



## The influence of country personality dimensions on intentions to recommend visiting: The preponderance of assiduousness and wickedness

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### Abstract

The purpose of the current research is to investigate the relationships between country personality dimensions and consumer behavioural intentions, and to examine in detail the perceived personality of a stimulus-country. A convenience sample of 130 individuals from Brazil was surveyed and 115 usable questionnaires were analyzed. Portugal was chosen as the country for scrutiny and the questionnaire was delivered in Portuguese. Country personality was measured using the 24 items of personality traits six dimensions scale of d'Astous & Boujbel (2007). The research findings suggest that consumers ascribe personality characteristics to countries. All the items show high factorial weights, and in the proposed model the percentage of the variance of the intention to recommend explained by the perceived country personality dimensions equals around 23%. Assiduousness showed a positive significant influence on intention to recommend, whereas wickedness showed a significant negative influence. The findings suggest differences from the comparable earlier studies. Practical and theoretical implications are discussed. Complementarily, and as suggested by the personality traits frequency analysis, Portugal is seen as a traditionalist country.

**Keywords:** Country personality; behavioural intentions; intentions to recommend; Portugal; Brazil.

### Introduction

In an increasingly competitive world, marketers face the daunting tasks of reaching out to consumers. In doing that, modern branding techniques and positioning strategies are applied. The use of mass media, the influence of family

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members and relatives, travel experiences and branding have all become powerful ways of spreading information about countries.

People are therefore likely to form organized mental representations of countries, as they do with other inanimate objects. In this context country personality is a metaphor for building a unique identity and a personified approach toward countries (d'Astous & Boujbel, 2007) – the organized mental representation of a country – capturing human characteristics associated to a specific country has become prominent in the study of these phenomena. In effect, recent studies suggest that both destination personality and country personality scales are capable of predicting consumer's behavioral intentions (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2008) with the former scale applied to tourists and the latter to local residents or even general consumers (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2008). The current study has followed the latter approach.

According to the consumer behaviour and personality literature, an established personality influences consumer preferences (Sirgy, 1982; d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007; Ekinci & Hosany, 2006) whilst in the tourism and country of origin literature, outcomes such as consumer's behavioural intentions to purchase (Knight & Calantone, 2000) and intentions to visit (Um & Crompton, 1990) are extensively used.

However, whilst brand personality is well documented in the marketing literature, the country personality it is not. Brand personality (Aaker J. L., 1997) has been found to be important in earlier studies. Aaker J. L. (1997) has argued that consumers select brands with personalities that are acceptable to them. Indeed, associating a set of human characteristics with brands is referred to as brand personality (Aaker J. L., 1997), and when tourists associate a set of human characteristics with a destination it is called destination personality (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006). Thus, understanding country personality can be important as well because consumers may select countries with personalities that are acceptable to them (Sirgy, 1982; d'Astous & Boujbel, 2007).

This study focuses on the country personality (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007), and its application to countries. Firstly, the perceived country personality of the stimuli country and its underlying dimensions are investigated and then the study proceeds to investigate the effects of country personality dimensions on consumers' intention to recommend behaviours. The study uses for empirical instrumentation d'Astous & Boujbel's (2007) country personality scale, and aims to identify whether Brazilian consumers ascribe personality traits to Portugal that will lead them to travel to this country; to identify the most salient country personality dimensions; and the personality traits that they ascribe to Portugal. There are over 240 million people sharing the Portuguese as mother tongue in the world (PLC, 2013), and consequently this is necessarily an important issue and worthy of scrutiny, with a Portuguese version of the country personality scale easily justifiable.

## Literature review

### Country image / brand personality / country personality

According to country of origin literature, country of origin image can include country of origin cues (DaSilva, Davies, & Naudé, 2001; Thomas & Grosse, 2001) and role effects (Bevan & Estrin, 2004; Disdier & Mayer, 2004; Loo & Davies, 2006; John, 2002; Han & Terpstra, 1988) as well as country reputation (Passow, Fehlmann, & Grahlow, 2005), and have been widely studied by many researchers.

Roth & Diamantopoulos, (2009) have argued that country of origin image is still a not very enlightened construct (a rather vague), and therefore, they proposed to divide it into three groups, focusing on different image objects: country image – generic and generalized image of the country (p. 3); country of origin - the effects of the image of the country on its products (pp. 3-4); and “made in” – image of the products/brands of a country (p. 4). Most of the multidimensional studies on country of origin image have focused on the functional benefits of its products such as quality, design, service, etc and most of them have used high-tech and high involvement products (Roth & Romeo, 1992; Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006).

