Nazi past and destination image: the case of Linz, Austria

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Abstract

Establishing a place as a competitive and attractive tourist destination on the already overcrowded tourism market is a challenging task on its own but paired with difficult heritage makes it a substantial obstacle for any Destination Management Organisation (DMO). The destination investigated in this research is Linz, Austria and has an identity deeply rooted in the Nazi's view of the world. The town's local authorities and destination marketers have been attempting for many years to distance themselves from the Nazi's history by highlighting their traditionally humanist cultural values and focusing on rebranding Linz as a town of contemporary art and culture. This research reveals that recent campaigns have been fruitful and established Linz as a destination with an image dominated by contemporary art and culture in the minds of International visitors, but Austrian visitors still have some level of prejudice in regard to Linz's difficult heritage and associate it more than the Internationals with its dark past.

The key findings of this study have implications for marketers, tourist destination planners and local authorities of relatively new destinations with difficult heritage (crime, war, dark history, natural disasters) competing for the same target market with destinations with stronger, more positive images.

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, many places believed to have found a "saviour" in the form of tourism development as a major source of economic benefits, along with improved local communities' quality of life (Dumont *et al.*, 2010). In this competitive environment, visuality is a key issue as Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) invest much effort and resources in creating an image that will establish a destination as attractive in tourists' minds (Dumont *et al.*, 2010; Kneesel *et al.*, 2010) in an environment where substitutability is becoming more prominent (Agapito *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, due to the intangible nature of the tourism product, travellers are believed to base their buying decisions on the mental images they have of places (Buhalis, 2000; Chen and Tsai, 2007). This intangibility makes destination image a major marketing tool in the tourism industry (Tasci and Kozak, 2006) used by DMOs to achieve competitive advantage (Agapito *et al.*, 2010; Fernando and Long, 2012; Konecnik, 2002; Ritchie and Crouch, 2010) and to differentiate themselves from their competitors (Carballo *et al.*, 2015; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993). Nevertheless, destinations burdened with crime, wars, natural disasters, etc., or difficult heritage, see their competitive advantage

diminishing in the eyes of potential tourists (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999). There is also a plethora of tourism studies indicating that destination image is a direct antecedent of satisfaction (Alcocer and Ruiz, 2020; Bigné *et al.*, 2001; Chen and Phou, 2013; Chen and Tsai, 2007; Lee *et al.*, 2014; Qu *et al.*, 2011) and the more positive the image is, the greater the level of satisfaction (Chi and Qu, 2008), which could consequently lead to repeat visits (Kozak, 2001). Moreover, it is acknowledged that only destinations with strong and positive images have a chance of being evaluated and consequently chosen by tourists (Ahn, *et al.*, 2013; Chen and Kerstetter, 1999; Pan, 2011) which could then be further positively modified as a result of actual visitations (Baloglu, 2001).

Destinations, however, tend to use the same destination image to attract visitors regardless of their socio-demographic characteristics, including country of origin (Bonn *et al.*, 2005), which has led to the notion in the literature that DMOs need: 'to acknowledge the fact that the same destination may mean different things to different stakeholder' (Stylidis *et al.*, 2015; p. 712). This statement corresponds with Mayo and Jarvis' argument (1981) that: 'no two people see a destination in exactly the same way' (p. 42). Nevertheless, any differences in perceptions among various stakeholders should be as small as possible to enable the development of a positive and effective destination image (Ryan and Aicken, 2010). Therefore, for the establishment of a relatively new tourism destination in this competitive tourism market, visitors' perceptions of the destination image must be studied and adjusted, if required (Slak *et al.*, 2018). This is especially important when the destination must overcome certain negative elements of its image, as in the case of the selected destination, Linz (Austria), which has been struggling to escape from its destiny to be associated with Nazi's past and Hitler's perceptions of the world.

The aim of this study, therefore, is threefold. First, it uses the concept of "Top of Mind" (Stepchenkova and Li, 2014) which has been adopted in tourism studies to test destination branding and image (Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Kotsi and Valek, 2017). In the current study the concept of "Top of Mind" is adopted to identify the spontaneous associations Linz evokes in visitors' minds and to highlight any differences that might exist between domestic and international visitors. Second, it aims to examine the gap between how domestic and international tourists perceive Linz's image (prior to visiting it and in-situ) where the focus is on a set of image attributes linked to the DMOs attempt to reposition the destination in visitors' mind such as Nazi's past and its cultural life (museums for modern art and festivals). Third, it seeks to highlight the differences in the image that occur because of visitors' actual experience

to assess the success or failure of Linz's image repositioning. The chapter continues with an overview of the existing literature on destination image and its complex formation process.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Definitions of Destination Image

The concept of image has been analysed from a variety of perspectives (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2011) and used in various disciplines, such as philosophy (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2011), psychology (Firestone and Scholl, 2016; Veldhuis *et al.*, 2020), marketing or branding (Arai *et al.*, 2014; Chang *et al.*, 2019; Grohs and Reisinger, 2014), and geography (Jenkins, 1999).

