“Personality and image as predictors of the intention to revisit and recommend tourist destinations”

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PERSONALITY AND IMAGE AS PREDICTORS OF THE INTENTION TO REVISIT AND RECOMMEND TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Abstract

Undeniably, the new normality caused by COVID-19 presents an enormous challenge for tourist destinations to become more attractive to visitors. Thus, the purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of destination personality and image on tourist behavior in Peru. This quantitative and cross-sectional analysis targeted 998 national tourists via a non-probabilistic convenience sampling. The study employed AMOS 24 statistical software for exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. The results showed positive effects of social innovativeness (β = 0.374), performance (β = 0.404), and honesty (β = 0.191) on an affective image. Likewise, the study confirms the favorable effects of social innovativeness (β = 0.524), performance (β = 0.156), and honesty (β = 0.280) on a cognitive image. Furthermore, the effects of a cognitive image on the intention to revisit (β = –0.756) and intention to recommend (β = –0.756) are also measured. In addition, the findings support the positive effects of an affective image in intention to revisit (β = 1.549) and intention to recommend (β = 1.547); all results obtained a significance less than 0.05 ($p < 0.001$). This study concludes that brand personality is a valuable concept that can suggest strategies to improve the brand image, so the personality of tourist destinations should be congruent with the personality of tourists.

Keywords marketing, tourist destinations, consumer behavior, structural equation modeling

JEL Classification M31, Z32, D12

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered as one of the most critical sectors of the economy that, thanks to the income of foreign currency and the generation of employment, contribute to the economic sustainability of a nation (Stojčić et al., 2022). Around the world, tourism was forecast to grow exponentially due to the increase in tourists (Purbadharmaja et al., 2021). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all tourism-related economic activity suffered significant economic losses. As a result, tourist destinations have gone through an unprecedented crisis, which has altered tourist behavior to the point that many companies had to close for not resisting the economic debacle. One way to boost them is by improving the destination image.

Commercially, an image is influenced by the brand personality that destinations project toward tourists and interest groups; therefore, managers should understand their brand personality to direct their marketing strategies efficiently. However, it must also be consistent with the lifestyle and attitudes of consumers (Greene et al., 2022). Thus, understanding tourist behavior is critical since it also depends on cultural contexts (Wen et al., 2021). Peru offers many natural regions (coast, mountains, and jungle), with customs, traditions, and lifestyles

that make certain places attractive and allow communication links with different environments (Li et al., 2021). Derived from the above, the problem of this study is: what are the factors that influence the intention to revisit and recommend tourist destinations in Peru.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of brand personality has been studied since 1950 (Ogilvy, 1955). Aaker (1997) defined the structure and dimensions of brand personality, which determined a theoretical framework for its measurement. Brand personality is a set of human characteristics associated with a brand that constitutes an essential part of its identity. Brand personality can also be applied to tourism destinations (Hosany et al., 2007). The personality fit of a destination refers to the degree of correspondence between the marketer's and the consumer's perceptions (Kemp & Williams, 2012).

The brand of places and destinations represents a growing research stream with significant scope for brand management and tourism (Hultman et al., 2017). One is the tourist's behavior, which has been studied from different perspectives. Wu et al. (2017) considered the adaptability behavior of the tourist. Josiassen et al. (2022) viewed tourist affinity and tourist behavior. Barrientos et al. (2020) and McKercher et al. (2015) researched the behavior of tourists in urban contexts and protected natural areas. Kvasova (2015) studied ecological tourism behavior, Özdemir and Yolal (2017) examined intercultural tourist behavior, and Vigolo (2017) – behavior of older tourists.

Brand personality affects both the cognitive and emotional image of an institution. Cognitive image affects customers' perception of the brand (Cam et al., 2019). Moreover, brand personality has a substantial impact on the cognitive image of customers. Therefore, it is a crucial aspect for the success of a brand, as customers can value a destination based on their experience and knowledge acquired during a trip, thus establishing a connection with the brand (Cam et al., 2019). This shows that the brand personality of a destination influences its image with customers through the evaluations they make (Gnoth, 2002).

Phills et al. (2008) consider the terms of "social innovation" as new ways of addressing social problems that are more effective, efficient, sustainable, or equitable than previous solutions. Its value creation depends on society rather than individuals.

There is a close relationship between brand personality and the emotional image that customers have of the brand (Fournier, 1998). Brand personality influences customers' emotional connection with the brand, which strengthens its image. A strong brand personality can generate positive emotions in customers and make them feel that the brand belongs to them. Brand personality is important because it simplifies customers' decision-making, allows them to express themselves through the brand and establish relationships with the brand (Hultman et al., 2017).

