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PSYCHOMETRIC EVALUATION OF THE TOURIST BEHAVIOR SCALE: INSIGHTS FROM PERUVIAN TOURISTS

Abstract

Tourism has become one of the most important activities, contributing significantly to national development. That is why understanding tourist behavior is essential but also very complex, as each tourist manifests different motivations when making a tourist trip. The objective of this research has been to evaluate the psychometric perspectives and invariance of the tourist behavior scale in the Peruvian context. The study focuses on the positivist paradigm with a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional methodological perspective. The data collection was carried out with a non-probabilistic sampling by convenience to tourists who visited the tourist destinations of the Peruvian jungle as Laguna Azul, Ahuashiyacu, Alto Mayo, Lamas, obtaining as a sample 778 valid responses. The results show a two-dimensional scale (intention to revisit $\alpha=0.819$; intention to recommend $\alpha=0.882$) with adequate internal consistency indices. On the other hand, the convergent and discriminant validation indices (CR=0.825; 0.850; AVE=0.612; 0.654) guarantee a valid and representative scale. Furthermore, the scale's factor structure was shown to be strictly invariant in the groups of men and women, which suggests that both genders share a similar conception of the tourist behavior scale and have a similar interpretation of the items of each factor. In conclusion, the factorial invariance indicates that the scale can be reliably applied in mixed samples (men and women), guaranteeing its validity and reliability in the measurement of tourism behavior. Furthermore, it is suggested to consider its use in future research and in the evaluation of tourism marketing strategies, since it is an accurate and robust tool for understanding tourists' intentions.

Keywords scale, factor analysis, behavior, tourism, Peruvian

JEL Classification M31, D12, Z32

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has established itself as one of the most relevant economic and social activities worldwide, exerting a significant impact on the sustainable development of nations. It not only generates income, employment and infrastructure, but also promotes cultural exchange, understanding between peoples and the enhancement of natural and cultural heritage. Its dynamic and multifaceted nature involves not only the physical movement of people, but also a complex web of interactions with local cultures, tourism services, natural environments and personal experiences, all of which directly influence visitor perceptions, satisfaction and behavior.

In this context, understanding tourist behavior has become a fundamental challenge for researchers, destination managers and public policy makers in tourism (Malhotra et al., 2022). Tourist behavior is not a generalizable phenomenon, but varies widely according to individual, motivational, social, cultural, situational and emotional factors, which influence their decisions before, during and after the trip. These decisions range from the choice of destination, type of accom-



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modation and activities to be undertaken, to the willingness to return, to recommend the experience and to share their experiences with others.

The tourism phenomenon, therefore, requires an in-depth and systematic analysis to identify representative and generalizable patterns of behavior in different contexts, cultures and population groups. This need is even more pressing in a globalized and competitive environment, where destinations seek to differentiate themselves through detailed knowledge of visitors' preferences and expectations (Cruz-Tarrillo et al., 2022). Having valid, reliable and change-sensitive tools to accurately measure tourist behavior is essential to generate rigorous, relevant and useful information for strategic decision-making in areas of destination management (Rini et al., 2021).

In this sense, the problem posed by this research focuses on determining whether it is possible to assess tourist behavior by means of a measurement scale that meets rigorous psychometric criteria of validity, reliability and factorial invariance. The question is not only limited to verifying the technical quality of the instrument, but also to establish whether its measurements can be generalized to different tourist profiles. This represents a crucial challenge in contemporary tourism research, since the possibility of having robust and applicable instruments in a variety of settings would contribute significantly to the theoretical and practical advancement of the field of tourism.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is one of the main economic activities, becoming an important contributor to the nation's GDP. Under this premise, studying tourist behavior is relevant because it effectively allows tourism-oriented organizations to satisfy tourists' needs (Shin et al., 2024). Understanding tourist behavior is transcendental to understanding the dynamics of the tourism industry and how these impacts on the economy, culture and environment of tourist sites. A conceptual approach refers to the actions and decisions that people adopt in the context of their tourist trip, this involves the choice of tourist sites, planning, the experience obtained, including participation in activities during their trip (Raja et al., 2023).

