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The Impact of Destination Image on Tourist's Behavioral Intentions: Case of the Essaouira City

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Abstract:

In a tourism destination, tourists are the main factor and what matters is to attract them. Therefore, in the competitive context of tourism destinations, those who can create, enhance and differentiate their image are more successful as they improve their popularity, reputation, and ability to attract more tourists in the future. Hence, we can infer that the image of the destination is one of effective marketing tools to attract more tourists.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of destination images on behavioral intentions. More specifically, we investigate the impact of cognitive and affective destination image on intentions to revisit and recommend the destination among past tourists. Data were collected from 249 tourists who visited the city of Essaouira and the model was tested using structural equation modeling based on the PLS method. The results of this study is to support the positive impact of the destination image on behavioral intentions.

Keywords: Destination, Image, Marketing, Tourism, Behavioral intention
JEL Classification: M3
Paper type: Empirical research

1. Introduction

Territories are currently evolving in a context of galloping competition, both at the international and interregional levels. As a result, destinations strive every day to build, change or strengthen their image in order to attract new activities, new investments, to receive more inhabitants, more tourists and to promote the development of local businesses. Yeoman *et al*. (2004) point out that it is essential for a city to create an attractive image, not only for the pride of its residents, but also to create the necessary environment for investments, tourists and business activities. Indeed, image is almost the number one asset and strategy priority of destinations in the global competition for attractiveness; it is the way for each destination to distinguish and position itself as sustainably as possible.

In fact, the significance of the concept of a destination's image in tourism has received considerable attention among tourist scholars primarily for its role in influencing tourists' behavioral intentions (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Bigné *et al.* 2001). It is generally admitted that destination image has an impact on destination selection, satisfaction and the after sales behavior of tourists. Therefore, it is necessary to develop images in order to increase the number of tourists and tourism revenue (Ramseook- Munhurrun *et al.* 2015).

For this study, we chose the city of Essaouira. Previously called "Mogador", Essaouira is a cosmopolitan destination with a strong tourist potential and thanks to its natural, historical and cultural assets. The Essaouira medina is classified as a Unesco World Heritage, its Gnaoua art is classified as a Unesco Intangible Heritage, its archipelago and its coastal dunes are classified by the Ramsar Convention, its traditional and historical port of the 18th century, its pleasant temperatures throughout the year and its beaches allowing the practice of water sports, make the city a privileged destination for international travelers.

In 2018, the "Best in Travel 2018" guide placed the city of Essaouira in the 6th position of "Best Value Destinations", offering the best value for money. It was the only Arab and African destination to be present in this prestigious ranking. This ranking has generated a record number of visitors in 2019. Indeed, Essaouira recorded a total of 556,904 overnight stays during January-December 2019, an increase of 9% compared to 2018 (Ministry of Tourism, Handicrafts, Air Transport and Social Economy). This performance continued during the first three months of the year 2020, but stopped after the outbreak of the coronavirus in Morocco which heavily affected tourism activity. However, the professionals of the sector have chosen to resist and not to let go, in order to rebound and project themselves with confidence in the future. Indeed, they have worked hard, in coordination with the supervisory services, provincial authorities, elected officials and civil society, to ensure a safe recovery of the destination and regain its place of choice on the chessboard of national and international tourism.

Within the framework of the above information, the purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of Essaouira's city image (cognitive and affective) on tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend Essaouira. In order to solve this problem. We have divided this work into two main parts: the first part aims to present the conceptual framework of the research and the review of an empirical literature review in order to develop the research hypotheses; the second part, which is the subject of the empirical study, will be devoted to present the research methodology, test the research model, and to present the results, conclusions, and future research directions.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Destination image

Destination image has become one of the most popular topics in the tourism field it is considered as an important part of the decision-making process for current and potential tourists (King *et al.* 2015; Chew and Jahari, 2014). Several definitions of destination image have been

proposed in the literature but the most cited are those of Crompton (1979) and Lawson & Baud-Bovy (1977).

Crompton (1979) defines destination image as "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions a person has a destination." (In Li & Kaplanidou, 2013), while for Lawson & Bovy (1977) destination image is "the expression of all objective knowledge impressions, prejudices, imaginations, and emotional thoughts an individual or group might have of a particular place" (In Moon *et al.*2013).