The tourism experience's quality may significantly impact the intention to return to the establishment and recommend it to others. This supports the hypothesis that experience quality affects both intentions (Sharma & Nayak, 2020). These findings contradict previous studies in which experience quality does not impact loyalty intentions in affluent individuals (C.-F. Chen & F.-S. Chen, 2010). In addition, tourists' attitudes determine their compatibility with the online content of tourism destinations, which may affect their clear travel intentions (Amaro & Duarte, 2015).

On the other hand, the cognitive image of a brand represents its overall quality and ability to meet customer expectations and desires and impacts recommendations and brand perception (Cam et al., 2019). For example, a brand is only considered good if it meets and satisfies customer expectations. The intention to recommend is considered a behavior and indicator of customer loyalty or dissatisfaction (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Furthermore, there is a correlation between customer perceptions and intention to recommend, linking the image of a tourism destination with the purpose of the trip and the role of travel imagery in decision-making (Choi, 2011). Therefore, cognitive image affects how customers view the brand and influences their decision to recommend it to others.

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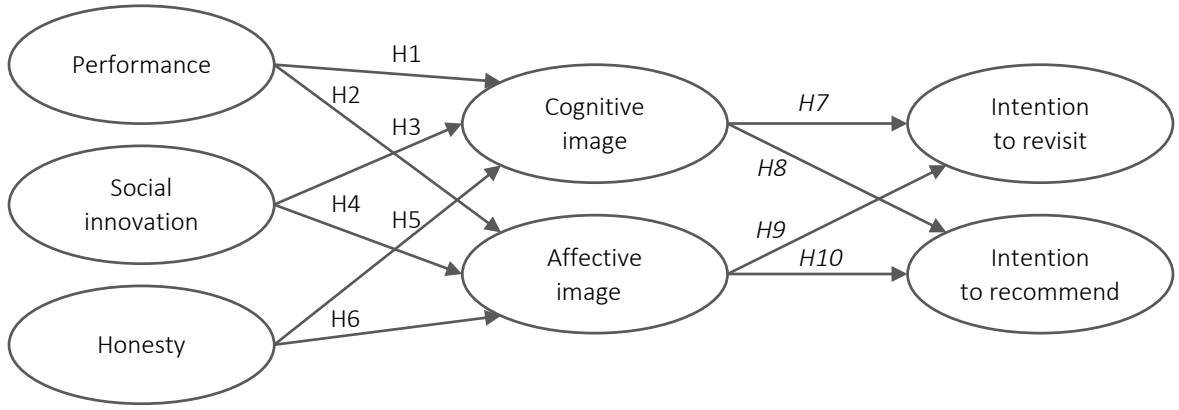

Figure 1. Theoretical model

When studying the brand image, it is not very easy to differentiate between the affective and cognitive images because the affective image is the premise of a cognitive image (Beerli & Martín, 2004). Loi et al. (2017) researched the tourist transport service in Macao and revealed that the destination's image predicts the intention to revisit it through the satisfaction that the destination produces. Allameh et al. (2015) showed that the destination's image positively influences the intention of Iranian tourists to revisit this country as a sports tourism center. Stylos et al. (2016) recognized the positive effect of the cognitive image. Therefore tourists are more likely to select a destination with a strong positive image.

Affective image is further linked to the customer's intention to recommend the brand (Cam et al., 2019). This image reflects customers' emotions and feelings toward the brand, ultimately leading to satisfaction and the desire to recommend it to others. In addition, the intention to recommend is often considered valuable information that can influence customer decision-making (Peter & Olson, 1983).

2. AIM AND HYPOTHESES

This study aims to determine the factors that influence the intention to revisit and recommend tourist destinations in Peru. Figure 1 shows the theoretical model of this paper. Following the literature review, the study elaborated on the following hypotheses:

H1: Performance has a significant influence on the cognitive image of tourist destinations.

H2: Performance has a significant influence on the affective image of tourist destinations.

H3: Social innovation significantly influences the cognitive image of tourism destinations.

H4: Social innovation significantly influences the affective image of tourism destinations.

H5: Honesty significantly influences the cognitive image of tourism destinations.

H6: Honesty significantly influences the affective image of tourist destinations.

H7: Cognitive image significantly influences the intention to revisit tourist destinations.

H8: Cognitive image significantly influences the intention to recommend tourist destinations.

