

Business Tourists' Perceptions of Nation Brands and Capital City Brands: A comparison between Dublin / Republic of Ireland, and Cardiff / Wales

Heather Skinner

Institute of Place Management, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK

E-mail: heatherskinnercorfu@gmail.com

Address for correspondence:

Dr Heather Skinner, Vraganiotika, Lefkimmi, Corfu, Greece GR 490-80

Author biography

Heather Skinner is chair of the IPM's Responsible Tourism SIG, co-chair of the Academy of Marketing's Place Marketing & Branding SIG, and chair of the annual Corfu Symposium on Managing & Marketing Places. She researches and publishes on matters related to various aspects of place marketing, management, branding, and tourism, and is particularly interested in issues of place identity, representation, and perception.

Abstract

This paper explores the relatively under-researched area of business tourists' perceptions of conference destinations. Data were gathered through questionnaires distributed at two international conferences. Findings indicate that business tourists' perceptions of a destination can influence their decision to attend or not to attend events, and that they perceive the brand images of the nation in which they may spend leisure time differently from the cities in which conferences are often held. Conclusions suggest that, particularly in countries less frequently used for hosting such business events, DMOs should better co-ordinate the promotion of a capital city and host nation, and diversity of the destination as a whole, and encourage event planners to organise more trips and delegate activities further afield, away from the main conference venue.

Keywords: academic conferences; place brand image; perception; conference destinations;

MICE

Summary statement of contribution

This fills gaps in knowledge by focusing on business tourists' perceptions of the brand image attributes of places they have travelled, comparing capital cities and nation destination brands, particularly where business travellers spend additional leisure time pre or post-conference during the same visit rather than at a later date on a return visit. This paper also offers a managerial contribution of relevance to destinations less frequently used for business tourism.

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Introduction

The travel and tourism literature in general, and the literature on places as destination brands, tends to focus on leisure tourism, rather than on business tourism. When the brand attributes and images of business tourism destinations have been examined in the literature, the focus also tends to be more on analysis of the actual conference location, rather than considering the relationship between a specific conference destination brand and the brand of the host nation. Research into the relationship between a nation brand and its component place brands is also lacking within the overall place branding literature.

It is worth stating at the outset of this paper that there is a wider debate concerning transnational networks, and indeed such networks are deemed to be a major focus of globalisation studies. Business tourism could be researched from within this perspective, considering the ways that both informal and formal organisational networks function as nodal points in the infrastructure of globalisation. Cities hosting major international business tourism events such as conferences can also be understood from a similar perspective. Such a perspective however is not able to be understood from a consideration of nation states, because such transnational networks are not located within, but exist beyond, national borders (Unfried, Mittag and van der Linden, 2008). However, the focus of this paper is not to consider business tourism in this way. The focus of this paper is to better understand business tourists rather than the phenomenon of business tourism, and to better understand these tourists' perceptions of the cities and nations within which the

largest share of business tourism events take place. If this paper were to be considering such issues in light of, for example, business tourism in the USA, a focus on the city and nation may not be fruitful (even though it could be argued that a similar focus to that taken in this paper could be applied if translated into destination city and host state rather than host nation). However, while large nations such as the USA host the highest number of business tourism events of any single country (925 meetings), this accounts for less than 8% of the global market (ICCA, 2016). ICCA figures (2016) evidence that the member nation states of the European Union host almost 48% of all meetings held globally, rising to over 54% of the market when considering Europe as a whole as a geographical region.

In a recent comprehensive review of the literature on events tourism that included a consideration of business tourism, Getz and Page (2016) found that the limited literature on business tourism decision making has considered what motivates, inhibits or facilitates a delegate to attend an international conference, and the extent to which their satisfaction through prior attendance may lead to loyalty and intention to revisit a place. There has been much less research into business tourists' perceptions of the image of the destination to be visited, with more attention being paid to business tourists' perceptions of the image of the event itself (Mody, Gordon, Lehto, So & Li, 2016). Where business tourism destination image analysis has been undertaken, this has tended to be not from the perspective of the business tourist, but from the perspective of the event planners (Oppermann, 1996a) the people who usually select the event destination (Oppermann, 2000), yet even this issue linked to destination selection remains under-researched (Oršič & Bregar, 2015). Moreover, in the limited literature that does exist, more research has been focused on the destination location of the event itself as a unit of analysis than

on the host country. Indeed, prior to their recent study comparing the competitiveness for business tourism of new EU member states, Oršič and Bregar (2015, p. 46) noted that ‘no research was found comparing countries in reference to the meetings industry’.

This paper attempts to fill these gaps in the literature by focusing on business tourists’ perceptions of the brand image attributes of countries and cities they have travelled as a business tourism destination. Moreover, business tourists may also be leisure tourists in the same visit to a destination if they participate in pre or post-event leisure activities either within the destination city or wider around other places of interest in the region or nation (Millán, Fanjul & Moital, 2016). This paper will therefore also consider not only business tourists’ perceptions of two European capital city conference destinations, but also their perceptions of the way these place brand images compare with the images of the host nation, particularly if these business travellers spent additional leisure time pre or post-conference, thus also filling a gap in the literature into the behavioural and emotional responses of conference tourism participants to a destination (Happ, 2015; Millán et al., 2016), particularly from a qualitative perspective into business tourism experiences (Getz & Page, 2016).

