

# Chapter 11

## From Chambord's Brand Equity to the Construction of a Touristic Destination's Image: A Reductive Marketing Approach



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**Abstract** With the evolution of territorial marketing and strong international competition, the perimeter of territories interested in tourism development has been extended beyond the cities by the introduction of the concept of a touristic destination, i.e. a territory marketed to a public of visitors and/or tourists. Although Chambord's brand equity is well known in terms of representations to different audiences, the three inter-municipalities surrounding the castle that are seeking to become a touristic destination remain poorly identified. The strategy of constructing an image of the destination has focused on the reputation of the castle by defining a *Blois Chambord* brand. However, the destination is full of other assets that can enrich the cognitive and emotional dimensions linked to the territory. In order to understand the logic behind this strategy of constructing a destination image, a study was conducted among four groups of stakeholders: local managers (elected officials, managers of the tourist office, managers of Chambord) and local residents or visitors. The results reveal the need to better promote the territory without abandoning the contributions of the castle's brand equity to the attractiveness of the destination. This enhancement involves better management of the destination's image in order to highlight the territory's assets and meet a local, or even non-local, demand for authenticity.

**Keywords** Tourism · Image · Touristic destination · Brand · Brand equity · Territorial marketing · Marketing strategy

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## 1 Introduction

The use of territorial marketing has become increasingly justified in the current context of market openings, globalization and increased competition between cities and even regions (Benko, 1999). In France, territorial marketing has become an important part of the strategic policies of elected representatives<sup>1</sup> and tourism organizations,<sup>2</sup> within the framework of the sharing of tourism competence between local authorities since 1983, which the “*NOTRe law*” of 7 August 2015 has not changed.

In a tourism environment where competition is increasing, the elaboration of a tourism development strategy, the better management of brand equity and the construction of a destination image are becoming key elements of differentiation for territories. However, if research in tourism marketing has mainly focused, since the early 2000s, on the study of the role of brand image in the management of the brand equity of destinations (Boo et al., 2009; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Kotsi et al., 2018; Sürücü et al., 2019), very few works question the role of the conceptual and theoretical framework of Tourism Destination Image (TDI) in the study of the relationship between “*brand image vs. brand equity*”. This is to some extent due to the fact that there is confusion between TDI and brand image in the literature (Hem & Iversen, 2004). This confusion is further accentuated by the “*product approach*” in the study of touristic destinations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). A touristic destination is “*a territory that is marketed as a touristic entity to multiple domestic and international markets*” (Frochot & Legohérel, 2010, p. 28).

Unlike the “*product approach*” of the territories interested in tourism development, Florek (2005) underlines the complexity of conceiving and/or approaching an object such as “the touristic destination”. He mentions, among other things, the fact that a touristic destination includes both tangible elements (historical monuments, natural sites, etc.) and intangible elements (culture, customs, history, etc.). This implies the need for the researcher to have a holistic vision to grasp the complexity of this object.

Moreover, two points of view can be chosen by researchers who approach this question of the image of the destination: either that of the sender (*branding*) or that of the receiver (*brand*). Indeed, from the point of view of the consumer (visitor and/or potential tourist), with regard to its notoriety and image, the destination is a *brand* in the sense of a sign, index, signal, etc. (Keller, 2008). It is endowed with a certain capital (positive if it attracts and negative if it drives people away). From the point of view of the organizations that manage the brand, the managers are more in line with a “*branding*” logic that aims to promote the brand and/or the destination to the visitor/touristic public. In this case, the main problem is that of the management unit. Unlike a manufacturer who has control over his product (design, development, production, marketing), several difficulties arise from the co-management of the destination brand, even if it is necessary to note the presence of a pilot, often a

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<sup>1</sup> Regional elected representatives, departmental elected representatives, municipal elected representatives, elected representatives of associations, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Touristic site managers, tour operators, etc.

tourist office. Our study is therefore positioned towards this second point of view, considering the disagreements that can emerge from the co-management logic of a destination brand.

Taking into account the managerial realities mentioned and the theoretical elements, our work is structured around two main research questions: (1) how can a complex "*Blois Chambord*" brand, co-constructed by stakeholders with varied, even divergent interests, be managed? (2) And how does the image of the destination co-constructed by these stakeholders enrich and/or contribute to the value of the "*Chambord*" brand?

In order to answer these questions, the conceptual fields of the brand and brand equity are mobilized. Then, we proceed to a clarification between the TDI and the brand image. Finally, a qualitative study is conducted with four groups of stakeholders of the *Blois Chambord* destination to understand the role of TDI in the relationship between "*brand image vs. brand equity*".

## 2 Brand, Brand Equity and Tourism Destination Image (TDI)

This first part is devoted to the conceptual and theoretical field of our research. The different concepts which structure our work are evoked: the brand, brand equity and TDI. Some reflection is also carried out to clarify the convergences and divergences between two key concepts related to this literature: brand image and TDI.

### 2.1 *The Brand and Brand Equity*

Several works have been conducted in tourism marketing literature on the tourism destination *brand image* to understand the tourism destination *brand* (Boo et al., 2009; Cai, 2002; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Kotsi et al., 2018; Sürücü et al., 2019).

#### 2.1.1 A Race from Territories to Brands

If in the field of territorial marketing, the brand has long been the privileged domain of the cities, today it is the touristic destinations that are leading this frantic race towards the creation of a brand to differentiate themselves, by focusing essentially on different approaches to the city brand. Several brands are developed in a given tourism territory, with the risk of exacerbated competition between these brands. On the basis of this observation, it therefore seemed important to us to study the literature on the city brand in order to understand the touristic destination brand.

