Destination Personality: An Application of Brand Personality to Tourism Destinations

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In an increasingly competitive tourism market place, destination marketers face the challenge of attracting tourists through destination branding and destination personality building practices. As places become substitutable, destination personality, defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a destination, is seen as a viable metaphor for crafting a destination's unique identity. At the conceptual level, the importance of destination personality has been widely acknowledged, but to date, no empirical research has yet identified its dimensions. This research, adopting Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale, seeks to identify whether tourists ascribe personality traits to destinations. The study results indicate that tourists do indeed use personality attributes in their evaluation of tourism destinations. Destination personality was found to be a three dimensional construct consisting of *sincerity*, *excitement* and *conviviality*. The findings of the study also suggest that destination personality influences destination image and tourists' intention to recommend. In particular, the conviviality dimension moderates the impact of cognitive image on intention to recommend. The study offers implications for destination marketing strategies and future research areas.

Keywords: destination image; destination personality; tourists' behavioural
               intention; destination branding; product and brand personality.

Faced with growing global competition where destinations are becoming highly substitutable, destination marketing organisations (DMOs) are in a constant battle to attract travellers (Pike and Ryan, 2004). In response, DMOs are increasingly seen to embrace branding initiatives such as the use of taglines and logos in order to attract visitors and expenditures to their respective destinations (Blain, Levy and Ritchie, 2005). As places seek to become distinctive, destination personality is viewed as a viable metaphor for understanding tourists' perceptions of places and for crafting a unique destination identity (Caprara, Barbaranelli and Guido, 2001; Crask and Henry, 1990; Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott, 2002, Triplett, 1994). Adopting Aaker's (1997) terminology of brand personality, destination personality is defined as "*the set of human characteristics associated with a destination*". In the tourism literature, there has been a proliferation of destination image studies over the past three decades, but destination personality has been largely unexplored. Although investigation and application of brand/product personality is relatively new in the tourism literature, research in the consumer goods domain can be traced back to the early 1960s. Birdwell (1964) investigated the relationship between self-concept and perceived personality of cars. Dolich (1969) researched the influence of perceived personality of cars on consumers' self-image. However, research has suffered due to a lack of common theory and consensual taxonomy of personality attributes to describe products and brands. Aaker (1997), realising this limitation and drawing on the Big Five Model of human personality, developed the brand personality scale (BPS) that consists of five generic dimensions: *excitement; sincerity; competence; sophistication* and *ruggedness*. Since then the brand personality dimensions have been applied to various settings across different cultures to gauge consumers' symbolic consumption

and their effects on behaviour (Aaker, Benet-Martinez and Garolera, 2001; Supphellen and Grønhaug, 2003).

A distinctive brand personality can help to create a set of unique and favourable associations in consumer memory and thus build and enhance brand equity (Keller, 1993; Johnson, Soutar and Sweeney, 2000; Phau and Lau, 2000). A well-established brand personality influences consumer preference and patronage (Sirgy, 1982; Malhotra, 1988), develops stronger emotional ties (Biel, 1993), trust and loyalty with the brand (Fournier, 1998). Similarly, a distinctive and emotionally attractive destination personality is shown to leverage perceived image of a place and influence tourist choice behaviour. For example, Western Australia destination brand personality campaign reinstated the country as a premier nature-based tourism destination and resulted in increased tourism demand (Crockett and Wood, 2002).

Although there has been sparse empirical investigations, the face validity of destination personality has been embraced by many tourism academics at the conceptual level (Crockett and Wood, 2002; Henderson, 2000; Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott, 2002). For example, through content analysis of travel and tourism advertisements, Santos (2004) revealed that Portugal was represented with personality attributes such as "contemporary", "modern", "sophisticated" and "traditional" in the USA travel media. Morgan and Prichard (2002) posited that England was portrayed as being "conservative", "pleasant", "refined", "civilised", "eccentric" and "down to earth" in the UK tourism media. Furthermore, Henderson (2000) revealed that the New Asia-Singapore brand comprised of five personality characteristics: cosmopolitan, youthful, vibrant, modern, reliability and comfort.

Accordingly, the aim of this study is to address the paucity of empirical research on destination personality by applying Aaker's (1997) brand personality

scale to tourism destinations. To date, studies on the application of the BPS have been limited to consumer goods (e.g. Kim, 2000; Aaker, Benet-Martinez and Garolera, 2001; Kim, Han and Park, 2001), restaurant settings (Siguaw, Mattila and Austin, 1999) and to websites (Muller and Chandon, 2003). More specifically, this study aims to answer two research questions: First, does a tourism destination possess a personality as posited by Aaker (1997) and if so, what are the underlying dimensions of destination personality? Second, while it appears that there is a consensus about the influence of destination personality and destination image on tourist behaviour, little is known about the interrelationships among them. Hence, the study also aims to enhance our understanding of the relationships between destination personality, destination image and how they influence intention to recommend.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Brand Personality and Destination Personality

In theoretical terms, product or brand personality reflects the "set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997: 347). It evokes emotional links between brands and consumers (Landon, 1974) and gives the latter a tangible reference point, which is vivid, alive and more complete than the sense conveyed by a generic offering (Upshaw, 1995). At the practical level, brands can be characterised by personality descriptors, such as youthful, energetic, extrovert or sophisticated (Keller, 1998). For example, one may use the word *masculine* to describe Marlboro cigarettes; *rugged* to describe Levi's jeans; *feminine* to describe Channel perfumes; and *intelligent* to describe IBM computers. Similarly, destinations can be described

using human personality traits, such as Europe is *traditional* and *sophisticated*; Wales is *honest, welcoming, romantic, down to earth*; Spain is *friendly* and *family oriented*; London is *open-minded, unorthodox, vibrant, creative*; Paris is *romantic* (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). Accordingly, in this paper, destination personality is defined as: "the set of human characteristics associated with a destination" as perceived from a tourist rather than a local resident viewpoint.

The idea of product or brand personality can be traced back to its origins through the theory of symbolism. It is argued that consumers view their preferred products as an extension of themselves, and therefore their purchasing behaviour is motivated by the symbolic value of the product (Mowen, 1990). As explained by Hong and Zinkhan (1995), consumers can satisfy and enhance their *self consistency* and *self esteem* through this kind of consumption. In line with this view, Sirgy (1982) introduced the self-concept theory that explains why consumers are motivated to buy certain products due to their symbolic value. Accordingly, when choosing between competing products, consumers assess the degree of similarity between the personality traits communicated by the product (Plummer, 1985) and the personality they wish to project of themselves (Zinkhan, Haytko and Ward, 1996). This notion is supported by Brown's study (1992) which advocates that through tourism activity, there are symbolic as well as physical attributes of place in terms of the relationship between people and their possession of tourism experience. Indeed, Chon (1990) found that tourists' satisfaction is influenced by self-image/destination image congruence.