However, there are many low-tech and low involvement products which may equally affect the country’s image (Tigli, Pirtini, & Erdem, 2010). It is also accepted that emotions and symbolic aspects (Verlegh, Benedict, & Steenkamp, 1999) are part of the image construct of a country (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993) although this may depend on other non-functional aspects. Country of origin image as a concept has been analysed by many, as it is referred before in the text, but only a few have focused on personality scales (Nebenzahl, Jaffe, & Usunier, 2003; d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007; Chao & Rajendran, 1993) when measuring attitude towards products from a certain country. In the context of the current research, however, it is proposed the intention to recommend as an outcome.

Personality is most commonly defined as the character of an individual or the individual qualities and that can include virtually everything about a person. McCrae & Costa (1996) defined personality as the traits that differentiate individuals. The Big-Five personality model (Goldberg, 1990) is the most widely applied personality theory that is based on trait psychology, but the application of brand personality to tourism destinations is relatively new (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006; 2007).

Brand personality has been known to contribute to brand differentiation (Aaker D. , 1996; Aaker J. L., Dimensions of brand personality., 1997) and to enhance brand equity (Keller, 1993) by increasing brand preference and usage

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(Aaker J. L., 1999; Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982). Brand personality helps consumers to develop strong emotional ties with brands and thereby contributes to the enhancement of trust and loyalty dimensions (Fournier, 1998).

Brands may be conceived as intangible objects; however consumers often view them as beholding human characteristics. Aaker J. L. (1997) defined brand personality as "*the set of human characteristics associated with a brand*" (p. 347). Using the word cool to describe Coca-Cola, or the word young to refer to Pepsi (Aaker J. L., 1997), and masculine to allude to Marlboro cigarettes (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006) is something widely accepted and which has been transferred over to the colloquial lexicon across languages and cultural contexts. Similarly, brand personality can also be easily applicable to the study of tourism destinations. The word romantic, for example, is widely used to describe Paris (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006), as people accept it and normally react positively to it.

Aaker, J. L. (1997) and Plummer (1985) are proponents of the notion that a brand personality can be formed, influenced or associated with, directly and indirectly by way of any prior contact that the consumer may have had with the brand. This is at the root of brand personality formation and perception. Personality traits may be associated with a brand: directly, through the association that people make with a brand, including the use of metaphors, defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand's typical user; and indirectly through the usage of product-related attributes, that is to say brand names, logos, advertisements, etc. (Aaker J. L., 1997).

Personality traits can in the same way be associated with a destination place through the link between personality traits and destination places by using images and photos, and that corresponds to the direct way. Personality traits can on the other hand be associated with a destination through marketing practices such as value pricing, cooperative advertising, logos, symbols or slogans (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006) and that is the indirect way. In this context, Aaker J. L.'s (1997) developed a reliable, valid and generalizable brand personality scale, consisting of five generic dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness.

Many researchers have since used Aaker J. L.'s (1997) original brand personality scale, in the context of various product categories and across different cultures. Still on the subject, Ekinci & Hosany (2006) have suggested that tourism destination consists of tangible and intangible components, and includes many symbolic values due to the hedonistic nature of the tourism experience, and hence it can also be seen as brand based. Ekinci & Hosany (2006) defined destination personality as "*the set of human characteristics associated with a destination by tourists*" (p. 127), thus adapting Aaker J. L.'s (1997) brand personality terminology, in the context of tourism destination realities. Ekinci & Hosany (2006) showed three salient dimensions for destination personality (sincerity, excite-

ment, and conviviality) rather than the original five dimensions of brand personality. The authors found sincerity and excitement to be the two main factors. Conviviality was a new addition and was specific to destinations. Their study revealed that destination personality has positive impacts on tourists' intention to recommend behaviour.

Ekinci, Sirakaya-Turk, & Baloglu (2007) also studied the relationships between tourists' perceptions of host image, destination personality and behavioural intentions. The results of their study supported the external validity of Ekinci & Hosany's (2006) findings. Ekinci *et al.* (2007) found evidence that host image is one of the antecedents of destination personality by finding a positive and statistically significant impact of host image on destination personality. Sheng Ye (2012, p. 398) have contributed to the literature by alluding to destination personality concepts and ideas, bringing more emotional links into the frame and allowing for the formation of a living and intimate identity in the tourists' mind. Thus destination personality as well country branding literature suggests that countries just like brands are described by consumers according to specific qualities and traits (Anholt, 2003).

