

## **Examining how country image influences destination image in a behavioral intentions model: The cases of Lloret (Spain) and Cancun (México)**

### **ABSTRACT**

Understanding the importance of the country's image in the behavioral intentions of tourists is essential for sun and sand destinations. This study examines an integrated model of behavioral intentions towards two international tourist destinations, Cancun (Mexico) and Lloret de Mar (Spain). The results indicate that country image influences destination image; destination image influences value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions; value influences satisfaction, and satisfaction influences behavioral intentions. These findings confirm that the country and destination image are different constructs, and, the destination image is the key to attracting tourists. Additionally, there are some differences in the relations among the destinations.

### **KEYWORDS**

Country image, destination image, value, satisfaction, behavioral intentions

## ***INTRODUCTION***

Tourism destinations need to increase tourists' loyalty by developing strategies to obtain long term relationships (Yoon & Uysal, 2005) and improve revenue, employment and regional development (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Identifying the antecedents of loyalty is especially important in destinations whose main product is sun and sand, where tourist loyalty becomes a relevant aspect of management, since they are characterized by needing a high number of repeat tourists (Alegre & Cladera, 2006). This occurs in different typologies of destinations such as those of second and third generation having different characteristics and service offers (Knowles & Curtis, 1999), although there are no studies having compared loyalty models among destinations of these two categories.

Destination image is one of the most-studied antecedents of loyalty, also called "behavioral intentions" in its conative phase in tourism research (Palau-Saumell, Forgas-Coll, Sánchez-García, & Prats-Planagumà, 2013, 2014). There is an abundant literature on models of behavioral intentions where the destination image positively and directly influences: (i) value (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Kim, Holland, & Han, 2013; Sun, Chi, & Xu, 2013); (ii) satisfaction (Lee, 2009; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Sun et al., 2013), and (iii) behavioral intentions (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Phillips, Wolfe, Hodur & Leistriz, 2013).

On the other hand, there is very little research facilitating understanding of the country image as a determinant of the destination image in behavioral intention models. The literature on the effect of a country's image or country of origin on consumers' evaluations has been numerous and diverse in recent years (Knight & Calantone, 2000; Laroche, Papadopoulos, Heslop, & Murali, 2005; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009). Nevertheless, the research relating country of origin or country image to tourism destination image is not very abundant. It includes a theoretical study without empirical

evidence in which the authors integrate country image and destination image (Moosberg & Kleppe, 2005), and a study that identifies the influence of the country image on the image of the tourism destination among international tourists who visit Nepal (Nadeau, Heslop, O'Reilly, & Luk, 2008). However, these studies fail because they do not separate sufficiently the two constructs, country image and destination image, which are significantly different, as indicated by Campo and Álvarez (2010), Lee and Lockshin (2012), and Zhou, Murray & Zang, (2002). Moreover, the marketing literature has shown that the general image of a country is distinct from that of the products associated with that country (Pappu, Quester & Cooksey, 2007). And in tourism, the tourist destination is the product for the tourist, since the destination is an amalgam of individual products that combine to form a total experience of the result of the visit (Murphy, Pritchard & Smith, 2000).

Consequently, it is necessary to look more closely at the drivers leading to the behavioral intentions of sun and sand tourists, of both second and third generations, especially at the influence of the country image on the destination image, as well as their interrelationships with value and satisfaction. Most of these relations have been proved by the literature in a fragmentary and partial manner. To avoid the scarcity of studies developing causal models among the variables proposed in only one model, the objectives of this study are twofold. Firstly, to incorporate country image into a model of antecedents of behavioral intentions with simultaneous relationships among country image, destination image, value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Secondly, test the proposed relations in a second and third generation destinations.

## ***THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES***

The conceptual model of this research is founded on the three components of attitude: cognitive, affective and conative. Thus we proceed in the basis of the reformulation of attitude theory Bagozzi (1992), in which he postulates that cognitive appraisal precipitates emotions and these emotions influence individual's behavior. This behavior is represented by a sequential process of cognitive, affective and conative factors. This sequential process is represented firstly in the conceptual model by a cognitive component formed through two "country image dimensions" - people and country character- , destination image and value. Secondly, an affective component formed through "satisfaction" and thirdly through behavioral intentions. The relationships between the constructs have been argued and justified in the following paragraphs

Figure 1 displays the conceptual model and its relationships used in this study.

Country image literature has a point of departure from studies on product-country-image (PCI) or "country-of-origin" (COO). These studies were related to the image consumers have about a country's products (Maher & Carter, 2011; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2003). PCI researchers have studied three types of effects over consumers: cognitive, affective and normative (Van Ittersum, Candel, & Meulenberg, 2003). Studies over cognitive effects were focused on find out if influence over consumer's perception is due to a halo effect, a summary effect, a default heuristic model, or the cognitive elaboration process (Brijs, Bloemer & Kasper, 2011). The halo effect appears when the consumer is not very familiar with a product, producing an influence of country image over product's beliefs, those beliefs influence attitudes, operating the national stereotypes as an halo permitting the evaluation of these country's products (Han 1989). Knight and Cantalone (2000) reformulate the halo effect and the summary models proposing that beliefs and country image have a direct influence on imported

product's attitude. Manrai, Lascu, and Manrai (1998) developed an intermediate model of influence over intentions denominated the default heuristic produced when the consumer is moderately familiar with the product; in this case, beliefs multiply the effects of country image in attitudes. Regarding the cognitive elaboration process, Hadjimarcou and Yu (1999) found that country origin information could produce the use of category- and stereotype-based heuristics. In the other hand, the other two types of studies about PCI, hold that affection and admiration for a given country influence evaluations and attitudes over products (Batra et al., 2000), in the case of affective studies, furthermore normative studies analyzing consumer relations with foreign products depending on how the country of origin of this product affect his norms and internal values (Brijs et al., 2011).

