c	.771	.780	23.88	0.000*
Exciting/Gloomy	4.48a	3.37b	2.88c	2.90c	.864	.875	175.12	0.000*
Overall Image	4.34a	3.32b	2.75c	2.76c	.862	.873	168.14	0.000*
Recommend	4.14a	3.08b	2.61c	2.71c	.862	.873	131.79	0.000*
Visit/Revisit	4.15a	3.02b	2.59c	2.69c	.936	.949	124.54	0.000*

Reliability and Validity Assessment

The findings indicated that qualitative and quantitative responses were mostly converged, which provided evidence for the reliability of the responses. The reliability of multi-item measures (affect and behavioral intention) was checked by Cronbach's alpha (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). A reliability score greater than 0.70 indicates a good reliability. The reliability scores for affective evaluations were 0.84 (Las Vegas), 0.88 (Atlantic City), 0.83 (Chicagoland), and 0.81 (Connecticut). The reliability scores for behavioral intentions were 0.88 (Las Vegas), 0.85 (Atlantic City), 0.78 (Chicagoland), and 0.85 (Connecticut). These results provided support for the reliability of the results. The predictive validity of the cognition and affect attributes was assessed by correlations of these measures to behavioral intent measures (recommendation and visitation intention). The results showed that all correlations are significant at 0.0001 probability level and ranged from 0.330 to 0.610, providing support for the predictive validity.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the images and perceptions of survey respondents in an attempt to reveal the perceived strengths and weaknesses of four selected gaming destinations- Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Chicagoland (IL, IN), and Connecticut- as well as cognitive perceptions, affective perceptions, overall image, and behavioral intentions for each gaming place to get a better understanding of how to more effectively market these gaming destinations.

The overall findings indicate that for the sample of gaming patrons, they view each gaming market differently in terms of cognitive, affective, overall image, and behavioral intentions. These differences, which were discovered through a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions, have identified the strengths and weaknesses of the gaming markets. This information will be imperative to forming a more accurately targeted marketing and positioning strategy for each of the selected gaming areas.

The results of this study have been enhanced and confirmed by the answers to the open-ended questions about each gaming market. While the cognitive, affective, overall image, and behavioral intentions of each gaming market were determined through a rank system, the qualitative responses provided further clarification and support for the scores each market received. For example, Connecticut was rated the highest in terms of cleanliness of environment. Qualitative responses about Connecticut revealed that respondents identify the area with the country, trees, and land, which can explain the higher rating in terms of cleanliness. The other destinations were all viewed as being more urban and dirty. Cleanliness of environment is the one cognitive attribute in which Las Vegas did not receive the highest average mean score.

Atlantic City received the lowest average mean score on Safety and security. Incorporating the keywords (Dirty/Seedy/Scary) identified in the open ended responses helps to explain why Safety and security might be rated so poorly. Respondents did not have a safe image of Atlantic City.

Connecticut was consistently ranked the lowest, with the exception of Cleanliness of environment, on most all variables, in particular the cognitive variables. This is no surprise considering the number of respondents that indicated they were not familiar with Connecticut as a gaming market. The same may be said of Chicagoland. Respondents' lack of familiarity with the area more than likely affected its gaming image. Both destinations, essentially, do not appear to have a gaming image.

Finally, the attribute Family appeal provides interesting results. The only gaming market that is not viewed the same in terms of Family appeal is Las Vegas. This result is remarkable considering that several years ago Las Vegas made the decision to do away with directly appealing to families and has since been promoting the city as an adult destination. The respondents of this study still view Las Vegas

as an option for family vacations and gave it the highest average rating among the four gaming markets. The responses to the open ended questions, however, provide no support for this conclusion. The words “family”, “children”, “kids”, or “family appeal”, did not appear in any of the responses. This may indicate that, as an image for Las Vegas, Family appeal does not immediately pop into one’s mind, but, when comparing Las Vegas to the other gaming markets, respondents felt, especially since they were not particularly familiar with all of the other markets, Las Vegas was the best option in this study.

Comparing affective and cognitive responses to the open ended questions also provide some interesting results. Las Vegas overwhelmingly outperformed the other three gaming markets in terms of affective evaluations. This provides evidence that travelers to a specific gaming destination are not just looking for specific cognitive attributes. They are looking for a destination that makes them feel a certain way, in this case, Excited or Fun. Las Vegas is associated with both of those feelings. Fun was mentioned in the top ten of the other three gaming markets, however, it was not as prominent.

