





# “Design and validation of the Brand Personality Scale in Tourist Destinations”

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# DESIGN AND VALIDATION OF THE BRAND PERSONALITY SCALE IN TOURIST DESTINATIONS

## Abstract

The new modality caused by COVID-19 has significantly affected tourism, from the decrease in demand and the deterioration of facilities due to lack of budget to the point of becoming unattractive. In response to this, the objective of this research work is to design and validate a scale to measure Brand Personality in Tourist Destinations (BPTD). The results were structured in three phases. In the first phase, an exhaustive search of the bibliography and first version of the instrument were generated. Moreover, a panel of 12 professionals between academics and managers was held, who evaluated the features and content validation by a panel of 7 experts. In the second phase, data collection was carried out with the participation of 998 tourists. In the third phase, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis was carried out, obtaining a KMO of 0.979 and a p-value of 0.000. The total explained variance of the 21 items grouped in three dimensions represents 87.27%. In the confirmatory analysis,  $\chi^2 = 921.57$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ,  $RMR = 0.069$ ,  $GFI = 0.917$ ,  $AGFI = 0.829$ ,  $CFI = 0.980$ ,  $TLI = 0.976$ ,  $NFI = 0.975$ ,  $IFI = 0.980$  and  $RMSA = 0.065$ , with an appropriate internal consistency (performance:  $\alpha = 0.984$ ; social innovation  $\alpha = 0.982$ ; honesty  $\alpha = 0.964$ ). Composite reliability was  $CR > 0.70$  and convergent validity was  $AVE > 0.5$ . In conclusion, the values imply an acceptable adjustment, for which the model is adequate, and the scale is valid to be applied in tourism.

**Keywords** brand personality, tourism, model, scale, marketing

**JEL Classification** M31, D12, Z32

## INTRODUCTION

Tourist destinations have had a decrease in demand due to deterioration due to a lack of budget to the point of becoming undesirable and attractive to visitors (Hultman et al., 2017). In addition to this, COVID-19 significantly affects tourism, since destinations must adapt to the new normality. According to Usakli and Baloglu (2011), to face these challenges, tourist destinations must focus their efforts on re-strengthening the place brand. Moreover, to Greene et al. (2021), it is vital to reflect congruent lifestyles and attitudes with tourists, which will allow positive associations and predisposition to visit. Likewise, Brand Personality (BP) is crucial to creating a differential positioning, and brand-related personality attributes stimulate tourists' destination decisions (Ghosh, 2016).

On the other hand, it is necessary to indicate that tourists tend to perceive tourist destinations as partners in their eagerness to satisfy their self-identification needs. Consequently, they dedicate themselves to attributing human characteristics to brands by expressing their personality or certain traits through the choice of destinations for their subsequent visits. This process is known as anthropomorphizing (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013), a key factor in the success of a tourist destination. Undoubtedly, the predisposition to study BP

is growing among academics, and professionals concerned with proposing reliable, valid, and practical instruments are invaluable (Geuens et al., 2009).

On the other hand, the construct proposed by Aaker (1997) has been of inspiration in most marketing research, with a scale composed of 44 items grouped into five dimensions, namely: sincerity, enthusiasm, competence, sophistication, and toughness. However, it does not include validation in brand contexts (Kaplan et al., 2010) because the tourist's behavior is different according to the latitudes in which it is found.

It should be noted that countries of all economic levels, millions of jobs and businesses depend on a solid and prosperous tourism sector. In this sense, domestic travel is driving the recovery of routes to many destinations, especially those with large domestic markets (World Tourism Organization, 2021). Moreover, today, more than ever, BP plays an essential role in the recovery of the tourism industry worldwide.

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## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1. Brand personality

The BP concept has been studied since the 1950s (Ogilvy, 1955), although it was Aaker, who proposed a definition of the construct in 1997. Plummer (2000) has described that the BP is related to the character of the brand, and Davies (2018) defines it as a set of human characteristics associated with a brand; While for Belk (1988), the brand is considered as an extension of the self.