Although consumers seem to have little difficulty in assigning human personality traits to inanimate objects (Aaker, 1996; Solomon, 1999), the cognitive process of product personality is relatively undeveloped (Olson and Allen, 1995). To

understand how and why people endow inanimate objects such as brands and places with human personality qualities, it may be helpful to utilise theories of anthropomorphism (Boyer, 1996). Anthropomorphism is pervasive in culture, religion and daily life (Barrett and Keil, 1996; Boyer, 1996; Guthrie, 1997). It is very common, for instance, to encounter people who treat their car, computer or dog as a friend or family member and it is generally accepted that anthropomorphism appeared with the first anatomically modern humans (Mithen and Boyer, 1996). Guthrie (1997) explains why anthropomorphism is so natural by means of *familiarity* and *comfort* theory. According to the familiarity theory, humans use themselves as models of the world because of their extensive knowledge of themselves. In other words, people employ their own self-schema as a source of labels and concepts by which to interpret the outside world. The comfort thesis, in contrast, posits the primacy of emotional motives. Guthrie (1997) argues that humans are not comfortable with what is non-human. They are ignorant or uncertain about these major factors influencing their fate and, finding this unsettling, try to reassure themselves by projecting the non-human characteristics onto the human domain. As Guthrie (1997:54) states:

"These unknown causes, then, become the constant object of our hope and fear; and while the passions are kept in perpetual alarm by an anxious expectation of the events, the imagination is equally employed in forming ideas of those powers, on which we have so entire a dependence"

Countless studies have established that in interpersonal interactions people are attracted to others of similar personality because similarity is considered to be emotionally rewarding (e.g., Moon, 2002). Emotional needs, along with cognitive

ones, motivate humans to form humanlike models to understand and mitigate events. Accordingly, Fournier (1998) argues that human anthropomorphise objects in order to facilitate interactions with the nonmaterial world. Consumers develop relationships with brands based on their symbolic value. As a result, the brand becomes alive, and is no longer a passive object but an active partner in the consumer's mind. Blackstone (1993) supports this notion of brands and consumers being co-equivalent parts of a single system, which is similar to interpersonal relationships. Blackstone (1993) showed that users and non-users perceived credit cards differently, although the two groups were virtually identical in their demographic and socioeconomic profiles. Users described the credit card as worthy, powerful, sophisticated, and distinguished, whereas non-users described it as intimidating, snobbish and condescending.

The preceding arguments suggest that human and destination personality may share a similar conceptualisation, but they may differ in how they are formed. Perceptions of human traits are inferred on the basis of a person's behaviour, physical characteristics, attitudes, and demographic characteristics (Pervin, 1996). In contrast, perceptions of destination personality traits can be formed and influenced by the direct and/or indirect contact that the tourist may have had with the destination (Plummer, 1985). Tourists receive and interpret the various messages sent by destinations and build a representation of the "behaviour" of the destination. Personality traits can be associated with a destination in a direct way, through citizens of the country, hotel employees, restaurants and tourist attractions, or simply through the tourist's imagery, defined as the set of human characteristics associated with the typical visitor of a destination (Aaker, 1997). In an indirect manner, personality traits can be attributed to destinations through marketing programs such as cooperative advertising, value pricing, celebrities of the country, and media construction of

destinations (e.g., Cai, 2002). Accordingly, we argue that, similar to consumer goods/brands, tourism destinations are rich in terms of symbolic values and personality traits, given that they consist of a bundle of tangible and intangible components (e.g., visitor attractions, hotels, people, etc.) associated with particular values, histories, events and feelings.

Brand Personality Measurement and Its Dimensions

Studies of product or brand personality began in the early 1960s. In sum, two types of product personality measurements can be identified from this research: idiographic (ad hoc) and nomothetic approaches (e.g., Bellenger, Steinberg and Stanton, 1976). The idiographic approach is based on the belief that a product is a single, well-integrated unit. This approach aims to capture the uniqueness of each product, but it is often criticised because it does not lend itself easily to scientific measurement. In contrast, the nomothetic approach defines product personality in terms of abstractions, or a collection of the distinctive traits of the product. Thus, product personality traits can be described as symbolic consumption of the product through direct and indirect contacts (e.g., Fournier 1998). Importantly, this approach introduced measurement instruments to capture the personality of products. Table 1 provides a summary of studies measuring product/brand personalities.

TABLE 1
PRODUCT/BRAND PERSONALITY MEASUREMENTS

Selected Reference	Scale Used	Dimensions/ Rating Scales Used	Number of Dimensions Found	Settings	Culture
Birdwell (1964)	Own	Unidimensional - 22 items - 7 point semantic differential	1 Dimension	Automobile brands	USA
Dolich (1969)	Own	7 Dimensions - 22 items - 7 point semantic differential	Not reported	Commercial brands	USA
Malhotra (1981)	Own	Unidimensional -15 items - 7 point semantic differential	1 Dimension	Automobile and Actors	USA
Karande *et al*., (1997)	Malhotra (1981)	Unidimensional -15 items - 7 point semantic differential	1 Dimension	Automobile brands	USA
Aaker (1997)	Own	5 Dimensions - 42 items - 5 point Likert scale	5 Dimensions	Commercial brands	USA
Siguaw *et al*., (1999)	Aaker (1997)	5 Dimensions - 42 items - 5 point Likert scale	5 Dimensions	Restaurants	USA
Aaker *et al*., (2001)	Aaker (1997)	5 Dimensions - 42 items - 5 point Likert scale	5 Dimensions	Commercial brands	Japan & Spain
Caprara et al., (2001)	Goldberg (1990)	5 Dimensions - 40 items - 5 point Likert scale	2 Dimensions	Commercial brands	Italy
Davies *et al*., (2001)	Aaker (1997)	5 Dimensions - 42 items - 5 point Likert scale	5 Dimensions	Corporate brands	UK
Venable *et al*., (2005)	Aaker (1997)	5 Dimensions - 42 items - 5 point Likert scale	4 Dimensions	Non-profit organisations	USA
Supphellen and Gronhaug (2003)	Aaker (1997)	5 Dimensions - 42 items - 5 point Likert scale	5 Dimensions	Commercial brands	Russia
Ekinci and Riley (2003)	Own	Unidimensional -5 items -7-point semantic differential	1 Dimension	Restaurants and Hotels	UK
Rojas-Méndez *et al*., (2004)	Aaker (1997)	5 Dimensions - 42 items - 5 point Likert scale	4 Dimensions	Automobile brands	Chile