Along the same lines, one of the important aspects of tourist behavior is to understand this connection with satisfaction, which are the factors that drive tourist satisfaction is essential to build loyalty and in turn have the desire to return on their next trip. Factors such as service quality (Alshiha, 2022), destination image (Cham et al., 2022) destination authenticity (Iqbal et al., 2023; Javed & Awan, 2023; Shi et al., 2022) affect how tourists perceive their trip. With a satisfactory experience at the destination location significantly increases the likelihood of re-experiencing, but also recommending it to other potential tourists, this creates

a positive circle for the development of the towns and the nation. This section presents the conceptual progress of the two dimensions of the scale.

To date, studies of tourist behavior have been addressed in various contexts, such as the experiences of Muslim women about virtual tourist destinations, emphasizing the importance of image in virtual environments (Tavakoli & Mura, 2015), or emotional factors such as joy, love, and positive surprise (Suban, 2024). However, one relevant factor is novelty (Tiwari et al., 2024), which seeks to capture the attention of tourists with permanent innovation (Lyu et al., 2023).

To properly understand the tourist, in principle, you must know the motivations for their trip. Motivations are divided into two important aspects, rational and emotional, which influence the choice of a tourist site and the actions taken during the tourist trip. From the rational point of view, tourists choose tourist sites according to factors such as access, costs, infrastructure, quality of services. These factors are fundamental since what is sought is to get the most out of the investment made. However, emotional motivations are decisive when it comes to choosing a tourist place, these must offer good and memorable experiences.

In this world where stress abounds due to the multiple activities that people perform, work activities,

family responsibilities and social commitments that generate an emotional overload in individuals allowing them to look for alternatives to escape from routine. In that sense, tourist trips are a perfect excuse and emotions such as adventures, relaxation or exploring new cultures drive us to choose exotic destinations, with history, or to continue discovering nature.

There are leisure trips, the purpose of which is to spend a relaxing moment and enjoy recreational activities. Travel for business, sports, health (Ramos & Cuamea, 2023), and studies, among other things. Regardless of the motivations for their trip, tourists value an adequate image of the destination and attachment, that is, the emotional connection that the tourist develops with the destination (Xu & Ho, 2024). For proper management, it is essential to achieve high levels of satisfaction with the tourist destination; otherwise, that experience could be affected by tourist fatigue, the causes of which may be the frequency and duration of the trip (Su et al., 2024).

In marketing, winning a tourist is important because financial and human resources have been invested in it. That is why keeping them happy during their stay in the tourist destination should be a priority. This will allow the tourist to have the desire to enjoy those unforgettable moments again.

To get the tourist to revisit the establishment, it is essential to know motivational factors such as rest, relaxation, ego improvement, novelty, and searching for new experiences. This is known as push motivations (Ayoub & Mohamed, 2024), or emotional, facilities, environment, safety, cultural, and historical attraction, known as attraction or cognitive motivations (Lim & Chang, 2024). Furthermore, positive and negative tourist memories (Zhao et al., 2023) are factors associated with returning to the destination.

Likewise, it is essential to mention the image of the destination, quality of service, satisfaction (Martins, 2023), and sustainability (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023). To this is added effective communication, taking advantage of information and communication technologies (Shabankareh et al., 2023), which are important aspects of the attitudes and desire to re-experience

those unforgettable moments that tourists enjoyed in the establishment. On the other hand, it is essential to understand the influence that brand personality represents since it influences the perception of the destination and how consumers interact with it, manifested in the willingness to return (Nguyen et al., 2023).

This factor is relevant to the success of any tourist destination. Clients should come through recommendations because it reduces marketing efforts, resulting in savings in budget and profitability for the company. However, it is not only a financial aspect; it also improves the credibility, trust, and commitment of tourists, allowing evidence of a high retention rate and reputation of the destinations (Mimaki et al., 2022). Taking a conceptual approach, this factor refers to the tourist's willingness to suggest and promote a tourist destination to others in their environment. This intention is undoubtedly based on a series of factors and psychological aspects that will be described further.

Analyzing the intention to recommend involves understanding a variety of factors as to why they would recommend tourist destinations; without a doubt, the perceived authenticity, image of the destination, perceived value, and satisfaction appear in the first list (Heydari Fard et al., 2021; Lobo et al., 2023) observed as key indicators of satisfaction, quality and your willingness to share your experience with potential travelers (Cubillas-Para et al., 2023; Pham et al., 2021). Furthermore, the information's attitude, subjective norm, value, security, and reliability positively affect recommendation (Mohammed et al., 2023). However, this aspect has also been studied from the psychological component, specifically evaluating self-concept, motivation, and positive and negative emotions (Prayag et al., 2022), without leaving aside the role that social media marketing plays (Ibrahim, 2023), decision-makers when recommending a tourist destination.