Image in the field of tourism has spawned a diversity of definitions and conceptualisations, which could suggest that there is either a significant level of uncertainty as to what constitutes destination image and how it is formed, or that tourism destination image is a "multidimensional and complex" (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002: 56) construct that can be embraced by all these definitions. One of the very first definitions of destination image was proposed by Hunt (1975) who described it as perceptions held by potential visitors about a destination. Later on, Crompton (1979) defined destination image as the sum of the ideas, beliefs and impressions a person has of a destination, which is one of the most prominent definitions of destination image to date and was the one adopted for the purposed of this study.

2.2 Destination Image Components and determinants

Although the term 'destination image' has been broadly used in tourism studies since the 1970s, its conceptualisation is still considered an issue for a number of studies (Gartner, 1993; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991, Kim and Richardson, 2003; Kislali *et al.*, 2019; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2011; Zhang *et al.*, 2014).

Boulding (1956) in his work: 'The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society' in a dialogue with himself proposes a theory of human behaviour from a psychological perspective based on perceptions of the world. He suggests that our knowledge of the world mirrors our image of the world since knowledge has an implication of validity and truth, hence what we believe is true is subjective and based on our own knowledge. Consequently, our actions depend on the image we have of the world and occur because of all our past experiences. He also postulates that people's subjective knowledge consists not only of images of "fact", but also images of "value". In other words, there is a difference between the image we hold of physical objects and our valuations of them, which is the way we evaluate the different parts of our image of

the world. Boulding, therefore, was among the first who recognised the existence of cognitive (knowledge) and affective dimensions (emotions) of images.

In tourism literature, destination image is generally acknowledged to be the end product of the fusion between cognitive and affective image elements. Knowledge/beliefs about a destination or even memories, evaluations and interpretations of a destination represent the cognitive image components (Baloglu, 1999; Chen and Phou, 2013; Gartner, 1993; Hallmann, *et al.*, 2015; Pike and Ryan, 2004; Tasci *et al.*, 2007). Affective components, in contrast, represent people's feelings or emotions towards a destination (Hanyu, 1993; Russel, 1980; Yacout and Hefny, 2016; Walmsley and Young, 1998). The conative component refers to the decision stage and is linked to future or actual behaviour or future intention towards a destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Gartner,1993; Hallmann, *et al.*, 2015; Sahin and Baloglu, 2011; Tasci *et al.*, 2007). The cognitive element is seen as more descriptive and measurable than the affective one (Xie and Lee, 2013; Walmsley and Young, 1998) and encompasses destination attractions such as cultural activities, traditions, landmarks, etc. (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Brito and Pratas, 2015; Eusebio and Vieira, 2013; Iordanova and Stylidis, 2017; Kim *et al.* 2013; Stylidis *et al.*, 2017; Stylos *et al.*, 2016). Previous research, in contrary, presented affective image components using four affective image attributes (distressing-relaxing, unpleasant-pleasant, boring-exciting, and sleepy-lively) on a semantic differential scale (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Martin and Bosque, 2008; Wang and Hsu, 2010) or Russell's (1980) spatial model where affective evaluations are situated on four distinct continuums – arousal – sleepiness, misery – pleasure, distress- contentment, excitement-depression. The amalgamation of cognitive and affective components is seen as forming the overall image of the destination, which can be either positive or negative (e.g., Beerli and Martin, 2004; Li *et al.*, 2009).

The literature broadly acknowledges the impact of information sources, socio-demographic characteristics (age, education, gender, nationality/geographical location), psychological characteristics and socio-economic status on the process of destination image formation (see Andersen *et al.*, 2018; Baloglu, 2001; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Yu and Ko, 2012; Iordanova, 2015; Stylidis *et al.*, 2017; Iordanova and Stylidis, 2017; Yu and Ko, 2012). For example, Bonn *et al.*, (2005), Beerli and Martin (2004) and Hsu *et al.* (2004) confirmed that the distance from a destination significantly affects its attribute-based and affective-based components of image. Respondents living far away from a destination were

found to lack a vivid image of it (Reilly, 1990), but it is more favourable than the image people who live close by might have (Crompton, 1979). The chapter continues with an overview of destination branding, which is deeply intertwined with destination image.

2.4 Destination Branding

Zenker and Braun (2010) define place brand as a: 'network of associations in the consumer's mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design' (p. 5), which reflect broadly Ritchie and Ritchie's (1998) statement that destination brand is a name, symbol, logo, etc. that represents and differentiates the destination from its competitors.

Numerous destinations globally have attempted to re-brand themselves to refute negative place images (Bennett and Savani, 2003; Gotham, 2007; Miller *et al.*, 2017, Martinez, 2007;). For example, Bennett and Savani (2003) reported on Amsterdam's 'City on the Water' rebranding campaign aimed at escaping its image of sexual liberalism and positioning it as a genteel tourist destination.

