

Validation of a Scale for the Evaluation of the Dimensions of Short Break Tourist Destination

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Abstract

The present study's aim is to design, construct and validate an instrument that allows for the measurement of the dimensions for short break tourist destination. The instrument was comprised of 29 items that were applied to 400 university students from diverse undergraduate in Lima, Peru through a convenience sampling. The analysis of the psychometric properties of the instruments and the construction of the perception scale of the short break destinations was carried out through application of Exploratory Factor Analysis and the Graded Response Model from Item Response Theory. The results show a valid and reliable scale to measure a short break tourist destination. Moreover, show that evaluated individuals tend to positively rate the attributes of the short break destinations they have visited and that tourist perceive the measured attributes as expected characteristic when they visit that destination. The scale proposed fills the gap to measure the dimensions that the visitor would like to find in a short break destination, to group the perception of the attributes that tourists seek in a holistic way. In so doing, the tourist will visit a place that is capable of meeting their expectations and that allows them to establish a link with the destination.

KEYWORDS: Tourist destinations; short break trips; dimensions of a tourist destination; measurement scale; Item Response Theory.



Validación de una Escala para la Evaluación de las Dimensiones del Destino Turístico de Espadas

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Resumen

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo diseñar, construir y validar un instrumento que permita medir las dimensiones del destino turístico de estancia corta. El instrumento estuvo conformado por 29 ítems que fueron aplicados a 400 estudiantes universitarios de diversas carreras de Lima, Perú a través de un muestreo por conveniencia. El análisis de las propiedades psicométricas de los instrumentos y la construcción de la escala de percepción de los destinos de estancia corta se realizó mediante la aplicación del Análisis Factorial Exploratorio y el Modelo de Respuesta Graduada de la Teoría de Respuesta al Ítem. Los resultados muestran una escala válida y fiable para medir un destino turístico de estancia corta. Además, muestran que los individuos evaluados tienden a puntuar positivamente los atributos de los destinos de estancia corta que han visitado y que el turista percibe los atributos medidos como característica esperada cuando visita ese destino. La escala propuesta llena el vacío para medir las dimensiones que el visitante desearía encontrar en un destino de estancia corta, para agrupar la percepción de los atributos que el turista busca de forma holística. De este modo, el turista visitará un lugar capaz de satisfacer sus expectativas y que le permita establecer un vínculo con el destino.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Destinos turísticos; viajes de estancia corta; dimensiones de un destino turístico; escala de medida; Teoría de Respuesta al Ítem.

Introduction

The tourism industry is important for the economic development of almost all the countries around the world (Bapjal & Lee 2015; Chen & Tsai 2007; Manhas, Manrai & Manrai 2016; Oh 2005; Veiga, Santos, M., Águas & Santos, J. 2017; World Tourism Organization 2016; Yang 2017). According to the World Tourism Organization (2016), tourism accounts for approximately 10% of the world's GDP, making it an economic sector with strong prospects for the medium and long term because tourism generates employment and income, in the diversification of exports, in reducing the trade deficit, in compensating for the decline in export earnings from other goods and services, it is also a catalyst for innovation and entrepreneurship (Chérrez, López & Logroño, 2021).

Since 1970, short break tourism has stood out as an important vacation activity in various segments of the global market, displacing long-stay tourism (Murphy, Niininen & Sanders 2010; Sharma 2010). This can be attributed to more complex and stressful lifestyles and to the variety of activities that short break tourism can include, including those conducted outdoors in nature, sports, art, cultural patrimony, festivals, local places of interest and social activities (Murphy, Niininen & Sanders 2010).

The frequency with which short break trips are taken has increased on a global level, especially stays between 1 and 5 nights away from one's place of residence (Boerjan 1995; Dunne, Flanagan & Buckley 2007; Lohmann 1991; Neal 2003; Pike 2002). It is most common for short break trips to be made to domestic destinations (Boerjan 1995) by young and middle-aged male and female travelers (mainly 18-45 years of age), which include university students, working professionals and public and private-sector workers (Alegre & Pou 2006; Tsiotsou & Vasioti 2006). This tendency reveals that this type of travelers has increased their travel expenses and have, for tourism companies, become an attractive market segment toward which to orient their marketing efforts (Davies 1990; Kozak, Kim & Chon, 2017; Tsiotsou & Vasioti 2006).

Peru is not unfamiliar with global trends, including the fact that short break trips are displacing long-stay trips and are made mainly to domestic destinations. This is reflected in the growth of the popularity of these destinations: the number of short break trips rose from 27.2 million trips in 2004 to 40.51 million trips in 2015; add that the growth in the flow of travel by internal tourism from 2015 to 2019 is as follows: in 2015 it was 4.6%, in 2016 it was 4.6%, in 2017 it was 4.7%, in 2018 it was 4.8% and in 2019 it was 4.4%. (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo, 2022). Due to the Covid pandemic, the number of short break trips decreased to 14.64 million trips in 2021 (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo, 2022); however, according to the National Strategy for the Reactivation of the Tourism Sector 2022-2025, it is projected that the flow of internal tourism trips in 2022 will be 24.14 million, in 2023 it will be 33.65 million, in 2024 it will be 42.46 million and in 2025 it is 48.59 million; all these figures projected based on the National Resident Travel Survey (ENVIR) 2017-2018 (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo, 2022), and the Peruvian government is seeking to consolidate this growth through the "And you, what plans?" program with short break packages (1, 2, 3 days) so that Peruvians can get to know about their country and the customs that characterize each region and, at the same time, develop the habit

of planning well before traveling, to identify services that offer security and safety (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo 2016).

