

## **Country Personality Scale: Is a Five-dimensional Model a Better Methodological Instrument?**

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**A five-dimensional scale of country personality**

## **Abstract**

Researchers investigate the country personality scale and explore the use of a five-dimensional scale instead of the originally proposed six-dimensional scale and its application for evaluating consumers' behavioral intentions. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the country personality scale and to adapt it to the Portuguese context, proposing a model anchored in a reduced country personality scale. Pretest (sample of 115 Brazilians) and main survey data (685 responses from São Paulo and Bahia states in Brazil) are considered. Portugal is the stimulus country. The proposed research model relating the country's personality dimensions to its behavioral intentions to visit is estimated using structural equation modeling with AMOS, and the research hypotheses are tested. The results suggest that five dimensions (agreeableness, assiduousness, conformity, snobbism, and unobtrusiveness) should be considered when measuring country personality. There is a perception that this scale is an instrument useful for a quantitative approach to measuring a country personality construct and its impact on behavioral intentions, which can help researchers and marketers address international and cross-cultural marketing issues. Based on the main survey data, subjected to the personality trait frequency analysis, Portugal is classified as a conformist country.

**Keywords:** Country personality; behavioral intentions; Portugal; Brazil

## **1. Introduction**

The increasing competition between countries for attracting business investment and tourism has led researchers to develop instruments that may aid consumers worldwide in objectively evaluating particular markets. This global process is reflected by the growing number of studies conducted in lesser-known countries. As researchers, we believe that a unique identity is crucial to the differentiation and positioning of countries. Thus, a distinctive country personality appeal may clearly identify a country in the consumer's mind and thereby differentiate it from its competitors (Lee & Lijia, 2012).

Recent studies suggest that both destination personality and country personality scales are capable of predicting a 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 paper follows the latter approach.

From a managerial perspective, this paper provides insights into country-related and consumer-related factors that drive behavioral intentions, which therefore need to be considered when developing international marketing strategies. The country personality can serve as a benchmarking tool for public policy officials when they want to know how their country is positioned in the international arena from the perspective of a consumer. In this respect, the country personality scale can be used to create country profiles, enabling comparisons to be made between the focal country and its most important competitors. From an analytical perspective, country personality dimensions provide concrete guidance on the factors that public policy has to focus on when designing image enhancement or repositioning strategies.

### **1.1 Narrowing the focus**

Countries expend enormous effort to gain competitive advantages in tourism, investment, and business (Anholt, 2005), and academic researchers must therefore enhance their efforts in eliciting knowledge of the role of branding and brand distinction (Aaker, 1997). Some authors have referred to successful and distinct personalities attached to the brand identities of certain countries, such as South Africa – modern and friendly (before 2010 FIFA World Cup) (Stokburger-Sauer, 2011); Ireland – the “Celtic Tiger” (Murphy A., 2000); and Spain – fresh, free and competitive (Gilmore, 2002).

According to Moya and Jain (2013), every country has a scattered image of itself that it projects to international consumers, although this image may be more or less clear and stronger or weaker and personal experience can be seen as a support for the country image. People are therefore likely to form organized mental representations of countries, as they do with other inanimate objects. Thus, the country personality may be seen as a metaphor for building a unique identity (Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Guido, 2001).

When a person thinks of Japan as an assiduous or diligent country (Nebenzahl, Jaffe, & Usunier, 2003), he/she believes it is an organized, rigorous, flourishing, and hardworking country, and this may have an influence on his/her (behavioral) intentions to visit/travel to it.

Researchers such as Alain d’Astous and Lilia Boujbel (2007) introduce a personality perspective to the discussion, providing evidence that it is reasonable to talk about a country personality and make use of human traits to qualify and present countries in a human-like manner (pp. 233-237). International marketing researchers studying country branding suggest that countries, just like brands, are described by consumers as possessing specific qualities and traits (Anholt, 2003).

However, there is a lack of academic research on the influence of a destination/country personality on a tourist’s behavioral intentions, and the existing findings have shown some inconsistencies. Ekinci and Hosany (2006) found that a destination

personality positively influences a tourist's intentions to recommend. However, Murphy, Benckendorff, & Moscardo (2007) noted that a destination personality failed to predict the intention to revisit. The results of d' Astous & Boujbel (2007) suggest the possibility of applying a country personality scale predicting people's travel attitudes (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007, p. 238), but their results have some weaknesses.

There is also a lack of research on the analysis and identification of the dimensions of the country personality that influence other variables (Lee & Lijia, 2012). There is a need to explore and examine the potential of the existing country personality scale (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007) in predicting behavioral intentions, such as those to travel.

First, the perceived country personality of the stimulus country and its underlying dimensions are investigated. The construct validity is subsequently tested, following which the study proceeds to investigate the effects of the country personality dimensions on consumer behavioral intentions to visit.

The context for the empirical research is Portugal and Brazil. There are approximately 240 million Portuguese-speaking people in the world (PLC, 2013), and this in and of itself offers ample justification for research to be conducted in this area and for a Portuguese version of the country personality scale to be worthy of scrutiny. In this context, the existing scale is adapted to a different market and culture (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003).

