

THESIS BOOKLET

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**“Bringing long-haul destinations closer: the role of
music in destination promotional videos”**

related to the doctoral dissertation with identical title

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Research background and justification of the topic

Amidst fierce competition to attract tourists, long-haul destinations face tougher challenges because distance also implies unfamiliarity and a certain degree of fear of traveling to them (Crouch, 2007; Larsen & Guiver, 2013). Destination promotional videos are audio-visual materials aimed to represent a tourist destination in the best possible light to positively influence the audience perceptions and attitudes toward the destination.

This dissertation delves into an often-overlooked ingredient in destination promotional videos: music. The title, "Bringing long-haul destinations closer: the role of music in destination promotional videos" aptly captures the core of this doctoral dissertation, whose main objective is **to understand the role of music in destination promotional videos of long-haul destinations**. To this end, three secondary objectives have been established:

- to determine the function and importance of music in destination promotional videos of long-haul destinations.
- to identify the effects of musical variations in a destination promotional video on affective reactions, such as arousal and valence, and on cognitive reactions, such as attention and memory; generated in a conscious and unconscious way.
- to examine how both affective and cognitive reactions influence on audience response, determined by attitude towards the destination promotional video, and attitude towards the long-haul destination.

To accomplish the research objectives, three research questions with their corresponding sub-questions were formulated:

RQ1. What is the **function and importance of music** in destination promotional videos of long-haul destinations?

RQ2. How and to what extent do different musical stimuli in a destination promotional video influence the audience?

RQ2.1. Does different musical stimulus in a destination promotional video generate different **arousal** and **attention** in the audience?

RQ2.2. Which musical stimulus evokes the most **positive feelings** in the audience?

RQ2.3. Which musical stimulus is the most **memorable** to the audience?

RQ3: Which musical stimulus in a destination promotional video is the most effective?

RQ3.1. Which musical stimulus generates in the audience the most positive **attitude towards the destination promotional video**?

RQ3.2. Which musical stimulus generates in the audience the most positive **attitude towards the long-haul destination**?

The selection and study of the topic in the current doctoral dissertation is justified by different facts:

-Although the role of music in advertising have been widely studied. Yet, music in destination marketing has been scarcely explored, especially considering the nature of the ‘product’: i) unlike traditional marketing, destination marketing aims to ‘sell’ an intangible: destination; ii) music is closely related to destinations. Every place evokes a sound and the other way around. In this regard, the thesis unveils how music aids prospective tourists to experience and perceive the destination.

-Although the interplay of music-destination-media has been studied in relation to movies, there is a dearth of research on destination promotional videos and music. Considering the videos significantly differ from movies in terms of length, purpose, context, budget and music, this thesis: i) raises awareness of the importance of destination promotional videos in the context of social networking platforms, ii) contributes to the scarce literature on the effects of promotional videos on destination image (Kim, Choe, & Lee, 2018; Gong, & Tung, 2017), iii) responds to a claim for further research on the attributes (i.e. music) that make promotional videos more effective (Stankov et

al., 2019), and iv) adds to the ongoing discussion on the role of music in persuasion (Kim, Kim, & Bolls 2014).

-The dissertation contributes to a better understanding of the power of perceptions to overcome physical distances (Larsen & Guiver, 2013) and the influence of music on destination image. Moreover, the study expects to become a useful piece of information for National Tourism Organization (NTOs) and Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) from foreign countries that aim to target long-haul travelers, by providing them with guidelines to design and create effective destination promotional videos.

-The methodologies used in this doctoral dissertation respond to increasing demand in Academia for experiments in tourism and hospitality using relatively new techniques such as electrodermal activity (Li et al., 2022; Viglia & Dolnicar, 2020). At the same time, the study also fills a gap in research on consumer responses to destination marketing during exposure to the stimuli (Kim et al. 2014, Li et al., 2016), as well as on the ways the

effectiveness of destination promotional videos can be assessed (Kim et al. 2014; Bastiaansen et al. 2022).

