

## Culture, sustainability and tourism destination image: a comparative study on the sub-regions of Brazil

Cultura, sustentabilidade e a imagem de destinos turísticos:  
um estudo comparativo nas sub-Regiões do Brasil

Cultura, sostenibilidad y la imagen de destinos turísticos: un estudio  
comparativo en las diferentes subregiones de Brasil

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**Abstract:** *The use of 'sustainability' as a factor of market differentiation has been recurrent among tourism destinations. However, the image of these settings is not free of influence of external factors, such as culture. In countries with large territorial dimensions, such as Brazil, this phenomenon tends to be even more evident. This is because, in cultural terms, there is not only one, but five different 'Brasils' (Ribeiro, 1995). Thus, this study aims to analyze how the image of the sustainability of tourism destinations can be influenced by the cultural characteristics of the Brazilian consumers' sub-regions of origin. The innovative character of the study stems from the adoption of an idiographic approach to the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1980). Five focus groups were conducted among Brazilian nationals, within the different cultural regions of the country, and the data were analyzed through content analysis technique. The results showed that, from the five subregions analyzed, the 'Brasil Sulinas' presented a greater discrepancy regarding the image of the sustainability of tourism destinations. This*

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fact was related to a higher propensity to values corresponding to high levels of masculinity and low aversion to uncertainties. On the other hand, the consumers from the other subregions tended to show similar patterns of thought among themselves, yet contrary to the 'Brazil Sulinas'.

**Keywords:** Image. Tourism attractions. Cultural dimensions. Cultural regions of Brazil. Sustainability.

**Resumo:** O emprego da 'sustentabilidade' enquanto fator de diferenciação mercadológica tem sido recorrente entre os destinos turísticos. Entretanto, a imagem destas localidades não está alheia à influência de fatores externos, como a cultura. Em países com dimensões territoriais amplas, como o Brasil, este fenômeno tende a ser ainda mais evidente. Isto porque, em termos culturais, não existe somente um, mas cinco diferentes 'Brasis' (Ribeiro, 1995). Assim, esta pesquisa se propõe a analisar como a imagem da sustentabilidade de destinos turísticos pode ser influenciada pelas características culturais das sub-regiões de origem dos consumidores brasileiros. O caráter inovador do estudo decorre da adoção de uma abordagem idiográfica das dimensões culturais de Hofstede (1980). Foram realizados cinco grupos focais com indivíduos de nacionalidade brasileira, nas diferentes regiões culturais do país, cujos dados foram analisados por meio da técnica da análise de conteúdo. Os resultados demonstraram que, das cinco sub-regiões analisadas, o 'Brasil Sulinas' apresentou maior discrepância quanto à imagem da sustentabilidade de destinos turísticos. Fato este atribuído a uma maior propensão a valores correspondentes a índices elevados de masculinidade e baixa aversão a incertezas. Já os consumidores das demais sub-regiões tenderam a demonstrar padrões de pensamento semelhantes entre si, mas contrários ao 'Brasil Sulinas'.

**Palavras-chave:** Imagem. Destinos turísticos. Dimensões culturais. Regiões culturais do Brasil. Sustentabilidade.

**Resumen:** El empleo de la 'sostenibilidad' como factor de diferenciación mercadológica ha sido recurrente entre los destinos turísticos. Sin embargo, la imagen de estas localidades no está ajena a la influencia de factores externos, como la cultura. En países con dimensiones territoriales amplias, como Brasil, este fenómeno tiende a ser aún más evidente. Esto debido a que, en términos culturales, no existe solamente uno, sino cinco diferentes 'Brasiles' (Ribeiro, 1995). Así, esta investigación propone analizar cómo la imagen de la sustentabilidad de destinos turísticos puede ser influenciada por las características culturales de las subregiones de donde provienen los consumidores brasileños. El carácter innovador del estudio se deriva de la adopción de un enfoque idiográfico de las dimensiones culturales de Hofstede (1980). Se realizaron cinco grupos focales con individuos de nacionalidad brasileña, en las diferentes regiones culturales del país, cuyos datos fueron analizados por medio de la técnica del análisis de contenido. Los resultados demostraron que, de las cinco subregiones analizadas, el 'Brasil Sulinas' presentó mayor discrepancia en cuanto a la imagen de la sostenibilidad de destinos turísticos. Este hecho es atribuido a una mayor propensión a valores correspondientes a índices elevados de masculinidad y baja aversión a incertidumbres. Los consumidores de las demás subregiones tendieron a demostrar patrones de pensamiento semejantes entre sí, pero contrarios al 'Brasil Sulinas'.

**Palabras clave:** Imagen. Destinos turísticos. Dimensiones culturales. Regiones culturales de Brasil. Sostenibilidad.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

To comprehend culture is an effort that has aroused the interest of scholars in the field of human and social sciences for some time (Sahlins, 2013). Still in the eighties, in his study entitled *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work Related Values*, Hofstede (1980) suggested that culture was treated as a 'collective pro-

gramming' of the mind. To that end, it was understood that individuals, represented by the collective of a social group, behaved according to what he termed as 'software' of the mind. Still in the vision of the author, members of a certain social group were considered holders of such programming due to the set of behavioral rules and habits which had been socially transferred to them.

Based on this assumption, some studies began to look for evidences that directed conclusions in respect to the effect of culture on the behavior of certain social groups. This movement was responsible for the emergence and, consequently, the employment of a set of cultural dimensions, capable of accessing with greater precision the phenomenon (Hall & Hall, 1990; Hofstede, 2001; House *et. al.*, 2004). The pioneer was, without a doubt, Hofstede (1980), by developing a research with IBM employees in over seventy countries around the world.

The result was the proposition of five cultural dimensions (Masculinity, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism and Long-Term Orientation) which, in the coming years, began to be applied to different areas of knowledge.

Although the value of these dimensions is recognized, it should be emphasized that their application was restricted to the understanding of social behaviors at a national level (Brewer & Venaik, 2012). In light of this, authors such as Ribeiro (1995) followed another path, proposing, for the study of culture, the notion of subcultures, capable of guiding the actions of different groups within a same nation. Ribeiro (1995) considered, for example, that there was not one, but five different 'Brazils'. This means that, in the case of a country with extensive territorial dimensions, such as Brazil, it is inevitable, and to some extent expected, that there is some variation in the behavior of certain regional groups (Maia, 2015).

However, it is worth noting that, over recent decades, the national comparative approach, pioneeringly proposed by Hofstede (1980), gained great space in the academic

environment. Studies such as those of Valsiner (2007), Schein (2010) and Tabellini (2010), for example, explore the relationship of culture with the elements that involve human psychology, organizational behavior and the level of economic development of a nation.

Now, in the field of marketing and consumer behavior studies, Mooij (2014) sought to insert the subject in discussions about how individuals in certain societies act and react when choosing and deciding to make a purchase. As argue Souza *et. al.* (2014), such perspective was preceded by the studies of Douglas (1979) and McCracken (1986), whose main objective was to analyze the complexity of consumption behavior based on socio-cultural parameters.

Still in the field of consumption, Jaworski & Macinnis (1986) focused on understanding the impact of culture on the process of formation of images. For them, this was a process that concerned the interpretation of the consumer in relation to certain products/brands.