Indeed, researchers and practitioners have developed branding approaches for the city in order to respond to the need for differentiation in an increasingly competitive tourism environment. Since the 1970s, with the appearance of the “*I love NY*” brand for the US city of New York, cities have been developing strategies with an acceleration of brand development.<sup>3</sup> The dominant thinking is that this brand represents an asset for cities to boost their economic dynamism. Convinced that their salvation lies in the development of brands, several cities have embarked on a brand management policy. It is one of the main entry points for tourism management practitioners to attract tourists, executives and investors. Over the last four decades or so, several city brands have emerged.

In this respect, Maynadier (2009) considers the complexity of a city<sup>4</sup> and the different publics linked to it. He emphasizes that branding goes beyond the management of a city as a pure touristic product or as the place of origin of a product.<sup>5</sup> This observation leads us to observe that the application of the concept of a brand to a city, or even to a territory, goes beyond purely “product” logic.

In fact, the territory is a complex system, in which there are several networks of stakeholders and different identities (Di Méo, 1998; Escadafal, 2015, p. 56). Three aspects are highlighted by Escadafal (2015) to illustrate this aspect of territory: (1) the political dimension created and intended by the different stakeholders, (2) the role of heritage “in a broad sense” in the construction of an identity and (3) the history linked to this heritage.

Consequently, the touristic destination is much more than a simple product, as mentioned by Baloglu and McCleary (1999). It is a particular object of study, even if the tourism products can be found within the destination. The marketing researcher must therefore avoid over-simplification in an approach to the touristic destination and tend towards systemic, even interdisciplinary, approaches to apprehend this particular object of study.

Moreover, in city branding literature, researchers have had to deal with this complexity of the city in the course of their research. The first research positioned the city brand by integrating a product brand approach, as specified by Hankinson (2001). Subsequent currents have preferred an institutional brand approach, as described by Anholt (2005) or Maynadier (2009). These institutional brand approaches seem more coherent in that they allow the brand to be understood through an institution, which carries the strategy of the territory interested in tourism development. However, one question remains unanswered and gives rise to an interesting debate in the literature: *can we apply the notion of brand to the city or to the touristic destination?*

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<sup>3</sup> *Annex 1.*

<sup>4</sup> This is a complexity that Florek (2005) does not fail to mention in the context of territories interested in tourism development as touristic destinations.

<sup>5</sup> In marketing, the product represents a physical offering that can be easily modified.

### 2.1.2 When Can We Talk About a City Brand or Even a Touristic Destination?

Since the city can be seen as a touristic destination, let us lay the foundations for our questioning of the appropriate context for talking about a touristic destination brand on the basis of the brand approaches for the city. Although it seems to be quick and easy to draw the parallel, the researcher must however have reservations. Considering our definition of the touristic destination, the destination<sup>6</sup> can represent more complex entities than the cities themselves. In addition to the object under study, the complexity of the issues at stake emerges from the multiplicity and diversity of the stakeholders.<sup>7</sup> It can be linked to the specificities of the different touristic sites that can be identified within the object (territory interested in tourism development) as well as to the power relations that can be engaged in between the different stakeholders of the destination (for example, a will to put forward one's own touristic area rather than that of one's neighbor). Nevertheless, this parallel is interesting to us in order to illustrate the difficulties in developing and supporting a destination brand with regard to those encountered in applying the notion of "brand" to cities.

As Anholt (2005, 2007) makes clear in his work, city branding cannot be reduced to the simple creation of a logo or a slogan. The city brand goes beyond these signs, in that it also requires a real policy of brand management by one or more stakeholders in the city. The management of a city brand is first of all the management of its reputation (Anholt, 2004; Maynadier, 2009). This management, which must be strategic, not only makes it possible to plan the brand policy desired by the various managers, but also to create an experience framework for the visitors. It can even go beyond the function of experience for visitors, by fulfilling a function as a lever for the feeling of belonging expressed by residents.

Furthermore, the notion of reputation in relation to city branding has led many authors to conclude that cities are brands in essence (Anholt, 2005; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). They start from the fact that cities have a name<sup>8</sup> and that this name, together with an image of the city, generates a reputation, hence a brand. However, Maynadier (2009, p. 40) points out a theoretical limit to this rapid shortcut from reputation to brand. In particular, he emphasizes the fact that according to brand management theories, one cannot dissociate the brand from the intention to generate a brand:

*In fact, the notion of reputation does not allow for the consideration of an intention to make a brand, nor of any brand project, which are fundamental notions in the literature (Kapferer, 1991). In the context of a city brand, Virgo and de Chernatony (2005) show that there is no brand without a brand project or vision.*

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<sup>6</sup> Seen as a department, a region, or a nation.

<sup>7</sup> The various managers of the touristic destination: the territorial authorities (region, departments, municipalities or inter-communalities), the elected representatives of associations, the managers of the tourist offices, the personnel of the place of strong tourist attraction (Chambord within the framework of this research), the residents, the shopkeepers, the regional visitors, the tourists, the media, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Big cities are taken as examples (Venice or New York); what about cities with a lesser reputation?.

In conclusion, the notion of brand cannot be applied to a city or a touristic destination if there is no will and strategy on the part of the managers to develop a brand policy. In the long term, this brand policy can strengthen the brand equity of the destination.

### 2.1.3 Brand Equity in the Tourism Industry

Brand equity is a fundamental concept in brand management and is widely used by marketing researchers to understand and analyze the value of brands. Two approaches are often used by researchers to study it: the first is financial (brand equity) and the second is customer-based (assessing consumer response to a brand name). In this work, we will retain the second, which is interested in customers in a general way, but with a broader vision of the different managers identified in a touristic destination (*branding*).