Atlantic City was more closely associated with the Boardwalk and Ocean than it was with Gaming. Gaming companies in Atlantic City can use this information to their advantage by incorporating the Boardwalk and Ocean into their advertising and marketing campaigns. Boardwalk and Ocean are strengths for the area because this is how people view it. At the same time, attention should also focus on the fact that respondents viewed Atlantic City as Old and Dirty. Perhaps the image of Old and Dirty explains why the respondents do not view Atlantic City as Fun.

Both Chicagoland and Connecticut are closely associated with Weather, and not in a positive way. It is difficult to control the weather, but, if the image that potential customers have of the area includes Weather, then Weather may be considered a strength in these areas and perhaps incorporated into marketing campaigns. Both destinations also are seen as fun and exciting. Connecticut, however, is also seen as boring. How can a destination be both fun and boring? The contrast of the two affective variables is an indication that Connecticut CVBs may be targeting the right audience only part of the time (Fun), but not always (Boring). Mixed images are being sent to customers, whether intentional or not.

The qualitative results were compared to Aaker’s (1997) study about brand personality. Aaker (1997) indicates that a brand has personality traits, just as people do, and people identify with those brand personality traits. The same personality traits used to describe people can be used to describe, for example, products or destinations. The results of the present study, however, indicate that none of the gaming markets have a distinct personality. Of the many characteristics or images used to describe the gaming markets, only one, Excitement, appeared in Aaker’s (1997) list.

This study separated image into several different components to look at each facet independently. Researchers in a variety of disciplines have stated that image is comprised of two main components: cognitive and affective evaluations (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Information presented in this research project has allowed for the separation of all facets of image- cognitive evaluations, affective evaluations, overall image, and behavioral intentions- in order to get a more accurate look at each gaming destination. Essentially, marketers and casino management will have a more precise view of each gaming destination because they can look not only at cognitive perceptions in terms of attributes, but also affective evaluations, and overall image in formulating a more effective image management plan and position strategy.

Implications

The results of this research project have both practical and theoretical implications. Theoretically this research proved that a combination of quantitative and qualitative perceptions is required to get a more accurate understanding of each gaming market. While the quantitative questions on cognitive perception, affective perception, overall image, and behavioral intentions provided interesting results, the free-

response, qualitative questions uncovered perceptions that were undeterminable through simply answering the quantitative questions.

These results would be beneficial to the local governments of each of these areas to help in tourism related projects and budgets. Private gaming companies should be interested in the results to help them more accurately position themselves not only within each market, but within the United States in general. This information will allow local convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs) to get an idea of their image, and how that image compares to other gaming areas, and develop a brand for their destination. In addition, CVB's might also find this information vital to their city promotion plan. City promoters can re-evaluate their current positioning strategy and make changes and modifications in order to establish a more favorable image for their destination. For each of the four destinations, marketers will be able to compare what they are offering as a destination with what consumers are demanding. Any discrepancies between the supplied offerings and the demanded offerings provide opportunities for improvement. For example, in this study it was determined that Las Vegas was rated low in terms of Safety and security. The respondents perceived the security presence within the city to be less than what they expected. Being aware that safety is a concern for visitors and that the respondents of this survey rated security rather low, city officials, marketers, and hotel management can increase security presence in order to make guests feel more at ease.

The gaming market of Chicagoland might launch a full scale marketing plan in an effort to get more people to recommend their casinos and visit again. Chicagoland was rated the lowest of the four destinations on both of the behavioral intention questions. Lack of awareness of the area no doubt has an effect on those intentions. Receiving low scores for Recommendations and Intent to visit or Revisit could potentially close a business. Chicagoland marketers and hotel management need to determine the best positioning strategy to increase the possibility of people recommending their casinos.

The responses to the qualitative questions produced some beneficial perceptions and images of each of the gaming areas that might be useable in forming different marketing campaigns aimed at a variety of different segments. With regard to the weaknesses determined by the results of this study, each of the gaming markets should focus their efforts on improving only those attributes that they have control over. For example, Las Vegas scored second to Connecticut on one cognitive variable, Cleanliness of environment. In the future Las Vegas might want to implement a citywide clean-up program or consider initiating further research on which areas of the city people feel need improvement. An example of a weakness that is out of the control of anyone, is weather. Chicagoland and Connecticut both scored rather low in terms of the weather attribute. These two destinations might want to focus more on enticing customers through targeted promotions that incorporate the weather, or with promotions during the more favorable seasons.

The qualitative results also have implications for creating brand personality. Gaming destinations, using results such as those found in this study, have the opportunity to create a personality for their city. That personality may try to incorporate the traits as defined by Aaker (1997), or incorporate new descriptors. The opportunity exists to create a new brand personality scale using descriptors that pertain directly and specifically to gaming destinations, not to mention other destination types.

