

Multifaceted Destination Personality Traits : A Short Communication on Understanding from Tourists' Perspective

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Abstract

This short communication is an extract from a major research work on destination branding, and this cull out of analysis focused on the multifaceted destination personality traits that the destinations possess and perhaps how such perceptions of tourists differ based on the selected personal factors. Though there are many studies in the destination branding literature, the evidence regarding the personality traits is still at the stage of progression, and approaches referring to multifaceted personality traits are unseen. After the pilot testing, a structured questionnaire was floated to 400 tourists who visited the selected destinations – a district in Tamil Nadu, India, between June 2019 and February 2020, where 327 responses were finalized. The questionnaire had statements measuring the destination's personality traits and other questions on tourists' characteristics. Combined mean calculation and multivariate results revealed that two personality traits, welcoming and friendly, were emphasized by the tourists and perceived in common. Also, personality traits such as spiritual and charming were found to be commonly perceived. The mean values also indicated the existence of multifaceted destination personality traits – some inherent and some perceived. Marketers and others thereof have been recommended on the branding and advertising strategies based on the outcome of this communication. The limitations and scope of this research have been indicated.

Keywords : destination, personality traits, branding, tourists, perception

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A set of human traits associated with brands has been highly looked upon in consumer studies as those alter not only their behavior but serve as symbolic functions of brands (Kumar & Nayak, 2014). Many researchers have tried to produce varied inferences on brand personalities referring to product, service, events, experiences, and other branding entities, and one such emergency is the Aaker's (1997) BPS – brand personality scale that facilitates to measure the brand personality through five critical dimensions such as sincerity, sophistication, ruggedness, excitement, and competence. This scale has led to the development of further scales and theories at various industrial outlets and tourism – witnessing the personality applications lately has been one among those (Chen & Phou, 2013). As product or service brands, destination brands have also been viewed as the human traits associated with tourism destinations (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Kumar & Nayak, 2014; Shankar, 2020a). Destination personality traits have been bestowed with due predominance in destination

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branding as evidence inferred that imposed human traits on the destinations reflect on various marketing elements such as destination image formation, tourists' perception and behavior, tourists' motivation, and many others (Ekinici & Hosany, 2006; Kim & Lehto, 2013; Souiden et al., 2017; Shankar, 2020b; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Though research in this arena is evolving at a great phase, yet the industry requires colossal evidence from distinct approaches on a timely basis. This short communication is an extract from a major research work on destination branding and portrays one of such requirements – analyzing the multifaceted personality traits of destinations from tourists' perception.

What Does Literature Say?

There have been numerous studies on destination personality; however, the most noteworthy initiation has been made by Ekinici and Hosany (2006) based on Aaker's BPS. The authors inferred that sincerity, excitement, and conviviality are the most reflecting personality traits of destinations. Later, studies emerging from 2006, perhaps based on Ekinici and Hosany's approach, focused on various bunches of destination personality traits such as sophistication, sincerity, excitement, and conviviality (Murphy et al., 2007); trendy, likable, sophistication, ragged, lively, genuine, and peaceful (Lee et al., 2010); ingenious, healthy, noble, and nostalgic (Lee & Kang, 2013); courteousness, vibrance, conformity, liveliness, viciousness, and tranquillity (Kumar & Nayak, 2014); excitement, sophistication, activeness, ruggedness, dependability, and philoxenia (Hultman et al., 2015); and agreeableness, wickedness, snobbism, assiduousness, conformity, and unobtrusiveness (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015), etc.

The research work by Souiden et al. (2017) has a detailed list of the scales proposed by the authors on the destination personality traits. However, these scales have been validated with disparate sample frameworks and analytical applications that suited the research design, time, and nature of the research ambiance. Immense emphasis has been given to the destination personality traits as such inculcations have been facilitating the destination marketers in branding and managing their destinations lucratively (De Moya & Jain, 2013; Kumar & Nayak, 2014). Moreover, the destination personality traits have significantly influenced the tourist's loyalty, intention, and satisfaction towards the destinations (Hultman et al., 2015). Research has also found that destination personality traits do influence tourists' behavioral intentions (Papadimitriou et al., 2015). Mainly, the destination personality traits conceive a competitive edge for the marketers to position their destinations in the global market (Chi et al., 2018; Murphy et al., 2007). Analyzing the destination personality has turned into a critical phase in marketing the tourism destinations (Bekk et al., 2016; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010) and requires continuous pondering for effective promotion and positioning (Chi et al., 2018). From the narrowed review, it has been found that the destinations tend to show varied personality traits despite their characteristics, perhaps image. Mainly, researchers found that destinations did possess more than one personality trait and that significantly differed among the tourist's nature. Moreover, the majority of the research findings recommended enhanced timely analysis on the personality traits of the destinations as there is clout similarity between the destination personality traits and tourists (Bekk et al., 2016). Considering the fact that tourists' lifestyles, perceptions, expectations, and motives significantly change based on marketing factors and other external intruders (Shankar, 2020c), there exists a need for continuous analysis on how these changes reflect on the perceived destination personality traits, and thus, this short communication has been proposed.