Visitors' perceptions regarding short break destinations have not been studied deeply in the travel and tourism literature (Alegre & Pou 2006; Dune, Flanagan & Buckley 2007; Tsiotsou & Vasioti 2006). The instruments that have been developed mainly measure the attitudes that determine the choice of the destination (Um & Crompton 1990), critical success factors (Ortigueira & Gómez-Selemeneva (2012), motivation and satisfaction (Yoon & Uysal 2005) and consumer behavior (Cohen, Prayag, & Moital 2014; Hu & Ritchie 1993), but no instrument has been developed to measure the dimensions that a visitor would like to find in a short break tourist destination.

In light of the need to deepen the understanding of the possible dimensions that comprise the short break tourist destination: historical/cultural patrimony, natural resources, tourism services and tourism infrastructure, the aim of the study is to develop a measurement instrument regarding young people's perception of the dimensions of a short break tourist destination using the Graded Response Model (GRM) from Item Response Theory (IRT). IRT's focus, as well as the particular application method of GRM, is the most appropriate for developing new instruments comprised of questions measured on an ordinal scale, due to the fact that the evaluation is centered on the properties of the items that comprise the instrument instead of the test as a whole, which makes the creation of the instrument more robust (Muñiz 1997).

The article is structured as follows: the theoretical framework explaining the characteristics of the construct "short break tourist destination" and the dimensions of a tourist destination. Next, the method applied in the present study to evaluate the psychometric properties of the instrument is detailed. Following that, the results obtained and their relation to the theory are explained. Finally, final considerations resulting from the research are included.

Theoretical Framework

Tourist Destinations of Short Break Trips

The length of trips is an essential index to monitor the growth of tourism in an area, as it allows for 1) an understanding of the determinants of the length of the trip, 2) the segmentation of the market, that allows tourism companies to design tourism products and services to increase market participation, 3) the ability to reach the most common type of tourists who go to a destination and 4) the ability for neighboring tourist destinations to benefit due to a greater possibility that tourists will carry out a multi-destination circuit to nearby places (Yang & Zhang 2015). Yang (2017), Moll-de Alba, Prats and Coromina (2016), Enne & Schofield (2011) indicate that short break trips are becoming more common and that the destinations are linked to the length of stay. In addition, the length of stay for tourists is shrinking for traditional tourist destinations, with tourists opting for short breaks to multiple destinations (Almeida, Machado & Xu, 2021)

The term "short break" was popularized by British Railways with its vacations to London in the 1960s, extending later to other cities and resorts for weekend stays, with the purpose of carrying out activities related to health, participating in forums on cultural patrimony, improving of culinary abilities and enjoying weekends abroad (Davies 1990). Tourist destinations have been changing,

with the trend toward short break trips surging as an important vacation activity in various segments of the global market (Boerjan 1995; Lohmann 1991; Murphy, Niininen & Sanders 2010; Neal 2003; Sharma 2010).

Short break trips are increasingly common due to the fact that there is a wide gamut of activities that attract tourists (Murphy, Niininen & Sanders 2010). In addition, to consider the benefits on well-being, the level of tension and stress, because short-term trips, unlike long-term ones, can prolong the effectiveness of long-term well-being by not having to return to a comparably high workload (Blank et al, 2018).

Williams and Shaw (2009) mention that since 1970, tourists have been switching from long-stay to short break tourism and indicate that in Great Britain the number of short stays (1-3 nights) increased from 53 million in 1995 to 64.5 million in 2002 and that, during that same period, vacations of 4 or more nights decreased from 40.5 million to 37 million. In the 1980s, short break trips in Western Germany, as in the Netherlands and in Austria, grew more quickly than long trips of 5 days or more (Lohmann 1991). Moreover, Alegre & Pou (2006) indicate that the stay of tourists in vacation destinations in Europe between 1999 and 2003 decreased in the number of days by an average of 25% (from 13 to 9 days), demonstrating a cumulative decrease of 2% annually per year.

It is important to highlight that the new travel trend, after COVID-19, has changed and preferences for domestic trips or short trips currently prevail (Monroy, 2020), even though the pandemic has had serious repercussions on the system. national tourism, government measures were implemented to mitigate the impacts and in turn promote the recovery of the tourism sector (Santos & Oliveira, 2021). Hernández (2020) adds that the new travel trend is for pleasure, and they consider more affordable trips, which could be short destinations with low cost strategies.