Thus the overall contribution this paper makes is to the literature on destination influence, and destination criteria for decision making regarding business tourism, contextualised with specific reference to academic forms of business tourism.

Business Tourism

Business tourism is both significant and important to the travel industry (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993; Oppermann, 1996a, 1996b). However, as outlined in the introduction to this paper, business tourism remains an under-researched phenomenon within the travel and tourism literature, yet this is despite business tourists accounting for around 14% of all international travel, and the heavy reliance of some countries on this type of tourism, for example, Singapore, where 40% of its tourism revenue comes from business tourism (Banu, 2016). While acknowledging that ‘there is not one commonly used definition’ of business tourism, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) defines business tourism as ‘the provision of facilities and services to the millions of delegates who annually attend meetings, congresses, exhibitions, business events, incentive travel and corporate hospitality’. As the ICCA is the industry body for the global meetings industry, it is not surprising that such a definition is based on the supply side of business tourism activities.

However, in this paper that is considering the influence of a destination image and the destination criteria for decision making regarding business tourism, more of a focus will be taken in this paper on the demand side. Only limited research has been undertaken in this area, notably, as outlined in the introduction to this paper, on the destination selection criteria of the event planners, rather than the business tourists themselves (Oppermann, 1996a, 2000). Demand patterns for business tourism are also changing globally. Although there has been an increase of around 10% each year in the average numbers of business events being held, their size is decreasing (ICCA, 2013; Marques and Santos, 2016). By far the majority of business events

(79.8%) recorded by the ICCA between 2008-2012 ‘hosted fewer than 500 participants’ (Marques & Santos, 2016, p.2).

Europe remains ‘the number one tourist destination worldwide’ (European Travel Commission, 2016, p. 6) with most European nations reporting increased numbers of international visitors in 2016 compared with the same period in 2015, and macro-economic factors in certain markets appearing to have no adverse effect as yet on international business travel to the region. Within Europe, business tourism remains situated frequently in national capitals and city destinations (ICCA, 2016; Skinner & Byrne, 2009), where it has been estimated that the economic contribution from business tourism far outweighs that of leisure tourism, and can do so by up to two or three times in many cities (Bradley, Hall and Harrison, 2002). This is due not only to the geographic location of convention centres in capital cities, but also to the tendency of the major operations of foreign organisations to be located in a host nation’s capital city. Indeed 7 of the top 10 worldwide destinations identified in the ICCA’s most recently published (2016) rankings of top meeting destinations (Berlin, Paris, Vienna, London, Madrid, Lisbon and Copenhagen) are European national capitals. Of the other two European cities appearing in the top 10, Barcelona is the regional capital of Catalonia, and Istanbul is the most populous city in Turkey, along with being the centre of that country’s economic activities.

The following relates specifically to the UK economy, but in general, all business tourism tends to bring high-quality, high-value tourists to a destination. These tourists often use at least some of the same facilities as leisure tourists, and use the existing destination infrastructure, but their visits can also lead to improvements in the facilities of a destination, and attract inward

investment that leads to many increased economic benefits, including job creation (McNicoll, 2004) as new physical resources are built for the growing demands of a destinations' business tourists (Min & Roh, 2014). Moreover, business tourism leads to destinations offering a more diverse service, and this can lead to an extension of the tourist season (Millán et al., 2016; Oršič & Bregar, 2015) and help limit the effects of seasonality (Marques & Santos, 2016). Thus business tourism is not only highly lucrative, but also can become of strategic importance to national and regional economies. As such business tourism is also seen as an area of the tourism industry that has 'great potential for development' (Marques & Santos, 2016, p. 1), particularly as this relates to local and regional development by not only strengthening these places' tourism image, but also in 'influencing the return of visitors' (Marques & Santos, 2016, p. 3). Therefore, while business tourism in Europe continues to be centred on national capital cities, one implication of the trend for a higher number of meetings of a smaller size to be held (ICCA, 2013; Marques and Santos, 2016) is that other places within a country can now capitalise on attracting these smaller but more frequently held events. Business tourism therefore has wide economic impacts on local, regional and national economies (Getz & Page, 2016), calling for more developed research to be undertaken that may address some of the methodological criticisms of the current state of some existing economic impact assessments (Kumar & Hussain, 2014), which is relevant to the qualitative focus of the empirical research undertaken in this study.