According to the American Marketing Association (2021), the BP refers to the psychological properties of a particular brand; that is, it is a concept that models the personality of the human being and associates it with the qualities, desires and opinions of a person. Similarly, Kapfer (2003) defines it as a set of human personality traits that are applicable and are associated with the brands. Although Aaker's (1997) work has been the basis for most research, it has also been criticized. A first criticism refers to the vague definition of BP that encompasses several characteristics (such as age, gender, etc.) in addition to personality (Bosnjak et al., 2007; Kapfer, 2003). Other authors have stated that the structure in the validity process suffers from problems of generalization (Caruana et al., 2007; Colmenares & Saavedra, 2008), and leaves researchers and practitioners unsure of what they have measured: perceived BP – an aspect of the sender – or perceived user characteristics – aspects of the receiver (Geuens et al., 2009).

### 1.2. Brand personality in tourist destinations

Theories of congruence brand – consumer are based on the notion that consumers associate human attributes with brands (Lin, 2010; Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014). Therefore, the competitive nature of the current tourism industry encourages destinations to develop their brand and establish effective promotion for tourists (Huang et al., 2017). However, brand attachment develops exclusively when a strong connection is established between the brand and the consumer's self; by satisfying the functional, experiential, or symbolic needs (Park et al., 2006).

When consumers take product quality for granted, and competitors can easily copy product features, strong brand identity and personality are invaluable in building brand equity (Van Rekom et al., 2006). In this case, Malär et al. (2011) state that self-congruence between a brand and a consumer plays an important role in creating an emotional bond with the brand. In a more conceptual approach to the destination branding process, Ekinci (2003) proposes that to be effective, destination brands must establish a BP and create links with the image that the tourist has of himself through the reasons for his trip. According to Murphy et al. (2007), since BP is directly linked to both the global image of the destination and the affective component, it is essential to recognize the possible significant spillover effects on BP and brand loyalty; therefore, for a better understanding of the evolutionary process, studies in this line are neces-

sary (Ha, 2016). Indeed, the Brand Personality in Tourist Destinations (BPTD) can be defined as the personal traits that a tourist destination projects.

Similarly, the latest research in BP literature has focused on the personality of a tourist destination (Aktan et al., 2021; Kumar, 2016; Murphy et al., 2007; Šagovnović & Kovačić, 2021), consumer perception (Kim et al., 2011, 2007), re-intention to visit the destination (Micevski et al., 2021; Quintal et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020), the mark of destiny (Li et al., 2020; Tsaur et al., 2016; Vinyals-Mirabent & Mohammadi, 2018), the image of destiny (Byon & Zhang, 2010; Huang et al., 2017; Kaur et al., 2016), brand loyalty (Ha, 2016; Kumar & Kaushik, 2017; Li et al., 2020) and tourist motivation (Correia & Pimpão, 2008; Dey et al., 2020; Hasan et al. 2018; Martaleni et al., 2021; Reitsamer et al., 2016; Simeon et al., 2017). Derived from the above, it is convenient to present how researchers operationalize BP scales in the following section and what features have emerged from it.

### 1.3. Models - scales

Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) defined BP as a set of human personality traits applicable and associated with brands. The BP model based on Aaker (1997) consists of five categories (sincerity, emotion, competence, sophistication, and rudeness), and the features such as friendly, up-to-date, unique, reliable, successful, and exciting have been highlighted as the most important (Lee et al., 2018; Rutter et al., 2018; Su & Reynolds, 2019), and other dimensions have emerged, such as coexistence (Ekinici & Hosany, 2006); high class, honest, exciting, and tough (Murphy et al., 2007); kindness, meanness, snobbery, assiduity, conformity, and discretion (D'Astous & Boujbel, 2007); competition, and modernity, originality and vitality, sincerity, freshness and fashion, and conviviality (Sahin & Baloglu, 2011). In addition, Kakitek (2018) proposed a 5-dimensional model (real, healthy, handsome, confident, western) and 23 items that measure the surfer's BP; while Stadler et (2018) developed a model that measured the BP of sports teams by 6 factors (success, talent, entertainment, dedication, admiration, and care) and 18 items to measure the BP of sports teams. Likewise, Zainudin et al. (2020) empirically expanded the Halal BP concepts developed by Ahmad (2015).