The conceptual roots of the country personality construct refer to "*the tendency of people to make attributions of human-like characteristics to animals and nonhuman entities*" (Kiesler, 2006, p. 149). In this context, individuals need to anthropomorphize objects in order to smooth the progress of their interactions with the non-material (inanimate) world (Fournier, 1998). Research in tourism and country of origin has used a personified approach towards countries (Chao & Rajendran, 1993; Nebenzahl, Jaffe, & Usunier, 2003).

D' Astous & Boujbel (2007) proposed a scale personification of countries to qualify and to measure country image as a symbolic component. They defined country personality as "*the mental representation of a country on dimensions that typically capture an individual's personality*" (p. 233). The current research project proposes to go deeper and explore the dimensions and their influence on other key variables of country image. The original scale of d' Astous & Boujbel (2007) was originally developed in French and then translated into English. They presented a feasible and understandable scale list of personality traits, with 24-items divided into six dimensions. They utilized different numbers of countries as a stimulus and a convenience sampling method was employed.

The authors also investigated the impact of the six dimensions on general attitude, on product-country attitude and on the travel destination attitude. Their models were found to be statistically important, however the snobbism, assiduousness, unobtrusiveness dimensions were found not to be significant in the travel destination attitude prediction. Based on their specific results, they have argued that the scale might be less useful for predicting people's perceptions of countries as travel destinations. The author's explanations for this were associated to the limitations of the research, including the use of convenience

samples, and the limited geographical coverage of the survey (one city in Canada), but also the inquiry's original language and its subsequent translation.

However, the scale development procedure has revealed interesting results about people's perceptions of countries. Their findings indicated Mexico and Australia as the most agreeable countries; United States were perceived as a wicked country; France was found to be the snobbiest country; Japan got the highest ratings for assiduousness; China was the most conformist and Canada was perceived as the most unobtrusive (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007). Hence the scale still is shown as an interesting instrument. Likewise, a typical and attractive country personality can effectively leverage the perceived image of a country and thus influence consumer behaviour.

### **Behavioural intentions / intentions to recommend**

Intentions may be recognized as connections with future acts (Soderlund & Ohman, 2003) and are usually conceived as evaluation-free, and this may be the key difference between intention and attitude (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Intentions can be defined as basic units that emerge when individuals appoint in future-oriented cognitive activities such as mental simulation, planning, imagination, and thoughts (like individual's perception of other one's intentions) (p. 54). The marketing literature is prolific on propositions about the future, reflected in the explicit usage of intentions labeling to cover several acts in the marketplace. Intentions are usually part of satisfaction models and are treated as dependent variables. Generally the researcher assumes that satisfaction affects customer behaviour and designs empirical studies focusing on behavioural intentions. Hence, intentions are often used as proxies for behaviour.

Behavioural expectations frequently refer to an intention construct. In fact intentions are often labelled as expectations and refer to the individual assessment of the subjective possibility to perform a particular behaviour in the future. Researchers usually measure it using questions such as "the likelihood that I would do A is..." (Soderlund & Ohman, 2003, p. 54). In the past, other authors have also labelled behavioural expectations as self-predictions (Gollwitzer, 1993).

Intentions to recommend behaviour may be seen as an intention associated with the act of recommending something assuming a positive satisfactory condition. Intention to recommend belongs to the intentions as expectations construct, because it does neither refer to plans nor to wants (Soderlund & Ohman, 2003). We followed this approach.

### **Research questions and hypotheses**

The present study was designed to provide a better understanding of the perceived country personality construct and to expand the relationship between

country personality dimensions and behavioural intentions. Accordingly, this study will address the following research questions:

1. What are the most relevant perceived country personality traits that consumers ascribe to the stimulus country?
2. Do country personality dimensions influence intentions to recommend behaviour?
3. If so, which are the country personality dimensions perceived by consumers that best predict their intentions to recommend a stimuli country for travel?

The research proposal tests the relationship between the independent variables represented by the six country personality dimensions developed by d' Astous & Boujbel (2007): three of them (agreeableness, assiduousness and conformity) hypothesized as having a positive influence on the behavioural intention to recommend visiting (dependent variable), and the other three (snobism, wickedness and unobtrusiveness) hypothesized as having a negative impact on the outcome variable. The theoretical bearing as per the original scale developers (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007) was followed. The model was adapted from Nebenzahl, Jaffe, & Usunier (2003) and Sheng Ye (2012).