In general the literature reaches consensus that it is the 'purpose of visit' that differentiates business tourism from leisure tourism (McNicoll, 2004, p. 4), not only the activity of travel itself (Bradley et al., 2002). Such definitions however, do not take into account that business and

leisure tourism may overlap in the same trip, when, for example, a business tourist arrives early to a destination or leaves at some point after the business event has ended in order to spend time in the destination as a leisure tourist. The literature extant literature acknowledges that, after the main theme of the event, which is the primary motivating factor, business tourists may be initially motivated to visit an event in a particular destination out of novelty and curiosity (Russet, 2000) and that they may then return again to a destination as leisure tourists (Millán et al., 2016). Research into this phenomenon in the UK suggests that return rates may be as high as 40% (Getz & Page, 2016). This not only lends credibility to the extant literature's findings regarding business tourists' levels of satisfaction with an initial visit leading to loyalty and revisits, but also strengthens the argument about business tourism's potential to provide a 'boost in leisure activities' (Marques & Santos, 2016, p. 1) particularly when business tourists extend their stay for leisure purposes in a destination. Yet when research has been undertaken with business tourists, the idea of a business tourist being motivated to attend an event in a particular destination in order to also engage in leisure pursuits has usually been found to be less of an identified factor in the extant literature (Happ, 2015). However, this is a key issue of interest to this study, particularly where the place brand image attributes of that tourist's business and leisure destinations may differ not only in the way these are communicated but also in the way they are perceived.

The role of promoting a destination to all target market segments usually falls to the Destination Management/Marketing Organisation (DMO). However, as tourists now seek a more 'integrated destination experience which is delivered through multiple components by numerous actors', Murray, Lynch and Foley (2016, pp. 877-880), have identified some of the challenges facing

DMOs in overcoming the ‘fragmented nature’ of a destination’s ‘governance structure’, in order to ‘develop an integrated marketing communication strategy to ensure a consistent message is being communicated to tourists’, leading them to call for DMOs to be involved in the creation of a ‘shared vision’ about a tourism destination among ‘this disparate and fragmented group of tourism stakeholders’. With specific reference to business tourism, Marques and Santos (2016) believe that there remains a role for not only DMOs, but also for the further creation of Conventions and Visitors Bureaus (CVB) to provide an appropriate supply infrastructure to event organisers in order to attract them to use a particular destination when planning a large scale business event. A recent study by the Union of International Associations (2015) found that of 425 responses, only 60 of their member organisations had used a local Convention Bureau’s services in the past 5 years, while 217 were not familiar with the type of services such an organisation could provide. Thus, if there were further creation of CVBs, these and DMOs would need to communicate clearly with event organisers to help them better understand the role they could play and services they could provide.

In summary, business tourism is defined by the purpose of the visit, and can also lead to leisure tourism not only on a repeat visit, but also on the same visit either pre or post the business event that is the main motivator for travel. Business tourism is of great current and potential relevance to places seeking to act competitively in global markets, and because the number of business tourism events is tending to increase while their number of attendees is decreasing, the role business tourism can play outside of national capital cities, and particularly to regional economies and non-urban centres, is one that remains under-researched, not only in terms of the business tourism destination location, but also to the wider region that may benefit from a

business tourist's leisure tourism. In particular, qualitative enquiry can be undertaken to better understand issues on the demand side of business tourism, where factors influencing business tourists' decision making criteria for decision making, including the influence of the destination itself. Thus filling a gap in the extant literature that tends to either focus on other parties in the destination selection criteria (particularly event organisers), and into more qualitative aspects of business tourism wider than its quantifiable economic impacts. Insights gained from such enquiry could also be of potential relevance to DMOs or CVBs that exist to promote a suitable image of a destination to its target markets.

Place brand image attributes

Destination image is important because it influences choice. However, the vast majority of destination image literature has been based on the perceptions of the leisure tourist and not the business traveller about places they may visit (Hankinson, 2005). In many cases, the use of the terms 'place marketing' and 'place branding' remains relatively interchangeable in the extant literature. The issue is further complicated when the terms 'marketing' and 'branding' are applied to specific types of places, be that tourism destinations, capital cities, regions, or other types of place (Hanna & Rowley, 2008; Skinner, 2008). While the identity of a place tends to fall within the realm of overall place marketing, place branding focuses on the way the place's identity is communicated from an inside-out approach (Skinner, 2008). Place brand image is then what is perceived by the recipients of the communication of the place brand identity (Skinner, 2011). Therefore, the issue of place brand image attributes seems to offer a relevant and appropriate theoretical basis on which to focus the empirical research for this study, focusing on the qualitative perceptions of business tourists regarding destination influence, and destination

criteria for decision making, while acknowledging that in the language of the extant travel and tourism literature, this topic is mainly referred to and studied as 'destination image' (Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Hankinson, 2005).