Research Methodology

Since this is a research piece, the methodology of this work has alone been discussed. However, the research type and approach in the study are quantitative and empirical, respectively. A qualitative review was carried out from

literary sources such as EBSCO, JSTOR, Cabell's Directories, Google Scholar, and other online sources. A structured questionnaire was constructed with the necessary statements constituting the objectives, such as tourists' socio-demographic characteristics and destination personality traits based on the evidence gathered. Socio-demographic characteristics consisted of gender, age, occupation, education, monthly income, and marital status. Destination personality included 24 statements measuring the aspects of sincerity, excitement, conviviality, sophistication, ruggedness, and conformity that were measured using a Likert 5-point scale. However, a pilot study on 33 respondents resulted in the exclusion of seven personality traits, and hence, 17 personality traits were considered. The finalized questionnaire was floated to 400 tourists, however, only 327 have been retained after expelling the illegible responses. The research location is a district in Tamil Nadu state that has multi tourists attractions and the period of the study is between June 2019 and February 2020. Mean calculation and multivariate analysis of variance of IBM SPSS have been used for understanding the multifaceted personality traits of the destination and estimating how significantly those traits are perceived by the respondents, respectively. The following hypotheses have been framed for analyzing the second part of this study.

↳ **H01** : There is no statistically significant difference in perceiving multifaceted destination personality traits based on tourists' sociodemographic characteristics (gender, age, education, occupation, income, and marital status).

↳ **Ha1** : There is a statistically significant difference in perceiving multifaceted destination personality traits based on tourists' sociodemographic characteristics (gender, age, education, occupation, income, and marital status).

Analysis and Results

Mean calculation has been used to understand the multifaceted destination personality traits of the selected tourism district. Table 1 provides a combined mean value and the high summed mean values.

It can be inferred from Table 1 that the selected tourism location has more than one personality trait. The highest combined mean value is 102.66 constituting the destination personality: welcoming and the second-highest mean value (101.80) denotes that the destination has friendly personality traits. Both these personality traits reflect the conviviality of the destination, and perhaps, it could be the people or the residents in the destination who made such personalized characteristics. Further, when the horizontal mean values are considered, these two destination personality traits have a high significant perception among the distinct crowd. However, the tourism location does possess another personality trait of down-to-earth as the mean value is 100.64 (combined score). This personality trait falls under the group – sincerity. Accordingly, if the highest mean value is 102.66, there is a moderate range between the lowest as the least mean value is 75.13, which constitutes a western personality trait. Seven other personality traits fall under the range between 90 and 103. This shows that the tourism location has the other personality traits of sincerity, reliability, peaceful, family-oriented, charming, religious, and spiritual (mean values are 91.27, 92.07, 99.91, 97.84, 90.12, 90.34, and 95.12, respectively). It is also decisive to note that seven more personality traits fall between the mean values of 75 and 90, such as daring, exciting, imaginative, upper class, outdoorsy, and western with the values of 85.13, 87.83, 81.74, 85.26, 79.63, 75.13, and 89.29, respectively. The results indicate that the destination has multifaceted personality traits and tourists perceive those distinctively. Therefore, a tourism destination branded in a particular theme may have inherent images and personality traits that reflect tourists' perceptions. This leads to further analyzing whether these traits are perceived significantly differently based on the tourists' characteristics; hence, multivariate analysis of variance was carried out.

Table 2 shows the sophisticated MANOVA results (including the individual ANOVA values).