For being something so subjective and, at the same time, inseparable from the cultural aspect, Roth (1995) proposed to address the phenomenon under the prism of values that define the different societies. This is not an exception from a tourism point of view, considering that authors such as Warren & Dinnie (2018) emphasize that the location's image, an essential element for the effective establishment of the destination branding (Kavaratzis, 2005), may be influenced by cultural components. In light of this, Souza *et. al.* (2014) suggested that, also in the field of tourism, the image of the consumer (potential tourist) in relation to a tourist des-

tionation was analyzed under the same perspective. This is because, in dealing with the image of destinations, the elements that compose certain cultures may directly affect consumer interpretation as to the 'tourist product', mainly because these are from different geographical regions.

For Buhalis (2000), Hassan (2000) and, more recently, Cucculelli&Goffi (2016), one of the strategies used the most by tourist destinations to attract the attention of consumers is the 'sustainability' argument. Not rare, destination administrators and tourism marketing professionals seek to build identities (Kotler &Gertner, 2002; Aaker, 2004) that can be easily associated with the sustainable character of a location (Zouganeliet. *al.*, 2012; Andrade *et. al.*, 2013). Years ago, this could even be a valid strategy, given the degree of competitiveness amongst destinations as well as the urgent need for their market differentiation. However, as proposed by Souza *et. al.* (2014), there can be no talks related to market distinction strategy when, in fact, most of the players, companies and organizations that participate in a given activity (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2018) resort to the same arguments.

Therefore, it is considered, in this study, that tourist destinations need to adopt differentiation strategies increasingly directed to the specificities of their target audience. This is because, according to Kavaratzis (2005), the efficiency of a location's branding depends on the perception of consumers, i.e., its image. At the same time, it is known that, in tourism, the consumer's interpretation process relative to a tourist destination is not oblivious to cultural influences, wherein culture is one of the dimensions that

make up place branding (Warren & Dinnie, 2018; Mariutti & Medeiros, 2018).

Based on this, this research was developed with the objective of understanding how the sustainability image of tourism destinations can be affected by cultural characteristics of resident (and local) Brazilian consumers from five cultural subregions of the nation (Ribeiro, 1996). In the face of an interpretative paradigm, the research adopted qualitative methods, consistent with the proposition of an idiographic study (Fellow, 2013). As a data collection instrument, five focal groups were conducted in Recife, Belém, Brasília, Porto Alegre, and São Paulo, hub cities representing the country's subregions. The data obtained were categorized and analyzed by means of content analysis techniques (Bardin, 1977).

Thus, it is intended not only to expand the studies in tourism, but also to fill a theoretical gap of investigations that are directed to the cultural influences of Brazil in the place branding image. With the objective of facilitating the reader's understanding about the subject, the following topics address the main constructs of the theoretical model defined as the basis for this research.

## 2 THEORETICAL REFERENCE

### 2.1 Hofstede's concept of culture and cultural dimensions

Some years ago, in the 1950s, authors such as Kluckhohn (1951), Kroeber & Parsons (1958) sought to understand in greater detail the main elements that characterized the field of culture domain. For Kluckhohn (1951), this construct consisted in standardized ways of thinking, feeling and reacting,

which could be acquired and transmitted primarily by means of symbols. Kroeber & Parsons (1958), in turn, went a little further, covering the level of analysis by proposing that culture was related to all and any content that could be transmitted and created in the social context, being responsible for guiding and shaping human behavior.

Later on, other authors also worked on the construction of an understanding for this construct. Hofstede (1980), for instance, understood culture as a collective programming of the mind, conceptual interpretation taken as the basis on this research. According to the author, individuals of a social group behaved according to their mental programming (or 'Software').

To reach this conclusion, the author had support in the empirical field, in a complementing form to the theoretical, conducting researches in over 70 countries amongst *International Business Machines* (IBM) employees. Thus, therefore, the author concluded that human behavior could be transmitted among members of social groups over the years, besides being, in a certain way, predictable.

It was precisely based on this predictability that Hofstede (1980) proposed a set of cultural dimensions, from which cultures could be analyzed and understood in a cross-cultural study. In this case, the unit of analysis adopted was the nation, since a certain homogeneity of behaviors was perceived between national groups (Brewer & Venai, 2012; Fellows, 2013).

The cultural dimensions were named and characterized by Hofstede (1980) as follows:

- (1) **Power Distance:** Social groups that display a high propensity to power distance generally accept and respect hierarchical orders (Souza *et al.*, 2014). On the other hand, social groups with low propensity to power distance strive to equalize the distribution of authorities in their society.
- (2) **Uncertainty Avoidance:** High rate of uncertainly avoidance represents social groups with low tolerance to ambiguous, unpredictable and risky contexts (Money *et al.*, 2003). Thus, these societies seek guarantees to assure their stability, whereby it is common the existence of a more influential regulation, based on laws and standards, in addition to greater government intervention. On the other hand, low rates of uncertainly avoidance indicate societies that are more exposed to risks and are more receptive to dealing with uncertain situations.
- (3) **Individualism:** The ties that connect individuals in individualistic societies tend to be less strict, prioritizing individual achievements. In these societies, each one must bear the consequences of his or her actions, and personal interests are a priority. On the other hand, more collectivist societies tend to prioritize the collective and the common good (Souza *et al.*, 2014).
- (4) **Masculinity:** He proposes that social groups whose values are predominantly masculine are geared towards achievement, heroism, assertiveness, material rewards and, in general,

such societies are more competitive. On the other hand, femininity represents in society a predominance of values such as cooperation, modesty and quality of life (Hofstede, 2001).

- (5) **Long-term orientation:** A society with long-term orientation, called by Hofstede (2001) as pragmatic, stands out for its propensity towards actions with future results, such as the investment in savings and efforts for the modernization of education. On the other hand, societies with short-term orientation, also called normative, cherish the maintenance of traditions and rules to deal with situations of social change.

We can say that these cultural dimensions were based on an *Etic* approach of cultural research, also known as nomothetic (Hofstede, 2001). This kind of approach addresses an external view and employs a positivist perspective of character. However, the *Etic* approach is not the only form used by scholars to investigate cultural facts, whereas the *Emic* (idiographic) approach can also be employed (Fang, 2003; Fellows, 2013).

In researches entitled *Emic*, as the one proposed by this study, the analyses are directed to within a same social group. Therefore, they tend to assume a constructivist character (Fellows, 2013). Studies that analyze the cultural aspects from an *Emic* approach, such as the one of Conner & Tennen (2009), assume, in general, that these can only be investigated if analyzed from the own cultural perspective of the group. In tourism, specifically, idiographic researches, as proposed in this investigation, are still scarce.

## 2.2 Brazilian regions: an idiographic approach of culture

The investigation of Ribeiro (1995) is one of the examples of researches that took the idiographic quality. To investigate in depth the cultural elements that guide the Brazilian society, the author proposes to study the heterogeneity of a single social group from its own cultural perspective, which in this case was represented by the Brazilian nation. Therefore, some of the characteristics that Fellows (2013) evidenced as being part of the idiographic investigations are strongly present in the study of Ribeiro (1995).

