

Exploring the Relationship Between Tourists' Emotional Experience, Destination Personality Perception, Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions*

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The relationship between tourists' emotional experience and perception of destination brand personality, has not been empirically explored before. Moreover, there is a literature gap in understanding how emotional experience, destination personality, destination satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, interact together in one model. Based on this, the principal aim of this study is to analyze how tourists' emotional experience affects the perception of destination personality traits, as well as how these two constructs relate to tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions. In order to explore this, the survey was conducted on a sample of 203 domestic and international tourists, who have visited the city of Novi Sad, while Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to test the hypothesized model. The results confirmed the positive role of emotional experience in shaping destination personality and destination satisfaction. Destination satisfaction and certain personality traits positively predicted behavioral intentions. Theoretical and managerial implications are discussed in the paper.

Keywords: destination personality, emotional experience, tourist satisfaction, tourist behavioral intentions

Highlights:

- Destination personality is positively associated with emotional experience.
- Destination satisfaction is affected by two dimensions of emotional experience.
- Destination personality traits did not predict destination satisfaction.
- Destination personality and destination satisfaction shape behavioral intentions.

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Functional attributes of a tourism destination, such as price levels, transport, climate, and type of accommodation, simultaneously represent the basis for the destination's positioning and make the destination easily substitutable (Ekinci, 2007; Yusof & Ramli, 2015). Thus, intangible elements, including destination personality, could serve as viable components to build the destination's unique identity and symbolic value (Ekinci et al., 2007). Destination personality also refers to desirable personality traits, which tourists do not necessarily possess but could experience when arriving at the destination (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Tourism destinations are rich in experiential attributes, and they have a strong power to awake emotions (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). It is believed that tourists experience a range of positive emotions during the holiday planning phase, which affects their ultimate decision to choose a destination (Walters & Sparks, 2012). When arriving at a destination, those emotions that tourists experience can both be positive or negative. For instance, a tourist can feel anger if he/she sees a dirty or crowded beach, or happiness when a patient and friendly tourist guide is by his/her side (Li et al., 2014). When it comes to the final stage of a tourist journey, most of the authors agree that emotions positively affect satisfaction (Bigné et al., 2005; De Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Hosany & Prayag, 2013; Matzler & Faullant, 2011) and intended behavior, expressed through intentions to pay more (Bigné et al., 2005) and recommend the destination (Hosany & Prayag, 2013). Likewise, the previous literature suggested that emotional associations, which tourists link to destinations, positively shape their satisfying experience and loyalty (Barsky & Nash, 2002; Yuksel et al., 2010).

Marketing research underlines the importance of an emotional connection between consumers and a brand (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2017). Also, a brand personality has shown to create a stronger emotional connection to the brand (Biel, 1993; Siguaw et al., 1999), increasing consumers' loyalty (Freling & Forbes, 2005; Sung & Kim, 2010) and preference (Sirgy, 1982). Indeed, an emotional connection might refer to attachment or trust rather than experience. For instance, emotional bonding that arises between a person and a brand represents emotional brand attachment (Thomson et al., 2005). Likewise, an emotional bond that connects a person and some consumption entity, such as a brand, another person, place, or object, refers to emotional attachment (Park et al., 2006; Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2020). Thus, it is of particular significance to point out that the proposed model of the present research explores the predictive effect of emotional experience on destination personality perception. Moreover, researchers in tourism have emphasized the emotional experience of tourists as an essential part of the destination brand (Baker & Cameron, 2008; Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Pritchard & Morgan, 1998). Besides, Aaker (1997) also claimed that brand personality could capture the emotional link between the consumer and the brand due to its symbolic, holistic, and emotion-evoking nature. Additionally, a considerable amount of literature indicates that brand personality captures the emotional side of a brand (Donahay & Rosenberger, 2007; Keller, 2003). Likewise, destination brand personality in tourism reflects

tourists' emotions and perceptions as well as the unique destination identity and image (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Hosany et al., 2006; Kim & Lehto, 2013; Papadimitriou et al., 2015).

Thus, we could assume a strong relationship between emotional experience and perception of the destination personality, even though this relationship has not been empirically explored in the previous studies. Based on this literature gap, this study intends to shed light on how tourists' emotional experience of the destination affects their perception of certain destination personality traits, as well as how these two concepts relate to tourists' satisfaction, their intention to recommend a destination, share positive impressions about the destination and encourage other people to visit destination.

Literature Review

The Personality of the Brand – Destination

The concept of destination personality is based on the term brand personality, which is defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Aaker (1997) was the first to suggest a general scale for measuring brand personality – BPS (Brand Personality Scale) that measures five personality dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. Following Aaker's (1997) definition of the brand personality, Ekinci and Hosany (2006) defined destination personality as “the set of human characteristics associated with a destination” (p. 127). Previously mentioned authors were the first to implement BPS to assess the personality traits of a destination. On a sample of British tourists, the authors applied a shortened scale with 27 items, and the results identified three dimensions inherent to tourism destinations: Sincerity, Excitement, and Conviviality. Later, these authors confirmed the originally obtained three-factor structure (Hosany et al., 2006; Ekinci et al., 2007). Similar to the mentioned studies, many other researchers (Chen & Phou, 2013; Gómez Aguilar et al., 2014; Hultman et al., 2015; Kim & Stepchenkova, 2017; Murphy et al., 2007; Papadimitriou et al., 2015; Pitt et al., 2007; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Xie & Lee, 2013) also tried to apply the original BPS for measuring destination personality, but most of them needed to modify or shorten the scale, or they realized that certain items are not appropriate for describing destination personality. The main reason for this is probably the fact that the original BPS (Aaker, 1997) was formed to measure the brand personality of material products while intangible product characteristics were not considered. This explains why the original BPS was confirmed to be inappropriate to measure the personality of a tourism destination, as it is equally characterized by material (e.g., buildings, beaches, flora, fauna) and nonmaterial attributes (e.g., service, hospitality; Hosany et al., 2006; Murphy et al., 2007; Pan et al., 2017; Smith, 1994). Considering this, several authors offered a solution to this problem, forming new scales to measure destination personality (Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2015; Jovanović et al., 2017; Kim & Lehto, 2013; Kovačić et al., 2020; Kumar & Nayak, 2018; Pan et al., 2017; Rojas-