The empirical research used a Brazilian sample and defined Portugal to be the stimuli country. The research analysed the perceived country personality of Portugal, as evaluated by Brazilians, and its relationship with intention to recommend Portugal for travel/to visit.

H1a; H1b; and H1c: (a) Agreeableness; (b) Assiduousness; (c) Conformity has a positive impact on intention to recommend visiting.

H2a; H2b; and H2c: (a) Snobbism; (b) Unobtrusiveness; (c) Wickedness has a negative impact on intention to recommend visiting.

## **Methodology**

The empirical data were drawn from a sample of Brazilian individuals older than 25, with internet access, speaking Portuguese, and having an income. 115 valid answers were obtained and it was assumed that there exists an historical affinity between Brazilian consumers and the stimulus country, and hence a high familiarity with Portugal. The data collection was conducted in Brazil.

A self-administered questionnaire was used. The questions used in the questionnaire were mostly close-ended in order to collect the required quantitative data for the study. The respondents were asked to think of the country as if it was a person and to ascribe human personality traits to it (Davies, Chun, Da Silva, & Roper, 2001). The stimuli country (Portugal) had to be evaluated using the 24 personality traits with the help of a 5-point scale, with anchors (1)

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*does not describe this country at all* and (5) *describe this country perfectly* (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007, p. 239).

The scales were borrowed from the original d' Astous & Boujbel (2007) scales, and translated into Portuguese, and previously tested by three experts on the Portuguese language with the aim of ensuring adequate understanding by Brazilian readers before delivery. Three criteria guided the choice of stimuli country: (1) historical affinity, familiarity and common language, (2) geographic distance, and (3) economic and demographic diversity.

Intentions to recommend visiting was measured using four items (e.g., "I would recommend going to [country] to others") adopted from Um & Crompton (1990), with anchors (1) *totally disagree* and (5) *totally agree*.

The last section of the questionnaire consisted of the socio-demographic questions (gender, age, level of education, occupation, monthly individual income, mother language, and residential location). To reveal any potential shortcomings and to test the feasibility of the proposed questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with a sample of 10 people. There were no special concerns with the question wording and format based on the pilot study results. The average response time to complete a questionnaire was around 5 minutes.

Data were collected from August to September, 2013. The survey participants were invited via email to fill in the questionnaire. Two emailing lists with a total of around 250.000 emails were used and sent using the *Qualtrics*® platform specific tools. The quality of the emailing list database was questionable due to the substantial error returns and delivery errors, but there was not a chance to test its quality (e.g. using standard e-mailing platforms such as *google*® or similar).

There were also too many rejected emails that were considered spam due to the existence of a link in the body of the email. Fortunately, some replies from people were asking about the true intention of the email and the clarification helped to have a reasonable amount of completed questionnaires. Hence, because of the email errors the current study does not refer to a response rate. However, overall the respondents exhibited a high level of interest, according to the observations made on the open question at the end of the survey, which asked for their comments (available upon request, in Portuguese).

The questionnaire was delivered in Brazilian Portuguese only, and used the Brazilian specificities for issues such as education, income details and occupation - specific questions were based on Brazil's "Census 2010" – a country specific federal government statistical inquiry (IBGE, 2013).

### Sample description

The survey had more males (62.6%) than females (37.4%) respondents. The sample age varied from 25 to 66 years of age with a mean value of 26.2 years.



The level of education was high as 11% of the respondents had high school, 35% had some college, and 54% had university masters or doctorate level. The level of individual monthly income was also high as 59% of the respondents receive more than 10 times the minimum salary (baseline R\$ 510.00 (R\$ 1.00 = USD 0.3)), and 18% receive between five and ten minimum salaries of income.

Overall, the participants had internet access, a registered email, and were employed. São Paulo state residents were more numerous (53%) than residents from Bahia (12.2%) and from other states (34.8%). Almost all participants referred to Portuguese as their mother tongue (98%). From the sample surveyed, 59.1% of the respondents (68) visited Portugal in the last five years, and from those, 52.9% (36) have visited Portugal once. From the respondents who visited Portugal, 54% travelled for tourism, 23% travelled for work, 7% travelled for studying, and 16% referred other reasons.

The participants demonstrated having an affinity with Portugal: the main sources of participants' country personality traits inferences were: the media (mean of 3.41 in a scale of 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*)); knowing the country (mean of 3.33); and traveling experiences (mean of 3.18). Family and relatives (mean of 2.55); products and brands (mean of 2.61), and formal school instruction (mean of 2.71). The latter didn't have the expected weight, as it is assumed, based on preliminary interviews to the 10 people, that Brazilians learn more about Portugal via scholar curricula than they referred in fact.