Research about PCI has been incorporating works analyzing a country and its inhabitant's perception influence consumers' attitude towards these country products (Heslop et al., 2004; Laroche et al., 2005; Maher & Carter, 2011), and they were based on construct operationalization with the components cognitive (beliefs or knowledge towards the country and its products), affective (the feelings towards the country and its products), and conative (behavioral intentions to its products) (Laroche et al., 2005; Wang, Li, Barnes & Ahn, 2012). This three components have been also used in tourism country image studies (Campo & Álvarez, 2014; Sönmez and Sirakaya, 2002), taking into consideration that attitude, in the case of a tourist, describes positive or negative evaluations when a consumer shows some type of behaviors predisposing to take action (Azjen, 1991).

Research on tourism has developed models relating to country image with other tourist constructs to explain tourist's attitudes and intentions to a country's image (Kim & Morrison, 2005; Nadeau et al., 2008). In this regard, recent literature having analyzed

post purchase tourist's behavior has used the three components, cognitive affective and conative, in order to produce models relating country image with other tourist variables (Elliot, Papadopoulos & Kim, 2011; Nadeau et al., 2008), in which the cognitive element is the attitude formation, affective is a response showing tourist preferences and conative is a behavioral intention indication associated to a tourism destination given by the tourist (Lee 2009).

Nadeau et al. (2008) develop a model connecting country image and destination image integrating, in a single construct, components cognitive and affective of destination image following other studies like Kim and Yoon (2003). These authors explained the cognitive part with country image dimensions, while other authors (Chen & Phou, 2013) consider destination image as a cognitive component of tourist' attitude Following this criteria, this study develops the first model's component – cognitive – through two dimensions from country image Country character and people character. Country character is defined as the tourist's beliefs about the country; and people character is defined as the tourist's beliefs about its inhabitants (Nadeau et al., 2008).

Very few studies of tourism include the country image in models of behavioral intentions and the influence of country image on destination image. Mossberg and Kleppe (2005) developed a theoretical model with this relationship, but do not test it empirically. Elliot et al. (2011) develop an integrated model of country and destination image in which they found positive influences among cognitive variables of country image and destination and product beliefs, but the sample was made of South Korean people attending an event. It is not an analysis of immediate post –purchase tourist behavior who recently visited their destinations.

Nadeau et al. (2008) develop a model that places the emphasis on the relationship between country and destination image within the broader country image context. They use the country and people character dimensions, defined as the tourist's beliefs about the country and its inhabitants, and identify a positive and direct relationship of people character and country character with destination image. So, based on the relationship obtained in the research cited above, and the paucity of studies, it is hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 1:* People character has a direct and positive effect on destination image.

*Hypothesis 2:* Country character has a direct and positive effect on destination image.

Although there is no consensus on the definition of destination image, we could define it as the sum of a person's beliefs, ideas and impressions of a tourism destination (Crompton, 1979), consisting of numerous elements ranging from the functional to the psychological (Gallarza, Gil Saura, & Calderón García, 2002). Consequently, destination image is associated with a subjective interpretation of tourists' feelings and beliefs toward a specific destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999), and is a key determinant to influence tourists attitudes toward a destination (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Most studies of the destination image show differences in the conceptualization and definition of its dimensions (Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007), in the attributes configuring the construct (Pryag & Ryan 2012), and in the methodologies of measurement (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002). Some authors use one cognitive dimension (Bigné, Sánchez, & Sanz, 2009), some of them use various cognitive dimensions (Chi & Qu, 2008), or measure it on the basis of functional and psychological characteristics (Prayag & Ryan, 2012). However, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) assert that to determine the destinations' overall image a combination of cognitive and affective dimensions is

necessary, while others consider that's a multidimensional construct composed of the referred two dimensions plus the conative dimension (Beerli & Martin, 2004). The cognitive dimension means beliefs and knowledge about the tourist destination; the affective dimension implies to evaluate the feelings a tourist has towards a given touristic destination; the conative dimension is the manifestation/intention of tourist's behavior at destination (Zhang, Fu, Cai & Lu, 2014). For this reason, other authors develop models in which the destination image has a cognitive component and an affective one, but with no other affective constructs in the model (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Makay & Fesenmaier, 2000; Qu, Kim & Im, 2011). Therefore, for this study and following the aforementioned criteria, the second cognitive component of the model is destination image

Despite the differences in the above-mentioned measurements of the construct, the tourism literature has proved the direct and positive relationships of destination image in a plethora of studies without country image construct. It has been demonstrated that there are positive and direct relationships with (i) value (Kim *et al.*, 2013), (ii) satisfaction (Wang & Hsu, 2010), and (iii) behavioral intentions (Correria Loureiro & Miranda González, 2008). So, based on these previous findings, and the absence of these relations in the models including country image, the following hypotheses are formulated:

*Hypothesis 3:* Destination image has a direct and positive effect on value.

*Hypothesis 4:* Destination image has a direct and positive effect on satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 5:* Destination image has a direct and positive effect on behavioral intentions.



Customer value refers to a consumer's overall evaluation of the difference between perceived benefits and sacrifices in a specific transaction (Zeithaml, 1988). However, there are different opinions on the cognitive nature of value versus its affective nature. Some researchers argue the cognitive dimension of value (Zeithaml, 1988), while others defend the presence of both cognitive and affective dimensions (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). It has also been measured by means of one-dimensional and multi-dimensional scales (Forgas-Coll, Palau-Saumell, Sánchez-García, & Caplliure-Giner, 2014). For the purpose of this study, the one-dimensional scale has shown sufficiency (Phillips et al., 2013), considering as in other studies ((Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001), a variable belonging the cognitive component of a destination image.

Studies in the tourism context has suggested relationships between value and satisfaction (Bonney-Claudet, & Ghantous, 2013), and between customer value and behavioral intentions (Chen & Chen, 2010; Chen & Tsai, 2008). So, based on the empirical studies in different tourist contexts, it is hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 6:* Customer value has a direct and positive influence on satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 7:* Customer value has a direct and positive influence on behavioral intentions.