Méndez & Hine, 2016; Zhang et al., 2019). Kovačić et al. (2020) created a new scale called Destination Personality Scale – DPS that confirmed all five dimensions of brand personality of the original BPS (Aaker, 1997), but with the items completely adapted to estimate the personality of a destination. This scale was applied to measure destination personality in the current study.

Tourism literature lacks research on the relationship between tourists' emotional experience and destination personality. However, several studies (San Martín & Del Bosque, 2008; Prayag et al., 2017) found a positive relationship between tourists' emotions and destination image. If we take into consideration the results of the work by Hosany et al. (2007), which showed that destination image and destination personality are related concepts, we could assume that tourists' emotional experiences would have a positive effect on shaping perception of destination personality. As a matter of fact, brand personality represents one of the components that make the brand image an encompassing construct (Plummer, 1984). Likewise, brand personality reflects the softer, affective side of the brand image (Hosany et al., 2007). Further on, the previously mentioned authors highlighted the association of the affective side of a destination image with traits of destination personality, such as sincerity, excitement, and conviviality (Souiden et al., 2017). Based on this, we can propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Emotional experience positively affects perception of destination personality.

Many papers found that destination personality positively affects destination satisfaction (Chen & Phou, 2013; Chi et al., 2018; Hultman et al., 2015). Moreover, previous research (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Ekinci et al., 2007; Kiliç & Sop, 2012; Pan et al., 2017; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011) emphasizes the positive effect of destination personality attributes on tourists' behavioral intentions. Based on this, the hypotheses 2 and 3 can be proposed:

H2: Destination personality positively affects destination satisfaction.

H3a: Destination personality positively affects tourists' intention to recommend the destination to other people.

H3b: Destination personality positively affects tourists' intention to share a positive impression about the destination with other people.

H3c: Destination personality positively affects tourists' intention to encourage friends and relatives to visit the destination.

The Emotional Experience of a Tourism Destination

Cohen and Areni (1991) defined emotions as “affective states characterized by episodes of intense feelings associated with a specific referent (e.g., person, object, event) that instigate specific response behaviors” (p.188). For instance, in the context of tourism, tourists could feel positive emotions, such as joy, love,

etc., but also negative emotions, including anger or negative surprise (Li et al., 2014). The tourism experience enhances tourists' personal value and provides them with emotions that are satisfying and enjoyable. Consequently, those emotional responses become a key component in shaping satisfaction, intention to recommend, and choice (Gnoth, 1997). Moreover, it is believed that the surroundings or environment of a place in which people find themselves evokes their emotional reactions (Machleit & Eroglu, 2000). Accordingly, the power of a destination to awake emotions lies in the abundance of its experiential attributes (Otto & Richie, 1996; Hosany & Gilbert, 2010), such as hedonism, novelty, knowledge, meaningfulness, local culture, etc. (Kim et al., 2012; Şahin & Güzel, 2020). Considering the fact that emotions are psychological concepts (Sharma & Nayak, 2018), in order to measure emotions, marketing and tourism researchers adapted self-report scales formed by emotion theorists (Izard, 1977; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Plutchik, 1980; Watson et al., 1988). However, these scales were proven not to be appropriate for measuring consumers' emotions when purchasing goods nor assessing the wealth of attributes and characteristics that distinguish a tourism destination (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Hosany, 2012; Lee & Kyle, 2013; Sharma & Nayak, 2018). Accordingly, Hosany and Gilbert (2010) wanted to form an adequate instrument to assess a wide range of tourists' emotional experiences. The previously mentioned authors considered both tourists' and destination's characteristics and developed the Destination Emotion Scale – DES with 15 items that measure three dimensions of emotional experience: Joy, Love, and Positive surprise. The present research implemented DES to measure tourists' emotional experiences of a tourism destination.

Under the dimension of Joy, there are emotions such as enthusiasm, pleasure, and delight (Hosany et al., 2015). Joy is associated with a positive outcome of a situation, for instance, when a person is guided by the belief that he/she is making the right moves that lead to the desired goal (Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991). Likewise, the previous research highlighted that the pursuit of experience that is going to provide pleasure represents the most important motivating factor in tourism (Currie, 1997; Goossens, 2000).

Emotions such as tenderness, caring, and affection are an integral part of the dimension of Love (Hosany et al., 2015). Moreover, the previous studies (Ahuvia, 2005; Batra et al., 2012) showed that consumers could express love for products and brands. Subsequently, destination marketing organizations emphasize elements that encourage love in their marketing activities and brand strategies. Considering this, several examples of good practice represent the campaign "I Love New York", the slogan coming from Thailand "Touch Your Heart" and the advertising campaign created in Cyprus, "In Your Heart".

Items such as surprise, inspiration, and fascination are part of the dimension of Positive surprise (Hosany et al., 2015). Regarding this, Westbrook and Olivier (1991) emphasized that consumers who remain positively surprised are more likely to be more satisfied and, at the same time, show greater loyalty. Therefore, destination marketers often induce elements that evoke surprise in their branding activities. For instance, the "Amazing Thailand, Amazing Value" campaign comes

from Thailand, the “Surprise Yourself” slogan emerges in Scotland, while Germany is “Simply Inspiring” and Malaysia is “Fascinating” (Hosany et al., 2015).