Alegre & Pou (2006) and Williams & Shaw (2009) mention that the causes that contribute to this reduction are the following: sociodemographic factors, such as age, income and level of education; vacation time flexibility; available income; changes in tourists' habits (they prefer to increase the number of short trips); and the choice to choose a higher-quality destination, which means paying more and reducing the length of the stay. Esiyok, Kurtuluşoğlu & Özdemir (2018) mentions that other factors that also contribute to the length of stay are age, purchasing power, physical distance, and seasonal preferences. Finally, Murphy, Niininen & Sanders (2010) state that short break trips are increasing, that there is a wide variety of activities related to short break vacations: the outdoors and nature, sports, art, cultural patrimony, festivals, local places of interest and social activities, and that many destinations are developing attractions and activities with the aim of guaranteeing short visits. In this sense, Sharma (2010) mentions that short break trips mean opportunities for new tourism products for people who wish to get away for a few days and for people seeking a nearby regional or domestic destination for relaxation and fun, driving the development of the product in terms of its specific attributes directed to its target market. Moreover, Sharma (2010) comments that consumers and the industry have a similar understanding of what a short stay really means and that this agreement between the consumers and the providers of the products is important for the development of products that satisfy the needs and wishes of the consumers and also increase promotional effectiveness.

Table 1 summarizes the definition of short break trips presented by the cited authors to explain the predominant characteristics of this type of trips.

Table 1
Short Break Definition

Author	Term	Definition – brief description
Davies (1990)	Short break	It refers to stays of 1-3 days by people aged 25-64 whose incomes have increased.
Lohmann (1991)	Short break holiday	It is characterized by the duration of the trip (up to 4 days, but at least one overnight stay) made by young and middle-aged travellers. The destinations are mainly within the home country.
Boerjan (1995)	Short break	It is having a break from the routine in the form of an intense activity, a period of rest or a special focus. Mainly domestic destinations are visited, predominantly between 300-400 km away. The important thing is that the destination be pleasant. The length of stay is a few days. It is based on an impulse decision more than on careful planning.
Pike (2002)	Short break	A non-business trip away from home of 1-5 nights.
Neal (2003)	Short term visitors	It refers to those who take a vacation of 1-6 nights.
Tsiotou & Vasioti (2006)	Short term vacation	It refers to a vacation from 1-6 nights taken by people between 26 and 35 years old who prefer adventure travel.
Dunne, Flanagan & Buckley (2007)	City break holidays	It refers to stays of 1-3 nights carried out in a city. Stays could be increased to 5 nights, depending on the nationality of the visitors. Another characteristic is that it is not their main vacation.
Sharma (2010)	Short break holidays	It is a trip of 3-5 days away from home, an escape from everyday life for personal and family relaxation: a non-business trip.
Murphy, Niininen & Sanders (2010)	Short break	It is a non-business trip between 1-4 nights away from the place of residence (one's home) to a single destination.

Herington (2013)	Short break	It is a 1-3 nights away from home. It is a domestic destination. It is not the traditional holiday break.
Valls, Sureda & Valls-Tunon (2014)	Short holiday	It is 3-4 days away from home. It is having taken between three and five trips a year. It is a domestic tourism.
Yang & Zhang, 2015	Short stay	It is 1-4 nights away from home, made by young and middle-aged travelers. The average traveling distance is 400-500 km from tourist residence.
Moll-de-Alba, Prats, and Coromina (2016)	Short breaks	It is 2-4 nights away from home. It is a non-business trip. Are closely related to urban activities.

Based on the literature review and the sources presented in Table 1, it can be understood that a short break trip includes the following: vacations between 1 and 5 nights (Boerjan 1995; Davies 1990; Dunne, Flanagan & Buckley 2007; Herington 2013; Lohmann 1991; Moll-de-Alba et.al 2016; Neal 2003; Pike 2002; Valls et al. 2014; Yan & Zhang 2015) away from one's place of residence carried out by young or middle-aged travelers (Davies 1990; Lohmann 1991; Murphy et. Al. 2010; Sharma 2010; Tsiotou & Vasioti 2006;) who could have as their destinations cities (Dunne, Flanagan & Buckley 2007) which are not visited for business (Pike 2002; Moll-de Alba et.al. 2016)) nor for the main annual vacation but rather for another, shorter or secondary vacation, which might be one of several distributed throughout the year (Dunne, Flanagan & Buckley 2007; Herington 2013; Pike 2002).