In this respect, context becomes important, not only to clarify the language used in various different bodies of literature (Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Skinner, 2008), but also the context of the various types of tourism studied. Pike and Kotsi (2016) stress that although the earliest studies into destination image published in the 1970s were indeed context specific, since that time context has tended to be absent from this aspect of the travel and tourism literature. One area where context does occur is in the extant literature relating to sports tourism (Kim, Chen & Funk, 2015). Here there can be seen to be some overlap with business tourism where the primary motivator to travel is the business event itself, because it is recognised that within sports tourism, whether the sports tourist is motivated to travel to a destination as a participant or observer, for sport tourists whose primary motivation to travel is sport, their initial image of an event destination may be dominated by the event itself' (Kim et al., 2015, p. 4). Therefore, within sports tourism, it is recognised that researchers should not only consider the cognitive, affective and conative components of the image of a destination (Gartner, 1994; Lawson & Baud-Bovey, 1977; and Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil, 2007), but also attitudinal components (Dann, 1996; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009) to a tourist's perceptions of a destination's brand image (Kim et al., 2015). It is also understood that, while 'attitude' 'image' and 'perception' may be defined differently by academics, in practice, tourists themselves do not tend to make any obvious differentiation between these various constructs (White, 2005). Thus leading Kim et al., (2015, p. 23) to conclude that for sports tourists whose primary motivation to travel is sport (even though a

specific destination may indeed have a specific attractor, such as, for example, a famous beach), it is more prudent for the destination marketer 'to understand how their tourists perceive their destination, in contrast to other destinations, in order to generate an appropriate emotive response'. Similarly it may be more prudent for marketers of business tourism destinations to not only focus on the infrastructure of the business events in urban areas, but also on how the overall destination differs from others similarly positioning themselves as business tourism destinations. This therefore reinforces the view that, even for business tourism, 'a destination must be favourably differentiated from its competition, or positively positioned, in the minds of the consumers' (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003, p. 37).

Similar to Marques and Santos (2016), and Murray et al., (2016), Hanna and Rowley (2013) also identify that the multiplicity and diversity of a place brand's stakeholders can lead to complexity in the development of salient place brand attributes, recognising that 'increasingly ... places have needed to consider branding in a wide range of contexts' (p. 1782). Hankinson (2005) classified leisure destination brand image attributes under five brand image attribute categories: *economic* (based on the extent to which a destination is seen as commercialised, and how expensive or cheap it is perceived); *physical environment* (in terms of a place's natural environment, and also its level of economic development, attractiveness, pace, climate, atmosphere, potential for interest, and also the extent to which it is perceived as comfortable and secure); *activities and facilities* (including the food available, suitability for children, for different types of vacation, tourist facilities and infrastructure, accessibility, and potential for interest and adventure); the overall appeal and favourability of *brand attitudes*; and *people* (including the culture of a place, the extent to which it is perceived as trendy, and also any existence of language barriers and

cultural distance). From a business tourism perspective he 'identified eight clusters of brand image attributes: physical environment, economic activity, business tourism facilities, accessibility, social facilities, strength of reputation, people characteristics and destination size'. While some of these attributes can be seen to be common for both leisure and for business tourism 'for example ... the overall attractiveness of the destination, its pace of life and feeling of security ... the role of people, the culture of the resident population, the character of the visitor market and accessibility ... the quality and choice of conference and hotel facilities are relevant to business tourism' (Hankinson, 2005, p. 29). Hussain, Raghvan and Kumar (2014, p. 4) note the importance of the environment in which a business tourism event takes place, because these are more closely related to the physical environment and a place's economic activity, which have been identified as 'the most salient destination image attributes' for business tourism.

The salient destination image attributes for leisure and for business travellers can thus be summarised as follows (Table 1):

Table 1: Comparing leisure and business tourism destination image attributes

Salient Destination Image Attribute Categories	
Leisure Tourism	Business Tourism
<i>Economic attributes</i>	<i>Economic activity</i>
<i>Physical environment</i>	<i>Physical environment</i>
<i>Activities and facilities</i>	<i>Business Tourism facilities</i>
<i>Brand attitudes</i>	<i>Strength of reputation</i>
<i>People</i>	<i>People characteristics</i>
	<i>Accessibility</i>
	<i>Destination size</i>
	<i>Social Facilities</i>

However, while a CVB may be tasked with the specific role of attracting business tourists to destination, the role of a DMO often involves communicating a place brand proposition that serves the needs of various different target markets, in this case both business and leisure tourists. Moreover, while not all European capital cities have a CVB or DMO undertaking this work, in some cases, and particularly in smaller countries, the nation's DMO (if one even exists) may be the only such body in existence, and will need to communicate the destination brand of the entire nation, while also attempting to promote the various brands of the nation's component places. It has also been found that a nation brand proposition, usually designed to serve general leisure tourism markets may not be as effective when targeting business tourists to its capital city, yet it cannot be ignored that a capital city's positioning and prominence in any branding efforts will tend to be influenced by the overall branding of the nation itself (Byrne and Skinner, 2009; Skinner, 2009).

There has been some previous research undertaken that is relevant to this study, that seeks to explore 'the way the marketing of a national capital city for business tourism both influences, and is influenced by, the marketing of the nation itself' (Byrne & Skinner, 2007, p. 55). For example, the nation of Ireland tends to be promoted on elements of its rural natural beauty, 'friendly people and a strong sense of culture', whereas its capital city, Dublin, is promoted separately and distinctively, 'differentiating Dublin from the competition and from the traditional image put forward in promoting the rest of Ireland' (Skinner & Byrne, 2009, p. 57). Dublin and Ireland are very well-known international destination brands. Other nation and city brands are much less famous and have a much less developed identity. Moreover, where a country, such as Wales 'does have an identity, it is often based upon historic perceptions grounded in cultural

symbols of dragons, druids and coal mining, yet Cardiff is a vibrant cosmopolitan capital city with many facilities and attractions, and an infrastructure that can support both general and business tourism to a very high standard' (Skinner, 2009, p. 34).