On the other hand, some researchers admit that not all personality traits are real and have added other elements such as attractive, healthy, old, new, heavy, and big (Sung & Tinkham, 2005) or profitable and financially stable (Venable et al., 2005). Regarding tourist destinations, Henderson (2000) evaluates BP's traits in Singapore through 6 dimensions (cosmopolitan, young, vibrant, modern, reliable, and comfortable). Crockett and Wood (2002) described the Australian country with characteristics of BP, namely, healthy, natural, free, and spiritual, while Morgan et al. (2003) characterize the British state as conservative, pleasant, refined, civilized, eccentric, and realistic. Likewise, Saints (2004), in a content analysis of tourism and advertising in tourist destinations, found that Portugal has a personality: contemporary, modern, sophisticated, and traditional, in the North American media. In the same way, Hosany et al. (2006) demonstrated three dimensions of Londoner's personality: sincerity, excitement, and happiness. Finally, Murphy et al. (2007), in Australia, discovered four dimensions: high class, sincere, exciting, and rough.

Therefore, tourist destinations have distinctive characteristics and traits that resemble the personality of the human being, so that their personality plays an important role in the performance and innovation of the brand and the projection of the tourist destination, which is why the purpose of this study is to design and validate a scale to measure Brand Personality in Tourist Destinations (BPTD).

## 2. METHOD

The BPTD scale is designed to be applied in different tourist destinations. For its construction, a development framework has been followed that consists of three stages: generate the items, collect the data and confirm the latent structure (Kim et al., 2012; Pereira et al., 2015). For these purposes, the voluntary participation of tourists through informed consent has been considered. At all times, its principles, values, and information privacy were respected. Likewise, the data collected have been used solely for this study and has the approval of the ethics committee of the Postgraduate Unit of the Universidad Peruana Unión.

## 2.1. Item generation

An exhaustive study of the bibliography search was made in databases such as Scopus, Emerald, and Web of Science, taking the first model proposed by Aaker (1997) as a starting point. Until now (2021), the terms entered were Model, Scale, and Brand Personality. After analyzing the bibliography, a first version of the BPTD instrument was made (Deng & Dart, 1994). Next, with a panel of 12 professionals (Churchill, 1979), value-oriented BP traits were added among managers and academics. Then, the content validation was carried out by a panel of experts from different latitudes and with an average of 20 years of experience in consumer behavior research (a total of 7), of which two are of Colombian nationality, two of Mexican nationality, and three of Peruvian nationality; who evaluated sufficiency, clarity, coherence, and relevance, whose Aiken coefficient index is observed in Table 4.

On the other hand, the scale that measures the BPTD was made up of 21 items grouped into 3 dimensions, namely: performance, which is made up of 10 items (efficient, competitive, responsible, strategic, productive, proactive, friendly, welcoming, helpful, engaged); social innovation, with 7 items (collaborative, tolerant, enterprising, creative, innovative, ingenious and attractive); and honesty, with 4 items (generous, fair, sincere and transparent). The scale was designed with 7 response options, in which (1) totally disagrees and (7) totally agrees, considered the most effective in identifying variance (Su & Reynolds, 2019).

## 2.2. Data collection

The features identified in the first stage were organized in a survey that consisted of two parts: the first describes the sociodemographic profile of a tourist, and the second is related to the items that make up the construct. 998 national tourists have been considered (convenience sampling) who visited a tourist destination during the last 12 months.