Besides, the community plays an important role in promoting and developing the tourist destination (Xu et al., 2022). One of the deciding factors in recommending tourism is its economic impact on the community. If residents perceive that tourism generates economic benefits and business opportunities, they will likely be willing to recommend it (An et al., 2022; Cho et al., 2020).

Scales are valuable tools to measure tourist behavior during their trip. They provide a structured way of collecting data on tourists' attitudes, allowing researchers and entrepreneurs to understand tourists' motivations and thereby take actions to benefit the tourist destination (Soliman, 2021). However, despite the economic power that the tourism sector represents, and the extensive research carried out, there still needs to be more scales to measure this concept (Ma et al., 2022). The progress of the literature in the development of the scales is presented further.

A scale has been developed to measure the travel experience for work reasons and the level of said experiences (Shin et al., 2024) or the experience of events (EES). On the other hand, a scale has been designed to measure the intention to revisit the destination (Tiwari et al., 2024) and quality of service and intention to revisit (Đurađević et al., 2022). The tourist behavior scale rests based on the proposal of Žabkar et al. (2010), expanded and coming to take two-dimensional form in the study of Cruz-Tarrillo et al. (2023).

Addressing this aspect of tourist behavior is of vital importance to understand the dynamism of the sector, which would allow tourism companies to meet the expectations of visitors, strengthen the link between them and promote the economic growth of the population. Factors such as satisfaction, perceived value and emotional motivations are paramount in promoting the intention to revisit and recommend tourist destinations. However, the persistent gap is the measurement of these aspects, which would limit an accurate diagnosis and therefore the design of effective strategies based on evidence. Therefore, this research aims to evaluate the psychometric properties and factorial invariance of the tourist behavior scale in the Peruvian context.

2. METHODOLOGY

According to the methodological characteristics, this research corresponds to an instrumental design (Ato et al., 2013) because it aims to evaluate the psychometric properties of the tourist behavior scale.

This methodological process guarantees the validity and reliability of the results, allowing a rigorous evaluation of internal consistency, factor structure, and invariance according to gender in tourists.

Tourist behavior scale (Cruz-Tarrillo et al., 2023). This scale consists of six items divided into two dimensions (intention to revisit and intention to recommend); responses range from 1 to 7, with 1 being totally disagree and 7 being totally agree. This structure enables to accurately measure tourists' intentions with respect to two key aspects of their behavior: the likelihood of returning and their willingness to recommend a tourist destination.

The sample comprises local, regional, national, and foreign tourists who visited a destination during the last 12 months. The study was conducted in Peruvian cities with the greatest tourist demand in the three natural regions. It was necessary to design the instrument in Google Forms and divide it into two parts to collect the data. The first consisted of sociodemographic questions, and the second consisted of construct questions. This research is part of a project approved by the Universidad Peruana Unión ethics committee with the following number 2021-CE-EPG-000018. On the other hand, the table 1 shows the sociodemographic profile of tourists, represented by 55.7% women and 44.3% men, with university-level studies (80.30%) and medium to high incomes. In addition, the majority have dependent jobs (37.4%) and students (29.3%). There is an equitable duration, so there is demand for short and longer stays. There is a segment whose daily spending ranges between 50 to 100 soles per day and another significant segment that spends more than 150 soles. Most tourists usually travel accompanied by their family, 45.2%, highlighting the importance of family group tourist travel experiences.