Emotions are the most influential component of the tourism industry (Mitas et al., 2012; Prayag et al., 2017). During the holiday, emotions play a role in shaping a memorable tourism experience (Aho, 2001; McIntosh & Siggs, 2005) and behavioral intentions, especially the intention to recommend (Gnoth, 1997; Hosany & Prayag, 2013), whereby their intensity fluctuates until the entire experience is complete (Kyle & Lee, 2012; Li et al., 2014). Finally, several studies implemented DES to evaluate emotional experiences and found a positive relationship between tourists' emotional experiences and their satisfaction (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Prayag et al., 2013; Prayag et al., 2017; Sharma & Nayak, 2018; Tlili & Amara, 2016). Based on this, we can suggest the following hypotheses:

H4: Emotional experience positively affects destination satisfaction.

H5a: Emotional experience positively affects the intention to recommend the destination to other people.

H5b: Emotional experience positively affects the intention to share positive impressions about the destination with other people.

H5c: Emotional experience positively affects the intention to encourage friends and relatives to visit the destination.

Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions

Tourism literature (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chen & Chen, 2010; Grappi & Montanari, 2011; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2007) emphasize the importance of satisfaction as one of the most influential components of tourists' loyalty (Prayag et al., 2017). Moreover, there is a close relationship between tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Bigné et al., 2001; Hosany & Gilbert, 2010). Based on the presented literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H6a: Destination satisfaction positively affects the intention to recommend the destination to other people.

H6b: Destination satisfaction positively affects the intention to share positive impressions about the destination with other people.

H6c: Destination satisfaction positively affects the intention to encourage friends and relatives to visit the destination.

Methods

Sample

The sample consisted of 203 domestic and international tourists who visited the city of Novi Sad, 68% of them were international, and 32% were domestic tourists. The gender

distribution is quite uniform, with 53.2% of female and 46.8% of male respondents. The average age of respondents was 31.48 years ($SD = 12.086$, range 15–73 years). Considering respondents' education, 32% of them completed college, followed by respondents who finished elementary and high school (33%). Regarding respondents' occupation statuses, the largest number of respondents were employed (59.1%) and pupils and students (31.5%). Further on, a majority of respondents have monthly income which is considered an average income for Serbia (35%). Respondents were asked to select the option that suits them optimally concerning the average monthly income in the country of their residence.

Table 1
Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 203)

International/Domestic tourists	
International	68%
Domestic	32%
Gender	
Male	46.8%
Female	53.2%
Education	
Elementary & High school	33%
3-year college	16.3%
Bachelors' degree	32%
Master's & PhD degree	18.7%
Occupation	
Pupil & Student	31.5%
Employed	59.1%
Retired	3%
Unemployed	6.4%
Monthly income	
Above average	23.6%
Average	35%
Below average	14.3%
No income	27.1%

Instrument

In order to collect research data, a questionnaire was developed. The first part of the questionnaire referred to the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents (gender, place of residence, age, education, work status, monthly income), and it also contained two questions, the first about the number of previous visits to the city of Novi Sad and the second about the travel companion. The second part of the questionnaire measured destination personality perception, and this concept was measured using a 24-item Destination Personality Scale – DPS, developed by Kovačić et al. (2020). Thirdly, the emotional experience of a tourism destination was assessed with the 15-item Destination Emotion Scale – DES, created by Hosany and Gilbert (2010). As for the fourth part of the questionnaire, an item was given to measure tourists' overall satisfaction with the city. Lastly, the three items measuring behavioral intentions, namely, the intention to recommend the city to other people, share positive impressions about the city with other people and encourage friends and relatives to visit the city, were based on Hosany et al. (2015). All the items were rated using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 – *strongly disagree*; 5 – *strongly agree*). The survey questionnaires were

distributed in both Serbian and English languages. Surveys were back-translated from English to Serbian and vice versa to ensure the quality of translation and to avoid possible miss interpretations. Domestic tourists were given questionnaires in the Serbian language, while international tourists filled in questionnaires written in English (see Appendix 1 for a full list of measurement items).

Procedure

The survey research was conducted in January, February, and March 2019 in the city of Novi Sad. The survey research was conducted using both classic paper-pencil and online questionnaires, previously made in Google Forms. Researchers distributed classic paper-pencil questionnaires to different accommodation facilities, asking front desk employees to share questionnaires with hotel guests and ask them to return filled questionnaires to the survey box at the reception desk. The online questionnaire was shared on the social network Facebook and intended for tourists who have visited the city of Novi Sad in the last two years and who do not reside in Novi Sad. Snowball sampling was also applied, as researchers asked respondents to pass the survey to other people who visited Novi Sad in the last two years. A total of 84.73% of research data were collected via classic paper-pencil questionnaires, while 15.27% were collected via the online questionnaire. While online questionnaires did not have missing data "due to the obligatory answer settings", all the paper-pencil questionnaires which had missing data were excluded from the study (a total of 10 questionnaires). All respondents were informed that the participation is voluntary and anonymous and that results are going to be used for scientific purposes only.

Statistical Analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM), specifically the Path model was applied in order to test the hypothesis. To determine the fit of the model, the following indexes were used: Sattora–Bentler χ^2 (S-B χ^2), which should not be statistically significant and ratio χ^2/df , which should be less than 2 (Sattora & Bentler, 1994); the square root of the mean squared errors of approximation (RMSEA) which should be less than .08 for an adequate fit and less than 0.5 for a good model fit (although it is noted that even RMSEA higher than 0.5 is not of concern when the other indices show good fit) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), which should be less than .08; Bentler Comparative Fit Index (CFI), which should be higher than .90 for adequate model fit (Brown, 2015).