Oliver's expectancy disconfirmation paradigm considers satisfaction to be the result of comparing the initial expectations and the perceived yield in the consumption of a product or service (Oliver, 1980). Satisfied tourists have more propensity to visit again the tourist destination and recommend it to relatives and friends (Chi & Qu, 2008). Bitner and Hubbert (1994) identified two types of satisfaction in consumer behavior: i) transaction-specific, that is the satisfaction with a specific service encounter; ii) overall satisfaction, that is a cumulative construct summing satisfaction and various facets of the destination (Pryag & Ryan, 2012). The overall satisfaction perspective is adopted in

this study because a tourist's satisfaction is not limited to satisfaction with a specific product or service (Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003), but makes an overall evaluation of his/her consumption experience (Johnson, Anderson, & Fornell, 1995) from leaving home until the return (Ritchie & Crouch, 2005) from a tourist destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

The literature has found, at the transaction level, visitor satisfaction is affective (Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003), and following the theoretical foundation of this study, the satisfaction is the affective component of the model. Hence, if the more satisfied is a tourist the more possibilities are to visit again the destination, and recommend it to friends and relatives (Sun, Chi & Xu, 2013) satisfaction positively affects tourists' behavioral intentions in tourist destinations (Chen & Chen, 2010; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Forgas-Coll, Palau-Saumell, Sánchez-García, & Callarisa-Fiol, 2012; Prayag, 2009). So, based on these previous findings, it is hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 8: Satisfaction has a direct and positive effect on behavioral intentions.*

A broadly accepted definition of loyalty is Oliver's (1999) who defines it as the highest level of commitment, implying the transition from a favorable predisposition towards a product to a repeat purchase commitment. In tourism the loyalty of a tourist to a tourist destination has been treated as an extension of the loyalty of a consumer to a product, because the tourist experience is considered a product (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) distinguish between behavioral, attitudinal and composite loyalty. Behavioral loyalty analyzes the results of behavior such as repeated visits. Attitudinal loyalty refers to tourist intentions to recommend or repeat a destination. Composite loyalty integrates behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (Oppermann, 2000). However, at the operational level, the literature in tourism has used in most studies

attitudinal loyalty, so called behavioral intentions (Chen & Chen, 2010; Ha & Jang, 2010), using items as repurchase intentions, recommendations, and speak positively (Zabkar, Brencic & Dmitrovic, 2010): i) repurchase intention, the individual's judgement about buying a designated service again from the same company (Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard, 2003); ii) willingness to recommend reflects a positive behavioral intention, which is the result of the value of the experiences enjoyed in the consumption of a service (Bowen & Shoemaker, 2003); iii) word of mouth is seen by people as reliable information coming from others who have already had a previous experience (Ha & Jang 2010). Consequently, behavioral intentions are the model's conative component proposed to analyze.

**[INSERT FIGURE 1]**

## ***METHODOLOGY***

### ***Survey instrument***

The survey instrument was a structured questionnaire that used a 5 point Likert scale where '1' means strongly disagree and '5' means strongly agree. The questions were based on a literature review.

This study has followed the criterion of measuring country and destination image by means of cognitive variables, since affective and conative variables are in other separate constructs of the proposed model, such as satisfaction, and behavioral intentions for the latter. Taking the above into account, to measure the country image two dimensions were operationalized, based on the definitions of people character and country character used in this study. The items of these dimensions were adapted from Nadeau et al.

(2008). The measurement of destination image includes items adapted from Prayag and Ryan (2012).

Customer value is operationalized, as in other studies in the marketing literature, with a scale which tries to measure overall customer value in terms of 'value for money' (Chen & Tsai, 2008), and with items from Sirdeshmunk, Singh, and Sabol (2002).

In relation to satisfaction, and as has been said above, the overall satisfaction perspective is adopted in this study, and was measured by items from Forgas-Coll et al. (2012). Behavioral intentions measures were adapted from Lee (2009).

The questionnaire was structured with the following three sections: 1) To ensure that the tourists surveyed had well-founded criteria regarding the country image, they were asked if they knew other destinations in the country. Specifically they were asked a discriminatory question: *Have you visited during your stay or on previous trips other tourism destinations in the country?* Only those tourists who responded 'Yes' to this question continued in the survey; 2) country image, destination image, value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions; 3) socio-demographic information.

All items used in the questionnaire were submitted to a panel of 10 experts in destination management in both countries, 5 for each country, to ensure the items were an adequate and thorough representation of the constructs under investigation.

The first draft of the questionnaire was tested with a pre-test of 50 questionnaires to assess the items used in the survey instrument to further examine the content validity, reliability, and comprehension. Suggested changes and improvements were minor, and they were primarily related to wording clarifications.

## *Site*

The research was carried out in two sun-and-sand tourist destinations: Lloret de Mar (Catalonia, Spain) and Cancun (Quintana Roo, Mexico). We chose two tourist destinations from two different countries, a developed one (Spain) and a developing other (Mexico) to identify the differences that could appear among the relationships proposed in the model. In addition, they were selected because both are second and third generation destinations according Knowles and Curtis (1999) typology, in which these authors define the differences among tourist destinations.

The first generation of tourist destinations were those in the south coast of England developed in the Victorian era with a structure of Victorian buildings, great hotels and public facilities which was the foundation of the success. Those destinations had easy access by train and car and consolidated between 1930 and 1960, not showing stagnation or declining signs until end of the 1960's by the popularization of air transport and holidays abroad.

The second generation of tourist destinations appears in Europe in late 60's thanks to tour operators' ability to attract tourists from North and Central Europe to year-round sun and beach destinations in the Mediterranean coast. These destinations are characterized by rapid infrastructures developing, easy access by air transport and overcrowding. These destinations are based on the lack of differentiation and high standardization of products and services (Knowles & Curtis, 1999).