According to Giarola (2012), Ribeiro (1995) analyzed the heterogeneous scenario of Brazilian people based on the process of formation and the historical facts of this nation. Similarly, Holanda (1936), in 'Raízes do Brasil' (*Roots of Brazil*), had also investigated multiple characteristics of the Brazilian national community. Both authors focused on historical facts in an attempt to explain the breadth of cultural characteristics that would be present in a single national group, relative to the different lines of research that the authors assumed.

For Ribeiro (1995), there are, in the Brazilian territory, five cultural regions that, despite belonging to the same matrix, are formed by different cultural characteristics. A decade later, Ortiz (2005) went further by stating that, in the Brazilian territory, there is not only one cultural identity, but multiple ones, all carried by their own historical events. More recently, Maia (2015) complemented the understanding of the aforementioned authors by stating that, in the framework of a national dimension, it is natural to

have the presence of different cultural identities.

Each one of the Brazilian cultural sub-regions were assigned the following designations: (1) Creole Brazil, (2) Caboclo Brazil, (3) Grasslands Brazil, (4) Backwoods Brazil and (5) Southern Brazil. By studying and understanding the cultural differences of the Northeast Grasslands, the Amazon Caboclos, the Coastal Creoles, the Southeast and Central Backwoods and the Southern Campaigns Treeless Plains, Ribeiro (1995) highlighted the cultural diversity of the Brazilian society (Miglievich, 2011). In a country with large continental dimensions and originating from such a peculiar forming process, as is the case of Brazil, it is possible that there is an extensive heterogeneity of behaviors shaped by cultural influences.

### 2.3 The influence of culture on the image

The cultural factors that lead human life may be responsible for guiding many of the aspects related to the collective behavior. Among these, it is possible to emphasize the influence that cultural elements exert on the consumption behavior in general (Mooij, 2014), which includes the product image perceived by consumers (Warren & Dinnie, 2018). Image that, in this research, is conceptually understood as a process of interpretation by part of the consumer relative to the tangible and intangible elements of a product whose perception results in 'mental photographs' (Stern, Zinkhan & Jaju, 2001).

For some time, scholars who investigated consumer behavior have stated that this image is formed by the more subjective variables of individuals, on which the cultural aspects are. Park, Jaworski and Macinnis

(1986), for example, drew attention to the fact of the image to be understood as an interpretative process in which culture is strongly present. Still in the 90s, Roth (1995) also highlighted the need to consider the culture by affirming that global aspects influence the consumption behavior, a fact that, further ahead, was affirmed and defended by Mooij (2014).

For Roth (1995), this understanding should be extended to the most diverse areas of knowledge in which this field of research may have an influence, among which is tourism. In this sector, specifically, authors such as Bonn, Joseph & Dai (2005) and Kastenholz (2010) evidenced that the cultural background of tourism consumers could influence its interpretation process relative to a tourist destination, exerting direct influence on its image. This, in turn, is especially important for the efficacy of place branding (Kavaratzis, 2005) and, often, tends to be influenced by cultural components (Warren & Dinnie, 2018).

### 2.4 The image of tourist destinations and sustainability

Often, sustainability, understood in this research as a phenomenon of preservation, conservation and protection of the social, economic and environmental pillars (Turner, Pearce & Bateman, 1994), has been one of the main arguments used by localities in formulating their identities (Dinnie, 2015). In the light of this, it has been assimilated by consumers as part of the destination's image (Zouganeliet. *al.*, 2012). In this scenario, according to Souza *et al.* (2014), it is increasingly common to use elements that refer to the three pillars of sustainability (environ-

mental, social and economic) in promotional campaigns aimed at attracting new touristic consumers.

However, authors such as Schultz *et al.* (2005) and Roy & Goll (2014) suggested that different societies could assume unique attitudes regarding sustainability. Consequently, scholars have admitted that there could be particular forms of sustainable behavior, based on cultural expectations that could affect the image of consumers (Husted, 2005). This, according to Bianchi *et al.* (2014), could also happen in the tourist activity.

As theoretical framework presented, the image of the products may be influenced by the consumer's cultural elements (Mooij, 2014), which is not different in terms of the image of tourist destinations (Kastenholz, 2010; Warren & Dinner, 2018). This, according to Ribeiro (1995), can be even more peculiar in Brazil, considering that in this nation there are cultural variations from one region to another. Parallel to this, the image of tourist destinations has been consistently associated with sustainability (Souza *et al.*, 2014), considering the inclusion of this element in place branding (Kavaratzis, 2005). From a congruence between such theories, it is possible that the image of the sustainability of tourist destinations can be influenced by cultural characteristics of the subregions of origin of Brazilian consumers.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research assumptions

This qualitative research, of descriptive character, was developed from a cross-sectional study. For its implementation, it has been necessary to identify cultural traits in

the Brazilian society, previously divided into five subregions. Subsequently, the patterns observed were associated with the image of consumers relative to tourist destinations, as already discussed in the introduction and review of the literature.

The approach adopted for this study was the cross-cultural idiographic (Hofstede, 2001; Harkness, Vijver & Mohler, 2003) one since there was the intention of comparing different cultures within a same national group. Even though a large part of the cross-cultural studies assumes a nomothetical character, by focusing on the comparative analysis between countries, the method employed in this research followed a different perspective, since the focus was on analyzing the subcultures of a same nation (Fang, 2003; Fellows, 2013).

Brazil was chosen as object of study due to its vast territorial extension and the multiplicity of cultures that, historically, gave rise to the nation. Such characteristics, according to Ribeiro (1995), resulted in the emergence of different cultural regions. As suggested by the author himself, there is not one, but five different 'Brazils'. As a consequence, it was chosen to understand, in an in-depth manner, how the specificities of each one of these sub-regions could affect the consumption behavior of Brazilians.

In this research, a proposal was drawn for mapping these subregions (Figure 1), as well as some hub cities were defined (Belém, Recife, Goiânia, São Paulo and Porto Alegre). This was done with a theoretical basis, considering certain passages of the work 'O Povo Brasileiro' (The Brazilian People) in which Ribeiro (1995) himself reports areas of geographical ranges of these 'Brazils', as well a

clarifies the role of some cities in the formation of these subregions.

**Figure 1** - Proposal for mapping the 'Brazils'



**Source:** Authors' proposition (2017)

It is important to emphasize that, although this geographical delimitation was proposed by the authors, this study does not intend to emphasize an accuracy between the geographical boundaries of the 'Brazils', which is why the spatial separations have been dashed. Thus, there was a concern in not doing what Laraia (1986) understood as 'geographical determinism', emphasizing that there are no rooted divisions of cultural characteristics between the 'Brazils'. It is respected the fact that differences and peculiarities may exist, regardless of geographical occupancies. However, for this research based on the cross-cultural approach, the proposition of a mapping was a feature considered as important and necessary for separating the 'Brazils' into units of analysis, enabling the possibility for comparison.