### **Analysis of the data**

SPSS® 20.0 and AMOS® 20.0 were used to analyse the data. Firstly, the data was explored for any outliers (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2005, p. 75). Exploratory factor analysis was used to identify the underlying personality dimensions using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method. Using PCA also helped us on multi-collinearity verification (Hair, *et al.*, 2005, p. 75). Construct reliabilities were assessed using Cronbach's alpha values. Secondly, the distribution frequency of personality traits was analysed to reach the specific personality trait that the sample ascribes to stimulus country. Finally, the relationship between the six country personality dimensions and the intentions to recommend the stimulus country for travel is tested using multiple regression analysis.

### **Personality traits associated with Portugal**

The 115 respondents were asked to think Portugal as if it were a person - The introductory sentence "Sometimes, people think about countries as if they were people, and associate them with characteristics typically used to describe humans" and then asked "evaluate to what extent the properties listed below describe Portugal. In your opinion, Portugal can be reported as someone who is ..." to rate each of the 24-items (bon vivant, reveller, amusing, agreeable,

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immoral, vulgar, decadent, offender, haughty, snobbish, mannered, chauvinistic, organized, rigorous, flourishing, hard at work, religious, spiritual, traditionalist, ceremonious (mysterious), cowardly (timid), wimpy, dependent, neutral (discrete)) of the country personality scale on a 5-point scale (1) *does not describe this country at all*; (5) *describes this country perfectly* (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007, p. 239).

Considering the distribution of the responses to the various items, the two individual personality traits with highest frequencies were “religious”, with a mean value of 4.28 (std deviation=0.894), and “traditionalist” with a mean value of 4.22 (std deviation=0.925). Table 1 shows the distribution of the responses to the various items.

**Table 1** – Descriptive statistics of country personality traits

Description	Mean	Median	Mode	Std.Deviation
Q1_1 Bon-vivant	2.72	3	3	1.13
Q1_2 Reveler	2.77	3	3	1.16
Q1_3 Amusing	2.83	3	3	1.09
Q1_4 Agreeable	3.77	4	5	1.18
Q1_5 Immoral	1.40	1	1	0.67
Q1_6 Vulgar	1.54	1	1	0.95
Q1_7 Decadent	2.21	2	1	1.21
Q1_8 Offender	1.73	1	1	0.97
Q1_9 Haughty	2.05	2	1	1.21
Q1_10 Snobbish	2.08	2	1	1.22
Q1_11 Mannered	2.38	2	1	1.14
Q1_12 Chauvinistic	2.14	2	1	1.15
Q1_13 Organized	2.96	3	3	1.03
Q1_14 Rigorous	2.77	3	3	1.09
Q1_15 Flourishing	2.64	3	3	0.97
Q1_16 Hard at work	3.63	4	4	1.14
Q1_17 Religious	4.28	4	5	0.89
Q1_18 Spiritual	3.46	3	3	1.14
Q1_19 Traditionalist	4.22	4	5	0.93
Q1_20 Cerimonious	3.70	4	5	1.19
Q1_21 Cowardly	2.26	2	1	1.11
Q1_22 Wimpy	2.02	2	1	1.16
Q1_23 Dependent	2.56	3	3	1.21
Q1_24 Neutral	3.36	3	3	1.09

According to the respondents’ evaluation, it is possible to conclude that Portugal is seen by our Brazilian population as having a symbolic image of a religious and traditionalist country. The conformity personality dimension

(measured by the items religious, spiritual, traditionalist and mysterious) showed the highest frequency, with a mean value of 4.28 (traditionalist). From another perspective the item “immoral” received the lowest frequency with a mean value of 1.40 and a std. deviation of 0.67. One should be careful when interpreting these results, as the sample size used in the computation of the personality means is quite low. Nevertheless, in general the symbolic country image makes sense.

There are five items with a median value of 4 (agreeable, hard at work, religious, traditionalist and ceremonious), and that can help people to better understand the findings. The Portuguese went to Brazil as emigrants in the middle of the last century (around 1950) and they were known as hard workers. That perception still is valid nowadays, as well as being religious and conservative (or traditionalist). On the other hand the Portuguese are agreeable in the sense of their interpersonal relationships – easy to deal with them “they are good people” is often heard.