The third generation of tourist destination were built in the late 80's predominantly in the developing world (Dubai, Cancun, Maldives), and are planned destinations that provide first-rate accommodation, nearly all of it in hotels of at least four stars, and always adding an exotic touch (Russo & Segre, 2009). Those third generation destinations are characterized for a high density of hotel places, a great dependence of

tour operators, a combination of luxury facilities and exotic scenarios for a massive public coming from all over the world (Knowles & Curtis, 1999), and, also, emerging imbalances, in the case of Cancun facilitating an explosive urban development, lack of public services, low agricultural productivity, and environmental degradation

Lloret de Mar is a town 80 km north of Barcelona, which became a second-generation tourist destination in the late 1950s. It has 29,727 hotel beds located within the city, and is visited by 954,507 tourists a year, of whom 80% are international, French and Russian tourism being the most important markets in 2012 (Lloret Tourism 2013). Cancun (Quintana Roo, Mexico) is a third generation destination, planned and built for tourism use from 1975 onwards, and it is located on the northeast coast of the Yucatán Peninsula, 1,600 km south of Mexico DF. It has 60,000 hotel beds (Sectur 2013), located in the hotel zone, and is visited by 4,093,942 tourists, 60% of whom are international (Sedetur 2014), Americans and Canadians being the most important markets (Sectur 2013).

The two destinations comparison was undertaken to enable a more in-depth testing of the model and to identify the differences between second and third generation of tourist destination between the causal relationships.

### ***Sampling, and Data collection***

The sampling strategy was by convenience, gathering a total of 1,228 questionnaires from international tourists older than 18 years between the months of July and August 2011 (Lloret de Mar) and January 2012 (Cancun). The difference in dates is due to differences in the seasonality of the destinations. Of the total number of questionnaires, 22 were rejected as incomplete, a total of 1,206 being accepted, 599 in Lloret de Mar and 607 in Cancun. 48% of the total were men and 52% women. Age distribution was:

18-24 (16%), 25-34 (21%), 35-44 (23%), 45-54 (25%), 55-64 (11%) and 65 or more (4%). As to education, 53% held university degrees. By tourist destinations, the demographic proportions of the total sample were reasonably maintained. As regards nationality, 75% of the Lloret de Mar respondents were French and Russian, while 63% of the respondents in Cancun were from the USA and Canada.

### ***Method of Analysis***

Hypotheses 1 to 8 were tested by means of structural equation models (SEM). The models were estimated from the matrices of variances and covariances by the maximum likelihood procedure with EQS 6.1 statistical software (Bentler, 2006).

## ***FINDINGS***

### ***Validation of Scale***

The first analysis was focused on the study of the psychometrical properties of the model for the whole sample. As can be observed in table 1 (CFA), the goodness-of-fit indices of the proposed model showed a good fit to the data (Chi-squared ( $\chi^2$ ) = 163.701, df = 155, p = 0.300, RMSA = 0.016, CFI = 0.998, NNFI = 0.995) (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). The convergent validity is demonstrated because the factor loadings are significant and greater than 0.5 (table 1) (Bagozzi & Yi 1988; Hair et al., 2006), and because the average variance extracted (AVE) for each of the factors is higher than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (table 1).

### **[INSERT TABLE 1]**

Table 2 shows the discriminant validity of the constructs considered, evaluated through AVE (Fornell & Larcker 1981). The square roots of the AVE are greater than

the correlations among the constructs, supporting the discriminant validity of the constructs.

**[INSERT TABLE 2]**

### *Structural models results*

The overall structural model showed a good fit to the data, given that the probability of the  $\chi^2$  is higher than 0.05 (0.384), CFI is close to unity (0.997) and RMSEA is close to zero (0.018). Additionally, the variance in the destination image ( $R^2=0.54$ ) is explained by the people and country character; the variance in value ( $R^2=0.50$ ) can be attributed to the destination image; the variance in satisfaction ( $R^2=0.80$ ) is explained by the destination image and value, and the variance in behavioral intentions ( $R^2=0.71$ ) is explained by the destination image and satisfaction, indicating that the model of this study permits us to predict and explain behavioral intentions.

On the other hand, the structural models of Lloret de Mar and Cancun showed a good fit to the data, given that the probability of the  $\chi^2$  is higher than 0.05 (0.086 and 0.093), CFI is close to unity (0.993 and 0.995) and RMSEA is close to zero (0.019 and 0.021). Additionally, the variance in the destination image is explained by the people character in Lloret de Mar ( $R^2=0.53$ ), and people and country character in Cancun ( $R^2=0.39$ ); the variance in value can be attributed to the destination image in Lloret de Mar ( $R^2=0.55$ ) and in Cancun ( $R^2=0.37$ ); the variance in satisfaction is explained by the destination image and value in Lloret de Mar ( $R^2=0.85$ ) and in Cancun ( $R^2=0.70$ ), and the variance in behavioral intentions is explained by the destination image and satisfaction in Lloret de Mar ( $R^2=0.76$ ), and by satisfaction in Cancun ( $R^2=0.72$ ), indicating that the model of this study permits us to predict and explain behavioral intentions.



The analysis shows that seven of the eight relationships proposed in the model are accepted for the sample as a whole (table 3 and figure 2). The direct and positive effects of people character on destination image are supported ( $\gamma_{11} = 0.68$ , t-value = 11.02) as are those of country character on destination image ( $\gamma_{12} = 0.10$ , t-value = 2.18); of destination image on value ( $\beta_{21} = 0.71$ , t-value = 13.44), on satisfaction ( $\beta_{31} = 0.49$ , t-value = 9.30) and on behavioral intentions ( $\beta_{41} = 0.15$ , t-value = 2.54); of value on satisfaction ( $\beta_{32} = 0.48$ , t-value = 9.92), and of satisfaction on behavioral intentions ( $\beta_{43} = 0.72$ , t-value = 11.03). Thus, hypotheses 1 to 6, and 8 were supported. The only hypothesis (hypothesis 7) that was not supported pointed to no significant relationship between value and behavioral intentions ( $\beta_{42} = 0.01$ , t-value = 0.15).