One final point needs to be made regarding context. This research focuses on one specific context of business tourism, travel to international academic conferences. In the case of academic conferences of this nature many delegates are often faced with a wide range of potential events to attend each year and limited funds with which to travel to these international events. However, because such choice exists, the nature of academic conference related travel, as opposed to 'academic tourism' which has been defined in the literature as relating to international students when studying abroad (Nash, Martin, Pearce & Sale, 2016), places more independence to at least some extent on an individual academic business traveller in deciding which conference to attend and in which destination. While Ando, Naoi, Iijima and Iramina (2015) also investigated academic business tourists' perceptions, their study focused on the participants' pre-trip expectations particularly about their visits to sites of historic interest undertaken as part of their trip, thus focusing on their perceptions, expectations and experiences as more akin to leisure tourists. This is the first study of its kind that considers academic business tourists perceptions of the image of the destination of their business trip, and the influence it had on their choice to attend a conference. An underpinning assumption made in this research was that the destination would have at least some influence on an individual's decision whether or not to attend a particular conference, not only the theme of the conference itself.

Method

Previous research into destination brand images has tended to be undertaken from the leisure rather than business tourist's perspective (Hankinson, 2005). Where business tourism has been researched, it tends less towards the perspective of the tourist and more towards the views of tourism experts (Marques & Santos, 2016). Even when destination image analysis has been researched with regard to business tourism destinations, this has also tended to be from the perspective of the event planners (Oppermann, 1996a) the people who usually select the event destination (Oppermann, 2000), and the image of business tourism destinations remains an area that is under-researched (Oršič & Bregar, 2015). With an aim to explore the relatively under-researched area of business tourists' perceptions of conference destinations, this research also sought business tourists' perceptions of both the capital city home of their business tourism event, and the event's host nation, in addition to seeking to understand the extent, if any, to which these issues impacted at the overlap between a business and leisure trip, particularly if these business travellers spent additional leisure time pre or post-conference, thus also filling a gap in the literature into not only the emotional but also the behavioural responses of conference tourism participants to a destination (Happ, 2015; Millán et al., 2016).

Empirical research into place brands tends to be undertaken from single case study research into a particular place (Hanna and Rowley, 2013). This paper therefore has considered the issues from a comparison of two business tourism destinations – two capital cities in two nations.

Data were gathered through self-completion questionnaires distributed to business tourists at two comparable business tourism events – a major international conference (the Academy of

Marketing Conference) that is held annually in different locations usually around the UK, but also occasionally in the Republic of Ireland. The 2005 data were gathered by responses to a questionnaire from 59 delegates attending the Academy of Marketing Conference held in Dublin, and from 66 delegates attending the Academy of Marketing Conference held in Cardiff in 2013. The questionnaires incorporated both qualitative and quantitative features, mixing both open and closed questions, and would thus entail a mix of analysis techniques. Questionnaire items considered the following issues:

- The extent to which the conference destination is of a particular concern to potential delegates in making a decision to attend an international conference
- Which particular aspects of the conference destination concern delegates most in making a decision to attend an international conference
- The extent to which the conference destination country had a significant contributory influence on the decision to attend this particular conference
- Which particular aspects of the nation destination experience would delegates identify as having had the greatest influence on their decision to attend the conference
- In making the decision to attend this conference, were delegates more or less influenced by its location in the nation or its location in the national capital city
- Did delegates' perceptions of the capital city as a conference destination differ significantly from their perceptions of the nation as a conference destination
- If so, on the basis of which specific attributes did delegates' perceptions of the capital city as a conference destination differ from their perceptions of the nation
- The extent to which delegates felt that the nation destination experience had affected their overall perceptions of the conference itself
- What particular defining characteristics, positive or negative, did delegates feel distinguished or differentiated the nation or its capital city as an international conference destination
- Whether or not delegates intentionally arrived early, or stayed after the conference to spend additional time in the capital city or country, by how many days, and whether this was for further business tourism or leisure purposes

Therefore not only were quantitative responses analysed for frequency, but also qualitative analysis was undertaken of the free responses and responses to open questions of these conference delegates, thus filling another gap in the literature identified by (Getz & Page, 2016, p. 603).

Choice of destination was purposive, and to some extent based upon convenience as the author attended both events as a business tourist participant in both conferences. However, there are further comparisons between Dublin the capital city of the Republic of Ireland, and Cardiff, the capital city of Wales, that do provide further underpinning justification for this choice. They are both national capital cities with good air, rail, and bus transport links, both are located on major rivers, and are located on their nation's coast. Both cities are the locations of many of the nation's attractions, including castles, cathedrals and museums. The Republic of Ireland shares a border with Northern Ireland, Wales shares a border with England, thus affording relative ease of travel between neighbouring nations. The Republic of Ireland's population at over 4.5 million people is greater than that of Wales whose population is around 3 million people, as is its size, over 70,000 km² compared with the under 21,000 km² geographic area of Wales. Both cities host MICE events, although in terms of the number of meetings taking place per city, on a worldwide basis Cardiff is ranked at 276 while Dublin ranks at 18. In comparison with other European cities, Cardiff is ranked at 139, whereas Dublin is ranked in 14th place (ICCA, 2016). Their relative size may account to at least some extent for the difference in these rankings.

