EXTENDED ABSTRACT

THE PERSONALITY OF THE TOURIST AS A SEGMENTATION CRITERIA OF SUN AND BEACH DESTINATIONS: AN APPLICATION TO THE DESTINATION GRAN CANARIA

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Segmentation in tourism has become an important tool to have a deeper knowledge of tourists and to differentiate them. Segmentation has been traditionally carried out through demographic and economic information regardless the value of tourist personality as a tool since it consists of stable and long-lasting thinking, emotional and behavioral patterns of a person that make them different from the others (Carver y Scheier, 2008; Larsen y Buss, 2008). However during the last years investigation on personality in tourism has increased on subjects like mice, wellness, snowboarding and risky sport tourism, and from a broad diversity of perspectives, but among them the most accepted one is the traits perspective, that is aimed at analyzing the structure of personality by measuring, identifying and classificating the similarities and differences of personality traits, and the most hardworking authors are Eysenck, Allport, Catell and Costa & McCrae.

The most currently used method to measure personality is the Big Five Method (Barrick y Mount, 1991; Goldberg, 1990; McCrae y Costa, 1987) resulting from the factor method by Catell (1992). This method is aimed at describing personality and not its causes. Regarding this method, Costa & McCrae (1990) maintain that the Big Five have contributed notably to the representation of personality structure by demonstrating how the five dimensions of biological basis can include the majority of personality traits: agreeableness, responsibility, extroversion, neurotism and openness to experience. Some instruments have been designed to measure personality according to this method lines.

The most famous ones are the Personality Inventory NEO-PI-R by Costa and McCrae (1989), followed by the NEO-FFI (NEO Five-Factory Inventory) (1992) and the TDA (Trait Descriptive Adjectives) by Goldberg (1990). The last one contains descriptive trait adjectives, and the others are structured into six facets depending on factors or dimensions.

However though the Big Five contain the main personality traits, other researchers have included other personality traits, among those the ones that seem to result from the temperament, such as for example the sensation seeking trait. Its importance in the tourist sector has driven us to study it together with the Big Five. Sensation seeking is the generalized tendency to seek varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences and the willingness to take risks for the sake of such experiences (Zuckerman, 1994:13). In the tourist context others have used Zuckerman´s works to describe the relationship between sensation seeking and demographic characteristics of tourists: Pizam et al. (2004); Xu et al. (2012), etc. Since most of the research evaluated for this piece of work is only on the influence of demographic characteristics of tourists on their personality in snowboarding and risky sport tourism, the present research is aimed at evaluating the possible associations between demographic characteristics and the most studied personality traits (agreeableness, responsibility, extroversion, neurotism, openness to experience, and sensation seeking) of tourists on Gran Canaria –a sun and beach tourist destination-, and formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: The leisure tourist gender influences on personality traits.

H2: The leisure tourist age influences on personality traits.

H3: The level of study of leisure tourist influences on personality traits.

H4: Social class of leisure tourist influences on personality traits.

H5: Nationality of leisure tourist influences on personality traits.

The fieldwork was carried out between May and July of 2015. The population studied in this research focuses on leisure tourists to Gran Canaria (The Canary Islands, Spain), the unit of analysis being tourists of both sexes, 16 or more years of age, and visiting the island of Gran Canaria for the first time from abroad and from the rest of Spain. The sample was obtained at the end of the tourists' stay on Gran Canaria, ensuring that their experience was recent and complete. Therefore, only those tourists returning to their home countries the day after or same day of the questionnaire completion were surveyed. The questionnaires were responded to by means of personal interviews carried out at the accommodation or on the bus on their way to the airport. The profile of the respondents was similar to the travel profile of visitors to Gran Canaria collected from statistical sources provided by official agencies during the same period of 2015 (ISTAC, 2015; Gran Canaria Tourism Board and FRONTUR).