## **2. Literature review**

Personality traits can be associated with a destination by recourse to user imagery. Authors such as Plummer (1985) and Keller (1993) argued that brand personality is a non-product attribute. Jennifer Aaker (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 replicated Aaker's (1997)

original brand personality framework, applying it in the context of different product categories and across different cultures and geographies.

Ekinçi and Hosany (2006) suggest that a 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. These authors define destination personality as *"the set of human characteristics associated with a destination by tourists"* (2006, p. 127), thus adapting Aaker's (1997) brand personality terminology in the context of tourism destination realities. Ekinçi and Hosany (2006) show three salient dimensions of destination personality (sincerity, excitement, and conviviality) rather than the original five dimensions of brand personality. The authors find sincerity and excitement to be the two main factors, while conviviality is a new addition that is specific to destinations. They reveal that destination personality has a positive impact on tourists' intentions to recommend. Accordingly, Caprara et al. (2001) discussing personality issues, agree that the symbolic association can be considered a stable metaphor.

Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale includes non-personality items. Accordingly, it has been addressed by the Big Five and psychology literature (Goldberg, 1990) and criticized by authors such as Azoulay & Kapferer (2003) and Geuens, Weijters, & De Wulf (2009).

D'Astous and Boujbel (2007) use the Big Five model as a baseline to develop empirical studies to reduce a list of personality traits to a feasible and easily manageable six-dimensional scale of with 24 items, utilizing different numbers of countries as stimuli and employing a convenient sampling method.

The dimensions were labeled by d'Astous and Boujbel (2007) and capture both the positive and negative perceived traits of a country. The positive traits are i) *agreeableness* – similar to the "agreeableness" dimension of the Big Five human personality model, focusing

on the quality of life and interpersonal relationships (Goldberg, 1990). *Agreeableness* is measured by the items “bon-vivant”, “reveler”, “amusing” and “agreeable” (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007) and is related to the “people effect” (Heslop, Papadopoulos, Dowdles, Wall, & Compeau, 2004) - “...people like and trust those whom they see as of agreeable culture ...” (Heslop, Papadopoulos, & Bamossy, 1993, p. 199); ii) *assiduousness* - comparable to “conscientiousness” of the Big Five, which is associated with efficacy and rule-consciousness (Goldberg, 1990). *Assiduousness* includes the items “organized”, “rigorous”, “flourishing” and “hard at work” (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007) and is related to “people competence” (Heslop et al., 2004); iii) *conformity* – comparable to “openness to experience” of the Big Five, which captures agreement with established rules and customs (Goldberg, 1990). *Conformity* includes such items as “religious”, “spiritual”, “traditionalist” and “mysterious” (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007).

The negative or unfavorable personality dimensions are the following: i) *wickedness*, which is similar to “neuroticism” of the Big Five, focusing on negative emotional and behavioral traits (Goldberg, 1990); *wickedness* includes the “immoral”, “vulgar”, “decadent” and “offender” traits (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007) and is likely to result in a negative attractiveness (Verlegh, Benedict, & Steenkamp, 1999); ii) *snobbism*, which has no direct similarities to any of the Big Five human personality traits, where neuroticism (Goldberg, 1990) is the only dimension that captures negative effects; *snobbism* includes items such as “snobbish”, “haughty”, “mannered” and “chauvinist” (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007) and has a negative influence on country evaluation, as a country scoring high on snobbism is likely to be perceived as arrogant or snobbish, thus resulting in unfavorable perceptions (Nebenzahl et al., 2003); and iii) *unobtrusiveness*, which may be comparable to the “extraversion” dimension of the Big Five human personality scale (Goldberg, 1990); *unobtrusiveness* includes items such as “cowardly”, “wimpy”, “dependent” and “neutral” (d' Astous &



Boujbel, 2007) and is related to the perceived inability of a country to protect (guard, defend) itself, in contrast to *wickedness* and *snobbism*, which evoke negative associations due to their unpleasant characteristics (Geuens et al., 2009).

Consumer behavior motivation seems to be driven by the mental images perceived by the consumer more than truthful attributes (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006). It is a matter of simplification through creating symbolic representations of major characteristics. An attractive country personality can effectively leverage the perceived image of a country and thereby influence consumer behavior. Behavioral intentions can be seen as a result of anticipated satisfaction with an object and are therefore very useful for marketing purposes. In the light of that, it can be assumed that an act should be real to be evaluated and to enable the prediction of intentions (Soderlund & Ohman, 2003).

Other researchers explored behavioral intentions in various stages, such as Baloglu (2001), who argues for actual behavior being an effective measure of loyalty, Fishbein and Manfredo (1992), who refer to behavioral intentions as very precise predictors of social behaviors, and Baker and Crompton (2000), who argue that behavioral intentions are truthful predictors of consumer loyalty because they represent the high attitudinal likelihood of consequent behaviors (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

This paper focuses on a deeper analysis of the country personality dimensions and applies the scale to behavioral intentions to visit. Accordingly, four research questions are addressed:

What is the perceived country personality trait that consumers ascribe to the stimulus country?

How many country personality dimensions should be considered?

Do country personality dimensions influence the behavioral intentions to visit?

If so, which are the country personality dimensions perceived by consumers that best predict their behavioral intentions to visit/travel to a stimulus country?

Figure 1 displays the research model. The researchers investigate the perceived country personality, as evaluated by Brazilians from São Paulo (SP) and Bahia (BA) states, and its influence on behavioral intentions to visit/travel to Portugal.