The study of brand equity is relevant to this research insofar as we note that it is necessary to put in place brand management policies in the territories interested in tourism development in order to be able to talk about destination brands (Maynadier, 2009). This concept is the subject of several definitions in the literature. In marketing, the dominant strand most often retains the definition of Aaker (1991) who presents it as “*all the assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name or its symbols and which bring something to the company and its customers because they give an added value or a loss of value to the products and services*”. Five elements are retained to analyze the added value of the brand in the study of its brand equity: notoriety, perceived quality, brand image, loyalty and other brand assets (patents, production experience, logistics management, sales force expertise, relations with distributors, etc.).

In the field of tourism, this concept has also been used on several occasions by researchers working on tourism destination brands (Boo et al., 2009; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). Referring to this work, brand equity can be defined as “*the overall utility that drives customers to favor a brand over its competitor*” (Boo et al., 2009).

Furthermore, Blain et al. (2005) suggest that the notion of image should be included in the definition of destination brands. While several research works have focused on the study of the role of brand image in optimizing the brand equity of a touristic destination (Boo et al., 2009; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Kotsi et al., 2018; Sürücü et al., 2019), the literature devotes little interest to the study of the links between TDI, brand image and brand equity. This is partly due to a confusion between TDI and brand image. The second chapter of our literature review is devoted to the clarification of these two distinct but complementary conceptual fields in tourism marketing.

## 2.2 TDI

A key notion in the literature on tourism marketing, researchers have been interested in the notion of image since the seminal work of Martineau (1958). This work suggests that human behavior depends more on image than on objective reality. The origin of "image theory" postulates that the world is a psychological or distorted representation of objective reality residing and existing in the individual's mind (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, p. 871).

TDI is defined here as a set of mental, cognitive and affective constructions that a person or a group of people make of a touristic destination over time, depending on the marketing and environmental stimuli to which they are exposed.<sup>9</sup> Although this concept is considered to be multiple in nature by researchers due to the different scales used for its measurement (Gallarza et al., 2002; Rodrigues et al., 2012), one of the consensuses identified in the literature is that the image is formed through cognitive and affective evaluations of the consumer or tourist (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Gallarza et al., 2002). Cognitive evaluation concerns the knowledge and beliefs one has about a touristic destination; and affective evaluation is related to the feelings one has about a touristic destination.

Furthermore, Gallarza et al. (2002, p. 57) point out that the image is constantly evolving according to different criteria that we do not necessarily understand. Indeed, the images of a touristic destination are interactions between the impressions we have of the residents, the shops, the other visitors or tourists, or the staff of the sites we visit. It is in relation to this holistic nature of image that the study of this central concept in the tourism marketing literature is interesting.

### 2.2.1 Do Not Confuse TDI with the Brand Image

Brand image is one of the elements of brand value identified by Aaker (1992). It is also presented as an important source of brand equity (Keller, 2008). Tasci et al. (2007) state that inconsistent use of the terminology "TDI" has contributed to the use of other constructs as falling within the conceptual and theoretical field of TDI. This leads to the analysis of other constructs using measurement techniques similar to TDI. One of the explanations for this confusion can be found in the fact that most of the approaches conducted on the notion of image applied to tourism in the early 2000s aimed to understand the destination brand (Boo et al., 2009; Cai, 2002; Hankinson, 2005; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Tasci & Kozak, 2006). As a result, they focus on the brand image of the destination rather than on TDI, and are conducted on *branding* logic. According to Blain et al. (2005, p. 337), *destination branding* is "the set of marketing activities, which (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that easily identifies and differentiates the destination; (2) convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; (3) serve to consolidate and strengthen the emotional connection

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<sup>9</sup> Synthesis of several definitions from the literature (*Annex 2*).

between the visitor and the destination; and (4) reduce search costs for consumers, as well as perceived risks”.

Studies on *destination branding* are most often based on the premise of Baloglu and McCleary (1999). They assume that tourists perceive touristic destinations as a product (Murphy et al., 2000). This is a quick shortcut that can be detrimental in the application of the notion of image to a touristic destination. In order to support our argument, the beginning of an answer comes from the consideration of the characteristics of the object of study (the touristic destination). It is a complex system of objects and stakeholders (Escadafal, 2015; Florek, 2005), which implies that, depending on which stakeholders or objects of the touristic destination are mobilized, approaches to the construction of the image of the territory interested in tourism development are not necessarily the same. It is crucial to consider the maximum number of elements (tangible and intangible) of the touristic destination in order to define the construction of the image of the destination. In our opinion, this is where the brand image is limited in the context of applying the notion of image to a territory interested in tourism development. This image reduces the object of study to the existence of a brand, whereas TDI considers the complexity of this object of study, which is the stakeholders and the territory interested in tourism development.

Furthermore, Hem and Iversen (2004) point out that the formation of TDI is not just about the brand image, although the former is the core of the latter. They see TDI as an important prerequisite for moving towards a destination brand image. In a *branding context*, Pike (2009) considers that TDI is a pre-existing concept which is the equivalent of the brand image. The few definitions (*Annex 2*) allow us to illustrate this difference, depending on whether the author is talking about the brand image of the destination or TDI. In this respect, researchers always refer to brand associations when talking about the brand image, whereas cognitive and affective factors in relation to a place are highlighted more in the definitions of TDI. This difference confirms the need to delimit the boundaries between these two concepts in the context of work on the application of the notion of image to a territory interested in tourism development.

