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Determining factors for tourist satisfaction in inland destinations: Impact on the depopulation problem

Factores determinantes para la satisfacción del turista en destinos de interior: Impacto sobre el problema de la despoblación

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ABSTRACT

Depopulation is currently a major problem in Spain, especially in inland areas. Tourism can help alleviate this problem. Therefore, competitive advantages must be enhanced by developing a capable and sustainable tourism model that can lead to the desired level of development in a given geographical area. A powerful decision-making and diagnostic tool was created for the tourism industry in the Burgos Province, Spain to identify the key factors in tourist satisfaction, which can influence the decision to recommend and revisit a destination. This study presents this tool and a theoretical model of tourism satisfaction. The findings emphasize the significance of the perception that tourists have of the quality of a destination's goods and services and its impact on satisfaction. Enhancing tourist satisfaction can have important implications for improving tourism management and, consequently, addressing the depopulation problem.

Keywords: Tourist Satisfaction, Structural Equation Model, Depopulation, Tourist Industry, Inland Destinations.

RESUMEN

La despoblación es actualmente uno de los principales problemas que deben ser afrontados, especialmente en zonas de interior. El turismo es un sector que puede ayudar a aliviar este problema. Por tanto, sería conveniente potenciar las ventajas competitivas mediante un modelo turístico competente y sostenible que permita alcanzar un deseado nivel de desarrollo

en una determinada zona geográfica. El trabajo implementa una poderosa herramienta de diagnóstico y de toma de decisiones para la actividad turística de la provincia de Burgos (España), identificando los factores clave en la satisfacción del turista, los cuales pueden ser decisivos en la decisión de recomendar y revisitar el destino seleccionado. Para ello, el trabajo presenta un modelo teórico de satisfacción turística. Los resultados destacan la importancia de la percepción del turista sobre los servicios del destino y sobre la calidad de los productos, así como su impacto en la satisfacción. Así que, mejorar esta calidad puede tener importantes implicaciones en mejorar la eficiencia de la gestión turística y, consecuentemente, en un mejor tratamiento del problema de la despoblación.

Palabras clave: Satisfacción del Turista, Modelo de Ecuaciones Estructurales, Despoblación, Industria Turística, Destinos de Interior.

I. INTRODUCTION

Depopulation is one of the main problems of inland areas in Spain. The Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP¹) has noted that half of the 8,124 Spanish municipalities are in danger of extinction (FEMP, 2022). Burgos, an inner province in the northern part of the country, with an area of 14,292 km², 371 municipalities and a population of 355,429 inhabitants in 2019², has a population density of 24.89 inhabitants/km²; therefore, it can be considered a sparsely populated territory (i.e., 12.5 to 50 inhabitants/km²) according to the system of Local Administrative Units (LAU) (Europarl, 2022; Eurostat, 2022).

There are numerous negative consequences and diverse effects of depopulation on the social, cultural, environmental, and economic aspects of life (Serra et al., 2022). To alleviate this problem, the Society for the Development of the Province of Burgos (SODEBUR), an instrumental entity of the Burgos Provincial Council, oversees promoting the economic and social development of the province and its municipalities, structuring its work in five areas: energy, industry, tourism, institutional cooperation, and economic and social promotion. Of these five areas, this study focuses on the tourism sector. In 2019, the province of Burgos was visited by 1,503,199 travellers (with 2,329,692 overnight stays), 633,450 day trippers and 319,561 private accommodation tourists; these tourists generated an economic impact of 323.7 million euros and 11,558 jobs (JCyL³, 2022), illustrating the economic powerhouse that tourism is and its potential to address the problem of depopulation.

Studies have analysed the importance of the tourism sector in inland areas (e.g., Jesus and Franco, 2016; Scorza et al., 2019; Prat Forga, 2020; Baptista Alves et al., 2022; Gatto et al., 2022). Other studies have demonstrated the impact of tourism on the problem of depopulation. For example, Cáceres-Feria et al. (2021) proposed the promotion of community-based tourism as a possible solution for rural depopulation. Hashimoto et al. (2021) examined the proposal for the museumization of abandoned landscapes to promote rural tourism attraction in areas of rural depopulation and peripheralization. Vidal-Matzanke

¹ Acronym in Spanish language

² All the data used in this work is relative to the year 2019 to avoid the effect caused by COVID-19 on the touristic sector.