An earlier study conducted by Santos (2004) found that US newspapers (New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and USA Today) travel sections (travel media) (articles from 1996 and 2002) represented Portugal with personality dimensions (traits) such as contemporary, modern, sophisticated, and traditional. The author used newspaper articles, perhaps written by travel agents, by experts or by specialized journalists. Thus, it may be argued that different countries and different inputs can result in varying evaluations and therefore different outputs.

Anholt (2003) referred to the culture as the unique feature of a country that communicates a country’s true spirit and essence, and we may add that it can potentially influence country personality. The historical affinity between Brazil and Portugal and the sharing of a mother tongue has implied an acculturation. Anholt’s (2003) view is thus corroborated.

## **Exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis**

### **Country personality dimensions**

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on the 24 personality items to identify the underlying dimensions of perceived country personality. An exploratory approach was used instead of a confirmatory approach because a new translated Portuguese version of the scale was adopted, and also due to the small size of the sample. As recommended by Hair *et al.*, (2005), factor loadings greater than 0.50 were considered necessary for practical significance, and *communalities* of 0.50 were used for item inclusion.

A Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.784 was obtained, suggesting a medium adequacy of the sample for the analysis. In line with the results of the original scale by d’Astous & Boujbel (2007), six eigenvalues were greater than

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one and the six factors explained 68.3% of the total variance, thus suggesting six dimensions of personality traits should be considered. However, three items had to be eliminated due to factor loadings  $< 0.50$ , communalities below 0.5 and cross-loaded items. After removing the items “agreeable”, “hard-at-work”, and “neutral” the analysis was repeated with just 21 items and the six extracted factors accounted for 71.624% of the variance of the initial variables (in the original study by d’Astous & Boujbel (2007, p. 236) the corresponding value is 62.5%).

**Table 2** - Factorial structure of the country personality construct (21 items)

	Component						Communalities
	Snob-bism	Assidu-ousness	Con-formity	Agreeable-ness	Unobtru-siveness	Wicked-ness	Extraction
Bon-vivant				0.577			0.654
Reveller				0.926			0.861
Amusing				0.870			0.824
Immoral						0.779	0.699
Vulgar						0.757	0.720
Decadent	0.538						0.696
Offender	0.768						0.687
Haughty	0.860						0.890
Snobbish	0.849						0.859
Mannered	0.758						0.707
Chauvinist	0.808						0.774
Organized		0.837					0.724
Rigorous		0.755					0.777
Flourishing		0.737					0.672
Religious			0.847				0.752
Spiritual			0.535				0.567
Traditionalist			0.811				0.715
Mysterious			0.646				0.550
Cowardly					0.673		0.587
Wimpy					0.574		0.538
Dependent					0.844		0.788
Eigenvalues	5.860	3.185	2.354	1.451	1.147	1.044	
Explained variance	20.026	11.992	10.971	10.608	9.429	8.598	
Cronbach’s alpha	0.908	0.752	0.725	0.801	0.720	0.640	
% Variance explained: 71.624							
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO): 0.770							
Bartlett’s test of sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square: 1279.916							
Significance $< 0.001$							
Cronbach’s alpha based on standardized items (items = 21): 0.770							
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.							
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.							

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

The factorial structure of the six country personality dimensions that was obtained is presented in Table 2. On the basis of the 21 items, the six factors are as follows: agreeableness (3 items), wickedness (2 items), snobbism (6 items), assiduousness (3 items), conformity (4 items), and unobtrusiveness (3 items).

The reliability of each of the six dimensions was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (which is a measure of the internal consistency of a summated scale) ranged from 0.640 to 0.908, showing satisfactory reliability values (see Table 2). The least reliable dimension is the wickedness personality factor (Cronbach's alpha = 0.640) even though acceptable in exploratory research (Hair, *et al.*, 2005, p. 137).

**Intention to recommend visiting**

The four scale items proposed to measure the intention to recommend a country for travel/to visit were also subject to a PCA. The resulting one-factor structure (Table 3) was consistent with the one-item factor expected pattern for the intention to recommend visiting. A KMO value of 0.713 shows a medium sample adequacy, and the extracted factor explains 71.848% of the total variance of the four original variables. The reliability of the intention to recommend scale is confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.866 (see Table 3).