Dimensions of a Tourist Destination

The concepts and definitions of a destination are somewhat vague in tourism literature due to the great number and variety of the users of those terms, each of whom has different priorities (Murphy, Pritchard & Smith 1999). For Pearce (1989) and for Solís-Radilla, Hernández-Lobato & Villagómez-Méndez (2016), the tourist destination is an amalgamation of products and services available in a place that can attract visitors to leave their habitual spaces, and it should provide consumers with all the facilities required by any other consumer product. This is similar to what Bigné, Font & Andreu (2000, 30) indicate as the “combinations of touristic products that offer an integrated experience to tourists and which can be interpreted subjectively by the consumers in function of their travel itinerary.” They add “that the tourist destination is a unit that encompasses diverse touristic and infrastructure resources, forming a system” (Bigné, Font & Andreu 2000, 31). For Hu & Ritchie (1993), it is a package of facilities and tourism services that, like any other consumer product, is composed of a series of attributes that can be grouped into various dimensions that include not only historical sites, amusement parks and spectacular views but also services and facilities that are adapted to the daily needs of tourists. Similar to what Gearing, Swart & Turgut (1974) propose, attributes can be grouped into dimensions: natural (nature and weather); social (artistic and architectural characteristics, festivals, customs, fairs, exhibitions, customer service);

historical (ruins, religion, historical sites); recreational and shopping (sports facilities, museums, zoos, botanical gardens, nightclubs, theaters, casinos, shops); and food and infrastructure (roads, water, electricity, communication, public transportation, hotels, restaurants). Mo, Howard, and Havitz (1993), in line with Gearing et al. (1974), mention that the atmosphere of the destination (social and cultural characteristics) is the most fundamental factor of importance, and that services and infrastructure (transportation, food, and lodging) are secondary factors of importance.

Dunn and Iso-Ahola (1991), following Gearing et al., indicate that the destination includes the site's facilities; natural resources, like the flora and fauna; the scenery; and the weather. Also, they state that the social factors include local people's friendliness, the language spoken, and the work that they do.

The model developed by Smith (1994) indicates that the attributes that make up a tourism product are not a simple combination put together any which way but rather that these attributes must work together in synergy; Smith's model presents a series of concentric circles that start at the core, which is called the physical plant. It can refer to a place, a natural resource or a special site, like a waterfall or wildlife. The physical plant also includes the physical conditions of the place, such as the water quality, crowding or the conditions of the tourism infrastructure: the buildings, equipment, and cultural resources. The next circle is service, which makes reference to the specific actions required to satisfy tourists' needs. The next circle has to do with hospitality, defined as the style or attitude in which the task is carried out: serving a welcome beverage or putting flowers in the room, for example. The next circle has to do with freedom of choice: the range of options that the traveler has in order for the experience to be satisfactory. Other attributes include the traveler's budget, previous experience, knowledge and trust in the travel agent or in the prepaid package.

Fluvià et al. (2011), Kozak and Rimmington (1998) and Enne and Schofield (2011) add that it is also important to consider the economic conditions of the country, the exchange rate and the prices when choosing the tourist destination. For Zeithaml (1988), the price from the perspective of the consumers is that they will make sacrifices in order to obtain the product and that they can experience it before the purchase, at the moment of purchase, while using and after using it. Similarly, Morrison (1989) identifies the value as the mental stimulation that the consumers get from the travel product, where the perceptions of value are extracted from a personal cost/benefit evaluation. Murphy & Pritchard (1997) add that other factors that can influence the perception of value are the infrastructure services and the environment of the destination in terms of climate.

In this context, it can be said that the tourist destination is composed of a series of attributes that inspire tourists to decide on one destination over another and that these attributes can be grouped into various dimensions. Table 2 displays the four dimensions of a short break tourist destination and their attributes.

Table 2
Dimensions of the Short Break Tourist Destination

Dimensions	Attributes	Author
Cultural patrimony	Local culture, history, customs, monuments, churches, museums, dances, traditions	Fluvià et al. (2011), Gearing, Swart & Turgut (1974), Mo et al. (1993), Murphy, Pritchard & Smith (1999), Prentice (1993)
Natural resources	The landscape, the flora and fauna, the weather, waterfalls, sports activities	Dunn & Iso-Ahola (1991), Fluvià et al. (2011), Gearing, Swart & Turgut (1974), Mo et al. (1993), Murphy, Pritchard & Smith (1999), Smith (1994)
Tourism services	Lodging, restaurants, information available, travel agencies, guides, perception of the prices for services offered	Fluvià et al. (2011), Gearing, Swart & Turgut (1974), Morrison (1989), Murphy, Pritchard & Smith (1999), Murphy & Pritchard (1997), Prentice (1993), Sánchez et al. (2006), Zeithami (1998)
Infrastructure	Touristic offerings, modes of transportation, access routes	Fluvià et al. (2011), Gearing, Swart & Turgut (1974), Mo et al. (1993), Murphy, Pritchard & Smith (1999), Smith (1994)

According to the literature review and what is summarized in Table 2, a tourist destination is composed of a series of attributes that should be grouped into dimensions: cultural patrimony, natural resources, tourism services and infrastructure. These dimensions are necessary in order to evaluate a short break tourist destination.

Methodology

Sample

The study was carried out with 400 university students from diverse undergraduate majors at three universities in the city of Lima, Peru, aged between 18 and 23 years old. An exclusion

criterion was considered: students who were studying a Hospitality and Tourism major were not included in the study, as these students were taking courses that had to do with the development and management of tourist destinations. A non-probabilistic sample was selected for convenience, according to the criteria of the researchers. In this sense, the application of this instrument with university students is justified, as it is a homogenous sample, as is necessary for a scientific study (Malhotra 2010).