To that end, the image of the sustainability of tourist destinations was determined

to be a central element of analysis of the study for being one of the dimensions of place branding, as suggests Dinnie (2015). In general, to arrive at conclusions for research problems such as this, the more indicated is the adoption of the idiographic approach, also known as '*Emic*' (Fellows, 2013). For Mooij (2010), unlike '*Etic*', or nomothetical studies, idiographic researches are limited to the search for understanding the influences of culture on the social behavior of a specific group that, in this case, may be represented by a country.

### 3.2. Data collection procedures

The *corpus* of this investigation was composed of individuals of Brazilian nationality. In addition, there was an age group delimitation as the individuals selected were over 18 years old, legal age in Brazil. All par-

ticipants were locals (and residents) from one of the five cultural regions proposed by Ribeiro (1995), again keeping the *corpus* in accordance to what was proposed by the research.

The collection of primary data at the empirical phase of this research took place through the performance of different focal groups. In total, five discussion groups were held, over five months, one in each Brazilian cultural subregion as proposed by Ribeiro (1996), in the 'hub cities' representative of the different 'Brazils' (Figure 1).

The decision to limit the number of cities to five arose from financial and time constraints for the operationalization of the study, given the geographic dimensions of Brazil. Thus, with the exception of the focal group held in Recife, all the others were conducted through video-calls (Poynter, 2010; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). As it deals with the collection of qualitative data amongst geographically separated groups, the use of technological resources becomes a viable alternative to the operationalization of

the studies (Stewart & Williams, 2005). Therefore, the adoption of this type of resource was essential to enable the retrieval of data in this research, since the hub cities representative of the subregions are geographically distant from each other.

Students of courses related to the field of Hospitality (Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy) took part in this stage, based on the assumption that these individuals, represented by their schooling, already had a certain degree of familiarity with the tourist activity. On the occasion, there was the collaboration of teachers/researches from five Higher Educational Institutions in Brazil, which made themselves available to operationalize the focal groups, namely: Federal University of Pernambuco - UFPE, Federal University of Pará - UFPA, University of Brasília - UnB, IPA University Center of Porto Alegre and Anhembi Morumbi University - UAM. Table 1, hereafter, details the number of participants and the total amount of time for each one of the sessions.

**Table 1** - Information from the focus groups

Name of the higher educational institution	Number of participants	Total time of the focal group
Federal University of Pernambuco - UFPE	12	62min and 53sec
Federal University of Pará - UFPA	12	64min and 40sec
University of Brasília - UNB	11	58min and 30sec
IPA University Center - Porto Alegre	9	61min and 30sec
Anhembi Morumbi University - UAM	6	60min and 39sec

Source: Data collection (2017)

As can be seen, the number of participants ranged between 12 (UFPE and UFPA) and 6 (UAM). According to Smith (2017),

most of the focus groups is composed of 8 to 12 individuals. However, still according to the author, this number may be lower, although

groups with less than 6 participants is not recommended. Regarding the duration of these sessions, an approximate time of one hour was obtained, on average. According to Gaskell (2002), in general, the focus groups tend to last between 60 and 120 minutes. It is worth pointing out that, as the discussions progressed, the session's mediator, accompanied by a topic guide that contained the main points to be discussed, carefully observed the opinions of the group. At the same time, the mediator took note of points of greatest interest to the research, as suggests Smith (2017). In addition, with the prior consent of the participants, the audios of all sessions were recorded to assist in the *posteriori* analyses, through the careful assessment of the transcripts of the interviewees' statements (Gaskell, 2002).

Over the course of the focus groups, participants were presented to five hypothetical problem situations, which served to encourage the active participation of the group in the discussion (Smith, 2017). Such situations were drawn up based on the main characteristics of the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1980), according to the following description:

- a) First situation: (Masculinity)** It dealt with the implementation of a resort in a strip of sand on the coastline of a tourist destination. Tourist administration believed that the project would increase the level of competitiveness of the destination.
- b) Second situation: (Power distance)** It discussed a tourist destination in which the local community did not believe to have authority to alter certain situations,

although these would affect it, electing other responsible parties to resolve them.

**c) Third situation: (Individualism)** In this situation, the social actors of the tourist destination were not used to articulate in the search for improvements, believing that the interests of its group should be resolved in a particular way, even if it could affect other agents.

**d) Fourth situation: (Uncertainty avoidance)** It presented a destination in which its residents, owners of their own businesses, refused to accept the entry of foreign hotel enterprises. The community believed that the situation represented an unnecessary risk to the local situation.

**e) Fifth situation: (Long-term orientation)** It discussed the arrival of cruises on an island that survived from tourism. The local tourist administration believed that the action would be beneficial, since it would entail fast and expressive financial gains.

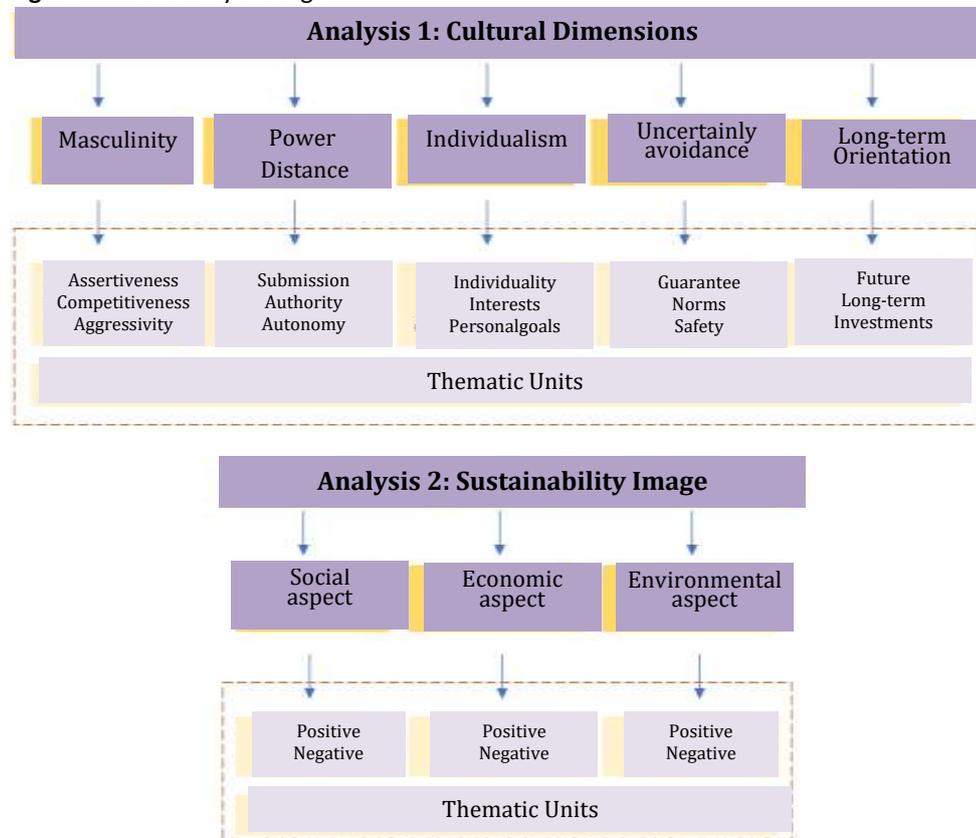
### 3.3 Data analysis procedures

As the participants discussed the above-mentioned hypotheses, it was possible to observe the predominance of values indicating their greater or lesser propensity to each one of the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1980). To identify these variations, the Analysis 1 procedure was carried out, as illustrated in Figure 2, identifying and counting, in the statements from the participants of the focus groups, the occurrence of thematic units (Bardin, 1977). Based on this, cultural traits that characterized each of the sub-regions were identified.