Difficult heritage, which is often seen to be human made, is the main reason for some destinations to have an unattractive brand identity (Amujo and Otubanjo, 2012). Muhwezi *et al.*, (2016) also suggest that places with difficult heritage should have a memorial emphasis rather than a commercial one when developing their positioning strategies aiming at changing deeply rooted prejudices and stereotypes in the minds of potential tourists by focusing on the commemorative, symbolic, functional, unique and distinctive attributes of the place.

Macdonald's study (2009) on Nazi's Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg, Germany is one of the very few studies on destinations bearing the burden of Nazi's past, like the selected case study for this research. In her work, Macdonald's reflects on Nuremberg's struggles to decide on the destiny of 'the largest single complex of monumental buildings ever constructed in National Socialist Germany' (p. 28). Through the years, local authorities' attitudes towards it went through "silence" to suggestions to use it for motor racing, rock concerts or even transform it into a shopping centre to finally decide to incorporate it into its self-image and into projected image as there 'was widespread political consensus that Nuremberg's image would be harmed more by appearing to be not acknowledging its terrible past' (p.188). From the 1990s onwards, the city's attempted to promote itself as a major centre of commerce and culture and

position itself as a "City of Peace and Human Rights" while still dealing with its difficult heritage.

3. Case study: Linz, Austria

The destination investigated in this research is Linz, Austria's third largest city, situated astride the Danube River with a population of nearly 205 000 citizens (Adminstat, 2020). Until the time of the First Republic, Linz was associated with provincial culture. During the Nazi period, however, Linz was transformed from a small town into an industrial city with a potential to become a cultural metropolis on the Danube and despite the fact that Adolf Hitler was born in the outlying village of Braunau and only grew up in Linz – Linz became Hitler's town as Salzburg is Mozart's, for example. After 1945, the main concern of Linz's authorities was to distance themselves from Nazi's culture and Hitler while highlighting traditionally humanist cultural values (Cultural Development Plan, 2000). Traces of Nazi's past, though, are still part of everyday life in Linz – in the appearance of the so-called "Hitlerbauten" (cheap homes introduced by Hitler for industrial workers) the industrial facilities of VOEST (leading European processing group with own steelmaking facilities) founded as the "Hermann Göring Werke" during World War II and also in the materials used for buildings construction that raise an embarrassing point: Mauthausen granite was paid for with the lives of prisoners from the nearby concentration camp (Mission Statement, 2009, cited in Iordanova-Krasteva *et al.*, 2010).

Linz's nomination for the title of European Capital of Culture for 2009 subtly signalled that the town no longer intends to be associated with its Nazi's past and put the focus on its attempts since 1985 to reposition itself as a high-tech cultural city with a newly built museum for Modern Art and major hallmark events such as Bruckner Festival, the International Street Artist Festival, and the Ars Electronica Festival (Iordanova-Krasteva *et al.*, 2010). Nonetheless, the evaluation panel recommended that recent history should find a prominent place in the event which was in a sharp contrast with Linz's authorities' main concerns after 1945. Nevertheless, Linz's destination marketers embraced its dark history and sought to benefit from probably the most outrageous associations with the town as Adolf Hitler is one of the last "celebrities" to be expected to find a place into a destination promotion campaign (Pierce, 2009, cited in Iordanova-Krasteva *et al.*, 2010), and especially in Linz's case where the local DMO has been striving to reposition the image of the town for many years. One of the first events of the European Capital of Culture programme, therefore, was an exhibition called the

"Fuhrer's Capital of Culture" and was part of a strategy aiming at overcoming Linz's dark history and audience's prejudices. Ulrich Fuchs, the deputy manager of Linz09, said with regard to Hitler's heritage that: '…..whenever you come to Linz …, you will find something related to this topic. We are not sweeping Hitler under the carpet' (Linz09GmbH, 2010, n.p).

Developing this line of thought, Martin Heller, the artistic director of Linz09 (Linz09GmbH, 2010, n.p), stated that:

> '…. we want to reflect back and show how cultural and political ambitions went together in the Nazi time' 'Talking about culture always means talking about politics……the only way of dealing with Hitler is to be completely honest…'

Moreover, the director of the Upper Austrian State Museums, Peter Assmann (Pierce, 2009, p. n.p), recognised that an exhibition about Linz's Hitler past might be going too far, because Hitler's legacy is still a very difficult and sensitive topic, but he defended the exhibition by arguing that:

> 'I don't see any glorification of Hitler in the exhibition. Hitler is fact, so we just face this fact and we face it with many arguments, with a lot of information about that time'.

These statements signal Linz's DMO readiness to embrace its burdensome past and incorporate it into their marketing campaigns focusing on historical facts and lessons learnt from the past.