Table 1. Sociodemographic profile of the tourist

Variables	Categories	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	345	44.3%
	Female	433	55.7%
Instructional level	Elementary	7	0.9%
	Secondary	71	9.1%
	University	625	80.3%
	Postgraduate	75	9.6%

Table 1 (cont.). Sociodemographic profile of the tourist

Variables	Categories	Frequency	%
Household income level	Less than 1000	188	24.2%
	1,001-1,500	217	27.9%
	1,501-2,000	174	22.4%
	2,001-2,500	196	25.2%
	More than 2500	3	0.4%
Employment status	Dependent	291	37.4%
	Independent	201	25.8%
	Unemployed	39	5.0%
	Retired	19	2.4%
	Student	228	29.3%
Duration of the tourist trip	Less than 24 hours	265	34.1%
	2-3 days	256	32.9%
	More than 3 days	257	33.0%
Daily expenditure during the tourist trip	Less than 50 soles	141	18.1%
	50-100 soles	243	31.2%
	101-150 soles	138	17.7%
	More than 150 soles	256	32.9%
Who did you travel with?	By myself	109	14.0%
	With my partner	116	14.9%
	With my friends	201	25.8%
	With family members	352	45.2%

The SPSS v28 statistical package and the AMOS v24 extension analyzed the data. After having been collected, 829 data were entered into the statistical software, and cleaning was carried out, following the criteria for measuring distances in order to discover outliers (De Maesschalck et al., 2000), eliminating a total of 51 cases, leaving a total of 778 cases for analysis. The use of personalized tables was necessary to analyze the tourist profile. Besides, descriptive statistics and the Aiken coefficient were used. To discover the factorial struc-

ture of the scale, Exploratory Factor Analysis was necessary using the principal axis factorization method (Byrne, 2013). A multigroup confirmatory factor analysis was carried out to verify the construct's validity and invariance.

3. RESULTS

The construct items show a mean between 5.15 and 5.30, considering that the response options were 7 categories. Standard deviations between 0.832 and 0.930 indicate that the responses are close to the mean. The Aiken coefficient values were between 0.976 and 1.000, indicating high content validity. The skewness and kurtosis values are close to zero, indicating a symmetric and normal data distribution. Furthermore, the 95% confidence intervals are closely grouped near the mean of each item.

After reviewing the KMO index (0.820) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 2535.064$; $df = 15$; $p = 0.000$), both results indicate that the data are adequate. The principal axis factorization method with a Varimax rotation reveals a two-dimensional structure of the tourist behavior scale, with each dimension composed of three items. Furthermore, the six items explain 77.761 of the total variance.

On the other hand, the intention to revisit the dimension shows high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.819$) and composite reliability ($CR = 0.825$, supported by an AVE (0.612). Likewise, the intention to recommend dimension shows similar values with high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.882$) and composite reliability ($CR = 0.850$), supported by an AVE (0.654). The items that make up the scale show strong internal coherence with their factors; this assumes adequate validity of the construct.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was carried out to evaluate construct validity. The results ob-

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and Aiken of the construct

Items	Mean	SD	Aiken	Correlation	Skewness	Kurtosis	95% confidence interval	
							Inferior	Superior
IVV1	5.24	0.930	0.976	0.573	-0.408	0.7644	5.17	5.31
IVV2	5.17	0.843	1.000	0.650	-0.293	0.0244	5.11	5.23
IVV3	5.19	0.832	0.976	0.665	-0.451	0.5588	5.13	5.25
IR1	5.15	0.918	1.000	0.698	-0.554	0.7340	5.08	5.21
IR2	5.29	0.930	1.000	0.663	-0.470	0.6323	5.22	5.35
IR3	5.30	0.905	1.000	0.745	-0.353	0.3450	5.24	5.37

Table 3. Instrument items and factor loadings

Instrument items	Factor	
	1	2
Intention to revisit ($\alpha=0.819$; CR 0.825; AVE=0.612)		
IVV1. I want to repeat the experiences I had in my tourist destination in the future	0.678	
IVV2. I have to have many new experiences in this tourist destination in the future	0.830	
IVV3. I want to experience the feeling of well-being again in my tourist destination in the future	0.695	
Intention to recommend ($\alpha=0.882$, CR=0.850; AVE=0.654)		
IR1. I would like to say positive things about the tourist destination to other people		0.664
IR2. I would recommend the tourist destination to anyone who asks me		0.833
IR3. I would encourage my friends and acquaintances to visit the tourist destination		0.885

tained were sufficiently significant, with a value of $\chi^2=25.529$, degrees of freedom $df=7$ ($\chi^2/df=3.647$) and a significance level $p<0.01$, indicating that the proposed model is statistically sound. Besides, the fit indices show satisfactory values, suggesting a good model fit. First, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) was 0.989, and the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) was 0.968, both values above the acceptable threshold of 0.90, supporting the validity of the model.