Table 1. Combined Mean Value of Destination Personality Traits

Tourists' Socio-Demographic Factors	Sincere	Reliable	Peaceful	Down to Earth	Daring	Exciting	Imaginative	Welcoming	Friendly	Family-Oriented	Upper Class	Charming
Gender												
Male	3.51	3.62	4.05	3.85	3.32	3.65	3.24	4.04	4.1	4.01	3.25	3.53
Female	3.77	3.6	3.7	4.06	3.57	3.6	3.49	4.37	4.3	3.73	3.44	3.72
Age												
16 – 24	3.35	3.37	3.71	3.72	3.68	3.78	3.80	3.90	4.12	3.81	3.60	3.91
25 – 34	3.57	3.72	4.07	4.19	3.39	3.70	3.09	4.34	4.18	3.91	3.28	3.49
35 – 44	3.98	3.71	3.81	3.80	3.33	3.54	3.37	4.36	4.36	3.92	3.09	3.42
45 – 54	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.75	3.25	2.50	1.75	1.50	1.50	2.50	3.25	3.50
55 – 64	3.57	3.57	4.43	4.14	2.00	1.86	2.43	4.71	4.43	5.00	3.71	4.00
Occupation												
Schooling	3.36	4.00	4.64	4.36	3.18	2.18	1.73	3.73	3.18	4.18	3.82	1.82
Under Graduate	3.40	3.44	3.89	4.07	3.61	3.51	3.46	3.99	4.09	3.61	3.17	3.82
Post Graduate	3.47	3.74	4.01	3.70	3.45	3.76	3.56	4.16	4.15	4.24	3.28	3.61
Professional	3.92	3.77	3.87	4.03	3.42	3.79	3.47	4.18	4.18	3.61	3.16	3.68
Doctorate	3.92	3.36	3.56	3.95	3.13	3.62	2.90	4.56	4.52	3.92	3.67	3.48
Others	3.80	4.20	4.60	4.60	4.20	4.20	4.60	4.60	4.60	4.20	4.20	4.60
Business / Entrepreneur	3.78	3.94	4.23	4.26	3.55	3.88	3.31	4.08	4.29	4	3.18	3.88
Govt. Sector	3.63	3.52	3.81	3.58	2.92	3.26	3.25	4.44	4.29	4.2	3.53	3.25
Private Sector	3.85	3.87	3.89	4.22	3.52	3.67	3.18	4.31	4.04	3.54	3.19	3.69
Student	3.24	3.19	3.73	3.84	3.85	3.83	3.69	3.83	4.13	3.8	3.38	3.74
NA	3.32	3.34	3.64	4.03	3.76	3.76	3.61	3.83	4.21	3.93	3.54	3.66
Income												
Less than \$1,000 / 20K	3.19	3.39	4.52	3.32	3.10	3.45	3.42	4.35	4.00	3.61	2.97	3.55
\$1,001 – \$2,000 / 21 – 35K	4.12	4.18	4.24	4.18	4.00	4.00	4.18	4.24	4.35	4.82	4.12	3.65
\$2,001 – \$3,000 / 36 – 50K	3.64	3.55	3.67	3.90	3.48	4.00	3.00	4.09	4.02	3.71	3.40	3.50
\$3,001 – \$4,000 / 51 – 65K	3.92	4.30	4.30	4.34	3.44	3.86	3.30	4.34	4.02	3.90	3.12	3.94
More than \$4,000 / 65K	3.75	3.47	3.76	3.86	3.13	3.16	3.21	4.38	4.38	3.88	3.22	3.47
Marital Status												
Married	3.78	3.69	3.83	4.01	3.34	3.51	3.2	4.3	4.19	3.81	3.1	3.58
Unmarried	3.44	3.52	3.97	3.88	3.52	3.75	3.52	4.05	4.17	3.98	3.59	3.64
	91.27	92.07	99.91	100.64	85.13	87.83	81.74	102.66	101.80	97.84	85.26	90.12

Note. P denotes "Personality." Personality traits have been arranged from P1 to P17 in the order of sincere, reliable, peaceful, down-to-earth, daring, exciting, imaginative, welcoming, friendly, family-oriented, upper class, charming, outdoorsy, western, religious, spiritual, and traditional.