Furthermore, the participants were also instructed that the situations dealt with destinations that self-entitled themselves as 'sustainable'. Thus, it was possible to analyze the sustainability image of tourist destinations, ascertaining whether it was overwhelmingly positive (favorable) or negative (unfavorable). To that end, it was considered, above all, the statements of participants whose content was related to the three sustainability pillars, which are environmental, social and/or economic (Turner, Pearce & Bateman, 1994). Again, the conclusions were made based on the occurrences of the thematic units, in this case Analysis 2 (Figure 2).

The type of analysis employed in the study was content analysis (Bardin, 1977). In order to ensure greater objectivity to the analysis of the content obtained from the focus groups, a systematic process was followed, starting with the selection of the unification scheme (Cooper & Schindler, 2016). To that end, thematic units were chosen, as shown in Figure 2, which were developed based on the review of the literature. Analysis 1, for example, had as reference the set of characteristics that define the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1980), whereas Analysis 2 was based on the image's theoretical framework.

**Figure 2 - Data analysis diagram**



**Source:** Formulated by the authors (2017)

In a first moment, the data from each focal group were analyzed separately (Analy-

sis 1 and Analysis 2). The information resulting from this preliminary step served to con-

clude in regards to the aspects of each subregion studied. Next, this information was assessed in a comparative manner, resulting in a more holistic understanding about the phenomenon in question.

#### **4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

The data presented in this section are the result of focus groups conducted among the five 'Brazils' and they will be presented according to the order in which they were collected. The first of them was held in Recife, hub city representative of the cultural

region called by Ribeiro (1995) as 'Creole Brazil'. As shown on Table 2, below, the members of this group tended to assume positions normally related to societies with greater propensity to values of power distance, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. On the other hand, it also became clear that the group tended to a lesser propensity to values assigned to more masculine and individualistic societies. Relative to the sustainability image of the tourist destinations, it is noted that the negative position was prevalent on the part of the interviewees.

**Table 2 - Results of the 'Creole Brazil'**

<b>Analysis 1</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Cultural dimension</b>	<b>Examples of participant statements</b>
First situation	Lesser propensity to Masculinity	"management must implement this resort as a structure that will protect the environment, respecting the legislation"
		"it will directly depend on where the local community is located and it must also be analyzed whether there is a sea turtle spawning site"
Second situation	Greater propensity to Power Distance	"residents are giving power to people who bought it to do whatever they want"
		"the community loses the authority from the moment in which it sells the property"
Third situation	Lesser tendency to Individualism	"one of the impacts is the conflict of interests, since each one is defending their own interests"
		"I believe that the first thing to look into is the consensus, it is the basis for them to restructure themselves"
Fourth situation	Greater propensity to Uncertainty Avoidance	"to improve does not necessarily mean to bring new hotels, it can also adjust what it is already there, to empower people"
		"encourage the community to carry on with this kind of tourism, so as not to lose it over time"
Fifth situation	Greater propensity to Long-term Orientation	"even if there is this fast and expressive financial return, I do not think that this is the most important thing"
		"thought must be given about the evolution of the site, not only the financial question"
<b>Analysis 2</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Sustainability image</b>	<b>Examples of participant statements</b>
First situation	Predominantly negative	"residents from that location would work in lower functions"
		"the construction of the resort can bring negative effects for the local community"
Second situation	Predominantly negative	"this is very bad for the residents because it is like it were an invasion"
		"tourism is beginning to marginalize people who live in this place"
Third situation	Predominantly negative	"this way it already shows that there is nothing sustainable about it, doesn't it? Zero sustainability"
		"I think it is only a matter of time for this destination to die, there is no other way around it"
Fourth situation	Predominantly negative	"if a hotel chain arrives, it will harm the businesses of the residents"
		"if new venture comes, it will break the destination and the community"
Fifth situation	Predominantly negative	"I think this is unsustainable, the entrepreneurs just want to make money and nothing else"
		"there is no sense in putting a lot of people in a place if it does not support so many people"

**Source:** Data collection (2017)

Upon being presented to the first hypothetical situation, which dealt with the deployment of a resort in a strip of sand of a tourist destination, the group, generally speaking, showed to prioritize elements such as the harmony between social actors and the quality of life of the inhabitants. Upon mentioning that the deployment of the resort "will directly depend on where the local community is located and it must also be analyzed whether there is a sea turtle spawning site", one of the participants displayed to have a certain concern with the quality of life of the locals who reside in the destination. According to Hofstede (2001), this is one of the characteristics of societies whose cultural values indicate a lesser propensity to masculinity. Therefore, predominantly feminine societies, in cultural terms.

Furthermore, the 'Creole Brazil' sub-region tended to present a predominantly negative image in regards to the sustainability of tourist destinations. This is because, in general, the study participants were more dissatisfied with the implementation of a resort, leading them to expose even more critical and cautious points of view on the subject. One of the participants was emphatic in stating that, with the arrival of a resort at the destination, the inhabitants of the locality "would work in lower functions". A second participant was even more incisive by arguing that the "construction of a resort may bring

negative effects for the local community". In both cases, it is possible to observe negative opinions, especially relative to the social aspect of the destination.

In this subregion there was, therefore, a predominance of values commonly attributed to social groups with greater propensity to femininity. In parallel, a more negative image was presented relative to the sustainability of tourist destinations. Generally, more feminine societies are represented by their sensitivity and tendency to excel for the quality of life (Hofstede, 2001). These characteristics which may have originated the image predominantly critical of the group, especially when considering that the social aspect was the most evident.

The second focal group was held in Belém, hub city representative of the cultural region called by Ribeiro (1995) as 'Caboclo Brazil'. Table 3, below, shows that the members of this group tended to assume positions normally related to societies with greater degree of uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. At the same time, it was noticed that the group tended to a lesser propensity to values assigned to more masculine, individualist and tolerant societies to the unequal distribution of power. Relative to the sustainability image of the tourist destinations, it is noted that, just as happened with the first group, the negative position was also prevalent on the part of the interviewees.