Early researchers were mainly interested in studying the relationship between product and self-concept. For example, in his influential study, Birdwell (1964) investigated the relationship between customers' self-concept and their perception of their car. The perceived personality of the car was measured using a compiled list of bipolar items. The adjectives chosen were appropriate to describe both automobile and human personalities. Later, Dolich (1969) adapted human personality scales to study the product personalities of four products (beer, cigarettes, bar soap and toothpaste) and their relationships with the consumers' actual and ideal self-image. However, research has suffered from the lack of a common theory and of a consensual taxonomy of personality traits to be used in describing products. The validity of the early product personality scales, based on human personality, was questioned because human and product personalities might have different antecedents. As a result, some dimensions of human personality might be mirrored in brands whereas others might not (Kassarjian, 1971). On the basis of this premise, Aaker (1997) developed a brand personality scale (BPS). It extended the scale of human personality measurements, and found brand personality to be multi-dimensional, and to consist of five dimensions: *sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness*. Sincerity is represented by attributes such as down-to-earth, real, sincere and honest. Excitement is illustrated by traits such as daring, exciting, imaginative and contemporary. Competence is characterised by attributes such as intelligent, reliable, secure and confident. Sophistication is personified by attributes such as glamorous, upper class, good looking and charming. Finally, ruggedness is typified by traits such as tough, outdoorsy, masculine and western.

Aaker (1997) suggested that the five dimensions of the BPS were generic, and could be used to measure brand personality across product categories and cultures.

The author also called for further research into the stability of the brand personality dimensions across cultures. Since then, several studies have examined the applicability of the scale in various settings and across cultures. For example, Aaker, Benet-Martinez and Garolera (2001) investigated the brand personality structures of commercial brands in Japan and Spain. For both countries, a five-dimensional structure was found, but some dimensions differed from those in Aaker's (1997) study in the USA. The dimension *Peacefulness* emerged in both cultures and *Passion* was specific to Spanish culture. Even though some of the dimensions were common to all three cultures namely, excitement, sincerity, and sophistication, the individual personality traits comprising these dimensions differed.

Supphellen and Grønhaug's (2003) study of Russia provided another cross-cultural validation of the BPS, using the Ford and Levi's brands. As in Aaker's (1997) findings, the authors found five dimensions, which they identified as *successful and contemporary*, *sincerity*, *excitement*, *sophistication* and *ruggedness*. The first factor consisted of traits from four different BPS dimensions, but the other four resembled those in Aaker (1997). The authors' findings provide further evidence that brand personality adjectives may shift from one dimension to another depending on the culture. Overall, the authors agree with Aaker's (1997) contention that the brand personality scale is probably less cross-culturally robust than human personality measures.

Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale has not only been replicated and extended across cultures but applied to different settings. As we depict in Table 1, while the majority of the studies using the BPS have been carried out within the commercial brand settings, there exists some notable exception to its application in other contexts. Unlike previous research focussing on brand personality of consumer

goods and services in the profit sectors, Venable et al., (2005) investigated the role of brand personality in non-profit organisations. Using Aaker's (1997) BPS and further complementing with the results of qualitative studies, Venable et al., (2005) found four dimensions of brand personality for nonprofits organisations: integrity, nurturance, sophistication and ruggedness.

Siguaw, Mattilla and Austin's (1999) study is one of the few studies of brand personality in the context of hospitality and tourism. The authors investigated the brand personality of three broad categories of restaurants: quick service, casual dining and upscale restaurants. Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale was used to gauge respondents' perceptions of nine restaurants, three in each category. The findings revealed that restaurants can be differentiated on the basis of personality characteristics. Upscale restaurants were perceived as being more sophisticated while casual restaurants were found to be more sincere and less competent when compared to the other two restaurants categories. Quick service restaurants were viewed as being less exciting and less rugged.

Although some studies on the application and validation of Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale reveal the emergence of culturally specific dimensions, the BPS remains the most stable, reliable and comprehensive measure to gauge brand/product personality. However, for most of the previous studies exploring the dimensions of brand personality using the BPS, three relatively consistent set of dimensions usually emerge: sincerity, excitement and sophistication. Moreover, most of these studies have been carried out across commercial and corporate brands within cross-cultural settings. To our knowledge, previous research has not examined the extension of brand personality in the context of tourism destinations. Thus, we seek to integrate existing knowledge of brand product personality in the consumer goods

settings with theories of anthropomorphism to identify dimensions of destination personality. First, we recognise that a tourist destination consists of a bundle of tangible and intangible components and can be potentially be perceived as a brand. Second, because of the hedonic nature of the holiday experience and given that tourism destinations are rich in terms of symbolic values, we believe that the concept of brand personality can be extended to destinations. As such, we argue that Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale can be extended to gauge personality traits that tourists ascribe to destinations.

Destination Personality, Destination Image and Intention to Recommend

Destination personality is a relatively new development in academic investigations, but studies of destination image can be traced back to the early 1970s, when Hunt's (1975) influential work examined the role of image in tourism development. Since then, research on destination image has not been confined to the academic community, but has been of equal relevance to destination marketers and industry practitioners (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997). A tourism destination may be viewed as an amalgam of individual products and experiences that combine to form the total experience of the area visited (Murphy, Pritchard and Smith, 2000). Past research has demonstrated that destination image has both cognitive and affective components (Kotler, Haider and Rein, 1993; Crompton, 1979; Dichter, 1985; Lawson and Band-Bovy, 1977; Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990). Although destination image has been acknowledged to consist of both affective and cognitive components, most tourism image studies have been confined at investigating the cognitive component, and have overlooked the affective dimension (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Walmsley

and Young, 1998). Nevertheless, research has established a positive influence of destination image on tourists' intention to recommend behaviour (Ashworth and Goodall, 1988; Mansfield, 1992; Milman and Pizam, 1995; Bigné, Sanchez and Sanchez, 2001).

Similarly, brand personality influences consumer preference and patronage (Sirgy, 1982; Malhotra, 1988). While brand personality is a viable metaphor for understanding consumers' perceptions of brands, there has been a long-running debate in the generic marketing literature on the relationship between brand personality and brand image. Various definitional inconsistencies have blurred the distinction between brand image and brand personality (e.g., Hendon and Williams, 1985; Upshaw, 1995). In other studies, the two concepts have been used interchangeably to gauge consumer perceptions of brands (e.g. Graeff, 1997). Efforts to provide an unequivocal interpretation of brand image have appeared in the literature (e.g., Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Patterson, 1999) but progress in this area has been hampered mainly because of the paucity of empirical investigations of the brand image-brand personality relationship. For some authors, brand image is a more encapsulating term and has a number of inherent characteristics or dimensions, including, among others, brand personality, user image, product attributes and consumer benefits (Plummer, 1985; Karande, Zinkhan and Lum, 1997). For example, in Heylen, Dawson and Sampson's (1995) proposed model of brand image, brand personality and brand identity are two components of brand image.