Likewise, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) yielded a value of 0.058, well below the acceptable threshold of 0.08, indicating that the model has an adequate fit. Other indicators, such as the normalized fit index (NFI=0.990) and the relative fit index (RFI=0.978), also confirm the robustness of the model. Likewise, comparative indexes such as the comparative fit index (CFI=0.993), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI=0.984) and the incremental fit index (IFI=0.993) show values close to 1, suggesting an excellent overall fit of the model.

Table 4. Model adjustment measurements

Absolute fit measures	Values acceptable	Values of the scale
Chi-squared	-	25.529
p-value	< 0.05	0.000
GFI	≥ 0.80	0.997
AGFI	≥ 0.80	0.991
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.058
NFI	> 0.90	0.990
RFI	> 0.90	0.978
CFI	> 0.90	0.993
TLI	> 0.90	0.984
IFI	> 0.90	0.993

Considering the relevance of this analysis in marketing, especially in studies of tourist behavior, the underlying structure of the construct and the multigroup variability are evaluated according to the gender of the tourist. Table 4 shows the results of chi-square (χ^2), degrees of freedom (df), and significance (p) are adequate, and the fit index (SRMR, TLI, CFI, RMSEA) are within the permitted limits according to the literature.

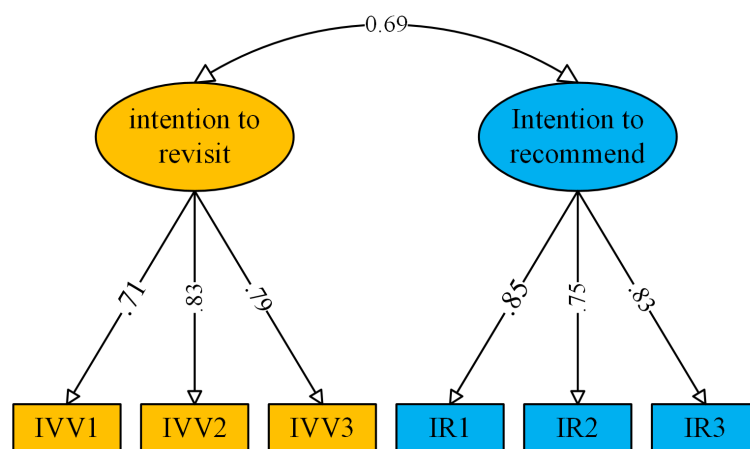


Figure 1. Confirmatory factor structure of the research

Table 5. Invariance of the tourist behavior scale

	χ^2	df	p	SRMR	TLI	CFI	RMSEA [90% CI]	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	P	ΔCFI	$\Delta RMSEA$
M0	35.157	14	0.001	0.023	0.982	0.992	0.044 [0.026 – 0.063]	–	–	–	–	–
M1	40.056	18	0.002	0.032	0.986	0.991	0.040 [0.023 – 0.056]	4.899	4	0.309	–0.001	–0.004
M2	47.020	24	0.003	0.029	0.989	0.991	0.035 [0.020 – 0.050]	6.964	6	0.294	0.000	–0.005
M3	50.186	27	0.004	0.038	0.990	0.991	0.033 [0.018 – 0.047]	3.166	3	0.306	0.000	–0.002

Note: M0 = configurational model; M1 = metric model; M2 = scalar model; M3 = strict model.

In the configural invariance (M0) that serves as a reference point, an appropriate fit is observed, with a value of $\chi^2/df = 2.511$, a significance level of 0.001, and values of RMSEA = 0.044; CFI = 0.992; TLI = 0.982; and SRMR = 0.023. These results indicate the feasibility of examining more complex constrained models to evaluate higher levels of invariance. The factorial structure of the scale proves to be strictly invariant for the groups of men and women in models M1, M2, and M3, evidencing metric ($\Delta RMSEA = -0.004$), scalar ($\Delta RMSEA = -0.005$) and strict ($\Delta RMSEA = -0.002$) invariance. These findings suggest that both genders share a similar conception of the tourist behavior scale and have a similar interpretation of the items of each factor.