The data collection was done virtually because the instrument was designed in the Google form and sent through social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and e-mail due to the COVID-19 health crisis. Minors (< 18 years old)

and those who did not complete the questionnaire were excluded. Likewise, the study was carried out in 16 Peruvian cities considered the most visited by tourists: Iquitos, Pucallpa, Tingo María, Chiclayo, Piura, Tumbes, Lima, Trujillo, Arequipa, Puno, Ica, Jaén, San Ignacio, Chachapoyas (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo, 2021).

## 2.3. Latent structure confirmation

This stage consists of two phases. In the first, content validation was carried out, and four criteria were used to evaluate the items: 1 = Does not meet the criteria, 2 = Low level, 3 = Moderate level, and 4 = High level. Likewise, the coefficient V of Aiken (Table 4) quantifies the degree of sufficiency, coherence, relevance, and clarity.

In the second stage, the reliability and validity of the scale were confirmed, for which it was necessary to use the statistical package SPSS in its 26 version. Initially, the data consisted of 1,026 records, missing data was checked, leading to the elimination of 28 cases, and 998 cases were submitted for analysis. Also, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed with the principal component analysis method (Papadimitriou et al., 2019) to know the construct's factorial structure. Subsequently, confirmatory factor analysis was performed using the AMOS V24 extension to determine the global fit of the scale.

# 3. RESULTS

## 3.1. Sample characterization

The sociodemographic profile of tourists is shown in Table 1. It can be seen that there is little difference in the proportions by sex (44% and 56%). The age group between 18 and 25 years represented a significant proportion (68.8%). A large percentage (79%) have university training in terms of education. Likewise, the level of economic-monthly income of the family unit ranges between 2001 and 2500 soles (33.0%). Regarding employment status, despite the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, a considerable percentage works as an independent (39.8%) or dependent (27.9%). In addition, tourists usually have long-term trips between 2 and 3 days (34.1%) or even more than three days



(36.4%), and their daily spending exceeds 150 soles (41.8%). It is important to note that tourists do not usually travel alone (11.1%) but rather with a family member (47.4%).

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic profile of the tourist (N = 998)

Variables	Categories	Distribution
Sex	Male	439 (44.0%)
	Female	559 (56.0%)
Age	From 18 to 25	687 (68.8%)
	From 31 to 35	208 (20.8%)
	From 36 to 45	72 (7.2%)
	From 46 to 55	23 (2.3%)
	56 and more	8 (0.8)
	Instructional level	Elementary school
Instructional level	High school	98 (9.8%)
	University	788 (79.0%)
	Postgraduate	105 (10.5%)
Household income level	Less than 1,000	216 (21.6%)
	Between 1,001 – 1,500	276 (27.7%)
	Between 1,501 – 2,000	173 (17.3%)
	Between 2,001 – 2,500	329 (33.0%)
	More than 2,500	4 (0.4)
Employment status	Dependent	397 (39.8%)
	Independent	278 (27.9%)
	Unemployed	26 (2.6%)
Duration of the tourist trip	Student	297 (29.8%)
	Less than 24 hours	295 (29.6%)
	Between 2 – 3 days	340 (34.1%)
Daily expenditure during the tourist trip	More than 3 days	363 (36.4%)
	Less than 50 soles	106 (10.6%)
	Between 50 – 100 soles	296 (29.5%)
	Between 101 – 150 soles	179 (17.9%)
Who did you travel with?	More than 150 soles	417 (41.8%)
	By myself	111 (11.1%)
	With my partner	170 (17.0%)
	With my friends	244 (24.4%)
	With family members	473 (47.4%)

### 3.2. Exploratory factor analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was performed to uncover the underlying structure of the 21-item BPTD model. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistical test shows a value of 0.979 greater than 0.50 (Kaiser, 1974), which ensures that it is suitable for exploratory factor analysis. Likewise, the Bartlett sphericity test projected a Chi-square of 41,995.020 and a P-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.001$ ), which indicates that the correlations are significant between the variables subjected to the analysis (Pan et al., 2017). On the other hand, to fulfil

the purpose of the investigation, the method of extraction of principal components and the Varimax rotation was used (Kaiser, 1960).