Another school of thought (Biel, 1993:71) views brand image "as a cluster of attributes and associations that consumers connect to a brand". In this conceptualisation, evoked associations can be either *hard* (tangible/functional attributes) or *soft* (emotional attributes). Brand personality is seen as the soft

emotional side of brand image (Biel, 1993). Likewise, Fournier (1998) argues that when brands are successful at satisfying consumer needs, consumers develop strong emotions towards them. Accordingly, brand personality has been shown to positively influence consumer choice (Sirgy, 1982; Malhotra, 1988), intention to purchase and intention to recommend behaviour (Biel, 1993; Fournier, 1998; Olson and Allen, 1995). Although past researchers have investigated the separate effects of brand personality and destination image on consumer behaviour, we could not identify any study which has simultaneously examined the impact of destination personality and destination image on tourists' intention to recommend.

METHODS

The measures for destination personality, destination image, and intention to recommend were drawn from previous research. A brief discussion of how each study variable was operationalised follows.

Destination Personality

Destination personality was measured using Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale, for two reasons: First, the BPS is the most comprehensive instrument for measuring brand or product personality; second, previous studies (e.g., Siguaw, Mattila and Austin, 1999) used this scale to capture brand personality. In addition, we tested the content validity of the scale in evaluation of tourist before application. Twenty native British subjects (50% male, 50% female) were used to assess whether the 42 brand personality variables were relevant to their description of tourism

destinations, and could thus be used to constitute the content validity of the scale. The following direction was given to respondents.

> *The following adjectives are mostly used to describe characteristics of people in daily life. However, some of them can be used to describe products, services, and tourism destinations. This may sound unusual, but we would like you to think of the last tourism destination that you have been to as if it were a person. Think of the set of human characteristics associated to that destination. We are interested in finding out which personality traits or human characteristics come to your mind when you think of that destination. Please tick (✓) in the box if you agree that the adjectives provided below can be used to describe a tourism destination.*

The criterion set out for content validity was that traits had to be chosen by at least 70% of the pre-test respondents: i.e., they thought the words would be suitable for defining a tourism destination (Churchill, 1979). Twenty-seven traits, split across five dimensions, met this criterion and were included in the final questionnaires: *Sincerity* (down to earth, family oriented, sincere, wholesome, original, cheerful, friendly); *Excitement* (daring, exciting, spirited, imaginative, up to date, independent); *Competence* (reliable, secure, intelligent, successful, confident, secure); *Sophistication* (upper-class, glamorous, good looking), and *Ruggedness* (outdoorsy, masculine, western, tough, rugged). Given the exploratory nature of this study, and that its main objective was to investigate, by applying Aaker's (1997) BPS, whether tourists associate personality characteristics with destinations, it was deemed inappropriate to complement these 27 items with other personality traits, for two

reasons. First, past studies with the objective of applying/validating the BPS (e.g., Siguaw, Mattila and Austin, 1999) adopted a similar approach. Second, such an approach makes it possible to assess the stability of the BPS across settings/cultures, and it facilitates comparisons with past research. Indeed, this study responds to Aaker's (1997: 355) argument that "additional research is needed to determine the extent to which these brand personality dimensions are stable across cultures and, if not, theoretically why they might be altered". Ratings for the 27 items were collected using a 5 point Likert-type scale anchored by 1 = "*not at all descriptive*" and 5 = "*extremely descriptive*", consistent with Aaker's (1997) study and recent research on brand personality (e.g., Diamantopoulos, Smith and Grime, 2005).

Destination Image

It has been acknowledged that destination image has both cognitive and affective dimensions (Crompton, 1979; Dichter, 1985). Some studies have been confined to either the affective (e.g., Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997) or the cognitive dimension (e.g., Oppermann, 1996; Schroeder, 1996), but this study seeks to incorporate both dimensions in its assessment of destination image. We measured the affective component of destination image using the four-item scale initially developed by Russell (1980), and subsequently used by other tourism scholars (e.g., Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Walmsley and Young, 1998). The four bipolar affective items were distressing/relaxing, gloomy/exciting, sleepy/arousing, and unpleasant/pleasant. For the cognitive image dimension, items were borrowed from Ong and Horbunluekit (1997). We chose not to use the full scale, as some adjectives were not truly bipolar, and some were not representative of the cognitive image dimension. The final set of

bipolar adjectives retained in this study to capture cognitive image includes accessible/isolated, friendly/cold, lively/stagnant, interesting/boring, quiet/noisy, and overcrowded/sparse. Items for both the cognitive and affective components were measured on a 5-point semantic differential scale, where the positions of positive and negative pole descriptors were randomised in order to minimise the halo effect bias (Wu and Petroshius, 1987).

Intention to Recommend

Post-visit behaviour was captured using tourists' intention to recommend, as opposed to intention to return. Kozak and Rimmington (2000) suggest that intention to return behaviour is not significant for destinations, as tourists may look for similar but new experiences at different destinations, even when the first destination has fulfilled their expectations. Intention to recommend was operationalised using a seven-point numeric scale with (-3) representing *extremely unlikely* and (+3) *extremely likely* (Cronin and Taylor, 1992).

Data Collection and Samples

Using two different samples, the study was conducted at four different locations: three UK cities (*Sample 1*) and one European airport (*Sample 2*). For the first sample, the retrieval hypothesis (Solomon, Bamossy and Askegaard, 1999) was used to capture destination evaluation. Respondents were instructed to recall the last tourism destination they had visited outside the UK in the previous three months. This method resulted in a number of destinations being evaluated. To participate in the

survey, respondents were approached randomly on the high street, and around shopping complexes and train stations. In general, participants were responsive and willing to participate, and refusal rates were predominantly low (around 15%). For the second sample, a trained researcher was hired. Data was collected in the departure lounge of a major European airport. British tourists, waiting for their flights to return to UK after visiting a popular European city, were approached randomly to complete a questionnaire. Unlike the first sample, these respondents had to evaluate the same destination only a few hours after the holiday experience. In both cases, whenever a respondent refused to participate, the researcher moved to the next random available one. A total of 275 questionnaires was administered across both samples (*Sample 1*: n = 155; *Sample 2*: n = 120), and of these 25 were excluded as they were from non-British respondents.