According to the consumer behavior and personality literature, an established personality influences consumer preferences (Sirgy, 1982; Ekinici & Hosany, 2006; d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007). The tourism and country of origin literature use outcomes such as consumer behavioral intentions to purchase/buy (Knight & Calantone, 2000) or visit (Um & Crompton, 1990). Similarly, using the behavioral intention to visit a country as a setting, this article aims to deepen the study of country personality and contribute to the evolution of the interrelationship constructs. The country personality captures both the positive and the negative perceived traits of a country, while behavioral intentions can be seen as propositions that assign future-oriented acts to individuals (Soderlund & Ohman, 2003). In light of that, researchers hypothesize relationships between the variables, as follows:

H1a; H1b; and H1c: (a) Agreeableness; (b) Assiduousness; and (c) Conformity have positive impacts on behavioral intentions to visit.

H2a; H2b; and H2c: (a) Snobbism; (b) Wickedness; and (c) Unobtrusiveness have negative impacts on behavioral intentions to visit.

< Insert Figure 1 about here >

### **3. Methodology**

The study is conducted in two states in Brazil – SP, in the southwest, has the highest average income per capita (R\$ 25,988.00) (BrazilState-SP, 2009) and is the economic

powerhouse and most multicultural state, while the state of BA, in the northern region, has the lowest average income (R\$ 12,701.00) ([BrazilState-BA, 2009](#)) and a powerful historical link to Portugal. Three criteria guided the choice of Portugal as the stimulus country: (1) cultural/historical affinity, familiarity and common language, (2) geographic distance, and (3) economic and demographic diversity.

A self-administered questionnaire is used. The questions are mostly closed-ended. The respondents are asked to think of the country as if it were a person and to ascribe human personality traits to it ([Davies, Chun, Da Silva, & Roper, 2001](#)). The scale is borrowed from the original d' Astous & Boujbel ([2007](#)) scale, translated into Portuguese, and subsequently evaluated by experts in the Portuguese language with the aim of ensuring adequate understanding by Brazilian readers before delivery.

The stimulus country is evaluated with respect to 24 personality traits, using a 5-point scale, with anchors (1) *does not describe this country at all* and (5) *describes this country perfectly* ([d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007, p. 239](#)). Behavioral intentions to visit are measured using six items (e.g., "I have plans to visit [Portugal] in the next two years"), adopted from Um and Crompton ([1990](#)), with anchors (1) *totally disagree* and (5) *totally agree*.

Pretest data were collected from August to September, 2013. The respondents were invited via e-mail to fill in a questionnaire located on an online platform. For the main survey, a quota sample of the population of SP and BA was employed, and the data collection took place from November, 2013 to February, 2014. The questionnaire was delivered in Brazilian Portuguese only and using Brazilian demographic specific questions.

### **3.1 Sample description**

The target population for the main survey is defined as males and females over the age of 18, speaking Portuguese, with internet access and a registered e-mail address, living in the surveyed states of SP and BA and earners of a monthly wage. In total, 821 questionnaires

were obtained for the main survey, and from those, 136 were deemed unusable due to excessive missing or incomplete data. Thus, a total of 685 questionnaires with valid responses were retained for analysis.

The main survey has more male (59%) than female (41%) respondents. The majority of individuals in the sample fell between the ages of 36-55, accounting for 54.2% of the total number of respondents. The level of education is high, with 72.2% of the respondents holding a graduate (27.7%), masters (16.5%), or a PhD degree (28%). Individual monthly incomes are considered to be high, as 47.9% of the respondents state earning more than 10 times the minimum salary (baseline R\$ 510.00), and 20.7% claim earning between five and ten minimum salaries. Overall, the participants have internet access, have a registered e-mail, live in the states of SP or BA, and earn a monthly income. SP state residents are more numerous (65%) than residents from BA (29.8%), and 5.3% of the respondents mention another state as the one that they consider their home state. Almost all the participants refer to Portuguese as their mother tongue (96.8%). From the sample survey, 58.8% (403 people) had visited Portugal in the previous five years, and from those, 43.7% had visited Portugal once, 21.3% traveled twice, and 18.1% visited Portugal at least three times. From the respondents who visited Portugal, 52.6% travelled for tourism, 17.6% for work, 11.2% for study, 8.2% to visit their family, and 10.4% for other reasons.

Overall, the participants demonstrate an affinity to Portugal. According to the answers to the questionnaire, the main sources and contributors to the way in which participants infer country personality traits are *the media* (mean of 3.69 in a scale of 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree)); *knowing the country* (mean of 3.29); *traveler experiences* (mean of 2.48); *family and relatives* (mean of 2.31); *products and brands* (mean of 2.66); and *knowledge acquired at school* (mean of 2.96). The last factor does not have the expected weight, as

based on preliminary interviews, it was assumed that Brazilians learn more about Portugal through the school system and academic curricula than is actually the case.

### **3.2 Data analysis**

IBM SPSS® and AMOS® 20.0 are the software used to analyze the data. Data are explored for outliers using the squared distance of Mahalanobis (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2005, p. 75). The pretest sample (N=115) is used to perform exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and the main survey sample (N=685) is used to conduct confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and test the proposed research hypotheses. In the first stage, the analysis includes the validity testing of the country personality and behavioral intention to visit scales. Finally, the research model and the research hypotheses are tested using structural equation modeling (SEM).