Indeed, according to Keller's work (2008), brand image is defined as the perception of a brand, as reflected by the brand associations held in the consumer's memory. Décaudin (1996) approaches this concept in the same way: “*The brand image can be defined as the set of affective and rational representations linked to a brand*”. The various authors are very clear on this subject and always link the brand image to the prior existence of a brand:

*The brand is a concentrate of history and consumers store in their memory a brand image; that is to say, the sum of impressions, satisfactions or dissatisfactions accumulated during their use of the product or what they have heard about it through word of mouth or communication.* (Ratier, 2002, p. 12)

This observation implies that there is no perception of a brand image without the actual presence of a brand for the destination. However, there are destinations which



do not have a brand (for example, the *royal palaces of Abomey* in Benin),<sup>10</sup> but which nevertheless benefit from an image perceived by visitors. In this case, it should be noted that the image is externally imposed and not desired by the managers. It is the intentionality that makes the difference. Other destinations may have recently developed a brand with less brand equity than the most popular touristic attraction in their area. This is the case of the *Blois Chambord* destination, which is the subject of our study.

It should be considered that the place of strong touristic attraction can be the main core of the brand image, or even of the brand equity of the destination if it has a high visibility. In this case, the brand image of the touristic attraction is emphasized at the expense of the brand image of the destination. This suggests that, depending on the context of the territory being promoted, the brand image can take two forms: the brand image of the place of strong touristic attraction or the brand image of the destination.<sup>11</sup> Also, this brand image, whatever it may be, is different from TDI, even if in the long run these two images are complementary in certain strategic logics of the promotion of a touristic destination.

### 2.2.2 Towards Complementarity Between TDI and Brand Image

The above-mentioned literature shows that TDI precedes the brand, which in turn generates a brand image. It is because a destination has a positive image that differentiates it from others that it can design a brand with a high level of awareness by implementing a management strategy. Therefore, before the brand or the brand image, TDI must constitute the core of a differentiation strategy. It has a central role for both researchers and practitioners.

Furthermore, the importance of brand or brand image in the differentiation strategy of a destination has been repeatedly demonstrated in the literature (Boo et al., 2009; Cai, 2002; Hankinson, 2005; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Tasci & Kozak, 2006). Nevertheless, it is necessary to focus first on the source, namely TDI, especially for touristic destinations in the start-up or development phase.

## 3 Methodology and Interpretation of Results

Our study is conducted on the *Blois Chambord* destination, which has been working since 2012 on the development of a destination brand (Abrioux et al., 2021). In recent years, it has been considering the development of a management strategy based on the co-construction of an image of the destination by various stakeholders in the

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<sup>10</sup> These are the institutional brands that may seem the most intangible in terms of their ability to represent complex entities (Maynadier, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> In a context where the whole of the territory being promoted for tourism adopts the same institutional brand through a federating institution such as an Intercommunal Tourist Office (OTI).

area. Located in the Loire Valley, within a region that has been developing several departmental or regional touristic destination brands since 2010, and supported by three inter-municipalities, it seems appropriate in this context to understand the role of TDI in the relationship between “brand image vs. brand equity”. Therefore, our approach aims to answer two research questions: (1) how can a complex “*Blois Chambord*” brand, co-constructed by stakeholders with varied, even divergent interests, be managed? (2) And how does the image of the destination co-constructed by these stakeholders enrich and/or contribute to the value of the “*Chambord*” brand?

The data used in this research comes from a qualitative study conducted as part of the “Chambord Appel à Projet Régional (APR)” project between 2017 and 2019. This part of the study considers four groups of stakeholders present in the *Blois Chambord* destination: managers of the *Blois Chambord* intercommunal tourist office, managers of the *Château de Chambord*, elected representatives and local residents or visitors (*Annex 3*).

An interview guide was provided for these stakeholders, and was constantly enriched as the research progressed. The interviews lasted an average of fifty minutes and were then transcribed in accordance with the processing requirements of the Alceste software. The entire corpus was also reread with a view to manual thematic, horizontal (inter-group) and vertical (intra-group) analysis, based on the recommendations of Blanchet and Gotman (2006) in relation to content analysis. Ultimately, this work allows us to exploit the heuristic function of content analysis which enhances an exploratory discovery approach, namely content analysis to see or understand a phenomenon (Evrard et al., 2003, p. 126).

### **Box 1: Different Phases of the Methodology**

Phase 1: Literature: Conceptual and theoretical elements.

Phase 2: Design of the interview guide (with three poles: positioning, brand equity and image of the destination, status) with adaptation of the questions for the different stakeholders interviewed.

Phase 3: Fieldwork: Identification of relevant questions based on the answers of the first interviewees = enrichment of the interview guide.

Phase 4: Transcription of the interviews—constitution of the corpus.

Phase 5: Analyses (Alceste and manual).

## **3.1 The Blois Chambord Destination**

The *Blois Chambord* destination was established between 2012 and 2017 (*Annex 4*). It is promoted by the Blois Chambord-Val de Loire Intercommunal Tourist Office (OTI). Straddling the Loire, this destination in the Loir-et-Cher is remarkable both for

the presence of renowned Loire châteaux—Chambord, Blois, Chaumont-sur-Loire, plus other notable châteaux such as Cheverny, Beaugard and Talcy—but also for the landscape of the Loire Valley, which was listed as a World Heritage site in 2000, and for the tradition of pleasure gardens. Moreover, a diversity of towns and villages rich in heritage and landscape are spread out between the Cisse valley and the limits of Touraine to the west, the ponds and moors of Sologne to the south-east, and the Petite Beauce to the north bordering the Vendôme region. The town of Blois, itself rich in architectural and landscape heritage, with a prestigious history, is at the geographical center of the region and is the economic hub of the area. In addition to the history of the Renaissance, the legacy of which can be perceived in this destination, the river tradition, hunting, agriculture, wine and the art of gardening have all left their mark on an area crossed by the Loire cycle routes.