According to Fakeye & Crompton (1991) and Gunn (1972), there are three types of images: (1) The organic image that comes from non-tourism information such as geography books, television reports, or magazine articles; (2) the induced image that usually comes from tourism-specific information such as destination brochures and travel websites; and (3) the complex image that forms as a result of direct experience in the destination. The difference between the organic image and the induced image lies in the travel intention and motivation of individuals. In other words, any individual can have an organic image toward a particular destination even though the individual has no intention to travel to the destination. Whereas, people can purposefully seek travel information about a destination through its promotional materials and thus hold an induced image if they have a specific intention to visit the destination (Gunn, 1972 [In Byon and Zhang, 2010]).

Several researchers find that the destination image consists of the cognitive, affective, and conative image. The cognitive component of the image is an evaluation of the known attributes or characteristics of the destination, the affective component refers to feelings toward the destination, and the conative component is analogous to the behavior because it evaluates the action component. However, the latter component has been progressively ignored by researchers, as in most empirical studies, tourist behavior was considered a separate construct from image (Gartner, 1993, 1996; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008).

On the other hand, according to Echtner and Ritchie (2003), destination image is composed of two main components. The attribute-based component to assess a destination's image based on a set of features common to all destinations, and the holistic component to understand how a destination is categorized in the minds of consumers but also to appreciate the uniqueness of a destination's image and differentiate it from competing destinations. Each of these two components contains functional, or tangible, elements (landscapes, attractions, accommodation infrastructure, price) and psychological, or abstract, elements (friendliness, safety, atmosphere...).

From this literature review, it can be seen that destination image could encompass various components. However, the most popular and widely used components in the measurement of destination image are the cognitive and affective components. Therefore, in our study we will measure the destination image by the cognitive and affective components.

2.2. Behavioral Intention

Intention represents a source of profitability for destinations (Marinkovic *et al.,* 2014). It is a variable most proximal to the actual behavior (Godin, 2012), it is the best predictor of behavior (Godin & Kok, 1996; Webb & Sheeran, 2006; Schwarzer, 2008). In the theory of reasoned action and planned behavior, intention directly affects the behavior and the final decision (Whang, *et al.* 2016). Behavioral Intention can be defined as "an individual's tendency to behave according to his or her feelings, knowledge, or evaluations of previous experiences" (Spears & Singh, 2004 [In Koo *et al.*2014 p.129]). Intention can be favorable or unfavorable (Ladhari, 2009). Zeithaml *et al.* (1996) state that favorable behavioral intention leads to buying in the future, paying a premium price, spending more money, remaining loyal, and spreading positive word-of-mouth.Behavioral intention includes intentions to revisit and intentions to recommend to others (Başarangil, 2016; Wu *et al.*2016). Intention to revisit a tourist destination

has been defined as an individual's willingness to visit the same destination again (Ferns & Walls, 2012; Han & Kim, 2010). to recommend the destination it is the willingness to recommend it to the family, friends, and others (Chen & Tsai (2007).

2.3. Hypotheses Development

The impact of image on behavioral intentions is of great importance in the tourism literature (Bigne *et al*., 2001; Chalip *et al*., 2003); it is a very important factor in the decision-making process of current and potential tourists (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1996; Goodrich, 1978; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). A destination that has a positive image is more likely to be chosen in the travel decision process (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Indeed, Assaker *et al*. (2011) find that a positive destination image results in favorable revisit intention, whereas a negative destination image (example: pollution and crime) may turn away many potential tourists.

Papadimitriou *et al*. (2015) find that cognitive and affective image of the destination has a direct and positive impact on the intention to recommend the destination to others. This finding is also supported by PEKTAŞ *et al.* (2019) who show that destination image impact destination recommendation. Specifically cognitive and affective image impact destination recommendation. Similarly, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) find that three cognitive destination image factors (quality of experience, attractions, and value/entertainment) were positively correlated with word-of-mouth (i.e. willingness to recommend to others).

In their study, Artuger and Cetinsoz (2017) find that the cognitive image of the destination impacts the intention to revisit. Girma and Singh (2019) confirm the impact of cognitive image on revisiting intention but also the impact of affective and global image on revisiting intention. Similarly, studies by Tan and Wu (2016) and Chuchu *et al*. (2019) show that cognitive and affective image of the destination influence tourists' intention to return.

