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BACKGROUND

Tourist Destination Image (TDI) refers to the individual's subjective interpretation of a tourist destination [1] and can be described by a combination of cognitive, affective, and conative components [2,3]. A good TDI will lead to tourism loyalty development, that is the willingness to re-visit and recommend the touristic destination [4]. Photographs of touristic places prime a first impression of the potential destination before the actual visit [5]. Recently, it has been demonstrated that aesthetic preference has a significant impact on the TDI [6,7], but which are the dimensions that are more likely to predict the aesthetic appreciation and the tourist evaluation of the destination? This is important because it offers venues to maximize the promotion of tourism. Grounded on the two "Liking" and "Wanting" facets of the reward system [8], the tourist judgment may be anchored to the projection of the observer as if they were in the place and to their intention of exploration. In line with the embodied cognition approach, this study focused on three components: presence (i.e. bodily engagement as a sense of presence in the represented place); exploration (i.e. the observer's sense of exploration as motor mechanism); completion (i.e. the intention to see and explore more of the place). Finally, the role of symmetry as an image's property typically associated with beauty [9] was also investigated.

METHODS

ONLINE QUALTRICS STUDY

PARTICIPANTS

121 (mean age= 22.17 ± 6.25 years; 97 females).

DESIRE FOR AESTHETICS SCALE [10]

36 items on a 7-point Likert Scale (from 0 = Strongly Agree to 6 = Strongly Disagree). Compared to the normative value, participants showed a positive attitude towards aesthetics (mean score= 88.31 ± 16.91, $t = -12.16$, $p < 0.001$).

TASK

[0-100 mm Visual Analogue Scale, from 0= "Not at all" to 100= "Very much"]

Embodiment components

- Presence: "I see a place, which I can be bodily present in"
- Exploration: "I feel I am in that place, like if I am exploring it"
- Completion: "I see only a part of the place and I would like to see something more"

Aesthetic component

- Symmetry: "I think the image is symmetrical"

Judgments

- Liking: "How much do you like this image?"
- Tourist: "How much would you like to visit the place represented in the image?"

VISUAL STIMULI

50 images of landscapes with urban and natural environments.



CONCLUSIONS

People tend to visit places that are aesthetically pleasing as confirmed by a positive relationship between liking and tourist appreciation. However, the two evaluations are not explained by the same components. In fact, while presence and exploration predicted both liking and tourist judgments, completion was determinant only for the tourist judgment. The involvement of these three dimensions suggests that embodied processes play a role in aesthetic experience [11] and here also in tourist evaluation. Specifically, for the tourist appreciation, completion reflects the intention to explore the place beyond image value. This could be supported by a mechanism of embodied simulation [12,13], by which the observer re-enacts offline past sensorimotor experiences associated, in this case, with visiting new places. Finally, symmetry, which typically influences aesthetic judgments for a variety of visual stimuli [9], did not predict liking of TDI. This is surprising but not new as there are conditions in which the preference for symmetry is violated [14]. Future studies should address whether embodied processes underlie the TDI evaluation.

AIMS

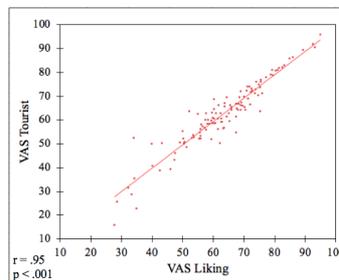
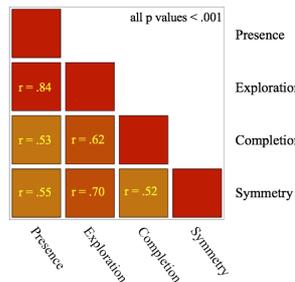
The study explored the relationships between the three embodied components associated with TDI (i.e. presence, exploration, completion) and an aesthetic component (i.e. symmetry) by assessing their role in predicting liking and tourist judgments.

HYPOTHESIS

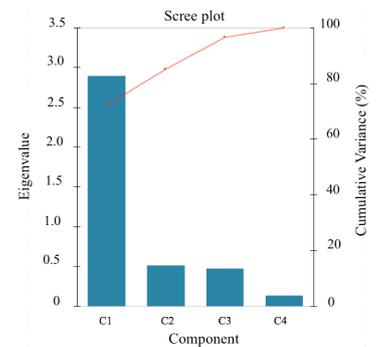
1. Liking would positively correlate with tourist judgment;
2. Presence, exploration and completion would predict the tourist evaluation;
3. Perceived symmetry would only predict the aesthetic evaluation.

RESULTS

PEARSON CORRELATIONS Correlation Matrix and Scatterplot



PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS



Direct Oblimin rotation of 3 components

	Pattern			Structure		
	C1	C2	C3	C1	C2	C3
Presence	1.03	-.02	-.07	.98	.53	.53
Exploration	.74	.10	.23	.93	.64	.72
Completion	.00	1.01	-.01	.57	1.00	.51
Symmetry	.01	.00	.99	.60	.52	1.00

KMO= .75; Cumulative % of Variance= 96.68

MULTILINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Aesthetic Judgment

	Estimate	SE	95% CI		t	p
			LL	UL		
C1: Presence	.68	.05	.59	.77	14.20	.00
C2: Completion	.01	.04	-.07	.10	.32	.75
C3: Symmetry	.05	.05	-.05	.14	.98	.33

$R^2 = .80$; ANOVA: $F(3,117) = 156.91$, $p = .00$

Tourist Judgment

	Estimate	SE	95% CI		t	p
			LL	UL		
C1: Presence	.71	.05	.62	.81	15.46	.00
C2: Completion	.09	.04	.01	.17	2.16	.03
C3: Symmetry	-.03	.05	-.12	.06	-.67	.50

$R^2 = .83$; ANOVA: $F(3,117) = 185.03$, $p = .00$

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