**[INSERT TABLE 3]**

**[INSERT FIGURE 2]**

The next stage of the analysis was to examine the inferred causal relationships between behavioral intentions and its predictors in each of the destinations studied.

The results of the Lloret de Mar and Cancun are show in table 4, and figures 3 and 4. The paths of Lloret de Mar are relatively stronger than in Cancun, confirming similar results of the sample as a whole in the relationships of people character to destination image ( $\gamma_{11} = 0.68$ , t-value = 6.33), of destination image to value ( $\beta_{21} = 0.74$ , t-value = 10.84), to satisfaction ( $\beta_{31} = 0.52$ , t-value = 7.07), and to behavioral intentions ( $\beta_{41} = 0.10$ , t-value = 1.98), of value to satisfaction ( $\beta_{32} = 0.47$ , t-value = 6.94), and of satisfaction to behavioral intentions ( $\beta_{43} = 0.73$ , t-value = 6.08). However, unlike the sample as a whole, country character does not have a significant influence on

destination image ( $\gamma_{12} = 0.08$ , t-value = 0.86). Additionally, the relationship between value and behavioral intentions is not significant as in the case of the total sample ( $\beta_{43} = 0.06$ , t-value = 0.72).

The paths of Cancun also confirm similar results of the sample as a whole in the relationships of people character and country character to destination image ( $\gamma_{11} = 0.50$ , t-value = 5.1;  $\gamma_{12} = 0.19$ , t-value = 2.89), of destination image to value ( $\beta_{21} = 0.61$ , t-value = 7.23) and to satisfaction ( $\beta_{31} = 0.50$ , t-value = 4.84), of value to satisfaction ( $\beta_{32} = 0.43$ , t-value = 4.27), and of satisfaction to behavioral intentions ( $\beta_{43} = 0.72$ , t-value = 5.43). However, unlike the sample as a whole, destination image does not have a significant influence on behavioral intentions ( $\beta_{41} = 0.03$ , t-value = 0.23). Neither in Cancun the relationship between value and behavioral intentions is significant ( $\beta_{43} = 0.09$ , t-value = 0.78).

**[INSERT TABLE 4]**

**[INSERT FIGURE 3]**

**[INSERT FIGURE 4]**

## ***DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION***

This research aimed to demonstrate that country image, destination image, value, and satisfaction were important predictors of behavioral intentions towards sun-and-sand destinations. It has also demonstrated that significant differences exist in tourists' perception between second and third generation destinations. From these results, it is believed that the destination behavioral intentions model outlined in the conceptual

framework is corroborated. These relationships between constructs have been studied habitually by the literature, but generally in a partial or fragmentary way. Consequently, this study contributes to increasing knowledge of tourist behavior in sun-and-sand destinations. This study extends behavioral intentions literature to investigate key consequences of country image and destination image, as two separate constructs, influencing antecedents of behavioral intentions through the variables such as value and satisfaction, and it can also be applied to an integration research framework on country image and destination image context. These findings contribute to the theoretical literature of destination behavioral intentions, because prior research doesn't bring in satisfaction as an affective variable (Elliot et al., 2011) or doesn't it discriminate value and satisfaction in different constructs (Nadeau et al., 2008). In addition, this study confirms de Bagozzi's (1992) contributions in which the cognitive evaluation of an individual has an affective response and the affective response has a behavioral response.

The results of the study confirm that country image and destination image are two different constructs (Campo & Álvarez, 2010). It is confirmed that country image is an antecedent of destination image, as suggested previously by Nadeau et al. (2008) and Elliot et al. (2011). Nevertheless, the results of this study, unlike the one mentioned, show a stronger relationship between people character and destination image than between country character and destination image, suggesting that, for sun-and-sand tourists at the two destinations analyzed, contact with the local population is much more important than the technical and political development of the country in their perception of the destination image. These results could suggest a certain halo effect (Han 1989) of country image in the beliefs and attributes of the destination because the country image

is the factor having an influence on the evaluation of touristic destinations because is the country image the factor influencing on touristic destination's evaluations.

The direct relationships of destination image with the other constructs of the model are also confirmed. Destination image is an antecedent of value (Kim et al., 2013), of satisfaction (Prayag & Ryan, 2012), and of behavioral intentions (Bigné et al., 2009), confirming that it exercises a much more significant influence than the country image on the model as a whole.

It is also confirmed that value is an antecedent of satisfaction (Chen & Chen 2010), but the direct influence of value on behavioral intentions is not confirmed, so this study agrees with the results of Chen and Tsai (2007) and Sun et al. (2013), who did not find this relationship significant, the former in a study performed in Kengtin, a coastal destination in southern Taiwan, the latter in a study carried out in Haikou and Sanya City, two most popular coastal tourism destinations in Hainan Island (China). So it seems to be confirmed that this relationship is not significant in sun-and-sand tourist destinations.

The structural path between satisfaction and behavioral intentions is consistent with the tourist destination literature, confirming the direct and positive relationship (Chen & Chen 2010; Chen & Tsai 2007; Forgas-Coll et al., 2012; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). The greater the tourists' satisfaction, the more it influences their behavioral intentions, so satisfaction is decisive in word-of-mouth, recommendations and revisit intentions for the tourist destination.