The first sample consisted of 148 respondents and was almost equally split between males (48%) and females (52%). In terms of age group, 18% of the respondents were between 16 and 24 years of age, 24% were between 25 and 34, 27% were between 35 and 44, and 31% were 45 or above. For their most recent vacation, the majority of respondents had travelled to a European destination (58%), with Spain (20%) and France (14%) as the two most popular destinations, and Belgium the least popular European destination, with only 1.4%. The United States accounted for 6.1% of the respondents' destination choice for their most recent holiday trip. Asian countries (e.g., China, India, and Malaysia) accounted for 7.5%, and African countries (e.g., Mauritius, South Africa, and Kenya) for only 4.8%. Fifty-six percent of respondents were on their first visit to the given tourism destination. The remaining 44% had made previous visits ranging from one to more than four trips to the same destination. For the majority of respondents (73%), the overwhelming purpose of the

visit was leisure, followed by meeting friends and family (18%). The second sample consisted of 102 respondents with 40% female and 60% male. The age groups of respondents were as follows: 16-24, 19%; 25-34, 43%; 35-44, 23%; 45-54, 14%; and above 54, 1%. The majority of respondents (91%) were on their first visit to this European city and the purpose of visit was mainly for leisure (70%).

RESULTS

Scale Purification

Substantive as well as empirical considerations were employed throughout the scale purification process (Chin and Todd, 1995). Scale purification is concerned with reliability, construct validity, unidimensionality, and predictive validity. Established standards (e.g., Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Churchill, 1979; Gerbing and Anderson, 1988; Hair et al. 1998) and emerging guidance (e.g., Peterson, 2000) in the literature were employed in item reduction and assessment of the factor structure.

Construct Validity: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was undertaken on the survey data for the first sample to identify *a priori* dimensionality of the destination personality scale. No specific rules have been developed to guide the researcher in choosing between a particular orthogonal or oblique rotational technique for exploratory factor analysis, but in this study the orthogonal rotation method was used, for two reasons (Hair et al. 1998). First, the ultimate goal of the analysis was to identify theoretically meaningful

constructs and, second, this approach facilitates comparison with Aaker's (1997) study, which employed the same rotation technique. The criterion for the significance of factor loadings was set at 0.45, based on the guidelines suggested by Hair et al. (1998) for a sample size of 150.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were computed to assess the appropriateness of factor analyses to the data. The KMO value was 0.85 and Bartlett's test was significant at the 0.00 level. Both results demonstrate the factorability of the matrices being considered (Hair et al. 1998). Principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation was employed to identify the underlying dimensions. Items exhibiting low factor loadings (<0.45), high cross loadings (>0.40), or low communalities (<0.30) were candidates for elimination (Hair et al. 1998). After inspection of item content for domain representation, 11 items were deleted. Applying the same empirical and substantive considerations in item trimming, 4 additional items were deleted (all items having factor loadings <0.40). A final three-factor model was estimated with the remaining 12 items. The factor solution accounted for approximately 62% of the total variance with all communalities ranging from 0.46 to 0.82. Table 2 illustrates the 12-item factor structure.

TABLE 2
CONSTRUCT VALIDITY: EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS WITH VARIMAX ROTATION (*n*= 250)

Scales	Mean[b]	SD	Factor Loadings[a]			Com*	Cronbach's Alpha
			Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3		
Sincerity							**0.84**
Reliable	3.00	1.24	80	-	-	67	
Sincere	2.90	1.30	79	-	-	68	
Intelligent	2.80	1.20	76	-	-	65	
Successful	3.40	1.20	70	-	-	56	
Wholesome	2.95	1.15	64	-	-	49	
Excitement							**0.73**
Exciting	3.80	1.15	-	83	-	82	
Daring	2.90	1.35	-	72	-	60	
Original	3.20	1.25	-	60	-	55	
Spirited	3.50	1.20	-	55	-	51	
Conviviality							**0.69**
Friendly	4.00	1.00	-	-	84	77	
Family oriented	3.50	1.25	-	-	80	50	
Charming	3.40	1.10	-	-	65	46	
Eigenvalue			4.51	1.75	1.17		
Explained variance by factors (%)			27.37	17.47	17.13		
KMO			0.85				
Barlett's test of Significance			0.00				

* denotes communality.
[a] Numbers are magnitudes of the factor multiplied by 100. Total variance extracted by the three factors is 61.97%. Item loading less than 0.45 omitted.
[b] Items measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

From Table 2, the three-factor solution was deemed adequate according to (a) the acceptable Eigenvalues; and (b) the satisfactory amount of total variance explained (61.97%). These findings provide evidence for the construct validity of the scale (Churchill, 1979). Once the factor solution had been derived, the next step was to assign some meaning to it. Specifically, items with higher loadings were considered to be more important and to have greater influence on factor naming (Hair et al. 1998). Also, a second criterion for assigning names was to compare the nature of the

items with those in Aaker's (1997) study. As such, Factor 1 was renamed sincerity

given that three of the six items were similar to the original study. Likewise for the

second factor, *excitement* was chosen, as per BPS, given that three out of four of its

constituent items were from the latter. The last factor was named *conviviality* and

includes traits like family oriented, friendly and charming.

Unidimensionality and Convergent Validity: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to establish unidimensionality,

convergent and discriminant validity of the scale, using the data taken from the

second sample (Bearden, Netemeyer and Teel, 1989; Bagozzi, 1980; Chin and Todd,

1995; MacCallum, 1986). The overall fit of the measurement model was determined

initially by examining the χ^2 statistics. A significant χ^2 value indicates an inadequate

fit, but one should be cautious in interpreting the results since χ^2 statistics are

dependent on sample size (Marsh and Hocevar, 1985; Bollen, 1989; Jöreskog and

Sörbom, 1989). A wide variety of other fit indices have been developed that are

independent of sample size (Marsh, Balla and McDonald, 1988; Hu and Bentler,

1998). Among these the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index

(AGFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean

Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) are relatively unaffected by sample size.

A 12-item, three-dimension confirmatory factor model was estimated using

LISREL 8.1 (Jöreskog and Sorbom, 1996), and inspection of model fit revealed

indices that were generally below acceptable thresholds ($\chi^2_{(51)} = 80.62$, $p = 0.00$; GFI

= 0.88; AGFI = 0.82; CFI = 0.90; NNFI = 0.87; standardised RMR = 0.084; RMSEA

= 0.076). Thus, the results were subjected to modification to improve the fit of the

model, while simultaneously respecting theoretical significance. Bentler and Chou (1987) suggest that model refinement should begin with the deletion of insignificant paths and the deletion of items associated with large residuals. An inspection of the modification indices (MIs) revealed that the item *reliable* (MIs=20.6) was a candidate for removal.