Methodology

The thesis comprised three stages that lead to the exploration of the role of music in destination promotional videos and their effects on audience.

First stage: From November 2019 to January 2020 qualitative primary information was collected in Budapest through **focus groups discussions** with Hungarian and international participants. This study aimed to understand the role of music in destination promotional videos. Findings belonging to the first -exploratory- stage were published in Consumer Behavior in Tourism and Hospitality journal (<https://doi.org/10.1108/CBTH-11-2021-0265>).

Second stage: From December 2022 to January 2023 qualitative primary research consisted of **expert interviews**. They took place both online and offline with

five experts in destination marketing and music from Hungary and Ecuador. This study aimed to better understand, from different perspectives, the function and importance of music in destination promotional videos.

Third stage: From January 2023 to February 2023 an **experimental study** took place in Budapest with the participation of Hungarians (n=26) and Ecuadorians (n=10). The main goal of this study was collecting participants' psycho-physiological measures such as skin resistance and heart rate while watching a promotional video of Ecuador with four musical variations. This study was complemented with self-report. Self-report consisted of a self-assessment manikin (SAM) rating scale and an open-ended interview conducted after video exposure. Self-report techniques allowed to collect Hungarian and Ecuadorian participants' subjective interpretations of their own reactions to the destination promotional videos.

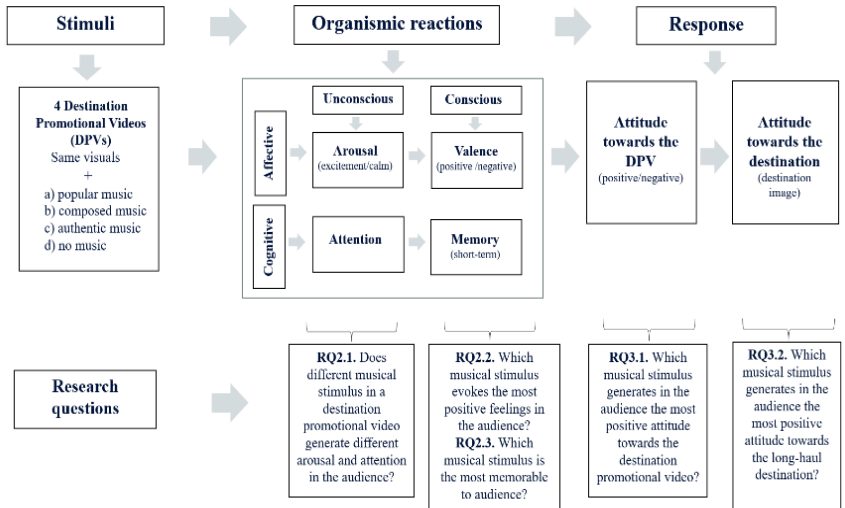
The experimental study was based on the conceptual model presented in figure 1.

The experimental design comprised manipulation of a destination promotional video about Ecuador. By keeping the same visuals, four mock videos were created on the basis of the following conditions or treatments, same visuals and different musical stimuli: i) traditional music (Andean folk track), ii) stock music (cinematic track), iii) popular (pop song), iv) no music.

Following a within-subject experimental design, ‘no music’ was meant to be the *control condition* (Viglia & Dolnicar, 2020).

Ecuador was chosen as the unit of analysis because is a long-haul destination and remains relatively unknown for the Hungarian market.

Figure 1. Conceptual model of audience response to musical stimulus in destination promotional videos



Source: Elaborated by the author, based on Mehrabian & Russell (1974), Pozharliev, Verbeke and Bagozzi (2017).

The experimental study comprised two phases:

- 1) *Psycho-physiological measures*, namely skin resistance and heart rate of participants were

recorded during exposure to the manipulated videos.

- 2) *Self-report methods* namely emotional rating scale and interview were conducted after video exposure to collect information from the participants after exposure to the manipulated videos.