**Table 3 - Results of the 'Caboclo Brazil'**

<b>Analysis 1</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Cultural dimension</b>	<b>Examples of participant statements</b>
First situation	Lesser propensity to Masculinity	"thinking with the community if it would be a local economic growth or if it would only be an economic growth for the entrepreneur"
		"tourism could be generating a more local revenue instead of not only for the entrepreneurs"
Second situation	Greater propensity to Power Distance	"it is important that residents feel that they have the authority to change this reality and for them to also be able to dictate their own rules"
		"the community has to have this autonomy, it can indeed change or try to change this destination"
Third situation	Lesser tendency to Individualism	"if there is no discussion, a dialog, it is not possible to have a consensus and to find a solution"
		"if there is no collective, as in this case, everyone loses"
Fourth situation	Greater propensity to Uncertainty Avoidance	"the community is going to the public authorities to demand the establishment of regulations to be able to safeguard themselves"
		"it is important to consider that the community should not change its way of life to receive these people"
Fifth situation	Greater propensity to Long-term Orientation	"managers cannot simply, due to financial factors, decide to deploy an action without thinking about the future"
		"as much as this provides fast results, I think that this is no reason to allow the island to receive this large number of tourists"
<b>Analysis 2</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Sustainability image</b>	<b>Examples of participant statements</b>
First situation	Predominantly negative	"only due to the simple fact of being a large resort, the first thing it is going to cause is an environmental damage"
		"I think that the results will be more negative than positive"
Second situation	Predominantly negative	"what we can notice in this destination is simply the interest of the local business community, the community is excluded"
		"this way the community will not survive"
Third situation	Predominantly negative	"I think that this administration is not even a little bit sustainable"
		"in this situation, the tourists are not visiting the locality and tourism is being put aside"
Fourth situation	Predominantly positive	"the community is appropriating its space and is working the way it believes to be more correct"
		"the community is right - it has to ask this question to the government to stop companies from coming"
Fifth situation	Predominantly negative	"actually, it may even be a motivator to keep the tourists away"
		"vessels on an island, which is not so large, can damage the ecosystem"

**Source:** Data collection (2017)

The second hypothetical situation created for the study dealt with a tourist destination in which the decision-making power of the various actors involved in the activity was unequal. In general, the participants of this group tended not to accept these differences, suggesting that the assumption of authority should be equal for everyone. In their opinion, it is necessary for the residents "to feel that they have the authority to change this reality and for them to also be able to dictate their own rules". According to Hofstede (2001), these are characteristics of societies whose cultural values indicate a lesser level of tolerance relative to power distance. Thus, societies seeking an improved balance in the participation of citizens in decisions that affect everyone, or a large part of their members.

As regards to the image of this group in relation to the sustainability of the tourist destinations presented, this proved to be predominantly negative. In general, the participants were critical as regards to the three pillars of sustainability. One of them, for example, voiced the following opinion: "what we can notice in this destination is simply the

interest of the local business community, the community is excluded". Also demonstrating a bad impression in relation to the destination. Another participant stated that, "this way the community will not survive". In both statements, it is noted the dissatisfaction regarding the current situation of the destination.

The third focal group was held in Brasília, hub city representative of the subregion called by Ribeiro (1995) as 'Grasslands Brazil'. According to the information presented on Table 4, the members of this group tended to assume positions normally related to societies with greater degree of uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. Furthermore, similar to the previous subregion, the participants of this group displayed a lesser propensity to values assigned to more masculine, individualist and tolerant societies to the unequal distribution of power. Relative to the sustainability image of the tourist destinations, it is noted that, just as happened with the previous groups, the negative position was also prevalent on the part of the interviewees.

**Table 4** - Results of the 'Grasslands Brazil'

<b>Analysis 1</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Cultural dimension</b>	<b>Examples of participant statements</b>
First situation	Lesser propensity to Masculinity	"the address of this resort should not prevent, or occupy, something that should be seen as a space for everyone to use"
		"if the deployment of this resort takes place, then it must be thought about the issue of participatory planning, of inserting the community"
Second situation	Greater propensity to Power Distance	"I think there is inertia on all sides, both from the local community by not imposing themselves and from public administrators"
		"I believe that everyone should have power, by means of associations or cooperatives"
Third situation	Lesser tendency to Individualism	"they are thinking about economic growth, but they are forgetting that it is possible to work on the development, in order for everyone to win"
		"it is important to have a conversation, a dialog, even if the interests are different"
Fourth situation	Greater propensity to Uncertainty Avoidance	"it is necessary, indeed, to regulate as standards need to be respected".
		"opening the doors for large-sized enterprises does not scale a limit for these investments"
Fifth situation	Greater propensity to Long-term Orientation	"I think it is that usual talk that it will bring financial benefits in the short term, but they are not thinking about the long term"
		"the administration should plan and consider the objective, what they intend to become in the tourist landscape"
<b>Analysis 2</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Sustainability image</b>	<b>Examples of participant statements</b>
First situation	Predominantly negative	"the resort's own materialsharm the environment and will end up affecting the sea, the marine life"
		"it neither greatly benefits the community nor the environment"
Second situation	Predominantly negative	"the entrepreneurs themselves are not interested in involving the community, they just want to use it"
		"without the distribution of powers, it is virtually unworkable"
Third situation	Predominantly negative	"it is clearly unworkable because, in the long term, sooner or later this lack of articulation is going to sink it"
		"the way that this destination is, it will not progress that much"
Fourth situation	Predominantly negative	"residents will become hotel staff, they will not have such a good quality of life"
		"this tourism is not planned and can put an end to what there is"
Fifth situation	Predominantly negative	"perhaps there will be an alarming increase of waste and debris"
		"if we think about sustainability, this number of vessels moored is not always so beneficial"

**Source:** Data collection (2017)

To discuss about the third hypothetical situation developed for the study, this group tended to present a lesser propensity to individualism. This is because, at the moment in which the topic was a predominantly individualistic destination, the group demonstrated a greater inclination towards promoting an environment of collaboration and association among the members, believing it to be necessary to search for integration among all social actors of the destination. One of the members, for example, showed a preference for a collaborative and consensual environment, by stating that, in the destination in question, "it is important to have a conversation, a dialog, even if the interests are different". For Hofstede (2001), this is one of the characteristics of societies whose cultural values indicate a lesser propensity to individualism. Therefore, predominantly collective societies, in cultural terms.

In addition, the 'Grasslands Brazil', as well as the other subregions already mentioned, also showed a predominantly negative image concerning the sustainability of the tourist destinations presented. In general, the participants were dissatisfied and critical about the lack of articulation that oc-

curs at the location. The image of one of them in relation to the destinations appeared to the negative, mainly relative to local sustainability, according to the following account: "it is clearly unworkable because, in the long term, sooner or later this lack of articulation is going to sink it". This comment illustrates the predominant dissatisfaction in the group, in particular regarding the social aspect.

The fourth focal group, in turn, was held in the hub city of Porto Alegre, representative of the subregion called by Ribeiro (1995) as 'Southern Brazil'. As shown on Table 5, below, the members of this group tended to assume positions normally related to societies with greater propensity to values of masculinity, tolerance to uneven distribution of power and long-term orientation. In contrast, the participants in this group indicated a lesser propensity to values assigned to more individualistic and averse to uncertainty societies. However, unlike the subregions previously cited, the 'Southern Brazil' presented, in general, a predominantly positive image regarding the sustainability of the tourist destinations presented.