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis – Emotional Experience

The Destination Emotions scale used in the paper for measuring emotional experience was developed by Hosany and Gilbert (2010). In order to obtain factor loadings and confirm the factor structure, principal component analysis with Promax rotation was applied, using a threshold of 0.3 for factor loadings. Representativeness was good ($KMO = .897$) and Bartlett's sphericity test was significant ($\chi^2(105) = 1849.62$, $p < .001$), which confirmed that the data are suitable for the analysis. Three dimensions (Joy, Love, and Positive surprise) which coincide with the original model were extracted with 67.19% of variance explained (Table 2).

Table 2
Pattern matrix of the proposed model (N = 203)

Items	Factors		
	Joy	Love	Positive Surprise
I feel Cheerful.	.798		
I feel a sense of Delight.	.754		
I feel a sense of Enthusiasm.	.759		
I feel a sense of Joy	.751		
I feel a sense of Pleasure	.522		
I feel a sense of Affection.		.766	
I feel a sense of Caring.		.833	
I feel a sense of Love.		.676	
I feel a sense of Tenderness.		.756	
I feel Warm-hearted.		.597	
I feel a sense of Astonishment.			.762
I feel a sense of Amazement.			.617
I feel Fascinated.			.693
I feel a sense of Inspiration.			.649
I feel a sense of Surprise.			.798

Note. The threshold value of .3 has been used for item factor loadings.

Exploratory Factor Analysis – Destination Personality

The Destination Personality Scale used in the paper for measuring destination personality was developed by Kovačić et al. (2020). In order to obtain factor loadings and confirm the factor structure, principal component analysis with Promax rotation was applied, using a threshold of 0.3 for factor loadings. Representativeness was good ($KMO = .817$) and Bartlett's sphericity test was significant ($\chi^2(1035) = 4709.44$, $p < .001$), which confirmed that the data are suitable for the analysis. Five dimensions (Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness) were extracted with 56.38 % of variance explained (Table 3).

Table 3
Pattern matrix of the proposed model (N = 203)

Items	Dimensions				
	Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Energetic		.819			
Entertaining		.714			
Lively		.825			
Dynamic		.821			
Benevolent	.770				
Emotional	.716				
Open	.691				

Items	Dimensions				
	Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Pleasant	.733				
Convivial	.812				
Reliable			.710		
Responsible			.761		
Dedicated			.743		
Serious			.726		
Organized			.612		
Attentive			.522		
Smooth				.656	
Balanced				.669	
Gentle				.736	
Charming				.726	
Mysterious				.728	
Spontaneous					.728
Free					.789
Uncontrollable					.721
Resistant					.787

Note. The threshold value of .3 has been used for item factor loadings.

Correlations Between Variables

Pearson correlation coefficients showed that all tested variables are correlated (Table 4).

Table 4
Intercorrelations between variables in the model

	S	E	C	S	R	J	L	PS	SAT	R	I	F
Sincerity (S)	1											
Excitement (E)	.545**	1				.						
Competence (C)	.655**	.418**	1									
Sophistication (S)	.641**	.420**	.677**	1								
Ruggedness (R)	.539**	.462**	.551**	.509**	1							
Joy (J)	.411**	.357**	.385**	.417**	.330**	1						
Love (L)	.456**	.354**	.431**	.448**	.313**	.672**	1					
Positive surprise (PS)	.329**	.415**	.347**	.395**	.393**	.578**	.625**	1				
Satisfaction (SAT)	.291**	.185**	.299**	.308**	.213**	.432**	.451**	.402**	1			
Recommendations (R)	.398**	.284**	.306**	.371**	.248**	.353**	.277**	.266**	.502**	1		
Impressions (I)	.447**	.297**	.328**	.310**	.259**	.405**	.371**	.256**	.565**	.683**	1	
Friends (F)	.347**	.237**	.237**	.212**	.242**	.350**	.314**	.267**	.531**	.662**	.734**	1

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Descriptive Statistics and Measurement Model Validity

Table 5 represents descriptive statistics for all analyzed variables including Cronbach's α coefficients which are higher than the recommended 0.7 for all analyzed factors. This confirms that the instruments are reliable measures of given constructs. Furthermore, before conducting the path model, the construct validity was examined by testing the factor structure, as well as convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity refers to the degree to which two measures that theoretically should be related, are related. Convergent validity exists when two similar constructs correspond with one another, while in the case of discriminant validity two dissimilar constructs are easily differentiated (Campbell & Fiske, 1959).

Table 5

Descriptive and measurement properties of Destination Personality and Emotional Experience Scales and descriptive statistics of destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions

Destination personality	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's α	AVE	CR
Excitement	3.8	.867	0.88	.63	.87
Sincerity	3.85	.735	0.836	.55	.86
Competence	3.65	.767	0.85	.42	.87
Sophistication	3.76	.764	0.806	.49	.83
Ruggedness	3.4	.758	0.747	.57	.84
Emotional experience					
Joy	4.08	.69	0.865	.48	.84
Love	3.81	.803	0.881	.47	.85
Positive surprise	3.57	.823	0.845	.5	.83
Destination satisfaction	4.37	.672	-	-	-
Recommendation	4.48	.76	-	-	-
Impressions	4.48	.779	-	-	-
Friends and relatives	4.41	.865	-	-	-

Note. AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability.

Convergent validity is also obtained when checking if each of the measurement items load on the theoretical constructs with significant t-values and t-values should be above 1.96 (Chin et al., 2013). Thus, the convergent validity was evident when taking the highly significant t-values of each indicator coefficient ranging from 1.987 to 7.984.