H9: Affective image significantly influences the intention to revisit tourist destinations.

H10: Affective image significantly influences the intention to recommend tourist destinations.

3. METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative and cross-sectional analysis. The scale of Cruz-Tarrillo et al. (2022) was used to measure brand personality, comprising 21 items grouped into three dimensions (performance, social innovation, and honesty). The IMATUR instrument (Moraga et al., 2012) was adapted to the research context, consisting of 14 items grouped

into two dimensions (affective and cognitive images) to measure the destination image. The scale to measure tourist behavior was based on Žabkar et al. (2010).

To elaborate the data, three stages were considered: generation of the items, data collection, and confirmation of the latent structure (Kim et al., 2012). For the generation of the items, an exhaustive search was carried out in the literature; 12 professional managers and academics in the marketing area evaluated the data. Subsequently, the content validation is reviewed by a panel of seven experts with an average of 20 years of experience in consumer behavior who assessed the relevance, clarity, consistency, and compliance with the Aiken coefficient indices. The tourist behavior scale comprised six items grouped into two dimensions. All scales have 7-point response options, where "1" totally disagrees, and "7" totally agrees, established as the most convenient (Su & Reynolds, 2017).

3.1. Sampling and data collection

The literature offers various sampling procedures. This study adopts the non-probabilistic technique for convenience. Although it is a common technique (Ragb et al., 2020), obtaining enough respondents is a viable option in terms of time, speed, cost, and convenience (Abd Rahman et al., 2015). The population consisted of national tourists who had visited a tourist destination in Peru during the period January-December 2021. In that order of ideas, the study was conducted in 16 cities in the three natural regions of Peru.

For information collection, a four-part online survey was conducted on Google Forms. The first section assesses the sociodemographic profile; the second comprises items of the brand personality construct; the third – items of the tourist destination image construct; and the fourth section includes items of the tourist behavior construct. Eight thousand two hundred surveys were sent through social networks such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and email from April to June 2021. A response rate of 12.5% was obtained, that is, 1,026 surveys. The exclusion criteria were applied to underage tourists (< 18 years old) and to those who did not manage to complete the questionnaire entirety. Likewise, based on the multivariate distance measurement (Mahalanobis, 2018), eight cases have been eliminated, leaving a final sample of 998 respondents.

3.2. Data analysis

To fulfill the purpose of this study, the paper adopted the structural equation modeling (SEM) methodology using AMOS v24 software, an extension of IBM SPSS v26. This software tested the model's assumptions shown in Figure 1. In addition, the robust maximum likelihood method has been applied to evaluate the model procedures (Byrne, 2013).

Two stages were considered to estimate the measurement and the structural models (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In the first, the theoretical model was created using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA); in the second, the structural estimations between constructs were performed to evaluate the model and test the hypotheses. This multivariate technique models involve independent, dependent, mediating, and moderating variables (Hair et al., 2010).

4. RESULTS

According to the data collected from the 998 tourists, 44% are men and 56% are women. They are primarily aged 18 to 25, with 68.8%. Then, 20.8% are in the age group of 26 to 35 years; 7.2% are in the age group of 36 to 45 years; 2.3% are in the age group of 46 to 55; and only 0.8% of tourists were over 56 years old. Of the sample, 79% are university students, 10.5% have completed postgraduate studies, 9.8% have secondary education, and 0.7% only have completed primary studies. Another characteristic is that they mostly want to travel accompanied by family members (47.4%). However, a considerable percentage prefer traveling with their friends (24.4%) or partners (17%), and 11% prefer solo trips.

4.1. Validation of constructs

Table 1 shows the construct validation of the brand personality, tourist destination image, and tourist behavior constructs. An exploratory factor

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Table 1. Confirmatory analysis values