For its part, the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) results are detailed in Table 2, in which the final factorial structure explains 87.27% of the total variance, which widely exceeds the suggested value of 60%. In addition, Cronbach's alpha of each factor had values higher than 0.95, indicating substantial internal consistency in each factor (Swailes & McIntyre-Bhatty, 2002). Finally, 21 items were produced in a factorial structure of three dimensions of the personality of the tourist destination (Table 2). Ten items make up the first factor, seven the second, and four the third, respectively.

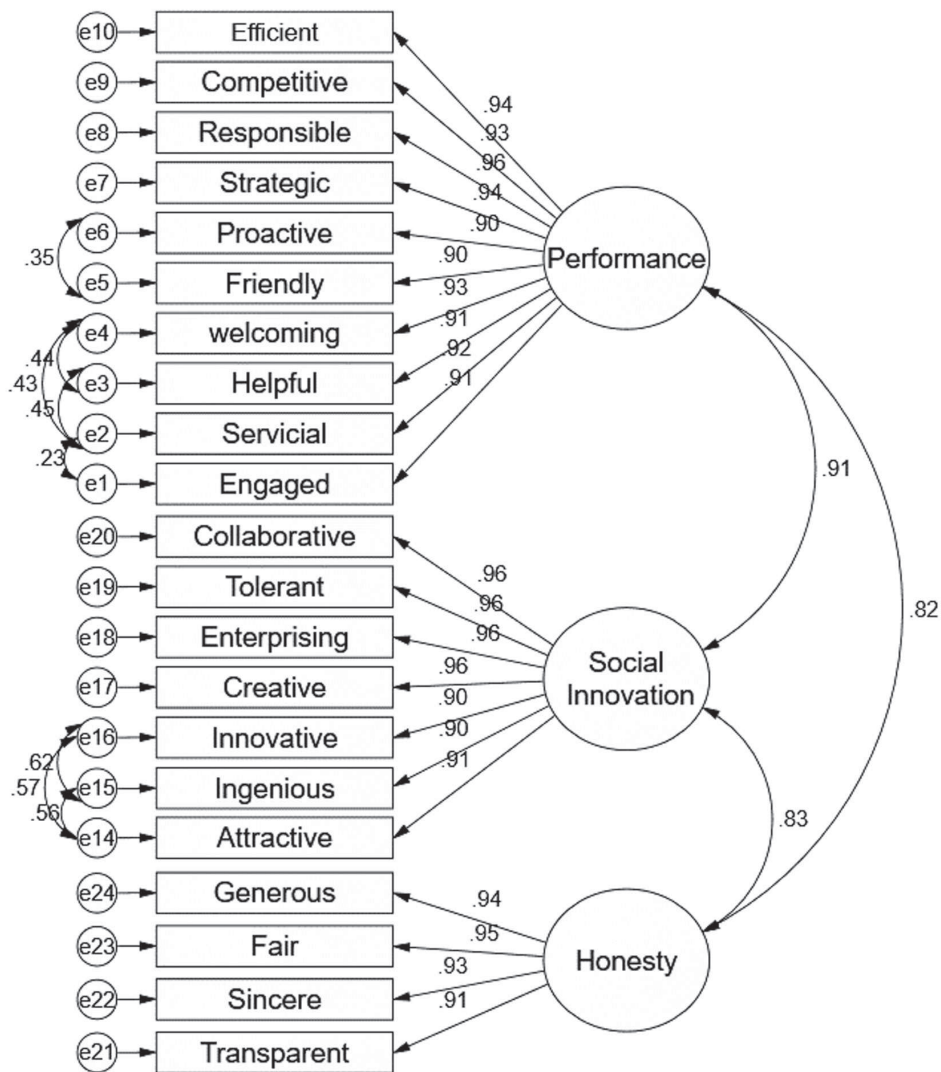
**Table 2.** Exploratory factor analysis results (N = 998)