Furthermore, a test possesses convergent validity when item-to-factor loadings are significant and the average variance extracted (AVE) is higher than .50 within each dimension, but AVE higher than .40 is still acceptable if composite reliability (CR) is higher than .60 (Huang et al., 2013; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Results showed that all dimensions had AVE higher than .40 and CR higher than .60 (Table 1).

We checked the discriminant validity, by comparing the average variances extracted (AVEs) for each latent factor, with the squared correlation estimates between latent constructs. Fornell and Larcker (1981) noted that the discriminant

validity is guaranteed when the AVEs, which are recommended to exceed a threshold of 0.5, are greater than the squared correlation estimates. The range of squared correlations based on total scores is from .09 to .45, which is lower than AVE. Thus, results confirm that DPS dimensions have sufficient discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Zaiř & Berteau, 2011).

Table 6
Squared correlations between latent variables and average variances extracted

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Sincerity	0.55							
Excitement	0.390	0.63						
Competence	0.429	0.174	0.43					
Sophistication	0.411	0.176	0.418	0.49				
Ruggedness	0.29	0.213	0.303	0.259	0.57			
Joy	0.168	0.127	0.148	0.173	0.108	0.48		
Love	0.207	0.125	0.187	0.200	0.097	0.451	0.47	
Positive surprise	0.108	0.172	0.120	0.156	0.154	0.334	0.390	0.5

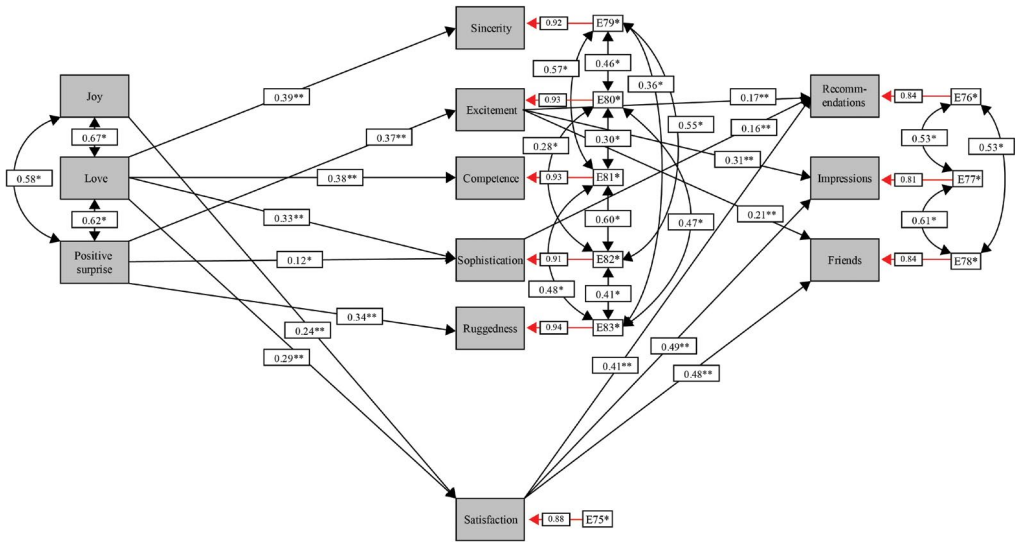
Note. Italics indicate average variances extracted (AVEs); *Correlations are significant at 0.01 level.

Results of the Path Model

A series of path models was created to test the suggested hypothesis of the study. The first, initial model (model 1), included all the relations specified in the hypothesis. However, model 1 did not show a satisfactory fit. Modification indexes suggested that Satisfaction should be positively related to Impressions. Moreover, some insignificant paths were removed from the model – Joy and Excitement, Joy and Competence, Joy and Ruggedness; Love and Excitement, Love and Ruggedness; Positive surprise and Sincerity, Positive surprise and Competence; Satisfaction with Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness. Insignificant paths were also Love and Recommendations, Impressions and Friends; Positive surprise and Recommendations, Impressions and Friends as well as Joy and Recommendations, Impressions and Friends. The paths between Sincerity, Competence, Ruggedness and Sophistication with Recommendations, Impressions and Friends were also removed as they were insignificant.

After removing the insignificant paths and adding the relationship between Satisfaction and Impressions, the model was run again (model 2). Model 2 again did not provide satisfactory indexes. Modification indices indicated that Satisfaction should be related to Recommendations, Friends and Love, while Sophistication should be related to Recommendations. In this step, the relationships between Sincerity and Joy, Sophistication and Joy as well as Joy with Friends showed to be insignificant, so they were excluded from the model. After the mentioned changes, the model was run again (model 3).

Model 3 provided a satisfactory model fit, however, there was one more suggestion given by modification indices: Satisfaction should be related to Joy. The fit indices improved in model 4, which is the final model (Figure 1 and Table 7).

Figure 1*Final structural model with standardized estimates*

Note. ** Correlations and effects are significant at 0.01 level; * Correlations and effects are significant at 0.05 level.

Table 7*Fit indices of the structural model*

Model	S-B χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA (90% CI)	SRMR	CFI	NFI	NNFI
1	122.08	7	17.44	.285 (.242-.331)	.104	.906	.905	.910
2	161.996	38	4.26	.127 (.107-.148)	.165	.899	.874	.901
3	51.06	37	1.38	.043 (.00-.070)	.077	.988	.980	.989
4.	43.19	36	1.20	.031 (.00-.062)	.069	.994	.966	.994

Note. S-B χ^2 in the model 4 is insignificant

Total indirect effects in the final model are shown in Table 8. The results revealed that emotional experience positively predicts tourists' perception of destination personality, which indicates that *H1* is accepted. Specifically, findings indicate the following: If tourists feel positive surprise at the destination, they are more likely to perceive the destination as exciting, sophisticated, and rugged. On the other hand, if they experience the emotion of love, they are more likely to perceive the destination as sincere, competent, and sophisticated. Nevertheless, Joy did not show any effect on tourists' perception of destination personality traits.