4. Data collection

Destination image is frequently assessed in the existing literature by using already tested lists of image attributes or characteristics, which could lead to the omission of destinations' unique features and characteristics such as Hitler and Nazi's past, for example, as in the case of Linz. This study, therefore, uses a "quasi-mixed" method approach including both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection following to capture all aspects of Linz's image as suggested by Echtner & Ritchie (1991) and Jenkins's (1999). In this approach, unstructured techniques are commonly used first to elicit the relevant destination image attributes, with researchers then using these attributes in subsequent analysis to construct surveys to investigate tourist images (O'Leary & Deegan, 2005). Existing studies used attributes are associated with

physical dimensions such as accommodation facilities, infrastructure, transportation, tourist facilities, climate/weather, scenery, natural environment, attractions, price (Brito & Pratas, 2015; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Eusebio & Vieira, 2013; Iordanova & Stylidis, 2017; Pan *et al.* 2014) to assess destination image.

The (first) qualitative data collection stage took place online (e.g., online travel forums) and the purpose of this stage was mainly exploratory which is reflected in the sample size and aimed at revealing people's spontaneous associations with Linz as a tourist destination which were then used to inform the second, quantitative stage of research.

The key findings from the first data collection stage and a subsequent review of the literature on destination image (e.g., Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Prayag, 2009) were used to design a questionnaire to be used for collecting data from tourists (domestic and international, aged 18 years old or older) visiting Linz. Linz's image was assessed by asking respondents to evaluate on a Likert-scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree its cultural life and Nazi's heritage (steel/heavy industry and Hitler) since these two categories reflect the DMO's attempts to reposition Linz's image in visitors' minds. A non-probability sampling method was used due to the lack of accurate data on the size of the tourist population; nonetheless, the data collection took place at various locations in Linz and during different days/time of the week and at various locations to ensure the study's representativeness and reliability. Content analysis was used to analyse the answers to the open-ended questions and paired-sample t-tests were applied to gain insights into Linz's image change resulted from respondents' actual experience. The possible relationship among nationality (before and during visiting Linz) and Linz's cognitive image components was analysed using independent t-tests.

5. Results

Out of the 150 invited 88 respondents agreed to participate and answered the questions included in the qualitative (first) phase. After discarding 14 incomplete responses, the final sample consisted of 74 usable responses that were content analysed and the key findings were used to inform the questionnaire used in the second phase.

Most of the respondents (74%) were from Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Portugal, Italy, Cyprus, France, Poland, Bulgaria and the USA, reflecting to a large extent the

profile of international tourists in Linz. About half of the respondents were female and half were male.

The first question focused on respondents' spontaneous associations with Linz and aimed to capture the overall image of Linz as a tourist destination and was answered by the majority (59) of the respondents. Only two Austrians (11%) left the question unanswered, compared to 13 international respondents (23%). Most of the respondents mentioned that Linz is in Austria and near the River Danube, showing that Linz benefits from the image of Austria as being a popular and favourite destination on the River Danube for many people. However, the collected responses also indicate that it suffers from the shadow of Vienna and Salzburg and attempts to escape from Austria's cliché identity represented by Vienna and Salzburg on the strength of its own merits (Linz09 GmbH, 2010). For example, one International respondent wrote: 'I associate Linz mainly with music and with the New Year concert of Vienna philharmonic orchestra'. Traditional cuisine and music as part of Linz's culture found their place in the answers as well. However, this coin has a reverse side, as respondents said that Linz is just a small, old-fashioned Austrian town.

Indications that Linz is still paving its way from an industrial to a high-tech cultural city could be identified as a theme in some of the answers: 'unfortunately my first association with Linz is with the steel industry in the town...'. It is of particular interest that the steel industry was mentioned only by Austrians which indicates that nationality could impact to some extent people's perceptions of destinations as stated in previous research (Beerli and Martin; 2004; Bonn et al., 2005; Hsu et al., 2004;). Two domestic and two international respondents mentioned Hitler and Linz dark Nazi's past as their first associations with Linz - a woman from France, for example, wrote: 'the first word that comes to my mind is Hitler?', and another male Austrian respondent stated: '... I associate this town mainly with Hitler and his "view" of the world...'.

Another question aimed at eliciting knowledge about some of Linz's attractions. The 27 of the international respondents said that they do not have any knowledge about Linz. For others, the ancient origin of Linz, Hitler, and its culture are inter-linked: '…originated in the place of the ancient Rome town Lencia, it should become Hitler's capital city' and their knowledge about Linz is '…Austria, Hitler and rich in cultural events'. The 21 international respondents mentioned different cultural events in Linz and museums. The number of respondents who mentioned Hitler increased to seven (only one was Austrian), thus assuming

that knowledge of Linz's association with Hitler is not necessarily a negative factor in the formation of the overall image of the town as feared by the local DMO.