#### **3.2.1. Personality traits associated with Portugal**

The 685 respondents were asked to think about Portugal as if it were a person and were then asked to rate each of the 24 items of the country personality scale (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007). Considering the distribution answers, the two personality traits with the highest frequencies (above 4.0) are “religious”, with a mean value of 4.33 (std deviation=0.87), and “traditionalist”, with a mean value of 4.15 (std deviation=0.94). The items “immoral” and “vulgar” received the lowest frequency rates, with mean values of 1.51.

In the same manner, Santos (2004) found that Portugal was associated with personality traits such as contemporary, modern, sophisticated, and traditional. Santos (2004, p. 128) focused on the analysis of a collection of American newspaper (from 1996 and 2002) travel section articles about Portugal. Anholt's (2003) view may thus be corroborated when the author refers to culture as the unique feature of a country that communicates its true spirit and essence and that can potentially influence the country personality.

#### **3.2.2. EFA and reliability analysis**

This stage involves testing the validity of the country personality and behavioral intention to visit scales. To this end, two separate EFA analyses are conducted for each of the scales. EFA is used to identify the underlying personality dimensions using the principal component analysis (PCA) method. Using PCA also helps researchers perform multicollinearity verification (Hair et al., (2005)). Construct reliabilities are assessed using Cronbach alpha values.

### **Country personality**

The scale of d'Astous and Boujbel (2007) used in this paper is specifically intended to measure the country personality construct, which makes it conceptually appropriate (Geuens et al., 2009). However because a translated version of the scale was used, the methodological option of conducting both EFA and CFA is taken.

EFA was performed on the 24 personality items, using the pretest sample to identify the underlying personality dimensions based on the PCA method. Per Hair et al. (2005), factor loadings greater than 0.50 are considered necessary for practical significance, and communalities of at least 0.50 are used for item inclusion. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.78 is obtained, suggesting a medium adequacy of the sample for the analysis, and Bartlett's test is significant at the 0.00 level, suggesting the items are correlated. In line with the original scale, six dimensions are obtained, accounting for 68.3% of the variance of the initial variables.

However, three items are not deemed to be suitable due to low factor loadings. After removing the items, the analysis is repeated with the remaining 21 items, and the six-factor solution accounted for approximately 71.6% of the total variance (in the original study, the corresponding value is 62.5% (d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007, p. 236), with the communalities ranging from 0.54 to 0.89.

The factorial structure is presented in Table 1. On the basis of the 21 items, the six dimensions are as follows: agreeableness (3 items), wickedness (2 items), snobbism (6 items), assiduousness (3 items), conformity (4 items), and unobtrusiveness (3 items).

All factors have relatively high alpha reliability coefficients, ranging from 0.64 to 0.91 (see Table 1). The least reliable dimension is the wickedness personality factor (Cronbach's alpha = 0.64), even though it was acceptable in exploratory research (Hair et al., 2005, p. 137) – d' Astous & Boujbel (2007) also report a Cronbach's alpha of 0.64 for the wickedness dimension. These findings provide evidence for the construct validity of the scale (Churchill, 1979).

<Insert Table 1 about here>

### **Behavioral intention to visit**

A six scale items is proposed to measure behavioral intentions, particularly, the intention to visit/travel to a specific country, which is subject to a PCA. The resulting one-factor structure is consistent with the expected item-factor pattern for the behavioral intention to visit. A KMO value of 0.77 shows a medium adequacy, and Bartlett's test has a significance level of 0.00. The extracted factor explains 60.4% of the total variance of the six original variables and has a relatively high alpha reliability coefficient (0.85). However, one item (Q5\_4) has to be eliminated due to communalities below 0.5. After removing the item, the analysis is repeated with just 5 items, and the KMO value is 0.74. The solution accounted for 66.6% of the total variance, with the communalities ranging from 0.55 to 0.77, and it has a relatively high alpha reliability coefficient (0.86) (see Table 2).

<Insert Table 2 about here>

The unexpected factorial distribution of the items on the country personality scale obtained with the pretest data indicates the need to dig deeper into the construct specification (scale) and explore its potential.

### **3.2.3. CFA**

The proposed pretest-based model for measuring the country personality construct is validated within SEM using AMOS® 20.0 and data from the main sample. Model-data fit is assessed using various goodness of fit indices and measures, namely the chi-square and corresponding degrees of freedom ( $X^2/df$ ); the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA - and corresponding 90% confidence interval); the goodness of fit index (GFI); the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI); the comparative fit index (CFI); the incremental fit index (IFI) and the PCLOSE. The application of these analyses is based on the literature from Hu and Bentler (1998), Hair et al. (2005), Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), Bryman and Cramer (2009).

#### **CFA MODEL 1 (pretest-based)**

The model has six factors measured by 21 items. Maximum likelihood estimation is used. The first CFA model shows an acceptable model-data fit:  $X^2(164)=816.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $X^2/df=4.98$ , CFI=0.90, GFI=0.90, RMSEA=0.08 (Table 3). However, the model shows two items with low loadings (Table 4). The  $X^2/df$  shows a value close to the high limit (5) of what is considered acceptable (Marsh & Hocevar, 1985).