RCP Marketing Agency has been working with the *Blois Chambord* tourist office since 2012. The agency has contributed to the creation of a new name and a new logo. Some of the destination's stakeholders have been developing a brand management strategy since January 2018, via the organization of strategic reflection workshops, even though the territory's strong touristic attraction (Chambord) has very significant brand equity.

## 3.2 *An Interpretative Approach*

By structuring our reflection around the elements of brand value identified by Aaker (1992), our analyses highlight a real use of the Chambord brand equity by different managers to build an image of their destination (*Blois Chambord*). This strategy proves to be double-edged in terms of strengthening Chambord brand equity.

Also, different managers of the destination do not necessarily agree on the course of action to be taken. The price of Chambord car park (presented in the sub-section on “loyalty”) is an example. Those in charge of the castle want to charge a lot (for reasons of profitability and to achieve important objectives in relation to the self-financing threshold desired by the French government), but a high price discourages tourists from visiting the surrounding area. This option does not help the promotion of the surrounding municipalities and is detrimental to the objectives of the mayors of these municipalities.

### 3.2.1 **The Reputation of Chambord**

Chambord enjoys a very high level of recognition among the various players in the region. As a result, these groups consider it useful to build TDI based essentially on the reputation of the castle. For example, this observation can be seen in the analysis of the *verbatim reports* of the group of elected representatives: **Ind. 1.** “*We’ve really tried to build on the image of Chambord in our region. Our business park, which is located at the motorway exit, which leads to Chambord from the A10, was called the*

*Gates of Chambord. This was not, we'll say, innocent, because we wanted to benefit from this image, known and recognized in France and abroad, to give an identity to our tourism business".*

However, there is real difficulty in giving meaning to the destination by relying on the territory's assets (service offers, culture, traditions, etc.) to optimize the visitor experience and co-construct an image that goes well beyond the castle. The approach is still limited to the day-to-day management of the landscape, such as the maintenance of the area around the castle: **Ind. 2.** *"Indirectly, yes, I think so, because everyone thinks well of Chambord today in the region and everyone is aware of what Chambord brings to the region. Behind this, we try to do things correctly for the communities and municipalities in the area. We take care of our town entrances, we take care of the motorway exit, we take care of the signage. We try to give back to Chambord what it can give us".*

### 3.2.2 Perceived Quality

The majestic appearance of the castle also evokes a form of quality. Chambord is seen as a place of excellence that contributes to the quality of the destination's offer: **Ind. 4.** *"The important thing is that it has to be well run, that's it! When you're at Chambord, you're not just anywhere; so there you go, it's a magical place, it's a place of history; so, there's respect which is there and which must be felt".*

However, stakeholders also deplore the lack of adequate service offers to meet visitors' requirements. For example, the destination has an image of an unwelcoming place which ultimately detracts from the quality of the visitor experience: **Ind. 21.** *"The tourist lodges in the area are starting to develop, they are developing more or less well. But going to people's homes, to people's houses, I don't know if they are... For example, someone who walks around with his bundle or his bike and then stops, goes door to door to try to...; I don't think that people would be able to welcome them, as we see in some countries or in some regions".*

### 3.2.3 Chambord's Brand Image

The distinctive elements of Chambord's brand image, especially those linked to the name and logo, are present in the representations of the different stakeholders, especially managers of the destination (Box 2). The latter do not hesitate to use them to highlight their destination.

#### **Box 2: Some Examples of Verbatim Reports**

**Ind. 3:** *"So there you have it, it's true that afterwards to answer your question on how, I think that the word Chambord can... is enough in itself. It's almost*

*a brand name for the area and it's true that, as we were saying earlier about this definition of grandiose, wide open spaces, nature, with a fauna and flora quite characteristic of the Sologne in which we are, I would describe it a bit like that"*

**Ind. 2:** *"I am also an elected official at the departmental level and it so happens that in the logo of our department, there is the salamander which is the emblem of François Ier and which is the motif of the coffered ceilings of the Château de Chambord. So, clearly, it's Chambord! It's Chambord! But my silence and this time of reflection was to know if we could imagine another site as a high place!"*

Nevertheless, these preconceived elements can also have consequences for TDI when the managers enter into opportunistic "naming" logic. For example, Blois station was renamed "*Blois Chambord station*". This decision was not the subject of a real strategy that considered aspects related to accessibility such as "transport from Blois to Chambord". On the cognitive aspect, this new name has induced a certain proximity between Blois and Chambord for visitors with little knowledge of the area. However, it is far from obvious: "**Ind. 13.** *Ah, sure, clearly, physical accessibility is difficult. When you have a car, everything is fine! When you don't have a car, it's extremely complicated; you get to the station, it's another seventeen kilometers, it's not clear...*".

### 3.2.4 Loyalty

At the same time, certain tensions between the castle's managers and the local people have greatly damaged the image of the castle. This has generated a form of tension between them and has in some way affected the loyalty and even the willingness of the local visitors to play a full ambassadorial role (Box 3).