Instrument

The instrument used in this study was created based on the literature review with the aim of identifying the dimensions of the short break destination from the perspective of university students. Thus, four dimensions were considered: cultural patrimony (Fluvià et al. 2011; Gearing, Swart & Turgut 1974; Murphy, Pritchard & Smith 1999; Prentice 1993), natural resources (Fluvià et al. 2011; Gearing, Swart & Turgut 1974; Murphy, Pritchard & Smith 1999; Smith 1994), tourism services (Fluvià et al. 2011; Gearing, Swart & Turgut 1974; Morrison 1989; Murphy, Pritchard & Smith 1999; Murphy & Pritchard 1997; Prentice 1993; Sánchez et al. 2006; Zeithami 1998) and infrastructure (Fluvià et al. 2011; Gearing, Swart & Turgut 1974; Murphy, Pritchard & Smith 1999; Smith 1994), as Table 2 reports.

Churchill (1979) indicates that it is imperative that research studies consult the literature to conceptualize constructs and specify domain; he adds that developing better measurements means generating items that capture the domain in a specific way and that the literature should indicate how the variable has been defined previously and how many dimensions it has. Based on this and on Table 2, a total of 52 items were constructed and submitted to an initial filtering process regarding the instrument's content validity. This type of testing, according to Escurra (1988), consists of soliciting from experts the approval or rejection of the inclusion of an item on the test, so ten Peruvian experts graded the items. The degree of agreement, which would indicate the reliability of their judgments and, accordingly, their validity, was evaluated, since consensus had to be reached for each item to be included. In this way, items that 80% or more of judges agreed on were retained (Aiken 1980), which resulted in the retention of 40 items.

The resulting instrument of 40 validated items and several extra questions to obtain demographic information was applied to a test sample of 30 students to identify and eliminate potential problems as question content, wording sequence, form and layout (Nunan et al. 2020) The results showed that some questions were hard to understand. Therefore, it was decided to clarify those questions with a brief definition of the concept. Later, the questionnaire was applied to a pilot of 100 students to evaluate the reliability and validity of the construct. In this stage, 11 items were eliminated, leaving 29 items that were used to create a final version of the instrument (see Annex 1). To measure the items, a 5-point Likert scale was used in which "1" meant the respondent totally disagreed and "5" meant the respondent totally agreed.

Analysis

The analysis of the properties of the instrument and the construction of the perception scale was developed using the psychometric focus of Item Response Theory (Lord & Novick 1968). As Ostini & Nering (2006) mention, Item Response Theory (IRT) is characterized by the way it

models the response of the subjects to the items of an instrument as a function of the set of factors or latent variables expressed through the growing monotonic functions called Item Response Functions (IRF).

The analysis was carried out in two stages: the evaluation of the dimensionality of the scale through an Exploratory Factor Analysis and the evaluation of the items, as well as the estimation of the perception scale of the dimensions of a short break tourist destination through the two-parameter logistic graded response model.

Although there is theoretical and empirical evidence of the multidimensionality of the perception of tourist destinations (Gering, Swart & Turgut 1974; Hu & Ritchie 1993), it is reasonable to use one-dimensional IRT models if it is possible to observe one dominant dimension or factor that contains the main information that one wants to measure. The evaluation of the existence of a dominant factor was carried out through the application of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), using the principal component extraction method with a matrix of polychoric correlations because those items are measured on 5-point ordinal scale. The estimate of the results of the EFA was carried out using princomp function of R software (R Foundation n.d.), and to evaluate the existence of a dominant factor, Reckase's criterion (1979), which mentions that the results can indicate a dominant factor when the first factor explains at least 20% of the total variance, was considered.

- Two-parameter logistic graded response model (2PL-GRM)

Because the items on the questionnaire of the present study were measured on an ordinal Likert scale, the two-parameter logistic graded response model (2PL-GRM), proposed by Samejima (1969), was used to evaluate the characteristics of the items and to make an estimate of the ability of the participants that, in this study, were given the perception scale of the dimensions of a short break tourist destination that could be measured. For a more exhaustive discussion of the different polytomous ordinal models and the suitability of their application depending on the characteristics of the items, Bazán, Mazzon & Hernani (2011) can be consulted.

The parameters of the items and the abilities of the people in the 2PL-GRM model were estimated under Bayesian inference using Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) with the WinBUGS program (Lunn et al. 2000) and the R2WinBUGS package from the R program. The convergence of the results was verified using graphics provided by the mcmcplots bookcase from the R program; moreover, the effective sample size and the Gelman & Rubin (1992) statistic, which were shown to be Rhat, were evaluated; regarding this last criterion, Rhat values close to 1 indicate a good convergence. More details regarding the codes used for the simulation can be consulted in Tarazona (2013).