#### **CFA MODEL 2 (original scale based)**

The model has six factors measured by 24 items. An acceptable model-data fit is obtained when a CFA with the structure of the original scale by d'Astous and Boujbel (2007) is considered:  $X^2(227)=1148.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $X^2/df=5.06$ , CFI=0.88, GFI=0.87, RMSEA=0.08 (Table 3). However, the model shows two items with low loadings (Table 4). Shared



variances range from a minimum of almost 0% to a maximum of over 83% (snobbism and wickedness), whereas the AVE (average variance extracted) ranges from 39.5% to 63.7%, thereby providing support for neither the discriminant validity nor the nomological validity of the dimensions due to the interdimensional correlations between snobbism and wickedness (0.83). This suggests that a different configuration should be considered.

Wickedness, as well as snobbism, is a negative dimension and can be compared to negative affections, and thus it can be treated as an unfavorable dimension. Snobbism is proposed by d'Astous and Boujbel (2007) in the context of country of origin literature using personality traits such as "chauvinist", and it appears as a second unfavorable dimension in the country personality scale. However, snobbism, similar to wickedness is expected to have a negative impact on country evaluation, so that an entity scoring high on both dimensions is likely to be perceived as snobbish, arrogant or even immoral or offensive, resulting in unfavorable perceptions.

The high correlation values between the snobbism and wickedness dimensions can be understood on the basis of that negative assumption. As the Big Five human personality scale (Goldberg, 1990) only has the neuroticism dimension to capture the negative traits, we may argue that the unfavorable traits can be perceived as having similar weights when applied to a country. Therefore, following these results, the researchers in the current study decide to combine the two dimensions, snobbism and wickedness, into a single factor and propose CFA model 3.

### **CFA MODEL 3 (reduced final proposed model)**

The final proposed CFA model has five dimensions measured by 15 items, as displayed in Table 4. CFA model shows a good model-data fit:  $X^2(76)=204.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $X^2/df=2.69$ , CFI=0.97, GFI=0.96, RMSEA=0.05 (Table 3). The results show a consistent model in terms of composite reliability (CR) values (all over .70, except for assiduousness

(0.68)) and AVE all over 50%, in line with Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Hair *et al.*, (2005) (Table 4). Likewise, the global adjustment of the CFA model also achieves acceptable values.

<Insert Table 3 about here>

Table 3 shows the desirable and the achieved values. Thus, the convergent validity of the scale is confirmed, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Hair, *et al.*, (2005). Although Hu and Bentler (1998) do not recommend the use of GFI due to its insensitivity to model misspecification, AGFI is found to be insensitive to the estimation methods and distribution. However, GFI is sensitive to sample size (Hu & Bentler, 1998).

<Insert Table 4 about here>

To confirm the discriminant validity, the correlations between variables are evaluated. None of the correlations are very high, except in Model 2, where the correlation between the snobbism and wickedness dimensions is quite high. However, this value suggests a new redistribution of the items, resulting in a new reduced model with five dimensions (Model\_3). The latter adjusted model does not show any high correlations among the dimensions. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that the AVE in each dimension cannot be lower than the variance shared with others. That confirms the discriminant validity on the dimensions. Table 5 shows the correlations between the six country personality dimensions, and the corresponding significance levels, in models 1, 2 and 3.

<Insert Table 5 about here>

The nomological validity examines whether the correlations between the constructs in the measurement theory make sense. Shared variances range from a minimum of close to 0% (agreeableness and conformity) to a maximum of 48.3% (snobbism and unobtrusiveness), whereas the AVE ranges from 52.6% to 62.5%, thus providing support for the discriminant validity and nomological validity of the dimensions.

The face validity is confirmed, as the items are grouped into 6 factors initially, according to the original scale of d' Astous & Boujbel (2007), and thereafter directly into 5 factors, based on the present research data and supported by the literature, namely the Big Five human personality factor structure (Goldberg, 1990). The preliminary tests also confirm the quality of the scales and the definition of the models. However, the current paper proposes a structure using fifteen items instead of the twenty-four initially proposed.

#### **4. Hypothesized research model validation**

The five-dimensional country personality scale is used to measure the influence of Brazilians' (from SP and BA states) perceived personality traits of Portugal on their behavioral intentions to visit Portugal. Figure 2 displays the path diagram of the research model, with the estimates that are obtained using a standardized solution (critical ratio values computed by AMOS in parentheses).

<Insert Figure 2 about here>

Goodness of fit values suggest a very good model-data fit:  $X^2(149)=308.14$ ;  $X^2/df=2.068$ ; CFI=0.98; GFI=0.96; RMSEA=0.04; 90% CI for RMSEA=[0.03; 0.05]; RMR=0.05. The coefficient of determination is 0.243, indicates that approximately 24.3% of the total variation in behavioral intentions to visit is explained by the country personality factors.

Regarding the impacts of the five country personality dimensions on behavioral intentions to visit/travel to Portugal, assiduousness shows a significant positive influence (estimate=0.35; p=0.000), whereas agreeableness and conformity show non-significant impacts. Thus, research hypothesis H1b is supported, and hypotheses H1a and H1c are not supported.