The analysis performed between the two tourist destinations shows differences in some of the relationships. In the relationship between country image and destination image, we observe that the influence of country image (people character) on the destination image is significantly stronger in Lloret de Mar than in Cancun. This

difference could be related to the typology of the tourist destination. Tourists relate much more to the population as a whole in a second generation destination because the tourist services are spread throughout the destination. On the other hand, in a third generation destination, tourists relate mostly with the service personnel of the resort and have less contact with the local population (Russo & Segre 2009). We also observe that the influence of country image (country character) on destination image is significant in Cancun, but not in Lloret de Mar. This would imply that the country character is more important for tourists visiting developing countries than for those visiting developed countries (Campo & Álvarez, 2010). One possible explanation could be that tourists visiting Lloret de Mar are not affected by country character in the perception of the destination image because it is a destination in a member country of the European Union, and it is assumed not to have deficiencies of democracy, development or international visibility. On the other hand, Mexico is a developing country, and Cancun is located in a region in which you can neatly perceive the socio – economic imbalances in the population (Torres & Momsen, 2005). Also, Mexico is exposed to the negative impact on public opinion of high indices of corruption perception, and of bribe payers (Transparency International, 2014), so any change or improvement in international indicators affecting country character would have a positive influence on the perception of the destination image. On the other hand results suggest that a direct relation between country image and destination image only takes place in Cancun, so the halo effect would appear stronger in this touristic destination

According to the relationship between destination image and value, the results show that the relation is stronger in Lloret de Mar than in Cancun. This difference indicates that for tourists in second generation resorts, infrastructures, services, reputation and access have a greater impact on monetary and non monetary costs than in third

generation resorts. On the other hand, for third generation destinations, as is the case of Cancun, tourists have their tourist experience in enclosed hotel complexes far from the urban center, so the influence of the destination image on value probably decreases because the infrastructure are located in the touristic destination area, not directly within the city as is in the case of Lloret de Mar.

The direct relationship between destination image and behavioral intentions is significant in Lloret de Mar, but not in Cancun. This low value in Cancun seems to confirm that the relationship between destination image and behavioral intentions has an indirect effect through value and satisfaction, and not a direct one.

The results in the relationships between value and satisfaction and between satisfaction and behavioral intentions are very similar and do not allow us to infer further interpretations. The differences are only significant regarding the  $R^2$  value, because values in Lloret de Mar are higher as much in value (54% Lloret de Mar and 37% Cancun) as in satisfaction (84% Lloret de Mar and 69% Cancun), which indicates that value and satisfaction will be explained for some variable not included in this study

Also, the results indicate numerous implications for the tourism promotion agencies of both destinations. As the results show, the destination image is the key variable, since it is essential for the tourist to value, be satisfied, recommend, talk positively and intend to repeat the visit. This means that the tourism policy managers of the two destinations must work to continue improving the hotel structure, the tourist services, the access, and prevent the mass tourism that uses these destinations from having negative repercussions on their reputation. Furthermore, each of the destinations has to continue to offer its own concept of “exoticism”. Lloret de Mar must continue to work the concept of a European and Mediterranean destination, situated in a country with an ancient civilization, which is opening up to new tourist segments, and prevent the

exoticism continuing to be associated with sex, street parties, cheap alcohol, exotic food, and few restrictions. Cancun has to continue to reinforce the “exoticism” derived from the concept of a Caribbean destination, but also to sell the secondary tourist attractions of its surroundings, such as the numerous archaeological sites of the Mayan civilization. However, to continue increasing this influence they must continue to work on the improvement of the cognitive elements of the destination that are of its competence and/or influence, especially for the case of Cancun. Any change in this direction will be decisive for tourists to find adequate the investment in time, effort and money, to be more satisfied and to be able to recommend and be willing to return to the destination.

With respect to public policies, and fundamentally for the Mexican destination, any reform or action to improve the perception of the Mexican democratic system, or greater technological development, or to have a positive protagonism in international politics, and not for corruption, violence or for the drug cartels, will directly and positively influence Cancun’s destination image. Also, greater redistribution of tourism services throughout the destination, so that tourists have more contact with the local population, would also improve the influence of people character on the destination image of Cancun instead of continuing to develop closed hotel resorts removed from the population.

One of the limitations of this study is that it considers only two tourist destinations, so care must be taken with extrapolating the results to other destinations. Furthermore, the use of convenience sampling could decrease the external validity. Future investigations could consider testing the model in more tourist destinations, maintaining the comparative analysis between second and third generation destinations, as well as a better representation of the tourist population in the sample.

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TABLE 1. Confirmative factor analysis (CFA)

Items	Factor loading	t
<b>People character (CR=0.71; AVE=0.53)</b>		
The inhabitants of the country are honest	0.68	19.44**
The inhabitants of the country are courteous	0.63	18.46**
The inhabitants of the country are trustworthy	0.71	23.35**
<b>Country Character (CR=0.71; AVE=0.53)</b>		
The country has the rights and liberties of a democratic system	0.73	22.41**
The country has a reasonable level of technological development	0.67	22.62**
The country has visibility in international politics	0.61	14.79**
<b>Destination image (CR=0.80; AVE=0.63)</b>		
The variety and quality of accommodation in XXX is good	0.62	19.65**
The level of services in XXX is high	0.64	18.91**
Easy accessibility to XXX	0.66	20.01**
Good reputation of XXX	0.71	20.76**
XXX is an exotic destination understood as a place of exotic food, sun, sand, sex, street parties, cheap alcohol, few prohibitions	0.68	21.70**
<b>Value (CR=0.81; AVE=0.64)</b>		
For the price paid, the trip to the destination was a good experience	0.69	17.40**
The travelling time to the destination was very reasonable	0.77	22.09**
The effort dedicated to the trip was worth it	0.82	24.31**
<b>Satisfaction (CR=0.89; AVE=0.72)</b>		
My expectations of the destination have been fulfilled at all times	0.83	24.29**
I feel good about my decision to visit XXX	0.81	28.94**
I am satisfied with the services received	0.84	22.27**
In general I am satisfied with the visit to XXX	0.79	21.70**
<b>Behavioral intentions (CR=0.82; AVE=0.66)</b>		
Willingness to revisit	0.76	31.91**
Willingness to recommend to others	0.92	30.83**
Positive word-of-mouth to others	0.65	25.22**