Findings

I present the main findings of the dissertation according to the research questions.

RQ1. *What is the function and importance of music in destination promotional videos of long-haul destinations?*

- Music is an essential element of persuasion, as this has the potential to generate favorable and unfavorable attitudes towards long-haul destinations. Therefore, tourism promoters should not underestimate it.

***RQ2.** How and to what extent do different musical stimuli in a destination promotional video influence the audience?*

- Music significantly influences arousal, valence, attention, and short-time memory.

RQ2.1. Does different musical stimulus in a destination promotional video generate different arousal and attention in the audience?

- The amount of arousal and attention changed significantly from one musical stimulus to another. Correspondingly, the lack of music decreases arousal and attention. For instance, the video with stock music elicited the most arousal, whereas the one with traditional music drew the most attention of Hungarian participants. The video with traditional music was the most arousal and drew the most attention by Ecuadorians.

RQ2.2. Which musical stimulus evokes the most positive feelings in the audience?

- The video with traditional music evoked the most positive feelings in Hungarians, whereas the video with popular music elicited the most positive feelings among Ecuadorians

RQ2.3. Which musical stimulus is the most memorable to the audience?

- Traditional music was most memorable for Hungarians. None of them was for Ecuadorians.

RQ3. Which musical stimulus in a destination promotional video is the most effective?

- It is difficult to determine the most ‘effective’ musical stimulus since it depends on the target segment and travel motivations, be it adventure, relaxation, culture, party, extreme sports, beach, etc. However, from an academic point of view, the most effective musical stimulus was traditional music. Because it drew the most attention, it was

the most pleasant, the most memorable and most liked among potential tourists. Furthermore, traditional music made the destination look more welcoming and safer, which are positive factors to consider in a long-haul destination.

RQ3.1. Which musical stimulus generates in the audience the most positive attitude towards the destination promotional video?

- Music impacted on attitudes towards the video. For instance, video with traditional music (Andean folk track) was the most liked by Hungarians and Ecuadorians.

RQ3.2. Which musical stimulus generates in the audience the most positive attitude towards the long-haul destination?

- Attitudes towards the destination changed from one musical stimulus to another despite the same visuals. Attitudes are overall evaluations, therefore, with the traditional music the destination was seen as a cultural

destination, very relaxing and hospitable. In contrast, with the stock music (cinematic track) the destination was perceived as dangerous and for adventure tourism, whereas with popular music (pop song), the destination was described as a destination for party and fun.

Conclusions

The novelty of this research is the use of music to shorten the relative distance between a destination and a market. Findings show that music “makes feel even the Amazonas, closer”. This means that music can counteract any negative perceptions about the long-haul destination i.e. insecurity, roughness, hostility. Since distance can decrease the competitiveness of a destination, due to stereotypes and false beliefs, the dissertation posits music as an alternative to bring long-haul destinations closer. As a persuasive element of destination promotional videos music should not be underestimated.

Contribution

As for its academic significance, due to its domain, the dissertation has implications for tourism, and marketing communication theory. This dissertation attempts to extend the seldom literature on destination promotional videos and fills a gap in the literature regarding the influence of music on long-haul destination marketing. Additionally, the study contributes to the ongoing discussion on music and tourism.

As a methodological contribution, this thesis provides tourism researchers and practitioners with a step-by-step guide of the experimental study to ensure replicability in other contexts, which might be a great help to tourism researchers and destination marketing organisations interested in assessing the audience reaction to tourism videos. Another benefit of the thesis from a methodological perspective is that the experiment employed a novel non-proprietary, commercially available hardware and software for data collection and data analysis of psycho-physiological measures.

Regarding practical implications, one of the assets of the thesis is contrasting the views of locals and long-haul potential travellers with the one of experts on destination marketing and music. The dissertation tested the effectiveness of different music types and provides practitioners with guidelines for the right selection of music for destination promotional videos.

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