From the Figure 2 analysis, it is also possible to conclude that snobbism exerts a significant negative influence on behavioral intentions to visit (estimate= - 0.29; p=0.000) and unobtrusiveness shows a non-significant effect on the outcome variable. Hence, research hypothesis H2a is supported, and hypothesis H2c is not supported.

## **5. Discussion of findings**

There is a relevant difference from the d' Astous & Boujbel (2007) findings, as they propose six dimensions of the country personality, whereas five dimensions emerged in the current paper. In general, four of the five factors appear to replicate the original dimensions. However, the fifth dimension aggregates two of the original factors into just one factor, and this seems particularly relevant and worthy of further scrutiny. The validation and confirmation process of the final reduced scale (5 factors) led to a scale supported by 15 items instead of maintaining the 24 items initially presented.

The evidence of a five-factor system rather than a six-factor system is something novel for country personality studies, although something similar had already occurred in the branding literature (Caprara et al., 2001) and Lee and Lijia's (2012) arguments. Their findings, in tourism destination studies, show that Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale could not be fully replicated. Caprara et al. (2001) argue that brands can be described using a small number of dimensions, as Hosany, Ekinici, and Uysal (2006) describe. They start with the five-factor brand personality scale (Aaker, 1997) and end up with three dimensional structures, which they call destination personality (Hosany et al., 2006).

This paper's findings are also consistent with existing theories in the consumer behavior literature that indicate that the creation of certain meanings relative to brand personality are culturally specific (McCrae & Costa, 1996), and the symbolism associated with a brand tends to vary to some degree due to varying needs of individuals and socialization processes and phenomena (Fishbein & Manfredo, 1992).

The current paper's findings support the application of the country personality scale of d'Astous and Boujbel (2007) to countries as travel destinations. Previous studies have focused mostly on the applicability and validity of another scale (brand personality scale from Aaker (1997), (Caprara et al., 2001; Ekinici & Hosany, 2006)) to consumer goods and across cultures, but very little research has attempted to test the relevance of the country personality (Chen & Phou, 2013; Ekinici et al., 2007).

Together with the works of Aaker (1997) and Geuens *et al.* (2009), the current paper shares the idea of a five-factor model. The current study goes further and explores the relative importance of each country personality dimension and their differences and keeps most of the proposed analogies to the Big Five human personality scale and its original purpose of being an instrument to operationalize the country personality construct.

In this paper, the authors highlight the perceived role of country personality characteristics and their influence on consumer behavior intentions. Of particular interest – and relevance to related research streams such as tourism research – is the revealed impact on behavioral intentions to visit. Country personality can be seen as a summary cue that may affect non-product related decisions.

On the methodological front, our study's main contribution lies in an independent rationalization of d' Astous & Boujbel's (2007) country personality scale. While the scale was originally developed in the context of a single country (Canada), this paper replicates the

scale in a different national context and also assessed its psychometric properties and reveals a valid and reliable scale, as expected. A new translated version is produced.

## **6. Contributions and limitations**

This paper evaluates the country personality scale and applies it in the Portuguese context, deriving a useful and practical model anchored on a reduced five-dimension 15-item country personality scale. There is a clear perception of this scale as an instrument for a quantitative approach to measuring the country personality construct, as well as the behavioral intentions to visit scale, helping researchers and marketers in the management of international and cross-cultural marketing issues.

Using a confirmatory approach, this paper made it possible to achieve a better understanding of the perceptions that Brazilian consumers from SP and BA states have of Portugal, enabling the identification of its personality traits. The reduced scale model reflects some cultural values that are found in Brazil and transferred to the evaluation of a specific foreign country through traveling behavior intentions.

By understanding how individuals perceive a country personality and its effects on behavioral intentions to visit/travel, marketers may be more effective in using personality traits and behavioral intention relationships. For practitioners, this study should be useful for positioning and projecting the evolution of a country's symbolic images, taking into account the opinion of consumers of countries that compete with each other, particularly for tourism income.

### **6.1 Academic contributions and managerial implications**

This paper shows that people are easily capable of thinking of personality traits and associating them with countries, thereby communicating country personality impressions and feelings. This is in line with the previous research on destination personality (e.g., (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006)), and country personality (Nebenzahl et al., 2003; d' Astous & Boujbel, 2007).

The quality of the country personality scale as a measurement tool of country image perception in a symbolic way and its importance as a complementary instrument for measuring country image is confirmed. Indeed, the results indicate that country personality dimensions may have significant impacts on consumer behavioral intentions. Snobbism and assiduousness are seen as the most relevant personality dimensions perceived by the research population that are predictors of behavioral intentions to visit Portugal, whereas agreeableness, conformity and unobtrusiveness are not statistically significant.

Promoting the functional attributes of a country no longer helps countries attract consumers because of the high similarity and growing substitutability of the service offer. The findings of the current research provide broad evidence that the symbolic functions or benefits of a country personality can be crucial in understanding the complex consumer intentions for travel behavior.

Using a non-probabilistic sampling method and acknowledging the restriction of investigating solely the perceptions of Brazilian consumers applied to only one stimulus country, the generalization of the research findings is naturally difficult.