Discussion of findings

While assuming that the theme of a business tourism event would be of primary concern to business tourists, this research found that in 2005 the conference destination itself was of some concern to 96% of delegates, in 2013 this had dropped somewhat, only being recorded as being of some concern to 78% of delegates, with 21% responding that it was of no concern at all, compared with only 3.5% in 2005. As one delegate to the 2013 event commented, the primary motivator is: *'probably more the theme than the place [but] accessibility helps'*.

Academics are faced with many potential conferences in their specific and general subject areas. While it is recognised that funding constraints across Higher Education will at least to some extent limit the number of conferences able to be attended by any one delegate in any year, given the choices facing academic business tourists in the number of conferences available, there was an assumption that the destination itself would have some influence on a delegate's decision whether or not to attend a particular event. That the destination of such an event does influence delegate choice appears to be borne out by these findings. The extent to which this issue is specific to academic forms of business tourism, or could be generalisable across others forms of business tourism is one that could benefit from future research, particularly considering a potential typology of business tourists, their level of freedom to select business events to attend, and any constraints on their selection criteria. The selection of destination by academic event organisers, compared with event organisers of more general forms of business tourism (Oppermann, 1996a, 2000) also remains an area that could also offer insights that could contribute to knowledge and understanding of academic forms of tourism.

The image of both destinations was perceived positively in open and free responses:

Ireland / Dublin

'In Ireland the language is an important factor...you can understand everybody in English'.

'As a European Destination I would see (Ireland) as being a highly accessible destination'

Wales / Cardiff

'It is an attractive destination, hadn't been to Wales before'

'Cardiff is a new part in the UK that I had not visited ... it has many attractions that I would like to visit'

Delegates at both the 2005 and 2013 conferences were asked which particular aspect of a conference destination was of most concern when making a decision to attend an international conference. Unsurprisingly, the theme of the event itself was the primary consideration. However, issues relating specifically to the destination identified by all delegates were quite consistent with those which the extant literature had previously identified (Hankinson, 2005), with these considerations being:

- Destination Accessibility
- Associated Expense and Costs
- Destination Image: Attractiveness and Appeal
- The Novelty of a Destination
- Destination Culture
- Destination Safety and Security

While increasing constraints on HE funding make it unsurprising that the accessibility of a business tourism destination, in this case an international academic conference, along with associated expense and costs remain of high importance when making decisions about attending such an event, one issue that arose from this research that has not been well covered in the business tourism literature is novelty of a destination, the attraction of being able to attend, for business tourism purposes, a place a delegate may not have previously visited, and is something that may fruitfully be capitalised upon by event organisers, DMOs and CVBs. ICCA (2016) data includes destination rankings (by nation and by city) based upon how many MICE events are held. Thus, for a low-ranking nation or city, the novelty of being somewhere not currently renowned as a MICE destination, could prove to be a positive destination brand image attribute if

promoted carefully, providing of course that the destination had adequate facilities to host such events (Hussain et. al., 2014; Skinner & Byrne, 2009).

One delegate did make a very interesting point regarding the destination of an event, that:

“the destination doesn't make me attend a conference, but it can make me not go to a conference”

The conference destination nation (Ireland) was of significant or some influence on delegates' decisions to attend the 2005 event (83%), the conference destination nation (Wales) was of significant or some influence on only just under half of delegates' decisions to attend the 2013 event (49%). The difference in influence of these two host nations is also interesting and, while bearing potential for future research, does contribute to filling a gap in the literature comparing countries for business tourism purposes (Oršič & Bregar, 2015). Interestingly, Ireland promotes business tourism throughout the Republic through Fáilte Ireland's Business Tourism section (Byrne and Skinner, 2009) whereas the former DMO 'Cardiff & Co.', charged with promoting Cardiff for business and leisure tourism, was wound up in 2012, with business tourism and all tourism promotion to the nation's capital falling under the nation's DMO 'Visit Wales'. Ireland also ranks higher than Wales as a business tourism destination by number of meetings held, and Ireland also tends to promote a stronger and more positive brand proposition in general around the world than does Wales, which continues to have a less well developed brand identity (Skinner, 2009; Skinner and Byrne, 2009). Marques and Santos (2016) have stressed the need for the further creation of CVBs to provide an appropriate supply infrastructure to event organisers. This research raises an interesting concern about whether smaller cities, even national capitals

that do not currently attract high numbers of business events, and also non-urban regions should indeed invest in the creation of appropriate CVBs rather than divest of them.