Second stage

A reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was performed for the cognitive image scale, and the Cronbach's alpha value was higher than .70 which showed that the questionnaire achieved high internal consistency. The whole sample consisted of 400 respondents, 188 of which were Austrians (47% of the total sample) and 212 were Internationals (53% of the total sample).

[Table 1 about here]

Respondents' spontaneous associations ("Top of mind" concept) with Linz were evaluated using an open-ended question where respondents were required to only write down keywords that come to their minds when hearing the word Linz. This question had two purposes - a) to gain insights into their spontaneous image of Linz and b) to assess Linz's branding richness and intensity by counting the number of spontaneous associations respondents have with it. This question was answered by all the respondents and the number of keywords varied between one to nine with four keywords being the average number. From the respondents, 35% them wrote three keywords, followed by 29% with four keywords and 20% with five keywords. The nationality of the respondents appears to be in a relationship with the number of given answers since the number of Internationals outweighed the number of Austrians within the group of respondents with "one to five" associations which represents nearly 80% of the whole sample. For example, 54% of the participants who had three spontaneous associations were Internationals and 46% were domestic visitors, whereas from the group of respondents with five spontaneous associations 67% were international respondents and only 33% were Austrians.

A content analysis was performed to analyse the spontaneous associations with Linz and the most popular category (235 responses, 55% Internationals and 45% Domestic visitors) was "Museums and Galleries" accommodating Linz's iconic museums (Lentos, Ars Electronica) and its galleries. Among the most popular spontaneous associations with Linz, where 54% of the 56 responses were given by International visitors, was Linz's history heritage and its destiny to be Hitler's birthplace. One Japanese female respondent expressed a very emotional statement: 'Hitler, concentration camps, grief and pain for Hitler's victims'. Similar

statements came from several other respondents (mainly Austrians) who said Mauthausen's concentration camp to be one of their associations with Linz or Hitler himself since a few respondents called Linz "Hitler's town". Other fragments of Linz's history could also be identified in the following quotes despite the DMOs attempts to refute its difficult heritage '...the old City Hall with the balcony where Hitler proclaimed the Greater German Reich'; 'Hitler's birthplace and its ambitions to expand the town further...'.

Another set of questions was designed to measure the level of agreement or disagreement with the elicited in stage one cognitive image elements of Linz before and during respondents' actual experience in Linz where a Likert Scale was used (Strongly agree (1); Agree (2); Neutral (3); Disagree (4); Strongly Disagree (5). Paired-sample t-test was applied to gain insights into Linz's image change resulted from respondents' actual experience. The results unveiled that significant changes in respondents' associations with Linz have occurred (Table 2; Table 3). For example, the mean values of Cultural Heritage before (M before = 1.59) and after (M after = 1.21) differed significantly. In a similar way, Linz' famous museums for Modern Art – Lentos and Ars Electronica Centre also showed significant differences in respondents' opinion before and after their visit to Linz. For Ars Electronica Centre the results were the following: on average, participants rated it significantly higher after their actual experience in Linz (M after = 1.54) than before (M before = 2.25), whereas Lentos Museum had the following significantly different values: M before = 2.25 compared to M after = 1.54. Modern Art changed with 1.02 point scale. The average level of agreement for the Bruckner Festival (Mean before = 2.55, Mean after = 2.80) and the International Street Artist Festival (Mean before = 2.93, Mean after = 3.00) changed slightly, but still statistically significantly, for "for worse" when comparing the pre- and post-travel results.

All cognitive elements aligned with Linz's dark side (i.e., Hitler and the Nazi's past) showed significant decrease in the level of respondents' associations demonstrating a positive change in Linz's image altogether. For example, the steel industry's mean value before visiting Linz was 2.84 and dropped to 3.33, whereas the heavy industry's mean value before visiting Linz was 2.91 and decreased to 3.42. The association with Hitler was rated averagely at 2.29 before respondents' actual experience in Linz and went down to 2.59.

[Table 2; Table 3]

The possible relationship among nationality (before and during visiting Linz) and Linz's cognitive image components was analysed using independent t-tests. The results indicated that prior to visiting Linz there is a statistically significant correlation between nationality and four out of the ten cognitive image elements, namely Cultural Heritage, Steel Industry, Heavy Industry and Hitler (Table 4). The Mean for Cultural Heritage was nearly the same for Austrians (M= 1.68) and Internationals (1.51); whereas for Steel Industry (Austrians M= 2.33, Internationals M=3.33), Heavy Industry (Austrians M= 2.34; Internationals M=3.42) and Hitler (Austrians M=2.11; Internationals M=2.45) the differences in the Means were more substantial which indicates that prior to visiting Linz the Austrian respondents were more likely to associate Linz with its negative sides than the Internationals.