Based on the reviewed literature, the following hypotheses can be formulated:
– **H1: Cognitive image of a destination impact tourists revisit intention.**
– **H2: Cognitive images of a destination impact tourists recommendation intention.**
– **H3: Affective image of a destination impact tourists revisit intention.**
– **H2: Affective image of a destination impact tourists recommendation intention**

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection

This study examines the impact of destination image on tourists' behavioral intentions. The study population is tourists who have already visited the city of Essaouira in Morocco. By definition, a tourist is a visitor who spends at least one night in the visited city.

For data collection, we conducted a survey between December 4th, 2020 and May 10th, 2021 by sharing the link of our questionnaire on social networks, including Facebook and Instagram. We also sent the questionnaire electronically to friends and family members who already visited Essaouira City. This choice was justified by the respect of the restrictive measures put in place by the authorities due to the Covid pandemic19. In total, we collected 270 responses, among which, only 249 were usable. This sample size is considered sufficient, as long as it meets on the one hand, the requirements of exploratory factor analysis, which requires interviewing at least 100 individuals (Carricano and Poujol, 2009 p.56). On the other hand, estimation by the Maximum Likelihood method used in structural equation modeling requires minimum sizes of 100 to 150 individuals (Roussel et al. 2005 p.305). Furthermore, Hair et al (1998) recommend systematically analyzing a model by randomly selecting 200 to 300 respondents from the survey sample (in Roussel et al. 2005, p.305).

3.2. Measurement

To measure the variables of our model, we used Likert-type scales ranging from 1 to 7 (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree) containing a set of items that we adopted from the previous literature. The cognitive image of the destination is measured by three factors namely infrastructure with 6 items, attraction with 7 items and price with 4 items adopted from the scales of Byon and Zhang (2010), Artuger and Cetinsoz (2017) and Ragavan *et al*. (2014). Affective destination image is measured by 4 items adopted from the Hallmann and Breuer (2010) scale. While intention to revisit and intention to recommend are operationalized by Byon and Zhang (2010) and Papadimitriou and al (2015) scales respectively.

The table 2 summarizes the selected items.

Table 2: *Presentation of measurement scales*

Constructs	Factor/Item
Cognitive destination image	**Infrastructure (six items)**
	INF1. Essaouira has quality infrastructure (roads, airport, and/or utilities
	INF2. Essaouira has suitable accommodations.
	INF3. Essaouira has good shopping facilities.
	INF4. Essaouira has a good network of tourist information (tourist centers)
	INF5. Essaouira has a good standard of hygiene and cleanliness.
	INF6. Essaouira is safe.
	Attraction (seven items)
	ATT1. City beautiful natural attractions (beautiful scenery, parks, forests, and/or trails)
	ATT2. City offers interesting cultural events (festival and/ or concerts)
	ATT3. City offers interesting historical attractions (museums and/or art centers)
	ATT4. City has a good nightlife.
	ATT5. City provides opportunities for learning ethnic customs.
	ATT5. City has a rich and varied cuisine.
	ATT6. Local community is friendly and hospitable.
	Price (four items)
	PX1.Prices for hotel accommodation are reasonable
	PX2. for commodities is reasonable
	PX3.Prices for food are reasonable
	PX4.Prices for transportation are reasonable
Affective destination image	IAE1. Exciting
	IAE2. Pleasant
	IAE3. Cheerful
	IAE4. Relaxing
Intention to Revisit the destination	ICRV1. I am likely to visit Essaouira in the near future for vacation.
	ICRV2.I am likely to attend events in the future in Essaouira
Intention to recommend the destination	ICRC1.I am likely to say positive things about the city to other people
	ICRC2.I am likely to recommend the city to those who want advice on travel
	ICRC3.I am likely to encourage friends or relatives to visit the city

Source : authors

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Sample profile

Our sample is composed of 68.3% of men and 31.7% of women, 59.8% of them are single and more than half are between 21 and 30 years old. Almost a third of the respondents (28.1%) have a Bachelor's degree, while 26.2% has a Master's degree and 20.8% have an Associate's degree. Our sample is therefore made up of individuals who are able to understand the

statements in our questionnaire. Moreover, almost a third of the respondents (30.9%) are employees. The data showed that 90.6% are Moroccans and only 9.4% are foreigners.