#### **Box 3: Some Examples of Verbatim Reports**

**Ind. 2.** *"There are indeed a certain number of inhabitants who have turned away from Chambord, who were regulars, who used to come to visit Chambord, especially in the low season when autumn and winter arrive, and there are far fewer members of the public at Chambord; well, it's the inhabitants who bring their family and friends, that's it! And in particular the shopkeepers of Chambord, well, we saw it... Well, we saw it! There was a period for years, years... Added to this was the price of the car park, I think you've heard about that? It's logical that there is a price for parking! But for the winter period, we, the elected representatives, proposed that it should be symbolic"*

**Ind. 20.** *“It’s difficult [the work of cooperation between the estate and the outside world to make the territory’s know-how visible in Chambord]. There have been various fights between the... in the estate and outside. You have to be careful because when you say the National Estate of Chambord, then there is the private side which intervenes. The Domaine de Chambord is something special with its epic status. So, it’s difficult to...”*

### 3.2.5 Little Use of Service Offers to Strengthen Chambord’s Brand Equity

Finally, the management policy for the destination must integrate a strategic approach which allows the tangible and intangible assets of the territory to be highlighted. The managers of the destination are aware of this, but are still struggling to implement this logic in the short, medium and even long term: **Ind. 3.** *“In other words, where the Director of the Estate and the President of the Board of Directors, and we, the elected representatives of the area with the Mayor of Chambord, can meet to talk about subjects that will contribute to the value of Chambord for our inhabitants, but also for the public that we are in charge of welcoming, because on questions, I don’t know if it’s part of your questionnaires! We mentioned the fact that the way we are welcomed is also how we arrive in Chambord! Since we are not in town, that’s it! SMILE, yes, Chambord’s accessibility won’t be solved by itself. Obviously, we’re going to have to get around the table”.*

Nevertheless, we note a real effort on the part of those involved in the tourist office who are increasingly promoting a destination that has several assets: **Ind. 8.** *“I work on a destination, which is based on four major pillars: Blois, Chambord, Cheverny and Chaumont-sur-Loire. These are the strong pillars, the identity bases of the Blois Chambord destination, on which we have deployed a certain number of..., tools, actions, operational tools, so there you have it”.*

## 3.3 Discussion

This research leads us to propose theoretical and managerial contributions, to underline certain limits in relation to our study and to highlight future research avenues which may allow us to better define the issue of TDI in the reinforcement of a destination’s brand equity:

### 3.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

Firstly, our work is situated upstream of research on the importance of the brand and/or brand image in the differentiation strategy of a touristic destination which have favored a “*product approach*” in their studies (Boo et al., 2009; Hankinson, 2005; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Kotsi et al., 2018).

Indeed, the application of the notion of image in the tourism context can quickly lead the researcher and/or practitioner to a rapid simplification of reality. They may tend to confuse different existing approaches (*TDI and/or brand image*) or to favor one over the other without having first analyzed the context of the study. This is why it's important to clarify these two key concepts in the tourism marketing literature and to underline their complementarity. In particular, managers and researchers should insist on the fact that good management of TDI allows the generation of a brand (brand image) which can contribute in the medium term to the reinforcement of the brand equity of the destination. Our research therefore underlines the importance for the various managers (elected representatives, tourist office managers, tourist site managers, etc.) to work upstream on a real strategy of co-construction of TDI before moving towards strategies for creating a destination brand. This approach should enable each stakeholder, within the brand management unit, to agree with the interests of the other stakeholders, while highlighting its own interests.

In this way, it is a question of anticipating the difficulties identified in the development and steering of brand management policies. The idea of managing a destination “like a brand” was initially intended to federate all the efforts of the different managers to try to act collectively in the same direction, which is not so easily achieved. Creating a logo and advertising are not enough to make a brand. The service delivered on the spot must be consistent with the promise which requires the involvement of a much larger number of stakeholders, with varied profiles, than in the case of managing a “*product brand*” or even a “*service brand*”. It should also be noted that the “*destination brand*”, in terms of its management, is closer to a “*service brand*” problem than to that of a “*product brand*”, with greater complexity due to the common and divergent interests of the different managers. Therefore, it is one of the limits of the analogy between a “*product brand*” and a “*destination brand*”.

### 3.3.2 Managerial Contributions

Moreover, the study reveals the ambivalence of the strategy of the managers of *Blois Chambord* to build TDI based essentially on the brand equity of the Château de Chambord. This priority given to the castle is to the detriment of the cognitive and affective elements which also enhance the touristic area of the destination. Indeed, as the literature emphasizes, a strong brand image creates value for the destination by generating a lasting preference among tourists for the place of visit and by reinforcing the brand equity of the destination (Boo et al., 2009; Cai, 2002; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014). Chambord's reputation thus contributes to the arrival of tourists

and visitors to the territory of the three inter-municipalities and the positive perception of Chambord's brand ultimately reinforces the valuation of the *Blois Chambord* destination. However, by neglecting to a greater or lesser extent the cognitive and affective perception of the destination, the managers in the area damage its image and thus contribute to a devaluation of the Chambord's brand in four of the five elements of added value identified by Aaker (1992): notoriety, perceived quality, brand image and loyalty. For example, in terms of awareness, by overvaluing the brand image of the castle, the “*small heritage*”<sup>12</sup> of the area, the other castles in the destination—whether well or lesser known, including that of Blois, which is included in the name—the wine-growing tradition, the Loire or Sologne landscape, and even the estate's park and garden, are largely relegated to second place and are hardly visible. Moreover, by focusing on the Chambord building, the rest of the territory concerned in the destination is hardly visible: the Sologne, the Cisse valley and the Petite Beauce escape the eye. The architectural and landscape charm of Blois and the surrounding towns, the history, the human activities (festivals, markets, etc.) are not mentioned. The emphasis on the world-famous castle is aimed at attracting international and, to a lesser extent, national visitors, while the diversity of the area's attractions is neglected, even though it could attract local visitors, enrich the brand and move the image away from the “*Renaissance masterpiece*”.