Table 8
Total indirect effects of the tested variables

Total Indirect effects			
	Recommendation	Friends	Impressions
Love	0.175 (CI .154–308)	0.139 (CI .108–.339)	0.142(CI .111–.336)
Positive Surprise	0.081 (CI .001–.122)	0.077 (CI .015–157)	0.115 (.012–.123)
Joy	0.098(CI .037–.195)	0.118 (CI .047–.236)	0.115 (CI .053–.249)

Note. The indirect effects were calculated by bias corrected percentile bootstrap; CI – Confidence Interval.

Contrary to what was expected, destination personality showed no effect on destination satisfaction after controlling for the association between satisfaction with emotional experiences (*H2* was rejected). However, tourists' perception of destination personality positively predicts their behavioral intentions (*H3a*, *H3b*, and *H3c* were confirmed). Specifically, Excitement is the best predictor of behavioral intentions, influencing all three items. Besides that, Sophistication was shown to positively shape the intention to recommend the destination. So, if tourists perceive the destination as exciting, they will be more likely to recommend the destination, share positive impressions about the destination with other people, and encourage friends and relatives to visit the destination. In addition, if they perceive the destination as sophisticated, they will be more likely to recommend the destination to other people. The emotional experience of the destination showed to be a predictor of destination satisfaction (*H4*). Specifically, if tourists experience love and joy, they are more likely to be satisfied with a tourism destination. On the other hand, Emotional experience showed no direct effects on behavioral intentions (*H5a*, *H5b*, and *H5c* were rejected). However, the model shows that Emotional experience has indirect effects on behavioral intentions, with destination personality and destination satisfaction being the mediator of this relationship (see Table 8). The model shows that Sophistication and destination satisfaction mediate the relationship between Love and Intention to recommend; Sophistication and Excitement mediate the relationship between Positive surprise and Intention to recommend, with Excitement also mediating the relationship between Positive surprise and intention to share positive impressions and encourage friends to visit destination. Finally, destination satisfaction mediates the relationship between Joy and all three outcomes of behavioral intentions.

Finally, destination satisfaction positively predicts all three items of tourists' behavioral intentions, which led to confirming *H6a*, *H6b*, and *H6c*.

Discussion

The principal aim of the present research was to investigate the relationship between tourists' emotional experience, destination personality, destination satisfaction, and tourists' behavioral intention. The results showed that perception of Love and Positive surprise positively affect the assessment of destination personality traits. Firstly, the results indicate that tourists who experienced the

emotion of Love at a tourist destination mostly perceived that destination as more Sincere, Competent, and Sophisticated. Accordingly, the destination awakened emotions of love, affection, tenderness, etc., which shaped tourists' perception of the destination as benevolent, emotional, convivial, etc. (Sincerity dimension). It is believed that touch and contact with other people (e.g., locals, tourism employees, and other tourists) have played a role in experiencing these emotions that further reflected on the perception of previously mentioned personality traits of the Sincere destination. Indeed, displaying positive emotions during the interaction with tourists improves the quality of the personal connection between local people and visitors at the destination (Nam et al., 2016). In addition, local people play an important role in shaping tourists' perception of the destination brand (Freire, 2009). On the other hand, emotions of love shaped tourists' perception of the destination as a reliable, responsible, dedicated, serious, organized, and attentive destination (Competence dimension). Again, feelings such as affection could create the impression that tourists are well-cared and that destination has all competence to fulfill their needs and requirements. Moreover, the feeling of love helped tourists perceive the destination as smooth, balanced, gentle, and charming (Sophistication dimension). Further on, tourists who mostly felt emotions of positive surprise generally perceived the destination as exciting, sophisticated, and rugged. Therefore, tourists who felt astonished, inspired, surprised, etc., perceived the destination as energetic, fun, lively, and dynamic (Excitement dimension). It might be that the participation in specific activities and events that evoked tourists' positive surprise, also reflected in the tourists' perception of the city as an exciting destination. Moreover, it seems that tourists who feel inspired, surprised and astonished, while staying at the destination, are more likely to perceive it as an exciting destination. Interestingly, Positive surprise was also found to affect the perception of Sophistication. Therefore, tourists, whose destination stay was accompanied by emotions of positive surprise, mostly perceived the destination as smooth, balanced, gentle, and charming. It seems that the tourism experience, shaped with some new knowledge about the destination and perception of its attributes and tourism attractions, as well as overall assessment of the services and host behavior, evoked tourists' delight and fascination. These tourists experienced emotions of positive surprise, which, together with newly formed impressions about the destination, helped tourists to perceive the destination as smooth, balanced, etc. Finally, positively surprised tourists generally perceived the destination as rugged. It is believed that these tourists learned something new, explored less-visited surroundings, or less promoted tourist attractions experiencing unexpected emotions of positive surprise that shaped their impressions of the destination as a mysterious, spontaneous, and free destination (Ruggedness dimension). It can be concluded that evoking a chain of positive emotional reactions to activities, attractions, or places that might not be expected at the destination leads to the perception of unique destination personality attributes. Therefore, enriching promotional activities of the city tourism offer with adequate tourism attractions

that spark positive surprise could enhance perceiving the city as an exciting, sophisticated, and rugged destination. On the other hand, focusing on such destination attributes that will bring a sense of love, caring, or warm-hearted to tourists, will strengthen their perception of the city as a sincere, competent, and sophisticated destination. When people associate such positive emotions and personality traits with a destination, it represents a great competitive advantage for such a destination (Freling & Forbes, 2005; Souiden et al., 2017).