According to the empirical evidence presented here, Portugal may be added to the list of countries already scrutinized for its country personality, in summary, a conformist nation. Thus, marketers can potentially use these characteristics to communicate their proposals and thus attract more Brazilians to visit Portugal. The emphasis should, in this context, be placed on the more traditional, positive aspects of Portugal, including its culture, historical elements and landmarks, gastronomy, and traditions.

## **6.2 Limitations and future research**

Akin to any other study of this nature and scope, the present research has some limitations, which need to be taken into account when considering a discussion. First, this paper focuses on general customer perceptions and behavioral intentions, and therefore the

results may not be generalizable to cognitive outputs such as purchase attitudes or purchase decisions.

Due to time and financial constraints, the target population of the study is restricted to the states of São Paulo and Bahia. Additionally, this study did not aim to survey the sample based on the real proportions of demographic characteristics. This research was conducted using an online survey method, with respondents being invited to complete an online questionnaire handed out only in Portuguese to Brazilian respondents. However, this study complements the one conducted by d' Astous & Boujbel(2007), in particular in that it uses a larger sample for a unique country evaluation and has a wider range of consumers as respondents as opposed to a student sample. 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 replicating this study in other countries will increase the external validity of this worthwhile research area, making an important contribution to the country personality literature. Although the authors of the study found that Portugal has a five-dimensional country personality, the responses provide support for the argument that the country personality scale may not fully represent the personality traits associated with a country, in line with Aaker's (1997) findings, as materialized in the brand personality scale. The low variance of the outcome explanation seems to be relevant for the purposes of future research.

The arguments made by d' Astous & Boujbel (2007) about the lesser usefulness of the country personality scale for predicting people's evaluation of countries as travel destinations (p. 238) is not corroborated, according to our findings. However, more research is needed to corroborate or refute these findings. Indeed, closed-ended questions elicit personality traits



that are similar in d' Astous & Boujbel (2007), and the CFA reveals five dimensions rather than six country personality dimensions.

Because travel choice and particularly behavioral intentions are not only affected by personal factors, future research may include the effects of affective country image factors in the context of behavioral intentions for travel. The inclusion of an emotional construct as a mediator in this relationship seems to make sense in the context of much-needed future research.

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Figure 1 – Research model, adapted from Nebenzahl et al. (2003) and Ye (2012).

Figure 2 – Research model with estimates using a standardized solution

### Figure Legends

**Comentário [AFS1]:** Per the journal guidelines, the figure legends should be placed on a separate page at the end of the manuscript. Please include all figure legends in this section prior to submission.



**Tables**

**Comentário [AFS2]:** Per the journal guidelines, all the tables should be placed at the end of the manuscript, each on a separate page. Please include all tables in this section prior to submission.

**Table 1.** Factorial structure and reliability values for the six dimensions of the country personality construct (21 items)

	Component						Communalities
	Snobbism	Assiduousness	Conformity	Agreeableness	Unobtrusiveness	Wickedness	Extraction
Bon-vivant				0.58			0.65
Reveler				0.93			0.86
Amusing				0.87			0.82
Immoral						0.78	0.67
Vulgar						0.76	0.72
Decadent	0.54						0.70
Offender	0.77						0.69
Haughty	0.86						0.89
Snobbish	0.85						0.86
Mannered	0.76						0.71
Chauvinist	0.81						0.77
Organized		0.84					0.72
Rigorous		0.76					0.78
Flourishing		0.74					0.67
Religious			0.85				0.75
Spiritual			0.54				0.57
Traditionalist			0.81				0.72
Mysterious			0.65				0.55
Cowardly					0.67		0.59
Wimpy					0.57		0.54
Dependent					0.84		0.79
Eigenvalues	5.86	3.19	2.35	1.45	1.15	1.04	
Explained variance	20.03	11.99	10.97	10.61	9.43	8.60	
Cronbach's alpha	0.91	0.75	0.73	0.80	0.72	0.64	

% Variance explained: 71.62  
 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO): 0.77  
 Bartlett's test of sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square: 1279.92  
 Significance < 0.001  
 Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items (items = 21): 0.77  
 Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization  
 a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations

**Table 2.** Factorial structure of the behavioral intention to visit

<b>Question: (Country) as a travel destination</b>	<b>Component</b>	<b>Communalities</b>
	1	
Q5_1 - A trip to to [country] will be a lot of fun	0.76	0.57
Q5_2 - I would recommend going to [country] to others	0.86	0.73
Q5_3 – I will say positive things about [Country] for others	0.84	0.70
<del>Q5_4 – [Country] is a very popular destiny among Brazilian travelers</del>		
Q5_5 – I have plans to visit [Country] in the next two years	0.74	0.55
Q5_6 – I will encourage friends and relatives to visit [Country]	0.88	0.77

% Variance explained: 66.58

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO): 0.74

Bartlett's test of sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square: (10) 2202.41

Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items (items = 5): 0.86

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

a. 1 components extracted

**Table 3.** Goodness of fit indices

Description	CFA Model 1 (Pretest-based)				CFA Model 2 (Original scale-based)				CFA Model 3 (Reduced final model)			
	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
Agreeableness	Bon-vivant	0.53	0.83	62.87	Bon-vivant	0.65	0.84	57.67	Bon-vivant	0.52	0.83	62.46
	Reveler	0.84			Reveler	0.82			Reveler	0.81		
	Amusing	0.94			Amusing	0.96			Amusing	0.97		
	Agreeable	-			Agreeable	0.55			Agreeable	-		
Wickedness	Immoral	0.77	0.81	67.54	Immoral	0.55	0.74	42.12	-	-	-	-
	Vulgar	0.87			Vulgar	0.62			-	-		
	-	-			Decadent	0.65			-	-		
	-	-			Offender	0.77			-	-		
Snobbism	-	-	0.87	54.44	-	-	0.87	63.71	Immoral	-	0.88	59.49
	-	-			-	-			Vulgar	-		
	Decadent	0.53			-	-			Decadent	-		
	Offender	0.67			-	-			Offender	0.66		
	Haughty	0.93			Haughty	0.93			Haughty	0.92		
	Snobbish	0.92			Snobbish	0.92			Snobbish	0.93		
	Mannered	0.62			Mannered	0.62			Mannered	0.63		
Chauvinist	0.66	Chauvinist	0.67	Chauvinist	0.66							
Assiduousness	Organized	0.63	0.69	44.04	Organized	0.70	0.78	47.67	Organized	0.54	0.68	52.89
	Rigorous	0.44			Rigorous	0.61			Rigorous	-		
	Flourishing	0.85			Flourishing	0.67			Flourishing	-		
	Hard at work	-			Hard at work	0.78			Hard at work	0.82		
Conformity	Religious	0.53	0.77	39.68	Religious	0.75	0.71	39.51	Religious	-	0.74	59.08
	Spiritual	0.26			Spiritual	0.71			Spiritual	-		
	Tradicionalist	0.89			Tradicionalist	0.59			Tradicionalist	0.78		
	Mysterious	0.67			Mysterious	0.41			Mysterious	0.77		
Unobtrusiveness	Cowardly	0.64	0.77	52.51	Cowardly	0.63	0.69	39.86	Cowardly	0.63	0.77	52.59
	Wimpy	0.79			Wimpy	0.80			Wimpy	0.81		
	Dependent	0.73			Dependent	0.73			Dependent	0.73		
	Neutral	-			Neutral	0.14			Neutral	-		

**Table 4.** Country personality scale dimensions comparing the three CFA models

<b>Fit Index</b>	<b>Desirable Value</b>	<b>CFA Model 1</b> (Pretest-based)	<b>CFA Model 2</b> (Original scale-based)	<b>CFA Model 3</b> (Reduced final)
CMIN/DF	< 3	4.98	5.06	2.69
CFI	> 0.90	0.90	0.88	0.97
GFI	> 0.90	0.90	0.87	0.96
AGFI	> 0.80	0.86	0.82	0.94
<b>IFI</b>	<b>Close to 1</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>0.97</b>
<b>PCLOSE</b>	<b>Close to 1</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.51</b>
		<b>I.C. 90%</b> <b>(0.071, 0.082)</b>	<b>I.C. 90%</b> <b>(0.073, 0.081)</b>	<b>I.C. 90%</b> <b>(0.042, 0.058)</b>
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.076	0.077	0.050

**Table 5.** Correlations between the six latent variables

Correlations - variables			Model 1 Estimate	Model 2 Estimate	Model 3 Estimate
ass	↔	agr	0.47***	0.47***	0.41***
ass	↔	cnf	0.08	0.52***	0.40***
ass	↔	unb	-0.38***	-0.29***	-0.46***
ass	↔	sno	-0.27***	-0.42**	-0.32***
ass	↔	wik	-0.23***	-0.40***	-----
agr	↔	cnf	-0.06	0.18***	-0.07
agr	↔	unb	-0.18***	-0.32***	-0.18***
agr	↔	sno	-0.32***	-0.19*	-0.32***
agr	↔	wik	-0.06	-0.24***	-----
cnf	↔	unb	0.08	-0.17***	0.10*
cnf	↔	sno	0.04	-0.11	0.07
cnf	↔	wik	-0.17***	-0.30***	-----
unb	↔	sno	0.50***	0.48**	0.48***
unb	↔	wik	0.49***	0.83***	-----
sno	↔	wik	0.54***	0.64**	-----

ass (asiduousness), agr (agreeableness), cnf (conformity), unb (unobtrusiveness), sno (snobbism) and wik (wickedness)

\*\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed)

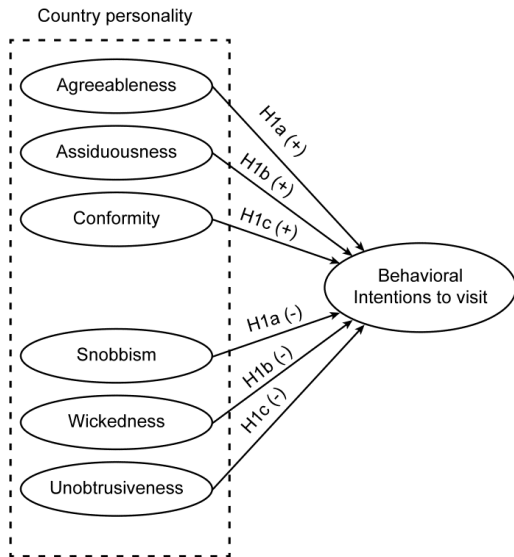
\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Figures**

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**Figure 1.**



**Figure 2.**