The table 1 summarizes the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**.**

**Table 1.** *Demographic Information of Respondents (n = 249)*

	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Gender			**Marital status**		
Male	170	68,3	Single	149	59,8
Female	79	31,7	Married	100	40,2
Total	249		Total	249	
Age			**Nationalité**		
<20 years old	7	2,7	Moroccan	226	90,6
21-30 years old	162	65,1	Foreign	23	9,4
31-40 years old	62	24,8	Total	249	
41-50 years old	8	3,4			
> 50 years old	10	4,0			
Total	249				
Level of education			**Occupation**		
Less than high school	19	7,5	Unemployed	15	6,0
High school diploma	18	7,4	Student	51	20,5
Associate's degree	52	20,8	Company employee	77	30,9
Bachelor's degree	70	28,1	Public employee	45	17,9
Master's degree	65	26,2	Liberal profession	30	12,0
Doctoral or professional degree	25	10,1	Retired	3	1,3
			Auto-entrepreneur	28	11,4
Total	249		Total	249	

Source: Own elaboration based on analyses performed by SPSS software

4.2. Assessment of the measurement model

Evaluation of the measurement model includes (1) composite reliability to assess internal consistency (2) individual indicator reliability (loadings) and average variance extracted (AVE) to assess convergent validity, and (3) cross-loadings and the Fornell-Larcker criterion to assess discriminant validity. Figure 1 shows the search model under SmartPLS 3 software.

Figure 1: *Search model under PLS*
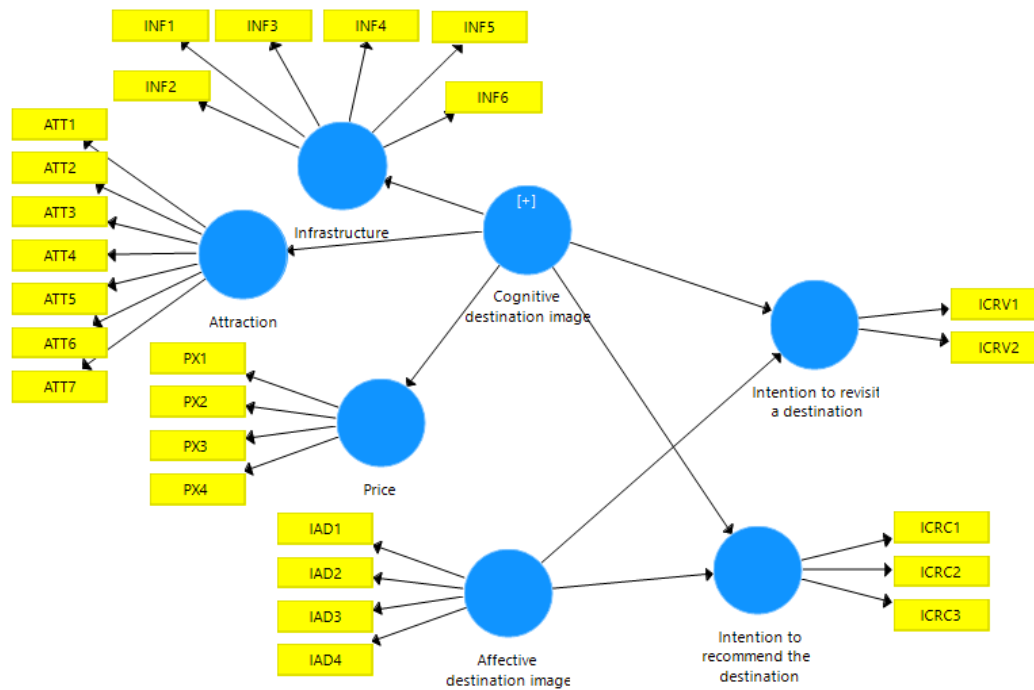
4.1.1. Reliability and convergent validity of constructs

The reliability of a measurement instrument can be assessed by the composite reliability which should reflect a value greater than 0.7. As for convergent validity, it is measured by two indicators namely the loadings and the average variance extracted (Hair *et al*. 2017). Factor loadings must have a value of at least 0.7 to be significant and the average variance extracted (AVE) must strictly be greater than 0.5 to ensure the ability of the selected indicators to reflect the latent construct being measured.