With various forms of gaming present in most of the states within the United States, the competition for gaming profit is increasing with each new casino opening. Each gaming market needs to evaluate whether the demand for its products is a reflection of the reality. Gaming markets should compare their intended image, or the image they supply, to the perceived image held by the respondents of this survey. If there are differences then a brand positioning strategy can be adjusted to close the gap between planned image and perceived image. For example, Las Vegas received the highest average mean score for the cognitive variable of Family appeal. In the early 90s Las Vegas was attempting to become a more family-

oriented destination. Today, however, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), has chosen to market Las Vegas as an adult-themed/ “what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas” destination. The quantitative results of this study show that respondents still view Las Vegas as a family-oriented town even though that is not the main focus of the marketing campaign. The LVCVA needs to decide if they should correct their positioning strategy to either include this current perception, try to change it, or ignore it based on the qualitative results (open ended responses) of the study. At the very least, the LVCVA can conduct research into the difference between the qualitative and quantitative results for the Family appeal variable.

Limitations of the Study

The most significant limitation to this research is that the results are not generalizable across the population of the United States. When using the Internet to conduct online research, it is extremely difficult to obtain a representative sample. People without Internet access and people who experience technical problems with computers are eliminated from the sample automatically.

The selected method for this research involved online surveying which in itself has several limitations. Technical problems arise occasionally and people experience frustration with sluggish Internet connections and slow loading WebPages. Online respondents might be hesitant to enter personal information on a website that they do not know is secure. Traditionally online surveys have lower response rates than other forms of data collection such as telephone and mail surveys.

Another major limitation of this study is concerning the selection of a sample. With the selected gaming destinations being across the United States, it was necessary to obtain a sample of respondents from all over the country. An Internet survey was selected as the best method to access the greatest number of people across the U.S. in the shortest period of time.

It was decided that the gaming destinations were to be selected according to reported gross revenue by the American Gaming Association (AGA) in 2004. The top four gaming markets for 2004 were selected to be studied in this research. A better measure of the top gaming destinations might be in terms of visitor volume or overall spending impact on a destination city. However, this information is much more difficult to access.

An added limitation to this study is in terms of the selected attributes that are used to measure cognitive perception and image. A review of the literature in gaming, tourism, and hospitality revealed the most common attributes used in past studies. However, very little information was available on specific attributes to be used in the measurement of gaming destinations. The interpretation of the results of this study is limited to those selected attributes. Steps were taken to ensure the selected gaming attributes were accurate through discussion board postings and conversations with experts in the field. The combination of attributes contained in this study has never been used previously in academic research and it will therefore be difficult to compare the results to other surveys.

This study was also limited in terms of which affective images respondents were asked to comment on. The present research was restricted to images of each place as a gaming market, rather than an overall evaluation of each place in terms of destination image. Finally, the positions for the destinations on affective, overall image and behavioral intentions may vary within visitors and non-visitors as this study could not compare them in each segment.

Further Research

Since this study was conducted with only four gaming markets and only a mere selection of nineteen cognitive attributes, it may be beneficial in the future to replicate this study with more gaming markets and a more complete list of attributes. At the very least, future research can apply the same methodology

and framework (quantitative and qualitative, with cognitive, affective, overall image, and behavioral intention questions) to a variety of other gaming markets across the country such as Tunica and Biloxi, Mississippi or Reno and Lake Tahoe, Nevada, or across the world. Due to the fact that very little literature existed on gaming specific attributes, a reproduction of this study in the future with improved cognitive attributes would be even more valuable for each of the gaming markets tested. The present research was able to determine a list of qualitative attributes for each of the four destinations selected. Future research can use these qualitative lists to develop a more accurate list of attributes.

Also, this study looked at gaming market areas which included land-based casinos, Indian casinos, and riverboat casinos spread throughout the United States. Further research on this subject might take a look at images and perceptions of just Indian gaming areas in relation to one another, or land-based casino operations compared to other land-based operations.

This study examined cognitive perception, affective perception, overall image, and behavioral intentions for each of the four selected destinations. A suggestion for further research would be to investigate the affective perceptions, overall image, and behavioral intentions of the same destinations or another set of destinations to compare the potential discrepancies that are present between the views of visitors and non-visitors.

Another option for future research might be to look at casino operations within a selected market to compare the cognitive, affective, behavioral intentions, and overall image of a specific casino/hotel with regards to other casino/hotels in the same market. Specific hotels would be used in place of the gaming destinations. This might help the marketing teams at each property tailor their marketing strategy even more. Overall, because this project was an attempt to close the gap in the tourism, hospitality, and gaming literature, projects similar to this one could only add to the growing knowledge base to help people truly understand how to promote, position, and market their product (location) to the right people.

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Research Proceedings of the 13th Annual Graudate Student Research Conference in Hospitality
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