More similar results between destinations were found when comparing the influence of capital cities than the results comparing the influence of the host nation, with the city of Dublin being reported as highly or somewhat influencing 50% of respondent delegates' decisions to attend the conference, and the city of Cardiff being an influencing factor on 58% of respondent delegates' decisions. This may be simply a result of the expectation of delegates that a capital city would offer an appropriate conference infrastructure, or the way a capital city may have developed a stronger brand identity than an entire nation.

Respondents were asked to identify particular defining characteristics they felt distinguish these nations Ireland and Wales and their capital cities Dublin and Cardiff as an international conference destination. All responses were positive about both the nations and their capital city, and have been ranked according to frequency mentioned in open-ended qualitative responses (Table 2):

Table 2: Characteristics defining an attractive conference destination

2005 event	2013 event	Characteristic
#1	#2	Friendliness and Welcome of Local Population
#2	#3	Entertainment and Recreation Possibilities
#3	#1	Culture & History
#4	#4	Destination Image: Attractiveness and Appeal: Capital City
#5	#5	Accessibility
#6	#6	Language
#7	#7	Destination Image: Attractiveness and Appeal: Nation

Qualitative results from the open ended questions for both 2005 and 2013 also showed that respondents did indeed perceive place brand image attributes differently when considering these for the overall nation and then for its capital city. In general, the brand attributes of the capital cities were deemed to be more limited than that of the nation: for example, one delegate put it thus: *“Wales is a country, Cardiff is a city. Cardiff means one thing, Wales means a lot”*. Moreover, both nations were seen to be more scenic and rural, with the cities being described as more cosmopolitan, lively and easier to access: *“Cardiff seemed more cosmopolitan than I had pegged Wales to be”*. In this case, by frequency mentioned in open-ended qualitative responses, the perceived attributes of both these nations and their capital cities, and the comparisons between both types of destination, were the same (Table 3):

Table 3. National and capital city brand attributes compared

Rank	Perceived attributes of Nations (Ireland and Wales)	Rank	Perceived attributes of Capital Cities (Dublin and Cardiff)
1.	Rural; Scenic; Countryside	1.	Entertaining; Lively
2.	Different types of experience	2.	Cosmopolitan
3.	Fewer amenities	3.	Accessible
		4.	Cultural Capital
		5.	Infrastructure

Previous research by Byrne and Skinner (2007, p. 61) found that, for business travellers, there was is 'a tendency ... to think more in terms of city than country destinations when discussing international business tourism', but also that while 'in larger countries it is more about the city. Smaller countries it would be more about the entire destination'. It was therefore interesting to find that one delegate at the Cardiff event in 2013 made the following observation:

'Cardiff is a city destination with similar amenities to many other cities. "Wales" as a conference destination could encompass many possibilities e.g. use of a conference centre in remote countryside, national park etc.'

Thus larger and well-known national capitals can continue to position themselves as the 'flagship' destination under the nation's corporate umbrella branding (Skinner, 2009), smaller destination nations, or nations whose cities are less well known could capitalise on the trend towards a decrease in size of events (Marques & Santos, 2016), and consider attracting business tourism to destinations outside of their national capitals, where the novelty value would be increased by hosting such events in less usual and non-urban locations.

27% of delegate respondents had arrived early to the 2005 event in Dublin, with just under half of these (43.75%) spending just one day in Ireland before the conference, 75% of whom had come for general tourism rather than business purposes. 31% of respondents had arrived early to the 2013 event in Wales, similar to the 2005 event, just under half of these (55%) spending just one day in Wales before the conference, 58% of whom had come for general tourism rather than business purposes. Post-event, 30% of delegate respondents indicated that they would spend additional time in Dublin or Ireland after the 2005 conference had ended, over 60% of whom

planned to stay for more than one day. In 2013, 28% of delegate respondents indicated that they would spend additional time in Cardiff or Wales after the conference had ended, over 47% of whom planned to stay for more than one day, 84% for general tourism rather than business purposes. These original insights into the overlap between an individual's visit to a destination as a business and a leisure tourist in the same trip can be seen to extending the definition of business tourism to take into account more hybrid forms of travel where business and leisure purposes may be combined in the same visit, as opposed to current definitions based solely on the purpose of a trip as either one undertaken for business or for leisure (Bradley et al., 2002; McNicoll, 2004). Moreover, delegates to both events did not confine their extended leisure time in the capital city hosting the business event. This points to an interesting result that impacts on the destination brand identity promoted about a nation and about its component places, that may have practical relevance to DMOs and CVBs, and also one which may impact on future theorisation of business tourism, which can take into account its more hybrid nature, when delegates combine a business trip with leisure travel.

Context is important when researching destination image Pike and Kotsi (2016). These findings can inform our knowledge about destination influence, and destination criteria for decision making regarding business tourism, contextualised to academic forms of business tourism. Specifically, and in summary, these results show that:

- The destination image of the location of a business tourism event is of some influence in a delegate's selection criteria. Within this research, the destination image was of some influence to 96% of delegates to an academic conference held in Dublin, the capital city

of Ireland, in 2005, and to 78% of delegates to the same academic conference when held in Cardiff, the capital city of Wales in 2013.