Table 3: *Reliability and convergent validity of constructs*

Constructs	Items	convergent validity		Reliability of constructs
		Individual item reliability (Loadings)	average variance extracted (AVE)	Composite reliability CR
Infrastructure	INF1	0,847	0,697	0,932
	INF2	0,835		
	INF3	0,857		
	INF4	0,800		
	INF5	0,898		
	INF6	0,766		
Attractions	ATT1	0,777	0,637	0,925
	ATT2	0,792		
	ATT3	0,824		
	ATT4	0,784		
	ATT5	0,835		
	ATT6	0,797		
	ATT7	0,778		

Price	PX1	0,892		
	PX2	0,910	0,840	0,955
	PX3	0,938		
	PX4	0,926		
Affective destination image	IAD1	0,892		
	IAD2	0,958	0,849	0,957
	IAD3	0,944		
	IAD4	0,889		
Intention to revisit the destination	ICRV1	0,956		
	ICRV2	0,964	0,922	0,960
Intention to recommend the destination	ICRC1	0,930		
	ICRC2	0,972	0,919	0,971
	ICRC3	0,973		

__Source__: Own elaboration based on analyses performed by the SmartPLS software

According to the results provided by the SmartPLS software, we notice that the items related to each of the latent variables all have a loading greater than 0.7 which indicates that these items contribute significantly to the measurement of their respective construct. Furthermore, the composite reliability of each of the variables studied is greater than 0.7 which means that there is internal consistency between the questions asked of each variable. We also find that the average variance extracted from the variables is greater than 0.5. Since the internal consistency reliability and the convergent validity are verified, we test the discriminant validity of the constructs.

4.1.2. Discriminant validity

The discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs by empirical standards. It implies that a construct is unique and represents phenomena that are not represented by other constructs in the model. (Hair *et al.* 2017).

To test discriminant validity, two criteria are recommended:

(1) The cross-correlations or cross loading of different items. In fact, the loading of an indicator (item) must not be higher for another construct than for the one to which it is attached.

(2) The Fornell-Larcker criterion, which compares the square root of the average variance extracted for each latent variable with its correlations with the other latent variables. In fact, the square root of the AVE of each construct must be greater than the correlations of the construct with the others to justify that the construct shares more variance with its own measurement items than with the other constructs.

The tables 4 and 5 confirm the discriminant validity of our measure.

Table 4: *Cross Loading*

	Attractions	Infrastructures	Affective destination image	Intention to recommend	Intention to revisit	Price
ATT1	**0,777**	0,679	0,489	0,692	0,603	0,559
ATT2	**0,792**	0,731	0,519	0,726	0,701	0,524
ATT3	**0,824**	0,540	0,504	0,598	0,514	0,594
ATT4	**0,784**	0,601	0,424	0,553	0,498	0,552
ATT5	**0,835**	0,534	0,437	0,555	0,462	0,651
ATT6	**0,797**	0,544	0,317	0,495	0,406	0,577
ATT7	**0,778**	0,518	0,394	0,607	0,516	0,664

IAD1	0,493	0,485	**0,892**	0,520	0,452	0,396
IAD2	0,524	0,441	**0,958**	0,606	0,547	0,512
IAD3	0,530	0,450	**0,944**	0,597	0,528	0,478
IAD4	0,491	0,453	**0,889**	0,596	0,539	0,506
ICRC1	0,684	0,548	0,584	**0,930**	0,910	0,649
ICRC2	0,761	0,624	0,626	**0,972**	0,839	0,653
ICRC3	0,733	0,625	0,605	**0,973**	0,846	0,646
ICRV1	0,606	0,511	0,523	0,839	**0,956**	0,553
ICRV2	0,667	0,568	0,557	0,890	**0,964**	0,633
INF1	0,626	**0,847**	0,440	0,476	0,449	0,459
INF2	0,646	**0,835**	0,484	0,598	0,597	0,607
INF3	0,583	**0,857**	0,373	0,510	0,466	0,463
INF4	0,615	**0,800**	0,382	0,487	0,428	0,499
INF5	0,649	**0,898**	0,420	0,550	0,463	0,487
INF6	0,604	**0,766**	0,373	0,507	0,403	0,456
PX1	0,686	0,593	0,475	0,581	0,512	**0,892**
PX2	0,617	0,519	0,422	0,553	0,498	**0,910**
PX3	0,691	0,508	0,463	0,650	0,631	**0,938**
PX4	0,704	0,558	0,529	0,694	0,625	**0,926**

Source: Own elaboration based on analyses performed by the SmartPLS software

From table 4, it appears that the indicators set "cross-loadings" in the model have all a stronger correlation with the latent constructs to which they belong than with the other latent constructs.