Item BPTD	Factors		
	F1	F2	F3
BPTD-01	0.792	–	–
BPTD-02	0.781	–	–
BPTD-03	0.777	–	–
BPTD-04	0.773	–	–
BPTD-05	0.771	–	–
BPTD-06	0.770	–	–
BPTD-07	0.770	–	–
BPTD-08	0.765	–	–
BPTD-09	0.753	–	–
BPTD-10	0.740	–	–
BPTD-11	–	0.768	–
BPTD-12	–	0.767	–
BPTD-13	–	0.748	–
BPTD-14	–	0.741	–
BPTD-15	–	0.735	–
BPTD-16	–	0.727	–
BPTD-17	–	0.720	–
BPTD-18	–	–	0.814
BPTD-19	–	–	0.802
BPTD-20	–	–	0.797
BPTD-21	–	–	0.786
% of variance	–	–	3,142
Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ )	0.984	0.982	0.964

Note: Item BPTD (Brand personality of tourist destinations).

### 3.3. Confirmatory factor analysis

Regarding the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the BPTD scale, the Chi-square statistical value was ( $\chi^2$ ) = 921.57, with degrees of freedom ( $df$ ) = 178; a significance of 0.000 and an approximation of ( $\chi^2/df$ ) = 5,177. In addition, the values of the goodness of fit index are the following: root



**Figure 1.** Three-dimensional confirmatory model of the BPTD scale

mean square residual (RMR) = 0.069; goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.917; adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) = 0.892; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.980; Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.976; normed fit index (NFI) = 0.975; incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.980 and residual root mean square (RMSEA) = 0.065. These values imply an acceptable fit, for which the model is adequate and the scale is valid.

**Table 3.** Goodness-of-fit index of the BPTD scale (N=998)

Goodness of fit index	Value	Goodness of fit index	Value
RMS	0.098	TLI	0.921
GFI	0.841	NFI	0.891
AGFI	0.813	IFI	0.928
CFI	0.928	RMSEA	0.067

### 3.4. BPTD scale validity

Content validation was performed using the coefficient V of Aiken (Table 4) and showed that all dimensions exceed the value  $V > 0.7$  (Aiken, 1985). They were submitted to the calculation to test the convergent and discriminant validity and found to be above the minimum established in all dimensions.  $CR > 0.70$  and  $AVE > 0.50$  (Priporas et al., 2020). Furthermore, concerning discriminant validity, it is achieved if the square root AVE (values in bold in Table 4) is greater than the correlations of the construct (Garanti & Kissi, 2019). Therefore, in this study, it was found that they satisfy the conditions for accepting the discriminant validity of the BPTD instrument in all cases.

**Table 4.** Content validity, convergent, and discriminant validity

Dimensions	Items	M	SD	V	CR	AVE	Performance	Social innovation	Honesty
Performance	10	4,725	1,659	0.92	0.983	0.854	0.924		
Social innovation	7	4,872	1,722	0.91	0.98	0.876	0.912	0.936	
Honesty	4	4.7	1.61	0.93	0.964	0.87	0.816	0.831	0.933

Note: *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation, *V* = coefficient *V* of Aiken, *CR* = Composite reliability, *AVE* = Average variance extracted.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The main theoretical contribution of this study is that it develops a valid and reliable scale that helps measure the BPTD concept, becoming a tool for the management of tourist destinations. It is necessary to indicate that, as time passes, it is essential to emphasize the management of the BP of the destination due to changes in the perceptions of BP by consumers (Ha, 2016). Therefore, from tourism and marketing, BP also helps to improve trust in the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

On the other hand, this study complements the void of a scale that measures the BPTD, since there are several previously carried out studies that have used the BPS model (Pan et al., 2017) and proposed by Aaker (1997), which was initially developed to measure the BP of tangible products and was considered a universal scale (Hanna & Rowley, 2019). However, it is proven that the five dimensions of the BPS scale cannot be applied to other contexts and even more so in crises like the one we are currently experiencing (Caruana et al., 2007; Kakitek, 2018).