Table 3 – Factorial structure of the intention to recommend construct

	Component	Communalities
	1	
itm_1 - A trip to [country] will be a lot of fun	0.915	0.838
itm_2 - I would recommend going to [country] to others	0.930	0.866
itm_3 - [Country] is a place one has dreamed of visiting	0.725	0.526
itm_4 - [Country] is a place popular with travellers	0.803	0.645

% Variance explained: 71.848

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO): 0.713

Bartlett's test of sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square: 356.069

Significance < .001

Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items (items = 4): 0.866

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

**Country personality dimensions on intentions to visit behaviour validation**

The scores of the six country personality dimensions (assiduousness, conformity, agreeableness, wickedness, snobbism, and unobtrusiveness) obtained using PCA were saved as new variables and used to position the stimuli country (Portugal) and to measure the influence of the Brazilians' perceived personality

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dimensions on the intention to recommend Portugal as a country to visit/for travel. Table 4 displays the results of the regression analysis of the proposed research model (using the six country personality dimensions as independent variables and intentions to recommend as the dependent variable).

**Table 4** – Regression analysis: Relationship between country personality and intentions to recommend visiting

Model Intentions to Recommend Visiting			
	<i>B (Beta) Standard- ized Coef- ficients</i>	t	<i>p</i>
Snobbism	-0.187	-2.205	0.030
Assiduousness	0.296	3.501	0.001
Conformity	0.050	0.596	0.552
Agreeableness	0.063	0.739	0.462
obtrusiveness	-0.144	-1.68	0.092
Wickedness	-0.278	-3.290	0.001
R	0.477		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.227		
Note: $F=5.288, p=.000$			

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The results of the regression analysis provided some evidence for the predictive validity of country personality dimensions. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.227, indicating that approximately 23% of the total variation of the intentions to recommend visiting may be explained by the country personality factors. Regarding the impacts of the six country personality dimensions on the intention to recommend Portugal as a country to visit, assiduousness showed significant positive impact ( $B=0.296, p=0.001$ ), whereas agreeableness and conformity showed non-significant positive impacts. Thus, research hypothesis H1b is supported and hypotheses H1a and H1c are not supported. From Figure 3.2 it is also possible to conclude that wickedness ( $B=-0.278, p=0.001$ ), and snobbism ( $B=-0.187, p=0.030$ ) exert a significant negative impact on intention to recommend. Unobtrusiveness did not show a significant effect on the outcome. Hence, H2a and H2c are supported and hypothesis H2b is not supported.

### Discussion

Similar to the d' Astous & Boujbel (2007) findings, six dimensions of country personality emerged in the current study. In general, the six-factors appear to replicate the original dimensions of the country personality framework. It is

possible to estimate the relative importance of a personality dimension in explaining people's intentional behaviour to recommend. Thus, findings of this study indicate that d' Astous & Boujbel's (2007) country personality framework is applicable to behavioural intentions.

From the estimated regression coefficients it is possible to conclude that the most important personality dimensions for predicting travel destination intentional behaviour were assiduousness (positive), wickedness (negative), and snobbism (negative). As expected, the wickedness dimension (measured by the items immoral and vulgar) had a negative effect on intentions behaviour prediction. The results were similar to those of d'Astous and Boujbel (2007) regarding wickedness.

With regards to the positive dimensions, the current study showed different findings when compared to the original scale (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007). These authors concluded that agreeableness was the most important predictor of general attitudes (Nebenzahl, Jaffe, & Usunier, 2003). In fact it may be worthy of reference that they used attitudes as outcomes, whilst the current paper indeed proposes intentions to recommend behaviour.

Behavioural intentions may be seen as antecedents to attitudes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and that may explain the differences. In the same paper, those authors (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007) have referred to assiduousness as the most important personality dimension in predicting product-country attitudes (p. 238). This being the case, both findings can therefore be linked and thus confirm the similarities between both studies.

These results are quite different from those postulated by d'Astous & Boujbel (2007, p. 238) when their outcomes (evaluation of travel destinations attitude) are compared with those resulting from the current study. In effect the current research has shown assiduousness and wickedness and snobbism to be the significant predictors, whilst these authors showed no significant results for assiduousness neither for snobbism. However the current research confirmed that people are easily capable of thinking of personality traits and associate them with countries, thus communicating a country personality perception. Thus, confirming the importance of the scale.

## **Contributions, limitations and future research directions**

### **Contributions**

By understanding how individuals perceive a country's symbolic image and its effects on intention to recommend, marketers may be more effective in using personality traits and behavioural intention relationships, particularly intentions to recommend behaviour. The present study thus makes important theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical standpoint, the study has indicated that consumers do attribute personality characteristics to countries. This

is in line with previous research on destination personality (e.g. Ekinici & Hosany (2006), and country personality research (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007; Nebenzahl, Jaffe, & Usunier, 2003; Geuens, Weijters, & De Wulf, 2009).