Table 5: *Correlations between latent variables and the square root of the AVE*

Fornell-Larcker criterion	Attractions	Infrastructure	Affective destination image	Intention to recommend	Intention to revisit	Price
Attractions	**0,798**					
Infrastructure	0,744	**0,835**				
Affective destination Image	0,553	0,495	**0,921**			
Intention to recommend	0,758	0,626	0,631	**0,959**		
Intention to revisit	0,664	0,563	0,563	0,901	**0,960**	
Price	0,737	0,595	0,516	0,677	0,620	**0,917**

Source: Own elaboration based on analyses performed by the SmartPLS software

As shown in table 5, the Fornell-Larcker criterion is verified since the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlations between constructs. Indeed, the latent constructs have a very high variance with the measures that from them than with the other constructs. Thus,

following the examination of the two criteria mentioned above, the discriminant validity of the measurement scales is confirmed.

Hence, the validity and reliability of the construct measures are verified, we evaluate the results of the structural model.

4.2 Evaluation of the structural model

The main criteria for evaluating a structural model in the PLS approach are: path coefficients (β), coefficients of determination R², Cohen's *f*-effect size index or (*f*²), Stone-Geisser coefficient (q²), and GoF index (Chin, 1998 [In Hair *et al*., 2017]).

4.2.1. Testing the research hypotheses: the path coefficients

The hypotheses were tested using the PLS approach to structural equations. We used a Bootstrap procedure with N= 500 resampling to assess whether the structural model coefficients are significant or not.

The results obtained are presented in the table 6, where the first column presents the values of the regression coefficients (Beta). WBeta coefficients express the strength of the relationships between the different latent variables. The third and fourth columns show the Student's t and p-values, respectively. Statistically, a hypothesis is significant at the following thresholds: 0.05 if t-value > 1.96; 0.01 if t-value > 2.58; 0.001 if t-value > 3.29.

Table 6: *Results of the structural model hypothesis test*

Hypothesis	Std.Beta coefficient	standard error	T-value	P-value	Type of influence	Decision
H1 : Cognitive destination image ⟶ Intention to revisit the destination	0,552	0,086	6,398	0,000**	Positive	**Supported**
H2 : Cognitive destination image ⟶ Intention to recommend the destination	0,616	0,085	7,277	0,000**	Positive	**Supported**
H3 : Affective destination image ⟶ Intention to revisit the destination	0,240	0,102	2,344	0,019*	Positive	**Supported**
H4 : Affective destination image ⟶ Intention to recommend the destination	0,271	0,094	2,872	0,004*	Positive	**Supported**

Notes: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.001

Source: Own elaboration based on analyses performed by the SmartPLS software

The results demonstrate that the cognitive image of the destination impacts positively and significantly the intention to revisit the destination (β=.55, p <.01; t = 6.39). Cognitive image of the destination impact positively and significantly intention to recommend the destination (β=.61, p <.01; t = 7.27). Affective image of the destination has a significant and positive impact on the intention to revisit (β=. 24, p <.05; t = 2.34) and affective image of the destination has a significant and positive impact on the intention to recommend the destination (β=. 27, p <.05; t = 2.87). Thus, our four hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4 are supported.

4.2.2. Coefficients of determination (R²)

The coefficient of determination (R²) measures the predictive power of the model (Hair *et al*., 2017). It is the portion of the variance explained for an endogenous variable by the exogenous variables related to it. In other words, the R² allows us to understand the contribution of the explanatory variables to the prediction of the variable to be explained. Thus the R² concerns only the endogenous constructs of the model.

This coefficient varies between 0 and 1. For Falk and Miller (1992), if the R² is greater than 0.1, the model is significant.

Chin (1998) suggested that R² values above 0.67 are considered strong, those between 0.33 and 0.67 are moderate, those between 0.19 and 0.33 are weak, while R2 values below 0.19 are unacceptable.

Table 7: *R-Square of the endogenous latent constructs of our model*

Constructs Relation	R²	Result
Intention to recommend	0,648	Moderate
Intention to revisit	0,517	Moderate

Source: Own elaboration based on analyses performed by the SmartPLS software

According to table 7, the obtained coefficients of determination "R²" are between 0.33 and 0.67, this indicates that the explanatory power of the independent variables is moderate.

4.2.3. Effect size ƒ2

The f² effect size assesses the impact of each exogenous latent variable on the endogenous latent variable(s) in relation to the change in R² (Chin, 1998).

According to Cohen (1988) (In Hair *et al*., 2017), values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 successively signify effect sizes: small, medium, and large, while a value below 0.02 signifies no effect size.