A final confirmatory model was then estimated on the remaining 11 items. The model exhibited a better fit: The chi-square $\chi^2_{(41)} = 52.97$, was not significant, and therefore is an indication of good fit. The other indices exceeded the recommended level of 0.90: GFI = 0.91; NNFI = 0.94; CFI = 0.95. The standardised RMR = 0.07 and the value of RMSEA equal 0.05, and were below the recommended cut-off value of 0.08. All modification indices were predominantly low. Since the final 11 items parsimoniously represent the three destination personality dimensions, and each item taps into a unique facet of each dimension and thus provides good domain representation, no further items were removed. These results provide evidence that the measures are unidimensional, with each item reflecting one and only one underlying construct (Bollen, 1989; Gerbing and Anderson, 1988). Furthermore, composite reliability estimates (sincerity = 0.71; excitement = 0.70; conviviality = 0.70), are considered acceptable (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Item to total correlations range from 0.40 to 0.67, and all average variance extracted (AVE) estimates (sincerity = 0.51; excitement = 0.50; conviviality = 0.52) exceed the recommended 0.50 threshold level. The squared correlations between pairs of constructs were less than the AVEs, providing empirical support for the discriminant validity of the measures (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Convergent validity can be assessed from the measurement model, by determining whether each indicator's estimated maximum likelihood loading on the

underlying dimension is significant (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). All confirmatory

factor loadings were 0.35 or above and significant with *t* values ranging from a low of

3.17 to a high of 5.54. Therefore, these findings provide evidence for the convergent

validity of the destination personality scale. Given these results, data from the two

samples were combined for further analyses.

Predictive Validity

Predictive validity is defined as the ability of a measuring instrument to

estimate some criterion behaviour that is external to the measuring instrument itself

(Nunally and Bernstein, 1994). To assess the predictive validity of the destination

personality scale, three ordinary least square (OLS) regression analyses were carried

out (Table 3). These analyses examined the relationships between destination

personality and the summated measures of affective image, cognitive image, and

intention to recommend. The three dimensions of the destination personality scale, as

derived from factor analysis, were considered as independent variables, and affective

image, cognitive image, and intention to recommend were considered as the

dependent variables.

TABLE 3

OLS REGRESSIONS: ESTABLISHING THE PREDICTIVE VALIDITY OF THE DESTINATION PERSONALITY SCALE (*n=250*)

| Independent Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Affective Image			Cognitive Image			Intention to Recommend		
	Beta	**t-value**	**Sig. t**	**Beta**	**t-value**	**Sig. t**	**Beta**	**t-value**	**Sig. t**
Sincerity	0.209	3.060	**0.002**	0.019	0.265	0.791	0.059	0.819	0.413
Excitement	-0.016	-0.248	0.626	0.141	2.033	**0.043**	0.071	1.022	0.308
Conviviality	0.313	5.084	**0.000**	0.220	3.395	**0.001**	0.243	3.748	**0.000**
(Constant)		7.786	0.000		9.525	0.000		-0.293	0.770
Multiple *R*	0.43			0.30			0.30		
R²	0.17			0.08			0.08		
F test statistic/ significance	*F* (3,246) =18.10, *p*=0.00			*F* (3,246) =7.908, *p*=0.000			*F* (3,246) =8.009, *p*=0.00		

In Table 3, in all the regression models, destination personality dimensions were statistically significant in estimating affective image, cognitive image, and intention to recommend (p=0.00). The multiple R coefficients indicate that the correlation between the combined destination personality scale and the three dependent variables is moderate to strong across the models (all multiple R values $\geq$0.30). According to the R^2 statistic, 17% of the total variance for the estimation of affective image is explained by Model 1, 8% of the total variance for the estimation of cognitive image is explained by Model 2, and 8% of the total variance for the estimation of intention to recommend is explained by Model 3. Only the *conviviality* dimension was statistically significant (p=0.00) across all three models. Nevertheless,

these findings provide evidence for the *predictive validity* of the destination

personality scale (Churchill, 1979).

Post Hoc Analysis: Destination Personality, Destination Image, and Intention

to Recommend

      The analysis reported here was intended to ascertain the effects of destination

personality and destination image on intention to recommend. In response to

preceding discussions on destination image and destination personality, we propose

that the effect of destination image on intention to recommend is higher when tourism

destinations are perceived to have stronger personalities. The proposed conceptual

framework is depicted in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

**THE MODERATING EFFECT OF DESTINATION PERSONALITY ON THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DESTINATION IMAGE AND INTENTION TO
RECOMMEND**
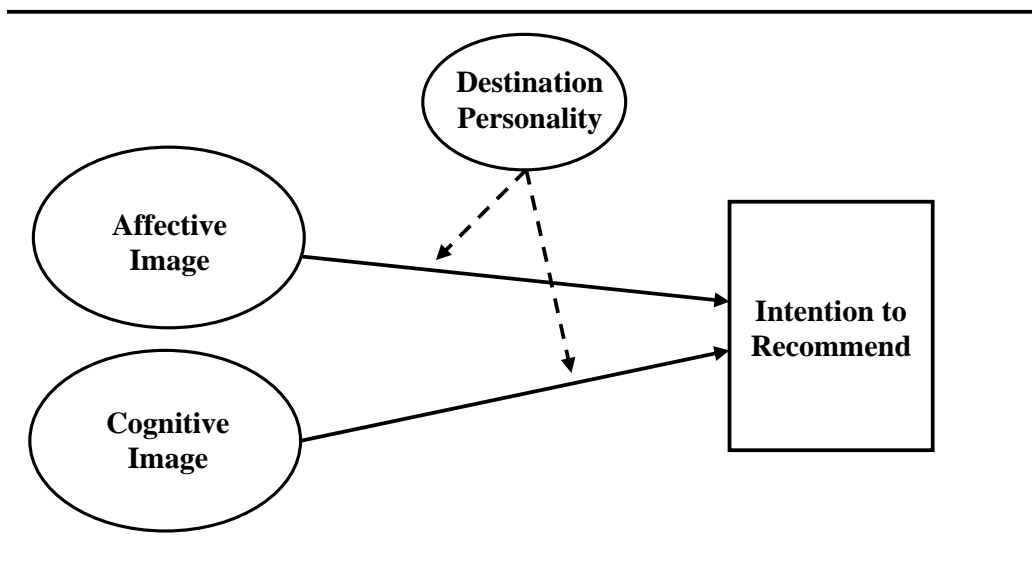
As can be seen from Figure 1, we posit that destination personality moderates the impact of destination image on intention to recommend. In other words, a strong destination personality leverages the effect of destination image on intention to recommend. Accordingly, we tested this research assertion using hierarchical moderator regression analysis, as suggested by Cohen and Cohen (1983). To simplify the presentation of the results, the three destination personality dimensions were summated. The destination image scale was subjected to exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation, and two factors emerged: affective image (mean=3.91; SD=0.88) and cognitive image (mean=4.00; SD=0.83). The affective image (α=0.78) and cognitive image (α=0.71) scales were found to be reliable and were therefore summated. Furthermore, in the regression models, the two destination image scales were taken as independent variables, the three destination personality dimensions were taken as moderators (or interaction variables), and intention to recommend was considered as dependent variable. As is often the case in testing moderating effects through the use of interaction terms, preliminary analysis revealed several high inter-correlations and multicollinearity effects between the variables. Therefore, in order to address this issue, the continuous independent variables in the hierarchical moderator regression models were mean centered to reduce multicollinearity between the main and interaction terms (Aiken and West, 1991). These transformations yielded interaction terms with low inter-correlations. Furthermore, across the regression models, no interaction term had a variance of inflation factor (VIF) exceeding the recommended maximum of 10 (Hair et al. 1998). This indicated that there was no evidence of multicollinearity. Consistent with Cohen and Cohen (1983), the interaction variables were entered in the regression model *after* their constituent

elements to partial out the main effects from the interaction terms. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4