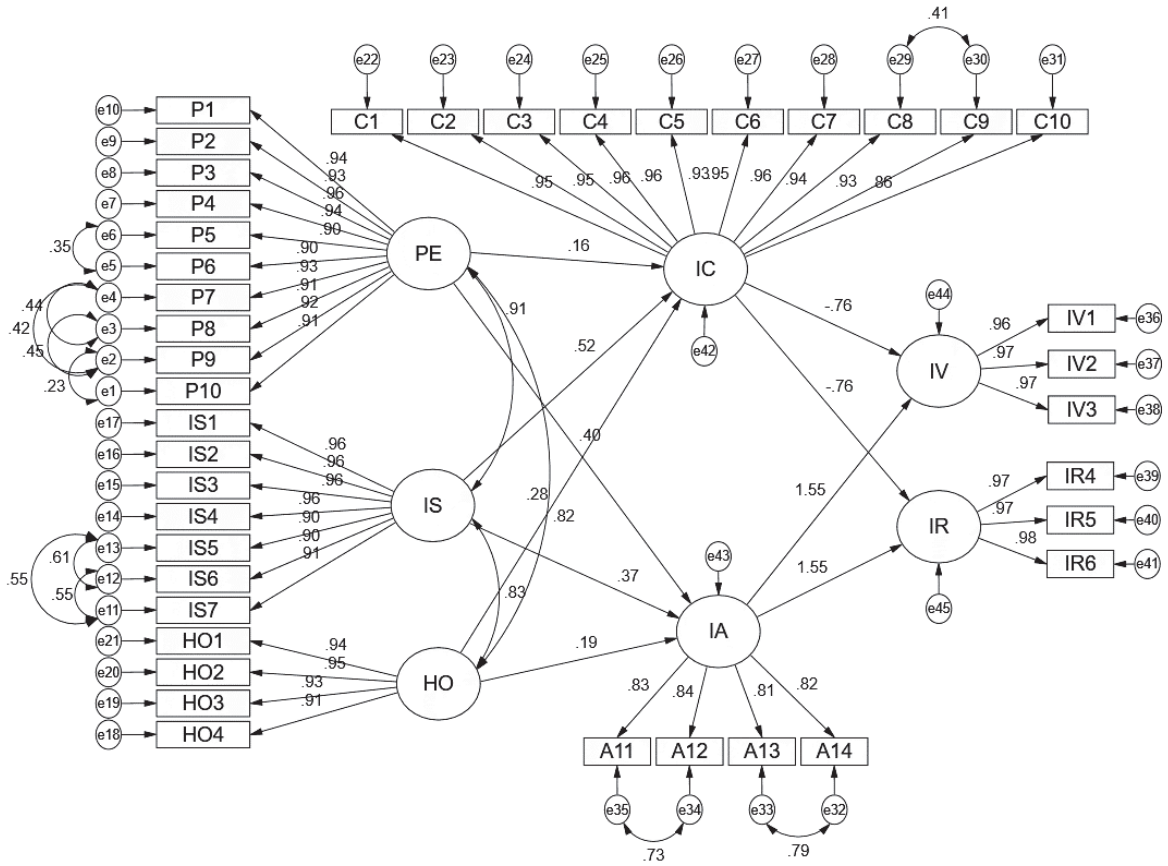
Absolute fit measurements	Acceptable values	Brand personality	Destination image	Tourist behavior
Chi-squared	–	921.57	349.107	95.397
P-value	< 0.05	0.000	0.000	0.000
GFI	≥0.80	0.917	0.952	0.996
RMSEA	≤0.08	0.065	0.061	0.030
NFI	> 0.90	0.975	0.986	0.999
CFI	> 0.90	0.980	0.989	0.999
TLI	> 0.90	0.976	0.987	0.999
IFI	> 0.90	0.980	0.989	0.999
AGFI	≥0.80	0.892	0.931	0.987

analysis (EFA) was performed to examine the underlying structure. In addition, the principal component extraction method and Varimax rotation were used (Kaiser, 1960).

For the brand personality construct, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test showed a value of 0.979; Bartlett's sphericity test yielded a Chi-square of 36,320.54 and a significance of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), grouped into three factors with a total explained variance of 89.052%.

For the destination image construct, the KMO test showed a value of 0.971; Bartlett's sphericity test gave a Chi-square of 25,441.40 and a significance of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), grouped into two factors with a total explained variance of 90.535%.

The construct of tourist behavior obtained a KMO value of 0.943; Bartlett's sphericity test yielded a Chi-square of 10,891.29 and a significance of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), grouped into two factors with a total explained variance of 95.254%.



Note: PE = Performance; IS = Social innovation; HO = Honesty; IC = Cognitive image; IA = Affective image; IV = Intention to revisit; IR = Intention to recommend.

Figure 2. Confirmatory research model

Generally, the KMO test values obtained for all constructs were higher than 0.50 (Kaiser, 1974), ensuring their suitability for EFA. In addition, the P-value of the structure is 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a significant relationship between the variables analyzed (Pan et al., 2017). CFA test was performed for the instruments where the values found were more significant than the minimum allowed (see Table 1).

