The beauty of tourist destinations: Perceptual and embodiment dimensions of tourist judgment

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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 tourist destination for tourism purposes. A new place is defined as a 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.

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.

METHODS

ONLINE QUALITATIVE STUDY

PARTICIPANTS

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

DESIRE FOR AESTHETICS SCALE

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= -12.56, p < 0.001).

VISUAL STIMULI

50 images of landscapes with urban and natural environments.

RESULTS

PEARSON CORRELATIONS

Correlation Matrix and Scatterplot

PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS

Direct Oblimin rotation of 3 components

MULTILINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Aesthetic Judgment

Tourist Judgment

REFERENCES