ESTIMATION RESULTS: INTENTION TO RECOMMEND

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Main Effects Only		**Main Effects and Interactions**	
Independent Variables	**Std. Beta Coeff.**	**t-value**	**Std. Beta Coeff.**	**t-value**
Affective Image (Aff)	0.38	5.39**	0.37	4.95**
Cognitive Image (Cog)	-0.03	-0.44.	-0.05	-0.76
Destination Personality: Sincerity (Sin)	-0.02	-0.29	-0.02	-0.39
Destination Personality: Exciting (Exc)	0.08	1.23	0.11	1.69
Destination Personality: Conviviality (Conv)	0.13	2.02*	0.12	1.86
Aff x Sin	-	-	-0.07	0.84
Cog x Sin	-	-	0.13	1.70
Aff x Exc	-	-	0.05	0.66
Cog x Exc	-	-	-0.15	-1.86
Aff x Conv	-	-	-0.14	-1.87
Cog x Conv	-	-	0.17	2.33*
(Constant)		24.89**		23.60**
Overall Model	$R^2 = 0.20$		$R^2 = 0.25$	
	adjusted $R^2 = 0.18$		adjusted $R^2 = 0.21$	
	$F(5, 244) = 12.27, p = 0.00$		$F(11, 238) = 6.93, p = 0.00$	

*Significant at the $p < 0.05$, **Significant at the $p < 0.01$

In Table 4, Model 1 depicts the test for main effects, and Model 2 shows the test for moderating effects. The overall model fit indices were statistically significant for both Model 1 and Model 2. The three destination personality scales and two destination image scales explained 20 percent of the total variance at estimating intention to recommend in Model 1. Furthermore, affective image (beta = 0.38, $p < 0.01$) and conviviality (beta = 0.13, $p < 0.05$) were found to have a significant impact on intention to recommend.

In Table 4, the statistically significant increase in the R^2 value in Model 2 (from 0.20 to 0.25) supported the interaction effect of destination personality on the relationship between destination image and intention to recommend. However, only the conviviality dimension of destination personality had a positive effect on the relationship between the cognitive component of destination image and intention to recommend. The findings of this study partially confirm the research proposition, and therefore imply that destination personality boosts the impact of destination image on intention to recommend. Although the other destination personality dimensions had no statistically significant effect on the relationship between cognitive image and intention to recommend, the findings of this study should be interpreted within the limitations of this sample. The majority of British tourists travelled to European destinations for their holiday vacation mainly for leisure purposes that involved enjoying sea, sun, and interaction with local people. Therefore, if travel motivation or purpose of travel were different, the impact of other destination personality dimensions on the relationship between cognitive image and intention to recommend might be statistically significant. For example, if travel motives were other than leisure (such as participating in activity based holidays, attending conferences), or if travel were to different locations (for example, outside Europe), then excitement and

sincerity might have a positive impact on the relationship between cognitive image and intention to recommend.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the dimensions of destination personality by extending Aaker's (1997) conceptualisation of brand personality to tourism destinations. We examined two key questions that pertained to destination personality: (1) Are tourism destinations perceived to possess personalities? If so, what are the underlying dimensions of destination personality? (2) What is the relationship between destination personality, destination image, and intention to recommend? Accordingly, we now discuss the implications of our study and consider further research areas.

Implications for Theory

The results of the study indicate that tourists ascribe personality characteristics to destinations, and destination personality can be described in three dimensions: *sincerity*, *excitement*, and *conviviality*. The dimensions were found to be reliable and valid, with sincerity and excitement as the two main factors. This is in line with previous research on the application of the BPS, where the sincerity and excitement dimensions were found to capture the majority of variance in brand personality ratings (Aaker, 1997). The same dimensions were also found to be robust across individuals, product categories, and cultural contexts (Aaker, Benet-Martinez and Garolera, 2001; Rojas-Méndez, Erenchun-Podlech and Silva-Olave, 2004). The emergence of the

sincerity dimension in this study may be explained by the fact that tourists portray destinations as trustworthy and dependable. This in turn reduces their feelings of vulnerability, and the risks associated with the new environment. In previous studies (Buss, 1991; Robins, Caspi and Moffitt, 2000), the dimension of sincerity was positively related to the relationship between the two parties, consumers and sellers. The sincerity dimension emphasises the importance of good relationships between tourists and hosts in evaluating holiday experiences.

The second dimension, excitement, includes traits such as exciting, daring, spirited, and original. In general, destinations that are perceived to have exciting personalities are considered attractive, and are thus highly capable of generating interest (Altschiller, 2000). Tourists travel to destinations mostly for relaxation/leisure purposes, which may explain why tourists attach a sense of excitement to places/destinations. The third destination personality dimension, conviviality, was new, and also specific to tourism destinations. It consists of traits such as friendly, family-oriented, and charming. This is not very surprising, because these traits are some of the most common themes that destination marketers use to characterise destinations in today's travel media. Furthermore, conviviality was the only destination personality dimension to have a statistically significant influence on affective image, cognitive image, and intention to recommend.

The findings of this study reveal that the BPS can be applied to tourism destinations. However, the 'penta-factorial' structure hypothesised by Aaker (1997) cannot be fully replicated. Instead, the five-dimensional BPS needs adaptation when applied to tourism destinations. The evidence of a three-factor rather than a five-factor solution is consistent with Caprara, Barbaranelli and Guido's (2001) argument that it may be possible to describe product or brand personalities using only a few factors.

Human personality dimensions tend to be robust across cultures (Paunomen et al., 1992), but this is not necessarily true for product or destination personalities (Supphellen and Grønhaug, 2003). The influence of culture and product category may be one plausible explanation for the emergence of dimensions that differ from those in Aaker's (1997) study. In the case of tourism destinations, some dimensions may be less relevant, and other new dimensions may emerge. The outcome of the present research is consistent with the theories in the consumer behaviour literature (McCracken, 1986) that suggest that the creation and development of certain associations and meanings in relation to product personalities may be culturally specific. This finding further reinforces recent research in cultural psychology, where the symbolic use of brands appears to differ considerably across cultures (Aaker and Schmitt, 1997).