Results

The dimensionality of the scale

To verify if the data had the characteristics necessary to carry out the AFE, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin indicator (KMO) was calculated, obtaining a value of 0.90, which justifies the applicative

power of said analysis (Hair et al. 2010). However, the measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) for item 7 (“The number of units and timetables of transportation options are limited.”) was 0.34, which indicates a very low fit, and so the decision was made to cut this item. The EFA was applied to the remaining 28 items, and it was observed that the first factor explained 34% of the accumulated variability, and so the use of a one-dimensional IRT model could be justified, according to Reckase (1979). To evaluate the reliability of the measurement, Cronbach’s Alpha was used, obtaining a value of 0.92, which is an indicator that the estimates obtained with the instrument possess a high level of reliability.

Evaluation of the items

The results for the estimate of the parameters of the items (the difficulty values and the discrimination index) with the 2PL-GRM Model are shown in Table 3. The first difficulty value (b1) shows the level of perception that a subject should have to be able to mark one category as superior to the first (totally disagree), and in the same way the rest of the difficulty values can be interpreted. In order to facilitate interpretation, an average difficulty value for each item (bmean) was calculated, indicating the mean level of perception associated with a category in each item. For inference purposes, convergence was attained generating 10,000 iterations. The 4000 initial iterations were discarded, and out of every 10 simulations, 2 chains were taken into consideration.

The discrimination levels for the 28 remaining items ranged from 0.693 to 2.394. Although there is not one criterion that can, by itself, evaluate an item’s capacity to discriminate, according to Baker (2001) and Zickar et al. (2002), an item can be considered as offering an acceptable discrimination level for the people evaluated for levels higher than 1, whereas levels below 0.65 are considered as offering low discrimination levels. Following these criteria, in accordance with the results presented in Table 3, none of the items possessed a low discrimination level and, therefore, it was decided not to discard any of them in the construction of the final perception scale. Specifically, six of the items had a moderate discrimination (levels less than 1), with item 23 (“The prices of food services are high.”) possessing the lowest discrimination level. In the same way, it can be highlighted that six items had high discrimination levels, with items 19 (“It has a tourist information system.”) and 20 (“It has numerous archaeological sites.”) being those with the highest discrimination levels.

In reference to the difficulty values, the average value oscillated between -2.171 and 0.177. In general, all of the items evaluated in the study, with the exception of 23, are more adequate for distinguishing between people with a low perception level, that is to say, the attributes measured by said items are perceived as expected characteristics for people while they are visiting a short break tourist destination. Of all of them, the one that showed the least value was that which belonged to item 14 (“There are recreational and entertainment venues.”), which can be understood as the most expected characteristic, while that which showed the highest value was item 23 (“The prices of food services are high.”), which would correspond to the characteristic that was least expected on the part of the subjects evaluated. In the same way, from Table 3, it is possible to specifically determine what the most and least expected characteristics on the part of the users are for each of the perception dimensions evaluated.

Table 3*Results of the graduated logistics parameter response model analysis of the items*

Item by Dimension	Item Parameter Estimates					
	b1	b2	b3	b4	Bmean	A
<i>Cultural patrimony</i>						
1	-2.568	-1.161	-0.012	1.012	-0.682	1.415
6	-2.632	-1.245	0.275	1.830	-0.443	1.387
9	-2.785	-1.140	0.406	1.412	-0.527	1.134
15	-3.044	-1.256	0.443	1.778	-0.520	0.845
17	-1.998	-0.688	0.272	1.211	-0.301	1.214
20	-1.689	-0.420	0.399	1.051	-0.165	2.303
27	-2.645	-1.500	-0.164	0.948	-0.840	1.092
29	-3.474	-1.672	-0.182	0.998	-1.082	1.058
<i>Natural resources</i>						
4	-4.249	-2.749	-0.590	1.476	-1.528	0.818
5	-3.581	-1.488	0.187	1.912	-0.742	0.996
8	-3.762	-1.971	-0.082	1.846	-0.992	0.771
24	-2.925	-1.569	-0.336	1.067	-0.941	1.479
25	-2.154	-0.750	0.672	1.860	-0.093	0.980
28	-2.105	-1.024	0.172	1.368	-0.397	1.642
<i>Infrastructure</i>						
2	-4.060	-1.640	0.296	2.257	-0.787	0.958
10	-2.869	-1.388	-0.027	1.368	-0.729	1.479
11	-2.524	-1.370	0.092	1.246	-0.639	1.773
13	-2.507	-1.269	0.050	1.530	-0.549	1.746
18	-2.157	-1.052	-0.127	1.090	-0.561	2.130
21	-2.105	-0.928	0.009	1.096	-0.482	1.894
22	-2.678	-1.556	-0.117	1.302	-0.762	1.638