The study also shows, in terms of brand image, that confusion over the image maintained in communication around the *Blois Chambord brand* with competing brands promoted by the region and certain departments such as *Val de Loire*, *Châteaux de Loire* or *Touraine Loire Valley* weakens the visibility of the destination and denies its uniqueness. The overkill of identical and parallel communication leads to a rivalry of brands positioned around the same image, with the only difference being their different perimeters (the Val de Loire in two regions, *Touraine* in the Indre-et-Loire department, etc.).

Furthermore, concerning TDI, it should be noted that it is the first form of perception that is created voluntarily or involuntarily by the various stakeholders in a territory. Knowledge of its cognitive and affective determinants can help tourism promoters to structure their territorial marketing strategy on different levels:

1. In a touristic destination which does not have a destination brand or which has a destination brand that is not very well known, the managers must essentially concentrate on building a positive image of their destination by promoting better knowledge of the touristic assets of their territory and by involving the various stakeholders, especially local ones, in their tourist development project. On the one hand, this choice can generate residents' attachment to their territory, contribute to further involving them in a logic of ambassadors of the territory and thus favor a better consideration of the affective dimension in connection with the destination. On the other hand, the positive image that emerges can only be beneficial for the preference and/or choice of the destination by visitors and/or tourists, as underlined by various authors in the literature (Jenkins, 1999; Rodrigues et al., 2012; Tasci et al., 2007).

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<sup>12</sup> “*Petit patrimoine*” in French.



2. In a destination with a high level of awareness of its destination brand, work on TDI is interesting insofar as it can help to strengthen the brand equity and/or the brand image of the destination. It can also have an influence on the preference of the various stakeholders (residents, visitors or tourists) for products bearing the destination brand. Indeed, in marketing in general and in tourism marketing in particular, several works have highlighted the influential role of image on brand equity or on the products associated with a destination brand (Kaswengi & Ramarason, 2016; Lim & Weaver, 2014). Moreover, TDI can play an important role in the loyalty of visitors and/or tourists as highlighted by many works in the literature (Chen & Phou, 2013; Zhang et al., 2014).

Our article thus highlights the limits of the brand analogy in the sense that there is no management unit with a coherent strategy for the *Blois Chambord* destination and that the product goes far beyond the “head of the show” (Chambord). While *branding* efforts are not in vain, the challenge lies in the ability to articulate the interests of the various entities involved.

### 3.3.3 Boundaries

As in any study, there are certain limitations which constitute avenues of reflection for future research. For example, we may be criticized for the lack of mobilization of stakeholders external to the destination (visitors to the Centre Val de Loire region, national and/or international tourists, tour operators, etc.) who also play an important role in the construction of the image. In other words, beyond the point of view of the sender (*branding*) which is ours in this article, this study should be considered from the point of view of the receiver (*brand*).

It would also have been interesting to approach our study differently so as to consider the “sale of complementary products” which are attached to the Chambord brand. A brand, because it is the object of positioning efforts, necessarily presents a simplified image based on the salient features of the destination. We are on the verge of caricature (but this seems consistent with the tourist's system of choice, who says to himself, for example: I will go to *Blois Chambord* to see the 350+ chimneys or the double staircase of the Château de Chambord, even though the destination goes beyond this representation). But, in addition to attracting and welcoming the visitor and/or tourist, it is necessary to convince them to consume “derived products”, a sort of “range extension”, by going to visit, for example, the castle of Talcy. This is a slightly different issue from that of the “*product brand*” for which a manufacturer and/or producer sells his product without any other purpose. However, the managers expect a “*destination brand*” to radiate, to encourage visitors and/or tourists to spend locally and to support the local economy. The “*destination brand*” plays the role of an appealing product which must be articulated around a range, where the role of each product in the range is considered. For example, when the Château de Chambord

sets the price of its car park too high, it does not play its role as a loss leader for the surrounding areas. Once again, it is an illustration of the difficulties linked to the co-management of a “*destination brand*”, this time extended not only to the brand, but also to its derived products.

### 3.3.4 Future Research Avenues

The difficulties noted in the management unit of the *Blois Chambord* brand lead us to consider the interest that the literature on role tensions can represent in the governance of tourism development and promotion policies (Djabi et al., 2019; Rivière et al., 2019). It is essentially a question of studying the levers of analysis and action to best manage the role tensions between stakeholders managing a touristic destination.

Furthermore, considering some works in the literature on shop image and brand equity (Kaswengi, 2013; Kaswengi & Ramarosan, 2016) and the results of our research, the statistical study of a possible effect of TDI on the brand equity of the destination represents an interesting research avenue. This study will make it possible to evaluate how and in what way the image contributes to reinforcing the constituent elements of the brand equity of a touristic destination.

## Annex 1: Some Examples of City Marks

The trend started in the late 1970s when graphic designer Milton Glaser launched the famous “*I love NY*” advertising campaign for New York City in the United States. It was later changed to “*I love NY more than ever*” in 2001, following the terrorist attacks. According to several New York City stakeholders, this brand was a real success, helping to revive declining tourism, attract new investors and increase residents’ sense of belonging to the city. In the following decades, several cities such as Amsterdam, Lyon and Hong Kong followed this trend.



I amsterdam.