Further on, the results showed that tourists' perception of Joy and Love positively shape their destination satisfaction, which is in line with the previous research that highlights the role of emotional experience in shaping tourists' satisfaction (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Hosany et al., 2015; Prayag et al., 2013; Prayag et al., 2017; Sharma & Nayak, 2018; Tlili & Amara, 2016). Besides, satisfaction is a consequence of pleasurable emotions (Oliver, 1997), and in the tourism context, positive emotions have a significant role in shaping satisfaction (Faullant et al., 2011; Grappi & Montanari, 2011; Prayag et al., 2017). On the other hand, the results of the present research showed that destination satisfaction positively affects tourists' behavioral intentions, which is supported by the previous research (Prayag et al., 2013; Sharma & Nayak, 2018; Tlili & Amara, 2016). Moreover, satisfied tourists are more likely to generate positive word-of-mouth (Tlili & Amara, 2016).

Furthermore, despite expectations that destination personality would affect destination satisfaction, this relation was not confirmed in the study. This might be because the emotional experience is a positive direct predictor of both destination personality and destination satisfaction, but it seems, in a different way. For instance, only the emotion of love directly predicts both of the constructs. On the other hand, the positive surprise will affect our perception of destination personality but will not necessarily shape our destination satisfaction, while the emotion of joy positively affects our destination satisfaction but it does not affect our perception of destination personality. This may indicate that, in the current model, the concept of destination satisfaction does not predict destination personality but that both are consequences of the emotional experience of a tourism destination.

Furthermore, the results showed the role of tourists' perception of destination personality in shaping their behavioral intentions, which is congruent with the previous research (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Ekinci et al., 2007; Kiliç & Sop, 2012; Pan et al., 2017; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Specifically, if tourists perceive the destination as exciting, they are more likely to recommend the destination, share positive impressions about the destination with other people, and encourage friends and relatives to visit the destination. This might be because excitement is something that the majority of tourists are searching for, especially when it comes to dynamic city tourism destinations. So, if tourists perceive the destination in this manner, they are more likely to recommend the destination and spread positive word-of-mouth. Thus, this finding might be a useful implication for city tourism marketers in adjusting promotional campaigns. Additionally, tourists, who perceive the destination as more sophisticated, are

more ready to recommend the destination to other people. Thus, it seems that the destination perceived as balanced, gentle, and charming creates special feelings among tourists, motivating them to recommend the destination to people who value such destinations. So, it seems that tourists, who perceive a destination as sophisticated, would not share their positive impressions and word-of-mouth with all of their acquaintances, family, and friends, but will recommend the destination to a specific group of people who are attracted by such destinations.

Finally, the study showed no direct effects between emotional experience and behavioral intentions (*H5a*, *H5b*, and *H5c* were rejected), although this relationship was expected. The model indicated indirect effects of Emotional experience on behavioral intentions, with destination personality and destination satisfaction being the mediator of this relationship. The model shows tourists who experience love will recommend the destination to other people in case they perceive the destination as sophisticated and in case they are satisfied with the destination. Moreover, the study shows that people who experience positive surprise, in case they perceive the destination as sophisticated and exciting will intend to recommend the destination to other people. Similarly, people who experience positive surprise and perceive a destination as exciting will intend to share positive impressions and encourage friends to visit the destination. Finally, people who experience joy and are satisfied with the destination will show a tendency towards all three outcomes of behavioral intentions. These findings show that experiencing positive emotions on a trip is often not enough to motivate tourists to recommend a destination, share positive impressions and encourage friends to visit the destination. Our study showed that, apart from positive emotions, the perception of destination personality and destination satisfaction have an important role in this, which are important guidelines for marketing managers and destination managers in order to for ensuring positive behavior outcomes for tourists.

This study also has limitations. The study was conducted in only a single city in Serbia and on a single type of tourism destination – a city tourism destination. So, the obtained results might be generalized for other city tourism destinations rather than all types of tourism destinations. This implies that the study should be replicated on another sample and another destination type in order to confirm its wider generalizability. Moreover, it should be taken into account the limitations of the SEM model and the fact that this research is correlational in nature so all the directions of the association of variables (emotions leading to the perception of destination personality) are only hypothesized. Also, future research should include the additional concept in the current research model in order for destination marketers to understand psychological factors that shape potential tourists' decisions to visit a destination better. This construct could be place attachment (e.g., place identity, place dependence). Considering this, it would be useful to investigate whether tourists' perception of destination personality and emotional experience simultaneously shape their sense of place attachment. Moreover, results would indicate the extent to which tourists have developed a sense of attachment toward the visited destination and thus help to mold promotional content to attract potential tourists.

Conclusion

The current study contributed to the existing theory, as it was the first study to examine emotional experience, destination personality, destination satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in one model. The study provided an understanding of the relationship between these constructs, revealing that emotional experience is a good predictor of destination satisfaction and how we will perceive the destination as a person. On the other hand, tourist satisfaction and perception of certain destination personality traits were confirmed to shape tourists' behavioral intentions. The study also provided new insight into the relationship between destination personality and tourist satisfaction, indicating that both constructs are predicted by tourists' emotional experience, but there might not be a direct relationship between them. The paper also contributes to the theory as it showed that destination personality and satisfaction are mediators in the relationship between emotional experience and behavioral outcomes.