4. DISCUSSION

The study focused on validating the scale’s reliability and validity and exploring its factor structure and invariance, which could enrich its understanding and usefulness. The Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed that the scale has a two-dimensional structure, empirically corroborating the original structure (Cruz-Tarrillo et al., 2023). Furthermore, the KMO was 0.80, and the $\chi^2 = 2535.064$ with a significance level of $0.000 > 0.05$, revealing that the data were adequate to proceed with the factor analysis.

The presence of a two-dimensional structure reveals a complete picture of tourist behavior, allowing the identification of specific patterns (intention to visit and recommend) that influence tourists’ actions (Martins, 2023; Saragi et al., 2021). The scale of six items explains 77.761% of the total variance; this is relevant because it encompasses important aspects of tourist behavior, essential for its application and decision-making (Ariya et al., 2020; Ayoub & Mohamed, 2024).

On the other hand, the scale has internal consistency whose values are solid ($\alpha = 0.819$ and $\alpha =$

0.882), being above the threshold required in the theory. This is supported by adequate composite reliability (CR=0.825; 0.819) and construct validity (AVE=0.612; 0.654) that exceed the 0.50 established in theory (Shin et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the factor loadings of the CFA were above 0.70, thus reinforcing the previous findings. This allows us to understand the tourists’ perception of their experiences and how it can affect their decision to return. It also recommends crucial aspects in the tourist industry to achieve the objectives (Coetzee & Pourfakhimi, 2020). Likewise, the two-dimensional structure found could reveal various motivations when the tourist decides to return or recommend. Revisiting could be associated with a memorable experience (Kamenidou & Stavrianea, 2022). These living situations produced general satisfaction (Aziz et al., 2022), while the intention to recommend could be associated with the quality of the destination, the services offered were of quality, and the willingness of other people to also benefit from the tourist destination (Cham et al., 2022; Mimaki et al., 2022).

The study also conducted a multigroup analysis on the tourist behavior scale to understand whether gender differences influence the scale’s conceptualization. The factorial invariance results reveal that the scale’s underlying structure and tourist behavior are strictly invariant between male and female tourists (Mamani-Benito et al., 2024). These findings are significant in that marketing strategies can be directed at gender because the understanding is common regarding tourist behavior (Shi et al., 2022).

Although the results of this research provide essential advances in the field of tourist behavior, there is still a long way to go in explaining this concept. Under that premise, it is relevant to recognize some limitations and future lines of research.

Factorial invariance between genders is valuable; other factors such as age, educational level, or origin could influence the conceptualization of the items. In future work, the invariance related to the abovementioned factors could be examined to provide a more adequate

diagnosis of tourist behavior. Furthermore, there needs to be more understanding of the construct of invariance concerning time; in future work, it is advisable to incorporate a longitudinal analysis to evaluate the stability of factorial invariance.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to evaluate the psychometric properties and factorial invariance of the Tourism Behaviour Scale in the Peruvian context. The findings reveal a scale that has a two-dimensional structure composed of six items, with adequate internal consistency and a satisfactory confirmatory fit, which supports its validity for its application in the tourism context. In addition, invariance between gender groups was found, indicating that both men and women conceptualise tourism behaviour in a similar way.

In terms of the profile of the tourists evaluated, an important segment was identified, consisting of men and women with a university education, medium-high income and dependent employment. These tourists make both short and long stays, spend more than 150 soles per trip and tend to travel accompanied by their families, especially valuing the family unit.

Based on these results, tourism marketing strategies should be oriented towards personalising the service, offering meaningful cultural experiences and generating added value, according to the purchasing power of the identified segment. It is also recommended that tourism agencies design packages that encourage family interaction, including recreational activities for different age groups and flexible and comfortable accommodation options. Given that both short and long stays are observed, it is pertinent that travel agencies and tourism stakeholders differentiate their offers to satisfy both types of demand.

The proposed scale is a tool for measuring tourist behaviour, especially in the dimensions of intention to visit and intention to recommend, which serves as a key input for strategic decision-making in the tourism industry. Finally, the usefulness of the proposed scale is highlighted as a tool for the periodic measurement of tourist behaviour, especially in the dimensions of intention to visit and intention to recommend, which can serve as a key input for strategic decision-making in the tourism industry.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

Data curation: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

Formal analysis: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

Funding acquisition: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

Investigation: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

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Project administration: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

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Supervision: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

Validation: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

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Writing – original draft: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

Writing – review & editing: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

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