[Table 4]

With respect to Linz's "on-situ" image, all cognitive image elements that were previously found to be in a significant relationship with nationality, apart from Hitler (Domestic M= 2.58; Internationals M= 2.59), were found to still be significantly influenced by nationality. Moreover, significant differences were found in the answers given by the International and the Domestic visitors in relation to Modern Art and Lentos (Table 5).

[Table 5]

Cultural heritage results showed that Internationals evaluate it more strongly (M= 1.12) and statistically significantly than Austrians (M= 1.31). Internationals associate Linz with Lentos almost to the same extent as Austrians (M=1.47 compared to M= 1.62) albeit the difference is significantly different. This finding is mirrored by the fact that Internationals also accessed Linz's Modern Art significantly higher than Austrians (M=1.56 compared to M= 1.82). Results also indicated that Austrians are significantly more likely to associate Linz with its Steel Industry and Heavy Industry than Internationals.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Positioning or re-positioning a destination on the already overcrowded market is a challenging task in normal circumstances but paired with difficult heritage could be a major obstacle to any DMO. The current study tentatively suggests that nationality influences the richness and

intensity of respondents' associations with Linz where the Internationals were more likely to have a higher number of spontaneous associations (keywords) than Austrians which is in contrast with that of Reilly's study (1990) reporting that respondents living far away from a destination were found to lack a vivid image of it. Moreover, Nazi's past appears to be still deeply rooted in Linz's brand despite DMO's continuous attempts to reposition the destination's image by consciously or subconsciously trying to refute its difficult heritage by focusing its marketing efforts on promoting Linz's vivid cultural life.

It was also unveiled that actual experience at the destination positively modifies and influences its image as suggested in the literature (Baloglu, 2001). Nevertheless, the modifications that occurred were more substantial for the International visitors which highlights the needs for a differentiated tourism product and marketing campaigns to adjust Linz's image for the domestic market and to overcome any stigmas associated with the town. Overall, Linz's image attributes linked to its DMO's strategies to establish the town as a centre for modern art and contemporary culture were rated higher after visiting it which signals that the DMO's efforts to rebrand the destination are starting to be fruitful. This is supported by the fact that respondents' associations with Linz's difficult heritage after visiting it, significantly decreased which again demonstrates a positive change in its image. This illustrates that rectifying destination image is feasible in the long term if destinations with difficult heritage engage in an unprejudiced discourse and present a balanced, non-judgmental and facts-based account of past events.

The current study also verified the results of previous studies (Hunt, 1975; MacKay and Fesenmaier, 2000; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Hsu *et al.*, 2004) that "distance" (or "nationality"), in general, has a direct effect over tourism destination images. Nevertheless, it was also proved that different stakeholders see the destination differently and targeting both domestic and international visitors using the same promotion strategy would not lead to the desired outcomes. This finding is adherent with Crompton's (1979) that individuals who live away from a destination have a tendency to hold more positive images of it since the Austrians were found to have a more negative image of Linz than the Internationals. For example, the main differences between the Austrians and the Internationals prior to visiting Linz were found to be linked to Linz's difficult past (Hitler, Heavy Industry, Steel Industry, Cultural Heritage) indicating that the Austrians were more likely to associate Linz with its negative sides than the Internationals. The Internationals rated Linz's "a priori" cognitive image dimension "Contemporary Culture" higher than the Austrians (not significantly though),

showing that the Austrians tend to underestimate Linz's place on the European cultural map of Modern Art. This finding supports Bonn *et al.*,' argument (2005) that destinations should not use the same destination image to attract visitors with different socio-cultural background. Not surprisingly, Linz's "on-situ" image showed similar results with some minor alterations. Austrians were still more likely to have slightly more negative associations (Steel/Heavy Industry) with Linz than Internationals whose associations were mostly linked to Linz's contemporary art image elements (Modern Art, Lentos). The reported findings call for a more targeted campaign on a local/domestic level aimed at shifting prejudices and promoting Linz as a cultural destination for the domestic market. This could be achieved by using on a national level traditional, promotional channels such as radio, television, and tourism brochures, but also by involving local renowned Austrians, to act as destination ambassadors. In addition to these recommendations, the local DMO should engage into a "dialog" with potential domestic tourists on various social media sites where the focus should be on re-branding the destination by promoting its lively cultural life and natural beauty. Moreover, special events of an educational nature on Linz's history could be introduced aimed at "healing" the nation's negative self-image of Linz, which as this study suggests, is already happening. Surprisingly, there were no longer any significant differences among respondents' associations with Hitler. This finding implies that Linz's DMO decision to incorporate Nazi's past into various exhibitions and be open and honest about it, similarly to Nuremberg (Macdonald, 2008), neutralised any negative connotations it might have had prior to this. Linz, as other destinations with difficult heritage, should instead of ignoring it, embrace it serenely in their brand strategies in a mature, facts-based manner aimed at changing prejudices and stereotypes in the minds of potential visitors as indicated by Muhwezi *et al.*, (2016) and Amujo and Otubanjo (2012). DMOs facing such difficult issue, could use it as an opportunity to develop tours aimed at revealing the past in an objective, humble way to ask humanity for forgiveness and establish the foundations for a new beginning.