Table 2 . Multivariate Results of Perceived Destination Personality Traits and Tourists' Sociodemographic Characteristics

Destination Personality	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
P1	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
P2	0.861	0.008	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.052
P3	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.117
P4	0.038	0.000	0.012	0.000	0.000	0.199
P5	0.013	0.000	0.015	0.000	0.000	0.08
P6	0.66	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.01
P7	0.018	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.002
P8	0.000	0.061	0.076	0.123	0.091	0.004
P9	0.114	0.059	0.040	0.059	0.059	0.828
P10	0.012	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.12
P11	0.128	0.023	0.011	0.124	0.003	0.000
P12	0.064	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.08	0.573
P13	0.557	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
P14	0.257	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.01
P15	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.128	0.000
P16	0.918	0.003	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.439
P17	0.509	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Wilks' Lambda Value	0.213	0.186	0.166	0.307	0.182	0.72
Wilks' Lambda F	8.558	7.238	6.182	8.744	7.362	7.07
Wilks' Lambda Sign Value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Note. P – personality D – demographic factor, D1 – gender, D2 – age, D3 – education, D4 – occupation, D5 – monthly income, D6 – marital status. The personality traits have been arranged from P1 to P17 in the order of sincere, reliable, peaceful, down-to-earth, daring, exciting, imaginative, welcoming, friendly, family-oriented, upper class, charming, outdoorsy, western, religious, spiritual, and traditional.

↪ **D1 – Gender :** The multivariate Wilks' value of 0.213 with the F - value 8.558 states that the significant p -value is less than 0.05, that is $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, and thus, there is a significant difference in tourists' perception of the destination personality traits among different gender categories. However, the follow-up ANOVA results show that P2, P6, P9, P11, P12, P13, P14, P16, and P17 are perceived in common despite the differences in gender as the p - values > 0.05 . Hence, H_0 can be accepted in these cases.

↪ **D2 – Age :** The Wilks' sign value of the analysis between the tourists' age categories and perceived destination personality traits is less than 0.05 with the Lambda value and F - value of 0.186 and 7.238, respectively. This shows significant differences in perception based on the age categories. However, the follow up ANOVA results state that the personality traits such as P8 (p -value = 0.061 > 0.05) and P9 (p -value = 0.059 > 0.05) are perceived same despite the tourists' age categories. Hence, H_a can be rejected in these two cases – as welcoming and friendly personality traits don't have statistically significant differences between the age groups.

↪ **D3 – Education :** As per the ANOVA results, except for P8 (p -value = 0.076 > 0.05), other personality traits have sign values less than 0.05. Hence the hypothesis H_0 can be accepted, and it can be inferred that perceived

destination personality traits have statistically significant differences based on tourists' education groups. However, this does not apply to P8.

↳ **D4 – Occupation** : Even though the multivariate ANOVA results state that the Lambda value is 0.307 (F - value = 8.744) along with the sign value of 0.000 (p -value < 0.05), the individual ANOVA values for P8, P9, and P11 are not significant as the p - values are 0.123, 0.059 and 0.124, respectively. Therefore, the H01 can be accepted in these cases alone. There are no statistically significant differences between perceived destination personality traits such as welcoming, friendly, and upper class based on tourists' occupation.

↳ **D5 – Monthly Income** : Though MANOVA Wilks' Lambda value of 0.182 (F - value of 7.362) states that the p -value is $0.000 < 0.05$, the individual ANOVA follow up results indicate that P8, P9, P12 and P15 have sign values 0.091, 0.059, 0.08, and 0.128, respectively > 0.05 . Hence, the Ha1 can be rejected in these cases; whereas, H01 can be accepted in the case of P8, P9, P12, and P15. However, there are statistically significant differences between the perceived destination personality traits (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P11, P13, P14, P16, and P17) based on tourists' income differences as the p - values are < 0.05 .

↳ **D6 – Marital Status** : Individual ANOVA results state that the personality traits such as P2 (0.052), P3 (0.117), P4 (0.199), P5 (0.080), P9 (0.828), P12 (0.573), and P16 (0.439) have the p - values greater than 0.05 with the multivariate Lambda value (f) = 0.72 (7.07), p -value = $0.000 < 0.05$. This shows no statistically significant differences in perceived destination personality traits based on marital status. However, it is decisive to note that Ha1 can be accepted in the cases of the other personality traits.