**Table 5 - Results of the 'Southern Brazil'**

<b>Analysis 1</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Cultural dimension</b>	<b>Examples of participant statements</b>
First situation	Lesser propensity to Masculinity	"a resort has many employees and this will bring employment to local people"
		"one must think about the people around there, if there is a resort there, they will sell more"
Second situation	Greater propensity to Power Distance	"when the locals sell their properties, they have indeed lost the right to care for that space"
		"when the residents sell their land, they have already lost some of the right to revoke"
Third situation	Lesser tendency to Individualism	"the first step is for the destination to stop defending the needs of the individual and to have a consensus"
		"if the two parties unite, things will work, because when it is a cooperative, then things work"
Fourth situation	Greater propensity to Uncertainty Avoidance	"it is giving a good means of support for local residents, but, with the arrival of hotels, this can be improved for the destination"
		"the community needs to think about something bigger that, who knows, allows it to become possible to generate a larger amount of revenue for the state"
Fifth situation	Greater propensity to Long-term Orientation	"a cruise from which 2 thousand people will disembark on this island will degrade the environment and the landscape will be lost over time"
		"to take this measurement can be, in a first moment, good for the pocket, but I think that it is unworkable in the long term"
<b>Analysis 2</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Sustainability image</b>	<b>Examples of participant statements</b>
First situation	Predominantly positive	"I think that, economically, the destination can only win"
		"as it is possible to plan properly, I think that a resort can only add in this situation"
Second situation	Predominantly positive	"in terms of sustainability, this destination is much better, more sustainable"
		"I think that, in this example, it tends to be more favorable for the community, for the destination"
Third situation	Predominantly negative	"what is happening is not nice, it is not being sustainable"
		"when each individual wants to do his or her own thing, there is no sustainability"
Fourth situation	Predominantly positive	"if a different infrastructure were to be implemented and more people were to be moved, there will be more revenue for the state"
		"this is called sustainability, I think this project is valid since there is already a source of revenue at the locality"
Fifth situation	Predominantly negative	"analyzing the cost-benefit, I think it would be incoherent, because it is a lot of people in a short period of time"
		"it will deteriorate the image of the destination, causing very negative impacts"

Source: Data collection (2017)

The fourth hypothetical situation created for the study dealt with a tourist destination in which the residents were against the coming of foreign hotel enterprises. This is because, for them, the action would represent unnecessary and unpredictable risks. In light of this, the group tended not to agree with the community's opposition, believing that the exposure to risks is needed to represent the possibility of improvements at the destination. This is what one of the participants emphasized upon commenting that the situation "is giving a good means of support for local residents, but, with the arrival of hotels, this can be improved for the destination". According to Hofstede (2001), exposure to unforeseen situations and changes are some of the characteristics commonly found in societies with lesser propensity to aversion to uncertainties.

In parallel, this subregion showed to have a more positive image regarding the sustainability of the tourist destinations presented, also going against the other subregions. Upon discussing the arrival of foreign capital and investment, the participants, in general, saw the situation as being timely and beneficial for the location. One of them even stated that "if a different infrastructure were to be implemented and more people were to be moved, there will be more revenue for the state", showing to be positive relative to the changes, specially taking into consideration the local economy.

At last, the fifth and last focal group was held in São Paulo, hub city representative of the cultural region called by Ribeiro (1995) as 'Backwoods Brazil'. Table 6, below, shows that the members of this group tended to assume positions normally related to societies with greater degree of uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. However, the participants of this group displayed a lesser propensity to values assigned to societies that are more masculine, individualist and tolerant to the unequal distribution of power. Relative to the sustainability image of the tourist destinations, it is noted that, just as happened with most of the previous subregions (except 'Southern Brazil'), the negative position was also prevalent on the part of the interviewees.

The analyses performed on the fifth and last hypothetical situation indicated that, in principle, the 'Backwoods Brazil' subregion has predominant characteristics of societies with greater propensity to long-term orientation. This is because, upon discussing the possibility of cruise ships being moored in a tourist island, the participants in this group were concerned with the future consequences of this action. For one of the participants, the destination administrators "have to think about the marine life over time, in order not to lose the essence of the destination upon affecting its biome", showing concern with the conjuncture of the destination in the future.

**Table 6** - Results of the 'Backwoods Brazil'

<b>Analysis 1</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Cultural dimension</b>	<b>Examples of participant statements</b>
First situation	Lesser propensity to Masculinity	"it will surely generate real estate speculation, which will lead to the residents of the region not being able to live there any longer"
		"the effectiveness depends on whether the resort will have a structure to properly safeguard the environment, whether it will have structure to take care of the quality of life"
Second situation	Greater propensity to Power Distance	"the residents have to give feedback about what they want, about how this will be set up there"
		"the residents cannot submit themselves to not having power because someone is purchasing real estate"
Third situation	Lesser tendency to Individualism	"I think we all have to think as a collective in order for the tourism there to be good"
		"it has to cover all the bases, with everyone giving an opinion"
Fourth situation	Greater propensity to Uncertainty Avoidance	"the administration can develop the housing projects without taking or changing identities, there is no need for a new hotel"
		"risk in this situation is setting up a lot of hotels and ending the identity of the location"
Fifth situation	Greater propensity to Long-term Orientation	"one has to think about the marine life over time, in order not to lose the essence of the destination upon affecting its biome"
		"it is something that brings a rapid economic benefit, but the long-term environmental aspects are also very important"
<b>Analysis 2</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Sustainability image</b>	<b>Examples of participant statements</b>
First situation	Predominantly negative	"the resort may even have some project to try to mitigate the negative effects, but it will not be the same thing as when there was nothing there"
		"this can harm the marine environment and the population itself, because there will surely be some influence"
Second situation	Predominantly negative	"this situation will negatively impact the life of the local community"
		"from the moment in which the residents submit themselves not to having power because someone is purchasing their real estate, it is not sustainable"
Third situation	Predominantly negative	"I think that if everyone does not think together, it will become a mess"
		"this destination is a failure, without dialog it is not possible to get anywhere"
Fourth situation	Predominantly negative	"if a hotel comes along with tourists who prefer the comfort of the hotel, the residents will lose their income completely"
		"it will cause the location to lose its main attraction, which is its identity"
Fifth situation	Predominantly negative	"the tourists can have their meals at the vessel, not using the local restaurants and still leave their trash and sewage on the island"
		"the vessel will stay there for three days on high seas and this can negatively affect the local ecosystem"

**Source:** Data collection (2017)

In parallel, presenting similar results to those that were found in the majority of the subregions, this cultural region also demonstrated to have a more negative image concerning the sustainability of tourist destinations. Upon treating about the arrival of cruise ships on the island, one of the participants stated that “the tourists can have their meals at the vessel, not using the local restaurants and still leave their trash and sewage on the island”, making it clear his dissatisfaction with the arrival of vessels at the destination, especially in dealing with socio-environmental issues on the location. This condemning point of view illustrates the interpretation that was predominant in the

group, i.e., more negative.

From the data that have been submitted relative to the five subregions of Brazil, Table 7 was prepared as a summary of the results obtained. In it, the initials ‘MAS, PDI, IDV, UAI and LTO’ correspond to the dimensions of Masculinity, Power Distance, Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-Term Orientation - kept in their original version, according to the proposal of Hofstede (1980). It can be observed that the results were quite similar in most subregions. However, ‘Southern Brazil’ showed notorious differences, both in the context of the cultural dimensions as regards the image of sustainability.