Note: Fit of the model: chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 163.701, df = 155, p = 0.300; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.016; goodness-of-fit index (CFI) = 0.998; non-normed fit index (NNFI) = 0.995; CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted

\*\* p < .01

TABLE 2. Discriminant Validity of the Scale

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. People Character	0.73					
2. Country Character	0.53**	0.73				
3. Destination image	0.62**	0.46**	0.73			
4. Value	0.57**	0.36**	0.60**	0.80		
5. Satisfaction	0.61**	0.38**	0.61**	0.63**	0.85	
6. Behavioral intentions	0.53**	0.41**	0.62**	0.59**	0.63**	0.81

Below the diagonal: estimated correlation between the factors. Diagonal: square root of AVE

\*\* p < .01

TABLE 3. Path Coefficients of structural model

Hypotheses	Path	Parameter	t	Support
H <sub>1</sub>	People Character → Destination Image	0.68	11.02***	Yes
H <sub>2</sub>	Country Character → Destination Image	0.10	2.18*	Yes
H <sub>3</sub>	Destination Image → Value	0.71	13.44***	Yes
H <sub>4</sub>	Destination Image → Satisfaction	0.49	9.30***	Yes
H <sub>5</sub>	Destination Image → Behavioral Intentions	0.15	2.54*	Yes
H <sub>6</sub>	Value → Satisfaction	0.48	9.92***	Yes
H <sub>7</sub>	Value → Behavioral Intentions	0.01	0.15	No
H <sub>8</sub>	Satisfaction → Behavioral Intentions	0.72	11.03***	Yes

Fit of the model:  $\chi^2 = 165.627$ ;  $df = 161$ ,  $p = 0.384$ ; RMSEA = 0.018; CFI = 0.997; NNFI = 0.996.

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

TABLE 4. Estimated Results of the Model by Tourist Destination

Path	Lloret de Mar		Cancun	
	Parameter	t	Parameter	t
People Character → Destination Image	0.68	6.33***	0.50	5.10***
Country Character → Destination Image	0.08	0.86	0.19	2.89**
Destination Image → Value	0.74	10.86***	0.61	7.23***
Destination Image → Satisfaction	0.52	7.07***	0.50	4.84***
Destination Image → Behavioral Intentions	0.10	1.98*	0.03	0.23
Value → Satisfaction	0.47	6.94***	0.43	4.27***
Value → Behavioral Intentions	0.06	0.72	0.09	0.78
Satisfaction → Behavioral Intentions	0.73	6.08***	0.72	5.43***

Fit of the model (Lloret de Mar):  $\chi^2 = 186.009$ ,  $df = 161$ ,  $p = 0.086$ ; RMSEA = 0.019; CFI = 0.993; NNFI = 0.989

Fit of the model (Cancun):  $\chi^2 = 185.133$ ,  $df = 161$ ,  $p = 0.093$ ; RMSEA = 0.021; CFI = 0.995; NNFI = 0.991