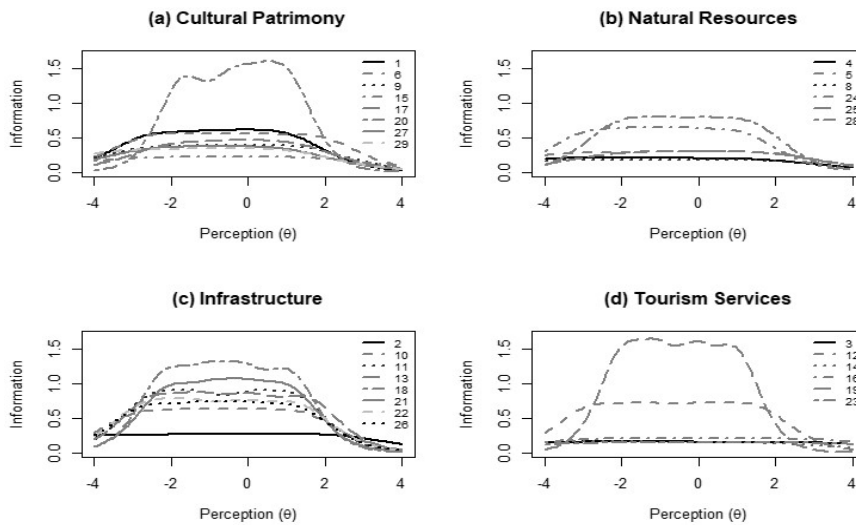
26	-2.710	-1.322	-0.096	1.245	-0.721	1.587
<i>Tourism services</i>						
3	-5.080	-2.395	0.007	3.159	-1.077	0.727
12	-2.815	-1.372	0.129	1.491	-0.642	1.598
14	-5.981	-3.323	-1.135	1.755	-2.171	0.719
16	-3.126	-1.080	1.019	3.160	-0.007	0.830
19	-1.982	-1.105	-0.058	0.976	-0.543	2.394
23	-3.332	-1.019	1.654	3.405	0.177	0.693

Note. bi=Difficulty Parameters; Bmean = difficulty parameters' mean; a= Discrimination Parameter. Source: Developed by the authors based on the data.

Figure 1 presents the item information functions (IIFs) according to the dimension they belong to. The IIFs show which perception levels the items are the most useful for in distinguishing between the evaluated subjects; said in a different way, greater information indicates greater precision in the measurement of the perception levels of the subjects evaluated. It is observed that, even though in general the items provide information over the course of the perception scale, this is usually greater for low levels of perception. Moreover, the items that offer greater discrimination correspond to those which offer more information.

Figure 1

Item information functions items for each dimension of the perception of the characteristics of short break tourism resources



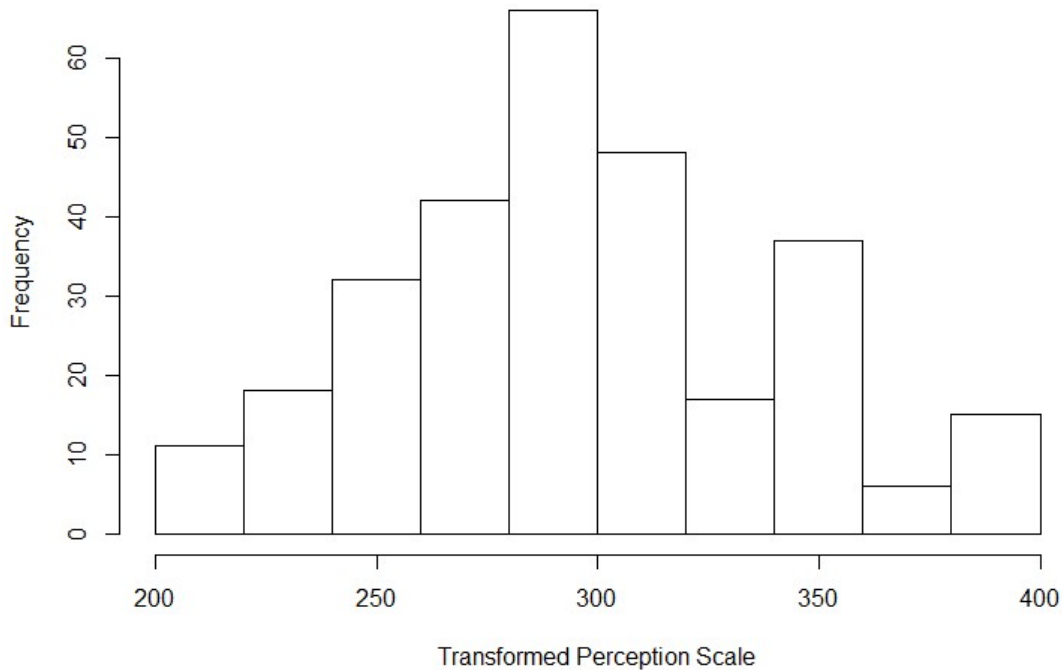
3

Estimation of the perception scale

Individuals' perception of the attributes of a short break tourist destination were simultaneously estimated using the parameters of the items. When the 2PL-GRM model is used, the perception is measured on a scale with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1, so to make the interpretation easier, a lineal transformation was applied so that the scale was transformed to have a mean and standard deviation of 300 and 50 points, respectively. As is shown in Figure 2, the distribution of perceptions includes many high scores, which indicate that the individuals evaluated generally tend to possess a positive appreciation of the characteristics of the short break tourist destinations they have visited.