A structural equation analysis (SEM) was performed, whose indicators show a good model fit since a Chi-Square of 4,030.979 and a *P*-value = 0.000 was reached. Additionally, the fit indices reflect acceptable values (GFI = 0.839; RMSEA = 0.066; NFI = 0.948; CFI = 0.957; AGFI = 0.816), so the study proceeds to interpret the effects and relationships that were found to contrast hypotheses and achieve the objectives (Chaulagain et al., 2019).

The study conducted the content validation, for which it was necessary to use the Aiken V coefficient, where values greater than 0.7 were obtained (Aiken, 1985). Likewise, convergent validity obtained a *CR* > 0.70, discriminant validity, and *AVE* > 0.50, checking its position in the minimum established theory (Priporas et al., 2020). On the other hand, a reliability analysis used Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which yielded values greater than $\alpha > 0.75$. In this way, the conditions for applying the research instruments are met (Garanti & Kissi, 2019).

Table 2. Instrument validation

Instrument items	Factor loadings	CR	AVE	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Aiken (V)
Performance		0.983	0.854	0.984	0.92
Efficient	0.938				
Competitive	0.930				
Responsible	0.956				
Strategist	0.938				
Proactive	0.903				
Productive	0.905				
Friendly	0.928				
Cozy	0.910				
Helpful	0.923				
Committed	0.909				
Social innovation		0.98	0.876	0.982	0.931
Collaborative	0.960				
Tolerant	0.961				
Entrepreneur	0.960				
Creative	0.963				
Innovative	0.897				
Clever	0.910				
Attractive	0.897				
Honesty		.964	0.87	0.964	0.885
Generous	0.939				
Fair	0.952				
Transparent	0.933				
Sincere	0.906				
Cognitive image		0.987	0.89	0.987	0.995
CIM1	0.955				
CIM2	0.954				
CIM3	0.961				
CIM4	0.959				
CIM5	0.933				
CIM6	0.956				
CIM7	0.959				
CIM8	0.934				
CIM9	0.934				
CIM10	0.943				
Affective image		0.896	0.682	0.960	0.985
AIM1	0.951				
AIM2	0.957				
AIM3	0.869				
AIM4	0.871				
Intention to revisit		0.975	0.929	0.970	0.984
IRV1	0.947				
IRV2	0.961				
IRV3	0.962				
Intention to recommend		0.981	0.946	0.985	1.000
IRC1	0.971				
IRC2	0.952				
IRC3	0.964				

Note: CR = Composite reliability, AVE = Average variance extracted.

4.2. Hypotheses testing

The study developed the model (Table 2) and applied the structural equation method (SEM), resulting in all the hypotheses of the structural model being accepted (Table 3). As a result, the effect of performance on a cognitive image (H1) is positive with $\beta = 0.156$ and $p < 0.001$. Furthermore, social innovation (H3) with $\beta = 0.524$ and $p < 0.001$ and honesty (H5) with $\beta = 0.280$ and $p < 0.001$ are predictors of a cognitive image. On the other hand, performance (H2) obtained $\beta = 0.404$, $p < 0.001$, social innovation (H4) scored $\beta = 0.374$, $p < 0.001$, and honesty (H6) had $\beta = 0.191$, $p < 0.001$; these variables are predictors of an affective image.

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Table 3. Path analysis

Research hypothesis				Path Coefficient	*p*-value	Decision
H1	Performance	→	Cognitive image	0.156	***	Supported
H2	Performance	→	Affective image	0.404	***	Supported
H3	Social innovation	→	Cognitive image	0.524	***	Supported
H4	Social innovation	→	Affective image	0.374	***	Supported
H5	Honesty	→	Cognitive image	0.280	***	Supported
H6	Honesty	→	Affective image	0.191	***	Supported
H7	Cognitive image	→	Intention to revisit	–0.756	***	Supported
H8	Cognitive image	→	Intention to recommend	–0.756	***	Supported
H9	Affective image	→	Intention to revisit	1.549	***	Supported
H10	Affective image	→	Intention to recommend	1.547	***	Supported

The cognitive image in the intention to revisit (H7) showed $\beta = -0.756$, $p < 0.001$; the values indicate a negative but significant effect. On the other hand, the intention to revisit (H9) with a $\beta = 1.549$, $p < 0.001$ showed a significant effect on the affective image. The cognitive image in the intention to recommend (H8) obtained similar to H7 values, $\beta = -0.756$, $p < 0.001$. Although the direct effect of the affective image on the intention to recommend (H10) is weak with $\beta = 1.547$, $p < 0.001$, it is significant and has the direction proposed in the hypothesis.