- The destination image of a well-known nation with a strong and positive brand identity (Ireland) was of a significant influence on decision making of 83% of delegates, whereas the destination image of a nation with a less well-known identity was of significant influence to only 49% of delegates.
- Whereas, the destination image of these nation's capital cities was of a much more similar level of influence to delegates (50% attending the conference in Dublin, 58% attending the conference in Cardiff).
- The brand image of both nations were seen to be rural, scenic, countryside, offering different types of experiences, but with fewer amenities.
- Whereas their national capital cities were deemed to be more entertaining, lively, cosmopolitan, accessible, cultural, and offering a better infrastructure.
- However, it was the attractiveness and appeal of the capital cities rather than their host nations that ranked higher when considering the characteristics delegates believe define an attractive conference destination.

Conclusion

This research focused on business tourists', rather than meeting organisers', perceptions of the brand image attributes of places they have travelled, along with a consideration of the way perceptions of the place brand images of a capital city destination compare with the images of the host nation, particularly where business travellers spent additional leisure time pre or post-

conference. Findings indicate that, after the theme of the event itself, a conference destination is indeed one of the significant influences in a business tourist's decision to attend an event, and can also be a deciding factor to not attend, especially if the destination is perceived as difficult to get to, expensive, and if the destination image is unattractive, with little cultural appeal, and is perceived as unsafe. However, one factor that has received little attention in the literature to date is the attraction of novelty, a place a business tourist may not have visited previously and may indeed never have decided to visit had it not been that a business event was taking place. Thus, while the major nations and capital cities that host many such events will probably continue to do so, particularly as they may be highly accessible, with good conference infrastructure, and international transport links, the novelty of a destination that may not be so highly ranked in terms of number of events held, can be a positive attribute on which to promote and encourage attendance at an event. There also appears to be a need for better co-ordination between the promotion of business tourism capital city and host nation by DMOs to positively affect the cross-over between business and leisure tourism during the same visit. Possibly also encouraging a better understanding of the diversity of the destination as a whole, with event planners being encouraged to organise more trips and delegate activities further afield, away from the main conference venue. Taking delegates to participate in activities or visit places of interest even outside of the destination city may not be detrimental to the overall delegate experience, even if the facilities outside of the city are not as highly developed, because delegates have recognised that while a destination capital city may be more lively, entertaining and cosmopolitan, they also recognise the charm associated with the wider host nation's rural and scenic landscape, and these broader destination image attributes are also perceived as positive by business travellers.

There are limitations to this study. Data were gathered anonymously. Some attendees at the 2013 event may not have been present at the 2005 event, or may not have participated in the research at the earlier event. Some attendees may have participated in the research at both events. Therefore it was not possible to present the findings from this research in a longitudinal manner to show the way individual responses may have stayed consistent or changed with regard to issues such as the conference destination itself being of a concern to delegates, or indeed if any specific aspect of a destination changed in importance over time when making a decision to attend an international conference. It also was not therefore relevant to provide cross-tabulated analysis of the different sets of data. Because this research focused on an academic conference, it can be inferred that increasing constraints on HE funding may well have impacted on perceptions of costs incurred when considering the accessibility of a business tourism destination, as may heightened concerns over terrorism have grown during the period the two studies were conducted when considering the safety and security aspects of international travel. The research focused only on two English-speaking European destinations. Future research could therefore fruitfully focus on gathering longitudinal data, on gathering data on a wider range of business tourism events, and on gathering data across a wider geographical area. In the case of academic conferences of this nature many delegates are often faced with a wide range of potential events to attend each year and limited funds with which to travel to these international events. It would also therefore be interesting for research into business tourism destination image to consider the issues raised in this paper when business tourists have less or no choice in their destination, or indeed, in whether or not to travel for business purposes at all.

What this research has shown, and herein lies its main originality and contribution, is that the image of a business tourism destination is indeed of concern to the majority of business tourists. This image can influence a business tourist to attend an event, and can also influence a business tourist not to attend. While the theme of a business event remains the primary consideration, other issues considered by the participants remain consistent with earlier studies into destination image, but the issue of destination novelty is one that has arisen from this research as one of interest, particularly when a delegate retains the choice to attend a business event in a place not previously visited. Therefore, less well-known destination nations and places within these nations should capitalise on this novelty factor, especially when considering attracting smaller events following the trend in declining attendances at business events that no longer mean a business tourism destination requires a large and sophisticated business tourism infrastructure with the availability of large convention centres. However, when better known and capital city destinations do influence business tourists to travel, DMOs and CVBs must be aware of the different perceptions that business travellers have of capital city and nation brands. City brands tend to be perceived in a much more limited manner than that of a nation, with nation brands seen to be more scenic and rural, compared with the lively cosmopolitan city brands. This research has also evidenced that it is vital for DMOs to gain a better understanding of these perceptions in order to attract a business tourist to spend additional time pre or post-event in the nation in which the business event has been held during the same visit, and not only to believe business tourists may return as leisure tourists at a later date. It may no longer be appropriate to treat business and leisure travellers as such distinct and separate segments as previous research would seem to suggest.

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