Table 8 shows small effects of the contribution of the explanatory variable "affective image of the destination" on the variables to be explained "intentions to revisit" and "intentions to recommend". The values obtained are 0.078 and 0.137 respectively. On the other hand, the effect size of the construct "cognitive image of the destination" on the endogenous latent variables "intentions to revisit" and "intentions to recommend" is large.

Table 8: *The size of the f² effect*

	Intention to recommend the destination	Intention to revisit the destination
Affective destination image	0,137	0,078
Cognitive destination image	0,707	0,415

Source: Own elaboration based on analyses performed by the SmartPLS software

4.2.4. The Stone-Geisser coefficient (Q²)

Also called the redundancy index in cross-validation, the Stone-Geisser coefficient (Q²) is the test of cross-validation between the manifest variables of an endogenous latent variable and the set of manifest variables of the latent variables explaining said endogenous latent variable using the estimated structural model (Chafik and Bennaceur, 2019 [In Daoud and Tritah, 2021]).

Calculated by the blindfolding procedure, if the latter is positive, then the model has predictive validity; on the other hand if it is negative, the model studied has no predictive validity and therefore unacceptable (Fernandes, 2012).

In table 9, all the indices are positive which shows that our model present predictive validity.

Table 9: *The predictive relevance Q²*

Constructs	Q²
Intention to recommend the destination	0,581
Intention to revisit the destination	0,460

Source: Own elaboration based on analyses performed by the SmartPLS software

4.2.5. Global quality of the model: Goodness of Fit (GoF)

In the PLS approach, there is no global index of model validation. This is why Tenenhaus et al (2005) have developed a Goodness-of-fit (GoF) index as an operational solution to this problem. They takes into account the measurement model and the structural model.

The calculation formula is the geometric mean of the community mean (Mean Variance Extracted) and the mean of the coefficients of determination (calculated for each endogenous variable):

$$GoF = \sqrt{R^2 * \overline{AVE}}$$

Applying the above formula, we obtain (GoF = $\sqrt{0,5825 * 0,8106}$ = 0.687) a value of 0.687 (greater than 0.36). Thus referring to Wetzels *et al.* (2009), we can infer that the estimated model is highly valid.

4.2.6. Discussion

As tourism industry is in perpetual change, tourism destination managers should investigate and analyze image of their destination and recognize their strengths and weaknesses so that they can meet tourists' increased needs and guarantee their survival because no tourism destination is meaningful without tourists.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of cognitive and affective image destination on intentions to revisit and recommend the destination among past tourists. The literature review leads us to develop a conceptual model that examines the causal relationship between destination image and behavioral intentions. Data were collected from 249 tourists who visited Essaouira City through an electronic questionnaire while hypothesis testing was conducted using structural equation modeling (SEM).

The findings revealed positive effect of destination image on behavioral intention. More specifically, cognitive image has a significant and positive impact on intention to revisit and recommend the destination; and affective image has a significant and positive impact on the intention to revisit and recommend the destination.

This supports the results of prior studies that found a significant role of the destination image in predicting tourist behaviors. Indeed, similar results were evident in studies by Tan and Wu (2016), Girma et Singh (2019) and Chuchu *et al.* (2019) who further support the impact of the cognitive and affective image on the intention to revisit the destination. Moreover, Alcaniz *et al.* (2009) find that cognitive destination image explained 39 and 32 percent of the variance in the intention to recommend and revisit intentions, respectively. Papadimitriou *et al.* (2015) also found a direct and positive impact of cognitive and affective image with the intention to recommend the destination to others. Pektaş *et al.* (2019) suggest that a destination which has an affirmative cognitive image will also have a positive affective image and will be recommended. Consequently, the importance of the destination image in order to get more tourists that is one of unpaid and effective marketing tools.

Possible explanations for the significance of the effect of destinations image for predicting the behavioral intention are: (1) the tourist's realistic and direct understanding of the destination's components, since the tourist has had a direct experience. (2) as Crompton (1979) pointed out, individuals who live further away (geographically distant) from a destination tend to hold more positive images about it. (3) Since tourists perceive the city of Essaouira as pleasant, exciting, cheerful and relaxing. Therefore, they will think of the destination whenever they feel the need for pleasure, joy, entertainment, relaxation and unwinding and will be more inclined to return to the city and recommend it.