5. DISCUSSION

Nine hundred ninety-eight tourists participated in the survey; 68.8% are university students who travel accompanied by a family member. Brand personality and image positively or negatively affect the intention to revisit and recommend tourist destinations (Kim & Lee, 2015). This study investigated brand personality, cognitive and affective image, intention to revisit, and intention to recommend Peruvian tourist destinations and performed validity, exploratory, and CFA of the constructs (Kim et al., 2012; Pereira et al., 2015).

Previous studies have considered the influential role of brand personality in the destination image (Pong & Noor, 2015; Hosany et al., 2007; Priporas et al., 2020; Chua et al., 2019; Garanti et al., 2019). The findings of this study confirm that among all the constructs used, performance has positive effects on the affective image and social innovation on the cognitive image. Hence, the study reinforces the results of Papadimitriou et al. (2015), showing positive and significant effects of brand personality on brand image.

Along the same lines, the results maintain that national tourists, who have visited a tourist destination, attribute personality traits to the destination such as efficient, competitive, responsible, strategic, proactive, productive, friendly, welcoming, helpful, and committed; they boost a better perception of the affective image. Likewise, collaborative, tolerant, entrepreneurial, creative, innovative, resourceful, and attractive traits help to create a better cognitive image (Aaker, 1997; Papadimitriou et al., 2019; Blank et al., 2018; Zivanovic et al., 2017).

This study adopted the structure of the tourist behavior constructs from Žabkar et al. (2010); although it is valid, it had tourists as its unit of analysis. According to the cultural aspect, the behavior is different (Papadimitriou et al., 2015); this study contributes and divides the construct into two factors: intention to revisit and intention to recommend. A validation of the destination image construct designed by Moraga et al. (2012) comprises many complementary factors (functional benefit, symbolic benefit, hedonic benefit) that measure the destination image; for this study, only two factors were sufficient: affective and cognitive image (Stylidis, 2022). As a result, the psychometric properties indicate that the scale is valid (Table 1).

This study shows that the affective image component is positively associated with tourist behavior; when the destination is entertaining, lively, pleasant, and cheerful, these significantly affect tourist behavior. This finding is similar to Carballo et al. (2021), Sharma and Nayak (2019), Kusumawati et al. (2020), Marques et al. (2021), and Tavitiyaman et al. (2021), who found that the affective image and other components positively affect the tourist behavior.

Therefore, this study shows how facilities, security, the transportation system, signage, and customs are components of the cognitive image that cause adverse effects on tourist behavior. These results support Liang and Xue (2021), Nazir et al. (2021), and Ragab et al. (2020), who demonstrated a challenge for marketers and managers in the tourism industry and generated a need to make efforts to promote tourist attractions to improve the image and project a personality that is consistent with that of a tourist. In this way, travelers will be more engaged and motivated to visit a particular destination, and a better economic return will be obtained.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to analyze the impact of brand personality and destination image on tourist behavior. The study concludes that brand personality positively affects cognitive and affective images. Likewise, an affective image has positive effects on tourist behavior. However, a cognitive image was found to negatively affect tourist behavior.

This analysis contributes to the research on brand personality by proposing a structural model that shows that brand personality and destination image factors affect tourist behavior. It also supports the proposal of Aaker's model on brand personality that can be applied to tourism destinations. However, the study results did not fully replicate the structure of the five dimensions. Therefore, this analysis is complemented by grouping the tourism behavior constructs into two dimensions.

The research results have practical implications for marketing decision-makers. First, the consumer behavior scale could help to analyze tourist behavior. In uncertainty, it is necessary to understand the cognitive and affective factors that influence tourist destination personality. In this sense, this study is significant because it seeks to attract tourists to increase profitability.

On the other hand, the results could help to diagnose destination personality traits and tourist behavior, which are inputs to design marketing strategies for strategic positioning. Given that the concern of a brand is always to remain current, attractive, and desirable to tourists, achieving this challenge is complex and uncertain due to the constant variation in behavior, culture, and high competition. Therefore, this study demonstrates that brand personality is a fundamental element in marketing strategy since the personality of destinations must be consistent with the personality of tourists.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Karla Liliana Haro-Zea, Edison Effer Apaza Tarqui.
Data curation: Edison Effer Apaza Tarqui.
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Investigation: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo, Karla Liliana Haro-Zea.
Methodology: Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo, Karla Liliana Haro-Zea.
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Visualization: Karla Liliana Haro-Zea, Jose Joel Cruz-Tarrillo.
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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