Managerial Implications

The combined mean calculation results have revealed that the selected destination has more than one personality trait, with perhaps welcoming and friendly personality traits being emphasized (mean values of 102.66 and 101.80, respectively). These two personality traits constitute the conviviality approach and, thus, signify the association of people in the tourism destination. It is important to note that few tourists are motivated to tour destinations to meet people of similar interests, explore people's lifestyles, and confront distinct people crowds (Shankar, 2020c). This is a key construct for destination marketers while formulating strategies for branding their offerings globally. Inculcation of these aspects into the campaigns and conceiving them as brand elements while positioning to wide segments would attract significant tourists' inflow. Also, the mean calculation states that the mean values range between the minimum of 75.13 and the maximum of 102.66, and this can be inferred that the destination has multifaceted personality traits. However, on an overview to understand whether these multifaceted personality traits are perceived by everyone in the same way, the multivariate analysis of variance has been used. Though the significance values of all these traits are convincible, there are vital pointers for marketers to understand how these traits are perceived.

Destination personality traits such as reliable, welcoming, friendly, charming, and spiritual have stringent communalities among the tourists despite differences in personal factors (refer to the MANOVA analysis for the relevant factors). This indicates that individual differences based on their demographic characteristics don't induce personality traits as these traits are inherent and could be associated with the existing destination attractive images.

However, few personality traits such as sincere, peaceful, down-to-earth, daring, exciting, imaginative, family orientation, upper class, charming, outdoorsy, western, religious, and traditional have been perceived distinctively by the diverse socio-demographic characteristics of tourists. This is an incredible pointer as such perception of the destinations' personality would reflect on tourists' behavioral intention. For example, when tourists perceive the

destination personality as highly imaginative and convey the same through tourists' blogs, such information becomes the reference material for potential tourists. Thereby, the cognitive image of the potential tourists (as tourists' cognitive image has a huge impact on tourists' motives to choose the destination – Shankar, 2020b) would impact the tourists' inflow. This assertion can be controlled with effective branding and advertising campaign; including the relevant personality traits in the projection of destination image would expel this risk of misperception. This could effectively convey the destination identity when such branding strategies and promotion of destination rely on digital platforms (for example, social media). Accordingly, such carry-out marketing strategies would help the destination management organizations, marketers, policymakers, and even the government position their destinations in the global tourism market, which has massive potential with emerging distinct tourists' motives (Shankar et al., 2021).

Theoretical Implications

Literature has colossal studies in destination branding and its related attributes; however, the existing theoretical frameworks are yet to be modified. Though this short communication intends to portray one of the core ideologies of multifaceted destination personality traits, it has laid a foundation for the researchers to proceed further in this research. The multivariate technique has been used, perhaps sophisticated, to understand the significant differences in perception based on tourists' socio-demographic groups, and has produced inferences for the academic fraternity as well. The findings add value to the literature that destinations can have more than one personality trait, and some are inherently associated with the destination, and some are associated based on tourists' factors. This novel inference adds to the existing destination branding literature and perhaps supports the context that other factors could also influence not only destination image, but destination personality as well.

Conclusion

This short communication is a focused analysis of multifaceted destination personality traits that one destination can possess. Also, the results reveal that some traits are associated naturally; whereas, some are formed based on the characteristics of tourists. The indication for the marketers is to focus on the unintended personality traits as that perception by tourists would convey a varied view to potential tourists as the information search (online and offline) impacts not only the destination image formation process in tourists' perception but also the motives, visiting, and behavioral intentions. Accordingly, emphasizing the intended personality traits, perhaps bestowed with the tourism resources, in the strategic branding process would produce a variety of benefits for the marketers, DMOs, policymakers, and governments. Such inclining in the branding process would help the thereof achieve the destination sustainability that cults cultural integrity (Chavan & Bhola, 2014) and increases allied business avenues (Shankar, 2021).

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The limitation lies with the sample size; increasing or decreasing the sample size would invite varied results and inferences. Choice of research location where the responses can be gathered would bring a significant difference in the theoretical approaches. Also, based on the data and its viability, the analysis has been chosen, and such differences in the distribution of data result in a choice of other analyses. There is a considerable scope for the researchers to proceed with this paper as a full-length empirical or structural model by inculcating the other aspects such as destination image, information sources, and tourists' motives. Also, the same pattern can be tested on the destinations which have or are assumed to have multifaceted personalities or images.

Authors' Contribution

Dr. Sabari Shankar R. is the leading author of this research work. Dr. John worked on the technical tools and analysis. However, both authors were integrated into all aspects of producing this communication.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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