Moreover, in our study the cognitive image of the destination seems to have the most important impact on behavioral intentions (i.e., intention to revisit and willingness to recommend) this can be explained by the destination's ability to develop a distinct identity. Indeed, the city of Essaouira is distinguished by natural, historical and cultural assets including the archipelago of Mogador which includes a large number of cultural properties and natural sites of exceptional universal value; the presence of several Sufi brotherhoods (Hmadcha, Issaoua, El Qadiriya, Gnaoua ... etc.); the climatic particularity allowing the practice of windsurfing and kitesurfing, the places of worship for Muslims, Jews and Christians (Zaouia

of Issaoua, Zaouia Dar Dakawa, Zaouia Tijania, Zaouia Hamdouchy, Zaouia El Kadiria, Synagogue Haïm Pinto etc.) which explain the cosmopolitan vocation of the city; The art galleries (the art gallery Frederic Damgaard, the Space Othello, the Gallery the Kasbah...) and the cultural establishments (the museum Sidi-Mohammed-ben-Abdellah, the cultural center Dar Souiri, Bayt Dakira...) which are very numerous. The city of Essaouira has culinary specialties that other cities do not have such as tajine souiri and is also distinguished by its artisanal marquetry in thuja wood, its pictorial art. In addition, it hosts each year major festivals including the Printemps Musical des Alizes, the festival of Atlantic Andalusia and the famous Gnaoua World music festival. These features of Essaouira destinations may increase the impact of cognitive image attributes. As found in this study, tourists considered Essaouira to be a city with many cultural and natural attractions, a welcoming population and a rich and varied cuisine.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study provides theoretical and practical contributions to the service literature and tourism industry managers. In previous research, most theoretical models on this subject are developed and validated in the Western World. Therefore, this study can serve as an important cross-cultural validation because it takes place in a different context.

On the operational level, the results of the study can be used by other cities and regions to promote their image and will help practitioners to anticipate and maximize the possible effects of the destination's image in order to benefit from the impact that can have on tourists' behavioral intentions towards the destination.

Moreover, the significant and positive influence of the cognitive and affective image destination on behavioral intention reinforce the importance of destination image as a marketing tool for destination development and suggests that the elements that make destinations desirable is emotional attachment and evaluations about the quality of accommodations, the variety of tourist attractions, the attitude of local people and reasonable pricing.

Therefore, tourism managers and authorities in the city of Essaouira should capitalize on our findings by devising appropriate marketing policies to increase the intentions of tourists to revisit and recommend their destination. To begin with, given that cognitive image of destination had a significant positive effect on behavioral intentions , this component must be taken seriously when designing a tourism destination's positioning strategy. Furthermore, given the relatively unstable nature of affective images, decision makers must continuously monitor them in order to adjust their marketing strategies (Agapito *et al.,* 2013). Managers need to be able to transform experiences related to a destination into internal emotional affect, and should also use communications that emphasize affective impulses of images but also the characteristics and specificities of the city to maintain the positive image of the destination and exert positive influence on behavioral intentions.

Nevertheless, as with any research, our work has several limitations that need to be taken into account. First of all, the results of this study were limited to only the Essaouira City and most of our respondents are Moroccans. Future research is needed to test our theoretical framework with visitors from different nations to different tourist destinations. In addition, this study examined only tourists who have already visited Essaouira and therefore had a direct experience. Future research can also be extended to other groups such prospective tourists and local residents as they may have differences in the perception of perceived the influence of cognitive image and affective image on behavioral intentions . We believe that the cognitive dimensions are subject to the level of knowledge a person has about a destination and thus are more likely to fluctuate among past tourists, local residents, and prospective tourists with different levels of knowledge. According to Fakeye and Crompton (1991) people with organic, induced, and complex image tend to behave differently because of their level of knowledge and

experience. Example: the long exposure of the locals to the city contributes generally to an image, which is enduring and less misleading. Therefore, they can become significant image formation agents and ambassadors for their city, especially if their image of the city is favorable. In addition residents can be important promoters of the city through recommendations. In fact, Beerli and Martín (2004) propose that word-of-mouth constitutes the most trustful and believable, communication channel, which usually projects images very close to destination reality. Another limitation is the fact that the sample size is small. Though PLS and bootstrapping were employed to handle small sample issue, a longitudinal study would be more appropriate.

Finally, since several other factors may influence a tourist's intention to revisit and recommend a destination, future researchers could also investigate the role of perceived value, perceived quality, motivation and satisfaction (e.g.Allameh *et al.,* 2015; Pratminingsih *et al*. 2014) as that would potentially reveal interesting insights that were potentially left-out by this research.

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