Therefore, the growing demand to find an adequate metric to measure BP in current contexts has made institutions and academia call for contributions to satisfy this existing need. Likewise, an emphasis has been placed on the development of BP measures in specific tourist destinations and within a culture, since these variations cause the differences between attitudes and behaviors of tourists. In this sense, Sung and Tinkham (2005) discovered two factors of the Korean culture (passive sympathy and ancestry), which corroborated their hypothesis that the Korean BP structure had a cultural significance that reflects the importance of Confucian values in Korea’s social and economic systems. In this line, the study results by Zainudin et al. (2020) indicated that the dimensions of Halal BP have a positive impact on brand

loyalty, especially in three dimensions: emotion, sophistication, and righteousness. Emphasis is placed here on the importance of considering religious values when marketing Halal products, especially in millennials’ fashion in Malaysia.

On the other hand, according to the findings found in this study, when tourists express their perception of the place they visit, the concept of BP is three-dimensional: performance, social innovation, and honesty. The entire structure is made up of 21 traits (Figure 1), and on this basis, the BPTD that shows adequate performance could be described as proactive, strategic, productive, helpful, responsible, welcoming, competitive, friendly, efficient, and committed; in which tourists recognize that the infrastructure of the destination is safe, varied and comfortable, in addition to protecting tourists. It should be added that the BPTD, which is perceived as a social innovator, is shown as enterprising, collaborative, creative, tolerant, innovative, ingenious, and attractive, which is why tourists point to these places as entertaining, pleasant, and welcoming. Also, the honest BPTD can be reflected as generous, fair, transparent, and sincere; therefore, it describes tourist destinations that protect their clients by satisfying their needs and desires, projecting values that differentiate them from other options.

In this sense, it is crucial to generate cognitions that generate interest and awareness, such as personality traits perceived by tourists and interest groups. Therefore, it is necessary to invest in tourism, marketing and communication resources to enhance the characteristics of the BPTD and the dimension of maintaining its attractiveness among interest groups (Gómez-Aguilar et al., 2014). Additionally, from the perspective of Fennis and Pruyn (2007), research in the tourism sector must evaluate the change in BP and the effect it produces on trust, loyalty, and intention to visit and recommend. Nevertheless, Ha (2016) recog-



nizes some limitations in studies of the tourism industry, so it is necessary to analyze consumer groups and investigate the moderating effects of each characteristic to find a complete understanding of changes in the proposed model. Although

the present investigation provides a useful and practical metric, it has some limitations. This work was directed only to national tourists derived from the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of access to foreign tourists.

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## CONCLUSION

This work found that the tourists visiting the studied destinations are between 18 and 25 years old, with a bachelor's degree, an average income of 2,300 soles (equivalent to 608 US dollars per month), staying in the destination from 2 to 3 days, and they generally travel accompanied, mainly by relatives. Additionally, the objective of this work is achieved through the design and validation of a scale of Brand Personality in Tourist Destinations (BPTD) with a factorial structure consisting of three dimensions: Performance (performance), social innovation and honesty, and 21 items, with adequate internal consistency, reported in a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for each dimension: Performance ( $F1 = 0.984$ ), Social Innovation ( $F2 = 0.982$ ), Honesty ( $F3 = 0.964$ ). This model represents a management tool that allows evaluating the tourist's perception from three edges and seeks to pay for the management of the BP being these destinations more inclusive, with a view to the sustainability of tourist destinations.

Additionally, to evaluate the BPTD in new projects, it is important to consider characteristics associated with culture, beliefs, religion, lifestyle, among others. Likewise, it would be convenient to replicate this study in a post-pandemic scenario that considers both national and foreign tourists to evaluate possible significant differences in the perception of the BPTD. Finally, another line of research aims to measure the effects of the BPTD on the intention to visit and recommend tourist destinations.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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Formal analysis: Effer Apaza Tarqui, Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

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Writing – original draft: Karla Liliana Haro-Zea, Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

Writing – review & editing: Karla Liliana Haro-Zea, Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.

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