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

FIGURE 1. Theoretical model and hypotheses

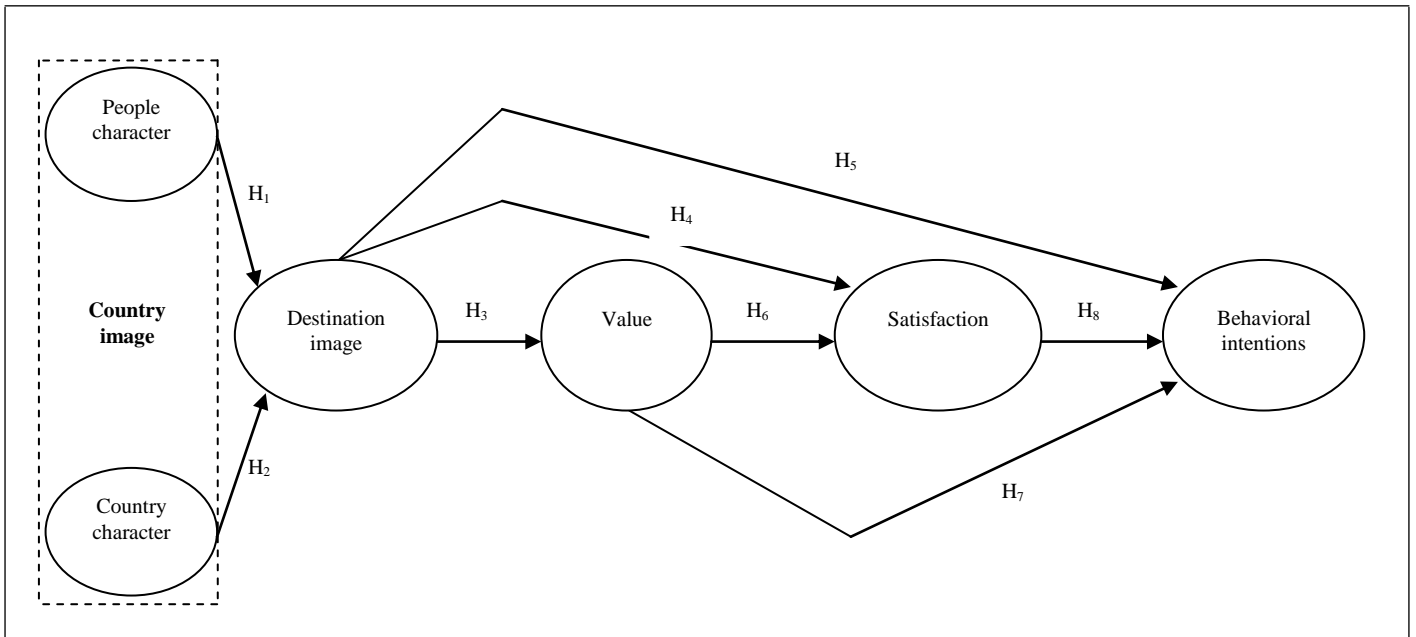
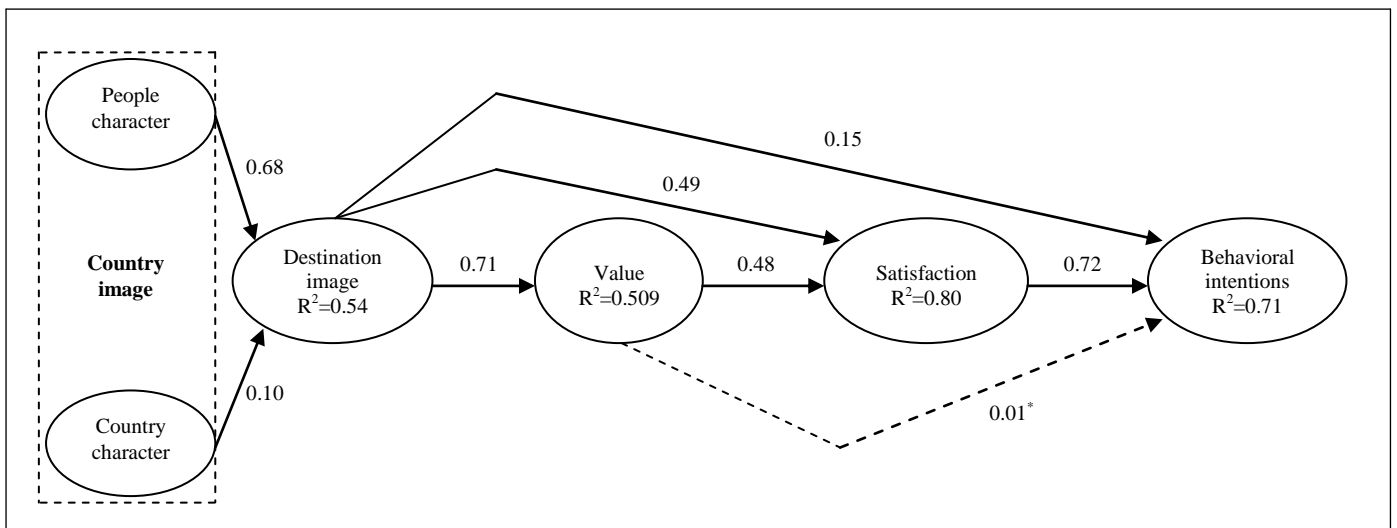


FIGURE 2. . Estimated results of structural model



—→ Supported    - - - - -→ Not Supported

Note: \* = t < 1.96

FIGURE 3. Estimated Results of the Model by Tourist Destination (Lloret de Mar)

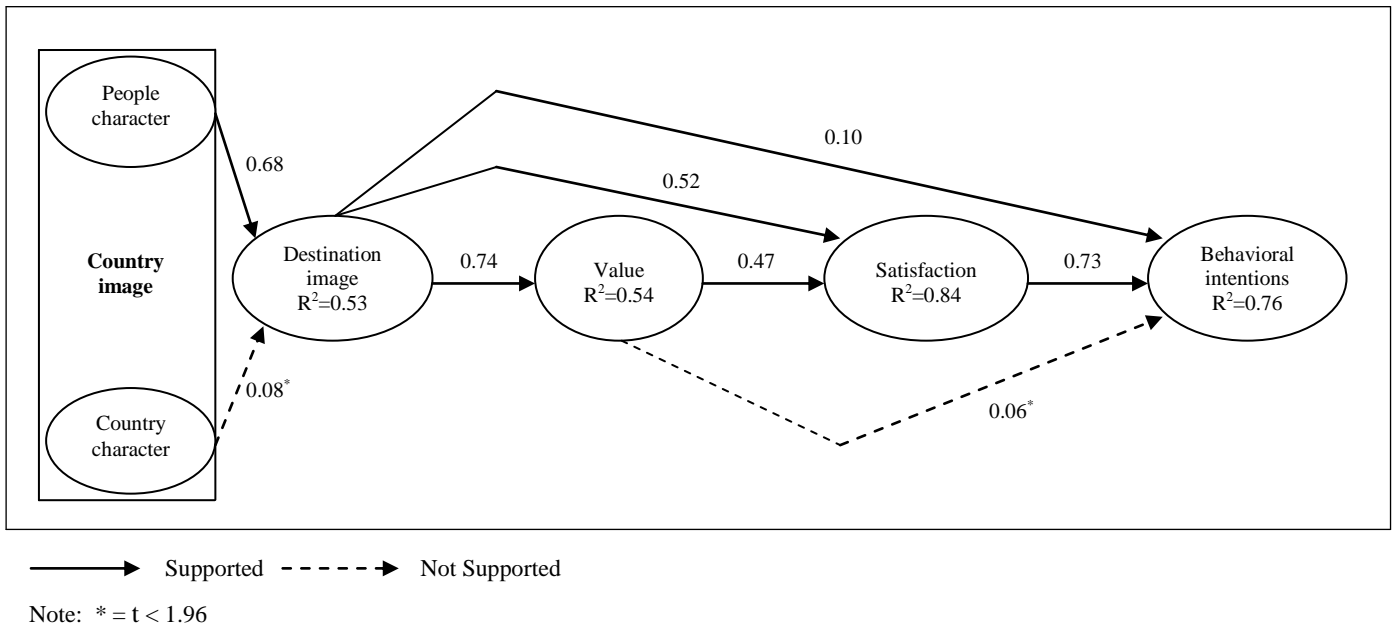


FIGURE 4. Estimated Results of the Model by Tourist Destination (Cancun)