Figure 2

Distribution of the scores of the perception scale over the characteristics of a short break tourist destination using the transformed, 2PL-CRM Model scale



Conclusion

On the basis of the increase in short trips (Alegre & Pou 2006; Moll de Alba, Prats & Coromina 2016; Murphy, Niininen & Sanders 2010; Williams & Shaw 2009; Yang 2017) and the fact that young people are the ones who most commonly take these trips (Alegre & Pou 2006; Davies 1990; Lohmann 1991; Tsiotsou & Vasioti 2006), it was necessary to have a measurement instrument for the perception of young people regarding the dimensions of a tourist destination. The construction of the instrument based on the literature review and its psychometric validation through IRT have

allowed for the proposal and validation of a measurement scale for the dimensions of a short break tourist destination.

From a theoretical point of view, the study was carried out to fulfill the documented need for an instrument that included the dimensions and attributes of short break tourist destinations. According to Table 2, a tourist destination is composed of various dimensions: historical/cultural patrimony, natural resources, tourism services, and tourism infrastructure. The cultural patrimony dimension would indicate a place with a rich cultural patrimony, with archaeological sites and colonial churches and traditional festivals, as Fluvià et al. (2011), Gearing, Swart & Turgut (1974) and Murphy, Pritchard & Smith (1999) mention. The natural resources dimension implies the development of ecotourism, sports tourism, the observation of a variety of views and landscapes and diverse weather, as Fluvià et al. (2011), Gearing, Swart & Turgut (1974), Murphy, Pritchard & Smith (1999) and Smith (1994) indicate. The tourism services dimension involves lodging, recreational centers, information systems, the food and the prices of services, as established by Fluvià et al. (2011), Gearing, Swart & Turgut (1974), Morrison (1989), Murphy, Pritchard & Smith (1999), Murphy & Pritchard (1997), Prentice (1993), Sánchez et al. (2006) and Zeithami (1998). The tourism infrastructure dimension refers to the transportation, the signage for the attractions, access roads and hiking paths, as established by Gearing, Swart & Turgut (1974), Fluvià et al. (2011), Murphy, Pritchard & Smith (1999) and Smith (1994). The scale used reflects the four dimensions to measure a short break tourist destination.

The use of the instrument as an evaluation of the dimensions of short break tourist destinations could be incorporated as knowledge in the tourism sector to develop new touristic products in a national or regional destination (Sharma 2010). The literature review shows that other instruments have been developed mainly to measure the attitudes that determine the choice of destination (Um & Crompton 1990), motivation and satisfaction (Yoon & Uysal 2005) and consumer behavior (Cohen, Prayag, & Moital 2014; Hu & Ritchie 1993), but no instruments that measure the dimensions that a visitor would like to find in a short break tourist destination were identified. The scale proposed fills the gap to measure the dimensions (Table 3) of a short break destination, to group the perception of the attributes that tourists seek in a holistic way. In so doing, the tourists will visit an exceptional place that is capable of meeting their expectations and that allows them to establish a link with the destination. Moreover, it will permit regional and local governments, as well as private investors, to develop touristic programs with short break packages specialized toward each dimension, so that by measuring the perceptions of the short break tourist destinations and their dimensions, they could be able to prioritize which dimensions are the most representative and important for young people who take short break trips. This scale makes it possible for local governments and private investors to evaluate each of the four dimensions for the planning of the development of tourist destinations.

The results show a valid and reliable scale to measure a short break tourist destination. Moreover, the results show that evaluated individuals tend to positively rate the attributes of the short break destinations they have visited and that tourists perceive the measured attributes as expected characteristics when they visit a short break destination. Also, none of the items had a low discrimination value.

As for the empirical, management contribution, the scale will allow different interest groups that have stakes in the tourist destination—travel agencies, business associations, regional governments, private investors, the media and providers—to provide relevant information about the attributes that tourists seek when visiting a short break destination and, in this way, provide them with a way to elaborate a plan for the development of local tourism focused on the improvement of attractions, the improvement and maintenance of services and the development of infrastructure of unexploited destinations and that could benefit many countries, Peru among them.

Regarding the validation of the instrument, this study presents an important methodological contribution, since the use of IRT to build instruments is rare in the tourism sector in spite of the fact that, in other research areas, it is frequently used, given the advantages it presents for validating a proposed scale and for selecting the most appropriate items. In general terms, the results of the validation of the instrument indicate a good fit for the proposed scale, suggesting the elimination of one item for the estimate of the final scale. In this way, this study provides evidence that this instrument can be used to evaluate the dimensions of short break tourist destinations at the local level; however, it is still necessary to undertake studies about its adaptation and use in different populations.

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