Certain managerial implications could be also derived, especially for the city destination marketers and managers. Firstly, the promotional campaign of the city tourism offer should highlight destination attributes with the potential to evoke tourists' positive emotions (e.g., love, positive surprise), as it will enhance their perception of the destination as a person. Specifically, if we promote tourism content that could spark tourists' inspiration, surprise, amazement, etc., they will mostly perceive the city as exciting, sophisticated, and rugged. Similarly, promoting such destination attributes that could evoke tourists' sense of affection, love, tenderness, etc., will affect their perception of the city as a sincere, competent, and sophisticated destination. Moreover, emphasizing such destination attributes, with its appropriateness in bringing pleasurable emotions to potential tourists, will indicate their destination stay will be accompanied by a satisfactory tourism experience. Magnifying tourists' personification of the destination could result in their beneficial reaction after the completed tourist journey – they will generate positive word-of-mouth. Specifically, perceiving the city as an exciting destination could impact tourists' intentions to recommend the city, share some positive impressions about the city, and encourage other people to visit the city. On the other hand, differencing the city as a sophisticated destination will provide tourists' destination recommendations to other people.

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Istraživanje odnosa između emocionalnog iskustva turista, percepcije ličnosti destinacije, zadovoljstva i ponašajnih namera

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Veza između emocionalnih iskustava turista i percepcije ličnosti brenda destinacije nije bila do sada empirijski izučavana. Štaviše, postoji praznina u literaturi u pogledu razumevanja načina na koji emocionalna iskustva, ličnost destinacije, zadovoljstvo destinacijom i ponašajne namere međusobno interaguju u jedinstvenom modelu. Zbog toga, glavni cilj ove studije je bio da analizira kako emocionalna iskustva turista deluju na percepciju osobina ličnosti destinacije, kao i kako su ova dva konstrukta povezana sa zadovoljstvom turista i njihovim ponašajnim namerama. Da bi navedeno istražili, sprovedena je anketa na uzorku od 203 domaćih i međunarodnih turista koji su posetili Novi Sad. Pretpostavljeni model je testiran postupkom modelovanja strukturnih jednačina (SEM). Rezultati su potvrdili pozitivnu ulogu emocionalnih iskustava u oblikovanju ličnosti destinacije i zadovoljstva destinacijom. Zadovoljstvo destinacijom i pojedine osobine ličnosti su pozitivno predviđale ponašajne namere. Teorijski kao i doprinosi menadžmentu su diskutovani u radu.

Ključne reči: ličnost destinacije, emocionalna iskustva, zadovoljstvo turista, bihevioralne namere turista

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Appendix 1

Full list of measurement items

Constructs/dimensions	Measurement items
Destination personality	
Sincerity	Benevolent
	Emotional
	Open
	Pleasant
	Convivial
Excitement	Energetic
	Entertaining
	Lively
	Dynamic
Competence	Reliable
	Responsible
	Dedicated
	Serious
	Organized
Sophistication	Attentive
	Smooth
	Balanced
	Gentle
Ruggedness	Charming
	Mysterious
	Spontaneous
	Free
Emotional experience	Uncotrollable
	Resistant
Joy	
	I feel Cheerful.
	I feel a sense of Delight.
	I feel a sense of Enthusiasm.
	I feel a sense of Joy.
Love	I feel Sense of Pleasure.
	I feel a sense of Affection.
	I feel a sense of Caring.
	I feel a sense of Love.
	I feel a sense of Tenderness.
Positive surprise	I feel Warm-hearted.
	I feel a sense of Astonishment.
	I feel a sense of Amazement.
	I feel Fascinated.
	I feel a sense of Inspiration.
	I feel a sense of Surprise.

Constructs/dimensions	Measurement items
Satisfaction	Please rate on the scale from 1 to 5: 1 (very dissatisfied), 2 (dissatisfied), 3 (neutral), 4 (satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) the level of your satisfaction with Novi Sad as a tourist destination:
Behavioral intentions	I will recommend Novi Sad to other people. I will say positive things about Novi Sad to other people. I will encourage friends and relatives to visit Novi Sad.

Appendix 2

The results of hypotheses testing

Hypothesis	Total effects	B	S.E.	t-value	p-value	Result
H1 Emotional experience → Destination personality	Love → Sincerity	0,388	0,051	6,847	***	Supported
	Love → Sophistication	0,329	0,065	4,624	***	
	Love → Competence	0,377	0,055	6,363	***	
	Positive surprise → Sophistication	0,124	0,056	1,987	0,047	
	Positive surprise → Ruggedness	0,335	0,053	5,662	***	
	Positive surprise → Excitement	0,374	0,062	6,228	***	
H2 Destination personality → Satisfaction	paths not significant					Not Supported
H3a Destination personality → Intention to recommend	Excitement → Intention to recommend	0,167	0,073	2,414	0,016	Supported
	Sophistication → Intention to recommend	0,162	0,061	2,801	0,005	
H3b Destination personality → Intention to share a positive impression about the destination	Excitement → Intention to share a positive impression about the destination	0,306	0,06	5,442	***	Supported
H3c Destination personality → intention to encourage friends and relatives to visit the destination.	Excitement → intention to encourage friends and relatives to visit the destination	0,207	0,071	3,471	***	Supported
H4 Emotional experience → Satisfaction	Love → Satisfaction	0,293	0,07	3,524	***	Supported
	Joy → Satisfaction	0,235	0,081	2,832	0,005	
H5a Emotional experience → Intention to recommend	paths not significant					Not Supported
H5b Emotional experience → Intention to share a positive impression about the destination	paths not significant					Not Supported

Hypothesis	Total effects	B	S.E.	t-value	p-value	Result
H5c Emotional experience → intention to encourage friends and relatives to visit the destination	paths not significant					Not Supported
H5a Satisfaction→ Intention to recommend		0,405	0,076	7,981	***	Supported
H6b Satisfaction→ Intention to share a positive impression about the destination		0,485	0,064	8,63	***	Supported
H6c Satisfaction→ Intention to encourage friends and relatives to visit the destination.		0,476	0,067	6,776	***	Supported