**Table 7** - Summary of research results

Subregion	Cultural dimensions					Sustainability image
	MAS	PDI	IDV	UAI	LTO	
Creole Brazil	Lesser propensity	Greater propensity	Lesser propensity	Greater propensity	Greater propensity	Predominantly negative
Caboclo Brazil	Lesser propensity	Lesser propensity	Lesser propensity	Greater propensity	Greater propensity	Predominantly negative
Southern Brazil	Greater propensity	Greater propensity	Lesser propensity	Lesser propensity	Greater propensity	Predominantly positive
Grasslands Brazil	Lesser propensity	Lesser propensity	Lesser propensity	Greater propensity	Greater propensity	Predominantly negative
Backwoods Brazil	Lesser propensity	Lesser propensity	Lesser propensity	Greater propensity	Greater propensity	Predominantly negative

Source: Data collection (2017)

It is observed on Table 7 that, although defended by Ribeiro (1995) that Brazil is composed by an evident cultural multiplicity, such differences did not appear to be so pronounced when analyzed from the perspective of the cultural dimensions of Hof-

stede (1980). Comparatively, it was noted that only the ‘Southern Brazil’ subregion displayed greater discrepancies in relation to the others. The data analyzed in this study revealed that, exclusively in that subregion, there was a greater predominance of cultural

values commonly associated to groups with high levels of masculinity. In contrast, the level of uncertainty avoidance identified in this same group showed to be below that commonly found in other subregions of Brazil.

It is worth pointing out that the more expressive differences evidenced only by 'Southern Brazil' can be explained by the influence that some external national cultures exerted, and still exert, specifically in this region. According to Ribeiro (1995) himself, this is one of the places that hosted individuals from different national identities, especially European immigrants with non-Lusitanian origin. The Germans and the Italians, for example, have been present in the Southern forming process for a long time, which resulted in significant influence from these nationalities in the economic, social and cultural areas of the region (Cunha & Gartner, 2003; Giron & Herédia, 2007; Trombini, 2017). This same fact, however, did not take place so expressively in the other regions of the country, reflecting the individual ways and habits of Southerners (Neto & Bezzi, 2007).

In relation to the image of consumers relative to the sustainability of the touristic destinations presented, the majority of the subregions tended to interpret this element in a predominantly negative manner. When confronted with the pretense of the hypothetical destinations in creating a local identity based on sustainability, a large part of the 'Brazils' proved to be skeptical and little attracted by the appeal. It is further emphasized that the aspect of sustainability of greatest relevance to these was the social, at the expense of the environmental and economic one. 'Southern Brasil' was the only

subregion that tended to be positioned in a more optimistic manner face with the sustainable identity of the hypothetical tourist destinations, especially concerning the economic sphere of sustainability.

Based on these results, it is clear that it is possible to assign the image of Brazilian consumers in relation to the sustainability of tourist destinations to the characteristics of their cultural region of origin. Despite this, it is recognized that more specific and in-depth studies are still required on the subject in order to confront the conclusions presented in this research. In principle, it is likely that the greater propensity for masculinity and lesser uncertainty avoidance, characteristics that were only found in 'Southern Brazil', may explain the tendency to a more positive image on the part of the representatives from that subregion.

For Hofstede (2001), social groups whose values reveal a greater propensity to the masculinity tend to be self-confident and excel by competitiveness. These characteristics, revealed only in this subregion, may explain the predominance of a more positive image relative to the economical aspect of sustainability. At the same time, societies with a predominance of attributes that indicate lower levels of uncertainty avoidance, as in the case of 'Southern Brazil', tend to be more secure and open to new opportunities. This may also be the reason for the less cautious and predominantly optimistic interpretation in this group in relation to the future of the tourist destinations presented.

On the other hand, the cultural characteristics that have been identified in the other subregions may also explain the negative image of these groups regarding the sus-

tainability of tourist destinations. In principle, these subregions indicated less propensity to the masculinity, which, according to the theoretical support of this research, tends to reveal societies that are concerned for their quality of life and harmony. Attributes such as these can foster a more critical view in relation to the sustainability of tourist destinations, especially as regards the social aspect. In addition, they presented greater uncertainty avoidance to reveal insecurity, dissatisfaction with changes and low tolerance to potential risks, which can be directed to a more critical and cautious vision by part of this group.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

This research concluded that, in the case of Brazil, regions characterized by the same cultural dimensions tend to feature a similar interpretation relative to the sustainability of tourist destinations. This is because the results highlighted that the only Brazilian region with cultural traits more different from the other ones was also the only one that presented a more positive image, in contrast to the other subregions. Therefore, it was noticeable that, in the Brazilian territory, the sustainability image of tourist destinations tended to be influenced by the cultural traits of the subregions of origin of consumers.

It is understood that, upon thinking about the most effective marketing strategies, tourist destination administrators must consider the cultural particularities of potential consumers. It is worth pointing out that, in the case of tourist activity, this segmentation with cultural base is even more pertinent, since the destinations deal, on a daily

basis, with tourists from different cultural regions. Hence, upon assuming the sustainable identity, the destinations must understand how consumers, influenced by their cultural traits, interpret this argument. Thus, they will be able to employ actions and marketing strategies more directed and consistent with the characteristics of their target markets. Such approach does justice to what authors, such as Kavartzis (2005) and Warren & Dinner (2018), suggest regarding the application of the place marketing and place branding concepts, apparently still little explored in the Brazilian market.

In general, this research concluded that the majority of Brazilian subregions, in addition to possessing similar cultural patterns, tends to interpret the sustainability of tourist destinations in a similar manner. This indicates that a single marketing effort could result in a similar return among Brazilian subregions, except 'Southern Brazil'. Due to the more negative image evidenced in most regions, it is possible that, in these cases, marketing actions need to be more robust, so as to convince these consumers that the 'sustainable' argument employed by the destinations is relevant. Furthermore, administrator should consider that the social aspect was the one that most caught the attention of consumers.

At the same time, the discrepancy presented by 'Southern Brazil' revealed that, in the case of this specific cultural region, the marketing efforts should be guided slightly differently. Due to the predominantly positive image that this group presented, it is possible that the actions from the administrators no longer need to be as detailed as in the other subregions, since this group is, by

nature, more optimistic. At the same time, one needs to consider that, in this case, the economical aspect was the most praised by consumers.

As in all researches, this study also encountered some limitations, although they did not influence the scope of the proposed objectives. In principle, it is worth pointing out that the focus groups conducted by video-calls prevented a more detailed observation of the interaction between participants. In addition, the selection for the convenience of students from common areas to hospitality may not have been enough to represent the opinion of the entire population that composes the 'Brazils', and there is the need for further complementing studies to complement the findings of this research. Finally, due to the objective of drawing up an overview of the relation between culture and image of tourist destinations, it was not possible to investigate certain variations, the example of which occurred in the 'Power Distance' dimension.

As suggestions for future researches, in principle, it is recommended that this research be used as a starting point for further studies more directed to the reality of each one of the cultural regions of Brazil. In addition, it is also suggested the use of other methods of collection, following the example of the interviews, or even direct analysis for another dimension of a country or region branding, which is not sustainable. Finally, it is believed the possibility of performing other studies with similar goals to the ones employed in this study, preferably in national groups that are also formed by different cultural regions. From then on, it is possible to even conduct a comparative analysis.

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