The final sample was 450 participants. With the number of responses obtained and for a 95.5% confidence interval in the case of estimations of a proportion where $p=q=0.5$, and assuming a simple random sampling, the sample error was ±4.62%. The analysis of demographic data showed that there was an almost equal number of females (50.4%) and males (48.4%). Most respondents were either between the ages of 25 and 44 (66%). As far as the level of education is concerned, it is remarkable the high percentage of respondents with further and higher education (60.9%). Regarding the social class, most of respondents belong to middle class and upper class (36.9% and 32.2%, respectively). With respect to

the country-of-origin of the tourists, Germany (28.0%), The United Kingdom (20.2%) and Scandinavia (24.2%) represent 72.4% of the sample, followed by Spain (11.1%) and The Netherlands (6.7%).

With respect to the measurement scales, a Likert scale of 15 items and 7 points was used to measure the Big Five personality traits where 1 means "totally disagree" and 7 "totally agree". To measure personality of tourist visiting Gran Canaria we based it on the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) (Gosling, Rentfrow and Swann, 2003) and the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John and Srivastava, 1999). To evaluate the sensation seeking level we used the Brief Sensation Seeking Scale: BSSS, from Hoyle (2002). The questionnaire included also demographic data, that is, study level and profession of person with highest gain in the family in order to determine the social class of the respondent. The measurement model arising from personality has six dimensions and each of them is composed of three-five items, resulting in a 15 item personality measurement model. Although the results of this measurement model indicate statistical significance [$\chi^2(75)=210,709$, $p=0,000$], it should be noted that these statistics depend on the size of the sample, hence the need to analyze other indicators of fit. In this regard, the results obtained show that the other indicators of global fit of the model are found to be within the values recommended by the literature (CFI=0,91, NFI=0,87, TLI=0,86, RMSEA=0,06), so we can conclude that the specified model adequately reproduces the observed covariance matrix. This measurement model shows a very satisfactory fit, as the CFI value exceeds 0.90 and 0.95 and RMSEA value does not exceed the recommended maximum of 0.08 (Mathieu & Taylor, 2006). Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988) the model shows a satisfactory individual reliability, since the relationship between each item and the construct is statistically significant, with standardized regression weights greater than 0.7 and t statistic values also being significant. As for the measurements of internal consistency, the indicator value of composite reliability (CR) reaches a value exceeding 0.70, and higher than 0.50 for extracted variance (AVE). The value of Cronbach's alpha corroborates that obtained in the composite reliability. These results therefore indicate that the model of loyalty is reliable.

The results showed that: 1) Gender is a demographic variable that influences on the neurotism and sensation seeking level, where women have a higher neurotism level and men a higher sensation seeking level; 2) Age influences on the level of three of the six personality traits: responsibility (it gets higher with the age, though from 64 on it gets down significantly), neurotism (it is more frequent among the youngest people and the oldest one) and sensation seeking (it gets down considerably with the age); 3) The study level only influences on the openness to experience level, though with a 6.5% of significance where tourists with lower educational level show a lower level of this personality trait; 4) Social class only influences on openness to experience that shows an increase as the level of this variable increases; and 5) Nationality influences on all personality traits except on agreeableness.

The abovementioned results confirm the influence of demographic characteristics of leisure tourists on their personality traits. A major contribution of this research to the scientific literature on how the demographic data of tourist influence on personality is the validation of a measurement model of personality composed of the Big Five plus sensation seeking. The relevance of this work lies in the lack of studies along this common

model, where we used the TIPI scale plus 5 items from the BFI scale in order to measure the BIG FIVE. We completed this model with the Sensation Seeking Scale (BSSS) by Hoyle (2002).

Regarding the practical implications of this study, tourist destinations managers and enterprises should take personality into consideration as segmentation criteria for tourist markets in addition to the most applied demographic data.

As a conclusion we recommend two future research lines: a first one aimed at contributing to consolidate the present academic knowledge, since we recommend further research with scales created for this study in order to improve their validity and reliability. And a second one aimed at extending the research to other touristic destinations and contexts different from sun and beaches tourism.