The presented study is not free from limitations that could have an impact on its generalisability, but do not invalidate its findings. First, the Nazi's past discussed in this study is unique to Linz and it would be difficult to replicate it in other destinations, however, other places burdened with Nazi's history could learn from Linz's attempts to pave its way from an town rooted deeply in Nazi's history to a place associated with contemporary art and culture. Second, the International respondents represented mainly European countries which could have distorted the results and a more heterogeneous sample could be more beneficial. Third, a

topic as sensitive as Nazi's past calls for a qualitative discourse where respondents' emotions and feeling could be investigated more in depth which could lead to a better understanding of the differences that occurred in the way International and domestic visitors perceive Linz's Nazi's past.

The current study shows that re-positioning a destination with burdensome past is, albeit challenging, still feasible with well thought, targeted marketing campaigns and other destinations sharing similar destiny could learn from Linz's attempts to reposition itself as a cultural, modern tourism destination.

Future research could expand our understanding on the integration of difficult heritage in destination image and branding strategies by replicating this study in a different context using different research approaches and sampling techniques to validate the current findings and propose further ways to re-position a destination with burdensome past.

Reference List

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Table 1

Respondents' profile

	Sample ***n*** **= 400**
Gender	
Female	54%
Male	46%
Age	
18-25	8.5%
26-35	20.8%
36-45	23.5%
46-55	29.5%
56+	17.8%
Employment	
Full-time	57.5%
Part-time	16.3%
Student	7.3%
Retired	15.5%
Other	3.5%
Education	
Primary	7.3%
Secondary	35.5%
Tertiary	57.3%

Table 2

Paired Samples Statistics for Bruckner Festival, International Street Artist Festival, Cultural Heritage, Live Music, Ars Electronica Centre, Lentos, Modern Art, Steel Industry, Heavy Industry, Hitler

Paired Samples Statistics				
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	Bruckner Festival before	2.5550	400	1.67601
	Bruckner Festival after	2.8075	400	1.62390
Pair 2	Int. Street Artist Festival before	2.9300	400	1.82440
	Int. Street Artist Festival after	3.1950	400	1.68495
Pair 3	Cultural Heritage before	1.5975	400	.76613
	Cultural Heritage after	1.2150	400	.50439
Pair 4	Live Music before	2.7475	400	1.64484
	Live Music after	2.1750	400	1.48151
Pair 5	Ars Electronica Center before	2.2675	400	1.30007
	Ars Electronica after	1.4450	400	.70585
Pair 6	Lentos before	2.2550	400	1.34518
	Lentos after	1.5475	400	.70284
Pair 7	Modern Art before	2.7125	400	1.66637
	Modern Art after	1.6900	400	1.03275
Pair 8	Steel Industry before	2.8475	400	1.42981
	Steel Industry after	3.3375	400	1.15843
Pair 9	Heavy Industry before	2.9150	400	1.44325
	Heavy Industry after	3.4200	400	1.15626
Pair 10	Hitler before	2.2950	400	1.19228
	Hitler after	2.5925	400	1.17895

Mean scores are on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree)

Table 3

Paired Samples Correlations for Bruckner Festival, International Street Artist Festival, Cultural Heritage, Live Music, Ars Electronica Centre, Lentos, Modern Art, Steel Industry, Heavy Industry, Hitler

Paired Samples Correlations					Paired Samples Test			
					Paired differences			
		N	Correlations	Sig.	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Bruckner Festival before & after	400	0.762	0	-0.2525	1.13885	-4.434	0
Pair 2	Int. Street Artist Festival before & after	400	0.748	0	-0.265	1.25248	-4.232	0
Pair 3	Cultural Heritage before & after	400	0.367	0	0.3825	0.74672	10.245	0
Pair 4	Live Music before & after	400	0.424	0	0.5725	1.6828	6.804	0
Pair 5	Ars Electronica Center before & after	400	0.435	0	0.8225	1.17876	13.955	0
Pair 6	Lentos before & after	400	0.462	0	0.7075	1.19604	11.831	0
Pair 7	Modern Art before & after	400	0.474	0	1.0225	1.48746	13.748	0
Pair 8	Steel Industry before & after	400	0.337	0	-0.49	1.50684	-6.504	0
Pair 9	Heavy Industry before & after	400	0.358	0	-0.505	1.49182	-6.77	0
Pair 10	Hitler before & after	400	0.414	0	-0.2975	1.28379	-4.635	0

Mean scores are on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree) * Significant at the level 0.05

Table 4

Mean, SD and Independent t-test for Bruckner Festival, International Street Artist Festival, Cultural Heritage, Live Music, Ars Electronica Centre, Lentos, Modern Art, Steel Industry, Heavy Industry, Hitler prior to visiting Linz;