Furthermore, in this study, the identification of different dimensions to those employed in previous studies on the application of Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale may be related to the experiential qualities and benefits of tourism offerings. More specifically, the tourism experience is considered to be unique, emotionally charged, and of high personal relevance and value (McIntosh and Siggs, 2005). Unlike consumer goods, holiday vacations are rich in terms of experience attributes (Otto and Ritchie, 1996), and are said to be consumed primarily for hedonic purposes. Also, consuming the holiday vacation at a destination evokes emotions (Liljander and Strandvik, 1997) that are seen as fundamental determinants of tourist satisfaction and post-consumption behaviour (Gnoth, 1997). Thus, in this study, the experiential nature of the consumption could explain why we found the dimensions sincerity, excitement, and conviviality. These three dimensions closely relate to the hedonic

characteristics of fun, satisfaction, and enjoyment, as advocated by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982).

Another finding of interest is that brand personality adjectives locate under different dimensions than in Aaker's (1997) study. For example, adjectives such as "intelligent", "reliable", and "successful" shifted from the competence dimension of Aaker's (1997) study to that of *sincerity* in this study. In the literature, this phenomenon is referred to as *brand-adjective interaction* (Pedhazur and Pedhazur, 1991). This term refers to the notion that adjectives may assume different meanings when used to describe different products. This is exactly the case here, where adjectives initially designed to measure the brand personality of consumer goods tend to shift when applied to tourism destinations. Hence, the shift of adjectives between dimensions follows the argument that personality items have a contextual or relational meaning (Caprara, Barbaranelli and Guido, 2001).

The findings of the study suggest that destination personality dimensions have positive impacts on tourists' intention to recommend. This is in line with previous studies, in which researchers have posited that product or brand personality influences consumer preference and usage (Sirgy, 1982; Aaker, 1999). The results showed that intention to recommend was better estimated using both perceived affective image and conviviality dimension. Further analyses revealed that conviviality moderated the impact of cognitive image on tourists' intention to recommend. Given the paucity of research in this field, this finding makes an important contribution to our understanding of the inter-relationship between destination personality, destination image, and intention to recommend. However, our results are only exploratory and should be examined through further studies. Future research should investigate the

influence of destination personality on tourists' other post-purchase evaluations, such as satisfaction, perceived quality, and intention to switch.

Implication for Destination Marketers

From a practical standpoint, the findings offer important implications for the development of destination marketing strategies. In today's competitive climate, creating and managing an appropriate destination personality has become vital for effective positioning and differentiation. More specifically, destination marketers should concentrate on developing efficient communication methods to launch a distinctive and attractive personality for their places. In terms of antecedents, it has been suggested that brand personality is created by a multitude of marketing variables, such as user imagery and advertising (Batra, Donald and Singh, 1993; Levy, 1959; Plummer, 1985). Furthermore, the findings of our study suggest that it seems beyond doubt that destination marketers should concern themselves with both the personality and the image of the destinations under their charge, if they are to differentiate themselves in today's competitive holiday market and influence tourists' intention to recommend. In fact, destination personality was found to moderate the relationship between destination image (cognitive) and intention to recommend. Destination marketers may improve the positive impact of destination image on intention to recommend by developing strong destination personality characteristics, via advertising and destination management tactics. Furthermore, while most studies to date have been limited to comparing, classifying, and evaluating destinations on the basis of their perceived images only, differentiation based on personality traits has, as yet, been under-explored. Destination marketers could differentiate their places based

on the personality characteristics, over and above perceived images. Thus, one area of future research would be the positioning of tourism destinations using the personality dimensions found in this study.

Limitations and Future Research Areas

This study makes important theoretical contributions to the understanding of destination personality, and its relationship with destination image and intention to recommend. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to indicate the limitations of this research, which have to be taken into account when considering the study findings. Overcoming these limitations will enable the present work to act as a springboard for future research streams.

The study findings are specific to one culture (British nationals) and cannot be generalised to other tourist populations. Also, in this research, investigations of the relationships between perceived destination personality, destination image, and intention to recommend behaviour were carried out at the *post-consumption behaviour stage*. Although statistically significant relationships were found between destination personality, destination image, and intention to recommend, the magnitude of the effects may be different at the pre-purchase evaluation. Thus, further research should investigate whether non-visitors' perceptions of destination personality and its effect on post-consumption behaviour are different from that of visitors' perceptions. While our study gives some preliminary insights into the inter-relationships between destination personality, destination image, and intention to recommend simultaneously, future research could investigate the relationship and the degree of overlap between the destination image and destination personality dimensions.

Furthermore, this study did not take into account the effects of tourist travel motivation. Tourist motives have often been conceptualised in terms of push and pull factors. Push motivations are more related to the internal or emotional aspects of the individual traveller, while pull motivations are associated with the destination image attributes (Oh, Uysal and Weaver, 1995). Recent studies have found that 'push' factors have a direct positive effect on behavioural intentions (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Loker and Perdue (1992), using travel motives as segmentation variable, identified excitement seeking and family/friends oriented as tourist segments that closely match with the Excitement and Conviviality dimensions found in this study. Thus travel motivations may have influenced the magnitude of destination personality impact on the relationship between destination image and intention to recommend. Accordingly, future research should replicate the study under different travel motivations.

Also, a future research agenda could investigate the direct impact of self-congruence (the degree of matching between destination personality and self-concept) on tourist's choice behaviour. Self-congruence has been shown to affect consumer's choice (Birdwell, 1964). In particular, products or brands with a strong appealing personality are believed to function as status symbols, and also serve as a person's personal statement (Aaker, 1996). This is particularly relevant in the context of tourism, as the choice of a tourism destination is increasingly perceived as a self-expressive device, a lifestyle and status indicator (Clarke, 2000). Thus, future studies could assess the direct impact of destination personality-self-concept congruence on destination choice, or the moderating impact of destination personality-self-concept congruence on the relationship between destination image and intention to return/recommend, using the three destination personality dimensions found in this study.

This study has sought to provide a preliminary investigation into the applicability and relevance of personality traits in the context of tourism destinations. Consequently, this research borrowed an established scale, the BPS, which was originally developed to measure brand personality in consumer good settings. As a result, the personality traits used in this study may be limited, as they may not fully represent the gamut of personality traits associated with destinations. In order to provide a comprehensive picture of the destination personality construct and to further advance our understanding, future research could use qualitative research design, such as focus groups or projective techniques, to elicit destination specific personality characteristics. For example, participants could be shown videos of holiday destinations as a stimulus, and then be asked to generate a list of personality traits that can be attributed to that destination. This would in turn contribute to refine the destination personality scale validated in this study, and it might also enable possible comparisons with our findings.

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