ONLY LYON

Asia's world city

HONG KONG



## Annex 2 Some Definitions from the Literature

<i>Brand image of a destination</i>		
Boo et al. (2009, p. 221)	Brand image has been considered as the reasoned or emotional perception that consumers attach to specific brands (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Keller, 2003). Brand image has also been identified as an important source of brand equity (Keller, 2003; Lassar et al., 1995). Blain et al. (2005) suggested that destination image should be included in the definition of destination brands	Reasoned or emotional perception of a brand
Cai (2002, p. 723)	Destination branding can be described as a perception of a place, reflected in the brand associations held in a tourist’s memory	Perception of a place based on brand associations held in memory
Kladou and Kehagias (2014, p. 3)	Destination branding can be defined as a unique identity of a destination to differentiate it from its competitors	Unique identity of destination in a logic of differentiation
<i>Tourism Destination Image (TDI)</i>		
Foroudi et al. (2018, p. 98)	According to the tourism literature, destination image can be defined as the sum of beliefs, feelings, conceptions, knowledge, imaginations, emotional thoughts, ideas and impressions that people have about a place or destination	Sum of knowledge, imagination and feelings about a place
Bigné et al. (2001, p. 607)	The image of the destination is therefore the tourist’s subjective interpretation of reality. In this configuration, cognitive and affective factors are involved (Moutinho, 1987)	Subjective interpretation of reality (cognitive and affective)
Baloglu and McCleary (1999, p. 870)	The concept of TDI has generally been considered as an attitudinal construct, which consists of an individual mental representation of overall knowledge (beliefs), feelings and impressions about an object or destination	Attitudinal construct—representation of knowledge, feelings and impressions about a destination

(continued)

(continued)

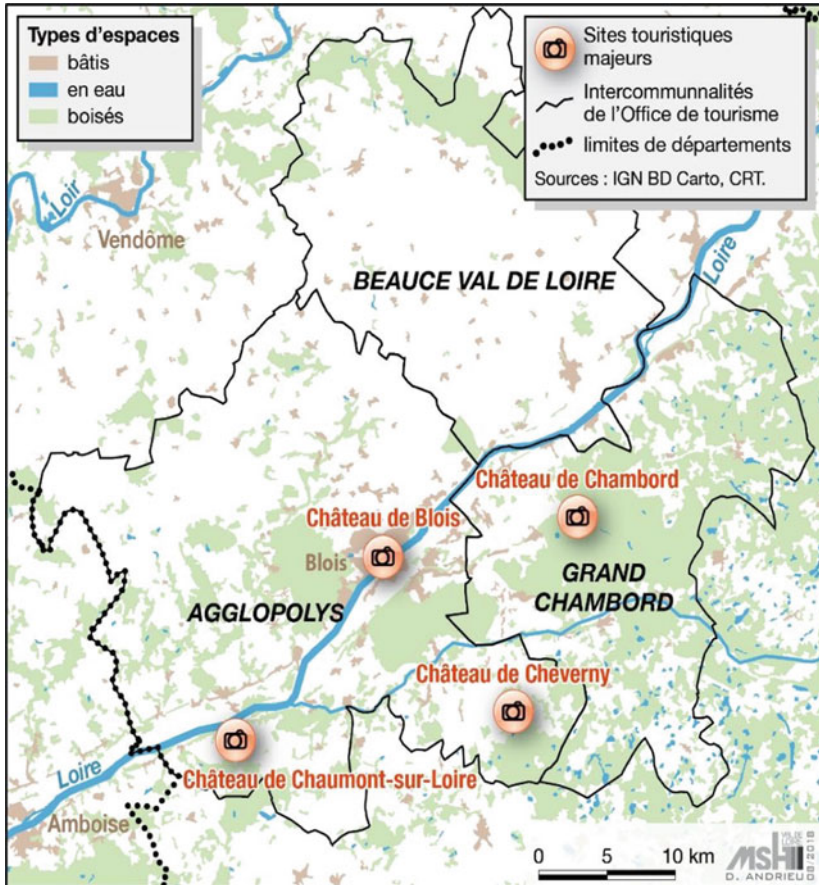
Baloglu and McCleary (1999, p. 871)	The destination image is the expression of all the knowledge, impressions and emotions which an individual, or a group of individuals, has about a particular object or place	Expression of all knowledge, impressions and emotions about a place
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Source Authors

### Annex 3 Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Groups	Ind	Gender	Profession	Age group
Elected officials and associations	1	M	Frame	[30–40 years]
	2	M	Elected municipal official	[60–70 years]
	3	M	Frame	[50–60 years]
	4	M	Elected association	[50–60 years]
	5	F	Trader	[50–60 years]
	6	M	Trader	[50–60 years]
Managers of the <i>Blois Chambord</i> Tourist Office	7	F	Middle management	[30–40 years]
	8	M	Frame	[40–50 years]
	9	F	Middle management	[30–40 years]
	10	M	Middle management	[50–60 years]
	11	F	Employee	[30–40 years]
Managers of Chambord	12	F	Frame	[30–40 years]
	13	F	Middle management	[30–40 years]
	14	M	Frame	[40–50 years]
	15	M	Frame	[50–60 years]
	16	M	Frame	[40–50 years]
Residents of the <i>Blois Chambord</i> destination	17	M	Middle management	[50–60 years]
	18	M	Retired	[60–70 years]
	19	M	Retired	[90–100 years]
	20	F	Middle management	[50–60 years]
	21	M	Employee	[20–30 years]
	22	F	Employee	[50–60 years]

### Annex 4 Map of the *Blois Chambord* Destination



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