Similarly to the d'Astous & Boujbel (2007) country personality framework, in this study, six dimensions of country personality have emerged. However, this study partially replicates d'Astous & Boujbel (2007) original six personality dimensions in that four of the six dimensions originate in d'Astous & Boujbel's (2007) study. In four out of the six factors (agreeableness, assiduousness, conformity, unobtrusiveness), the personality items located under the original dimensions of d'Astous & Boujbel (2007) were the same.

In one dimension (wickedness), only two of the four personality traits loaded in the same way as those in d'Astous & Boujbel's (2007) study. The third and the fourth, instead loaded onto the "snobbism" dimension in this study. Lastly the snobbism dimension included six country specific personality traits (items); four of them were the same as the original scale, plus two traits that loaded onto the snobbism dimension and not onto the wickedness dimension as proposed by d'Astous & Boujbel (2007) scale. These two traits, "decadent" and "offender", shifted from the wickedness dimension of d'Astous & Boujbel's (2007) study and became a part of the snobbism dimension in this study.

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The shifting of the personality traits from one dimension to another can be explained by the argument that personality traits designed for consumer general attitudes tend to change when applied to behavioural intentions. This may also be attributable to sample size issues or to the relationship between country of origin and the stimuli country in question.

The relationship between the snobbism, the wickedness and the "neuroticism" dimension of the Big-Five model (Goldberg, 1990) – the only negative dimension in the human being scale – can be another explanation assuming the fact that people's perception about negative traits may tend to be evaluated with similar weights.

The current study may complement and confirm the conclusions that earlier studies had advanced on scale usage when assessing country personality. The study confirmed the quality of this tool as a measure of country image perception in a symbolic way, and its importance as a complementary instrument to measure country image. However, the low variance of outcome explanation seems to be relevant for future research.

According to the sample personality traits evaluation, it may be concluded that Brazilians perceive Portugal as a religious and traditionalist country. That is an addition to d'Astous & Boujbel's (2007) study. Portugal may be added to the list of countries already scrutinized for its country personality, and therefore be seen as conformist. Thus, marketers can potentially use these characteristics



to make their communication proposals to attract more Brazilians to Portugal. In applying the results of the current study to the drafting of marketing strategies, marketers should put an emphasis on the traditionalist/conformist aspects of Portugal, namely culture, traditions, religiosity (associated with Fatima's sanctuary, for example), and other historical elements.

Since behavioural intentions can be treated as an attitudinal antecedent, and countries to visit/for travel become more substitutable, country personality may be seen as a viable metaphor for building a unique country identity.

Finally, assiduousness and wickedness were seen as the most relevant personality dimensions, believed to be predictors of intention to recommend behaviour. In using the insights from the current study, marketers need to take into consideration that assiduousness (measured by the items organized, rigorous, flourish) is a positive predictor of intentions to recommend behaviour, and that wickedness (measured by the items immoral and vulgar) is a negative predictor of intentions to recommend Portugal for visiting.

### **Limitations and future research**

Akin to any other study of this nature and scope, the present research has some limitations which have to be taken into account when considering a discussion on the merits of its findings. First, the results are limited to the sample size. Second, the findings of this study are specific to one country (Portugal) and cannot be generalized to others. Third, the present study focused on general customers (who have already visited / and who did not visit) perception about a country and therefore the results may not be generalizable to other useful outcomes such as intentions to purchase, for example.

Also, the current research was conducted using an online method of enquiry with respondents being invited to complete a questionnaire online. Finally, the study was conducted considering only one stimuli country, and the questionnaire was handed out only in Portuguese to Brazilian respondents. This study also seems to complement the one conducted by d'Astous & Boujbel (2007) in particular with regards to the following details: the current study used a larger sample for a unique country evaluation; in addition, a new translation of the scale and its validation was performed, and a Portuguese version of the original language adjectives (French, and English afterwards by the scale authors) became available.

Future research includes replicating this study with a larger sample size, which can increase the understanding of this research area, implying an important contribution to the country personality literature. Since travel choice, and in particular intentions behaviour is not only affected by personal factors, future research may add the effects of cognitive and affective image factors within the context of behavioural intentions to visit/travel. Also, future studies may investigate the moderating impact of country familiarity on the relationship

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between country personality dimensions and behavioural intentions from a wider perspective (including intentions as plans and even intentions as wants).

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