	Nationality/ size	Mean	Std. Deviation		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
					F	Sig.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Bruckner Festival before	Austrians 188	2.4096	1.6731	Equal variances assumed	0.114	0.735	-1.638	0.102
	Internationals 212	2.684	1.67194	Equal variances not assumed			-1.638	0.102
Int. Street Artist Festival before	Austrians 188	2.8511	1.87558	Equal variances assumed	1.218	0.271	-0.815	0.416
	Internationals 212	3	1.77929	Equal variances not assumed			-0.812	0.417
Cultural Heritage before	Austrians 188	1.6862	0.8729	Equal variances assumed	3.112	0.078	2.19	0.029
	Internationals 212	1.5189	0.64919	Equal variances not assumed			2.153	0.032
Live Music before	Austrians 188	2.5957	1.73556	Equal variances assumed	6.597	0.011	-1.742	0.082
	Internationals 212	2.8821	1.55172	Equal variances not assumed			-1.73	0.084
Ars Electronica Centre before	Austrians 188	2.3777	1.27541	Equal variances assumed	0	0.988	1.599	0.111
	Internationals 212	2.1698	1.31684	Equal variances not assumed			1.602	0.11
Lentos before	Austrians 188	2.3936	1.43462	Equal variances assumed	6.328	0.012	1.948	0.052
	Internationals 212	2.1321	1.25116	Equal variances not assumed			1.932	0.054
Modern Art before	Austrians 188	2.7979	1.731	Equal variances assumed	0.899	0.344	0.965	0.335
	Internationals 212	2.6368	1.6072	Equal variances not assumed			0.961	0.337
Steel Industry before	Austrians 188	2.3032	1.10835	Equal variances assumed	36.728	0	-7.672	0
	Internationals 212	3.3302	1.50966	Equal variances not assumed			-7.812	0
Heavy Industry before	Austrians 188	2.3404	1.10471	Equal variances assumed	38.038	0	-8.079	0
	Internationals 212	3.4245	1.51734	Equal variances not assumed			-8.23	0
Hitler before	Austrians 188	2.117	1.0275	Equal variances assumed	8.893	0.003	-2.836	0.005
	Internationals 212	2.4528	1.30353	Equal variances not assumed			-2.876	0.004

Mean scores are on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree)
* Significant at the level 0.05

Table 5

Mean, SD and Independent t-test for Bruckner Festival, International Street Artist Festival, Cultural Heritage, Live Music, Ars Electronica Centre, Lentos, Modern Art, Steel Industry, Heavy Industry, Hitler during the stay in Linz

	Nationality	Mean	Std. Deviation		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
					F	Sig.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Bruckner Festival after	Austrians	2.7447	1.70207	Equal variances assumed	3.275	0.071	-0.728	0.467
	Internationals	2.8632	1.55322	Equal variances not assumed			-0.724	0.469
Int. Street Artist Festival after	Austrians	3.1436	1.79292	Equal variances assumed	6.233	0.013	-0.574	0.566
	Internationals	3.2406	1.58597	Equal variances not assumed			-0.57	0.569
Cultural Heritage after	Austrians	1.3191	0.63267	Equal variances assumed	56.856	0	3.96	0
	Internationals	1.1226	0.3288	Equal variances not assumed			3.825	0
Live Music after	Austrians	2.2979	1.66004	Equal variances assumed	10.379	0.001	1.565	0.118
	Internationals	2.066	1.29724	Equal variances not assumed			1.542	0.124
Ars Electronica after	Austrians	1.5	0.68988	Equal variances assumed	1.33	0.249	1.47	0.142
	Internationals	1.3962	0.71781	Equal variances not assumed			1.473	0.141
Lentos after	Austrians	1.6277	0.73832	Equal variances assumed	2.506	0.114	2.158	0.032
	Internationals	1.4764	0.66348	Equal variances not assumed			2.144	0.033
Modern Art after	Austrians	1.8298	1.18492	Equal variances assumed	6.105	0.014	2.567	0.011
	Internationals	1.566	0.86005	Equal variances not assumed			2.52	0.012
Steel Industry after	Austrians	3.1809	1.13724	Equal variances assumed	1.044	0.308	-2.565	0.011
	Internationals	3.4764	1.16196	Equal variances not assumed			-2.568	0.011
Heavy Industry after	Austrians	3.2553	1.14636	Equal variances assumed	0.178	0.673	-2.704	0.007
	Internationals	3.566	1.148	Equal variances not assumed			-2.704	0.007
Hitler after	Austrians	2.5851	1.13674	Equal variances assumed	0.052	0.819	-0.118	0.906
	Internationals	2.5991	1.2178	Equal variances not assumed			-0.118	0.906

Mean scores are on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree)
* Significant at the level 0.05