³ Board of Castilla y León

& Vidal-González (2022) proposed using sports tourism as a tool to combat depopulation in inland areas. They analysed the effect of offering hiking accommodations, sports products, and services to determine whether a certain area was attractive to tourists and could generate a tourist product with added value. However, we want to emphasize here that tourism can also imply a certain degree of depopulation. Therefore, Larraz & García-Gómez (2020) analysed the reasons why residents of tourist cities abandoned the historic centre due to gentrification and how the loss of local shops in favour of tourist shops affected the population. Their study underscored the need for a higher level of citizen participation with collaboration among citizen associations, residents, and local authorities to try to recover these populations. In any case, very few studies have focused on analysing tourism in the province of Burgos (Antón Maraña et al., 2021). This study seeks to deepen the analysis of the tourism sector in the province of Burgos, since we believe that it can help solve the problem of depopulation.

For this reason, SODEBUR has launched, together with the University of Burgos, a program to analyse tourist satisfaction in the province of Burgos like studies conducted at other inland destinations (Martín et al., 2019; Soler and Gemar, 2019; Sherstha et al., 2022). Therefore, the main contribution of this work is an empirical exploratory analysis that allows us to look at tourist satisfaction with an inland destination, specifically, the province of Burgos. The objective of this paper is to identify the determinants of tourist satisfaction and define a theoretical model that increases the probability of successfully managing decision-making in the tourism sector in Burgos. We believe that improving decision-making can increase the competitiveness of the province compared to other destinations, thus directly and indirectly favouring the problem of depopulation, since improving tourism is often a strategy used to attract new inhabitants in environments prone to losing population (Dot Jutglà et al., 2022).

This manuscript is structured as follows. Section two introduces a review of the literature on tourist satisfaction and on the dimensions that can influence satisfaction. The methodology follows. In the results section, a practical validation of the methodology is conducted. The final section offers concluding remarks, highlights the limitations of the work, and proposes future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer satisfaction has been widely explored and defined in various ways over the past four decades (Cho, 2017; Tontini et al., 2017). In particular, tourist satisfaction is a concept that has been addressed by many authors. As early as 1978, Pizam et al. (1978) defined tourist satisfaction as the result of comparing the experience of tourists about a destination with their expectations about it (Expectantcy Disconformation Model). Churchill & Suprenant (1982) studied tourist satisfaction from the perspective of performance evaluations (Perceived Performance Model). This approach states that the tourist's perception of the overall experience is what truly matters for satisfaction. This idea has been reinforced by other researchers. For example, most recently, Bentz et al. (2016) argued that, regardless of the existence of prior expectations, the tourist is likely to be satisfied when the experience offered by the tourist destination performs at a desired level. Other studies reported in mixed findings. Llosa et al. (1998) stated that the simple indication of

perceptions/experiences might lead to a mental process of perception minus expectations or vice versa, eliminating the need to assess expectations and perceptions separately.

Thus, a tourist's satisfaction with an experience can be influenced by different dimensions. The quality of destination attributes has been the subject of many studies. Cronin & Tailor (1992) highlighted the importance of the tourist's perception of the quality of the attributes or services of a destination as a key factor of his or her willingness to share an opinion on satisfaction. This same idea has also been reflected by other authors, such as Kozak and Rimmington (2000) and Huh et al. (2006). More recent works such as those by Chi and Qu (2009), Ragavan et al. (2014) and Jayasinghe et al. (2015) also emphasize this same dimension. In this research, the quality dimension refers to tourist satisfaction with different destination attributes, such as holiday celebrations or tourist experiences, over a broad range of destination attributes that tourists can evaluate separately, such as accommodations, catering, restaurants, shops, services, the environment and accessibility, and cultural, natural, and historical attractions (Hui et al., 2007; Chi and Qu, 2008). Biswas et al. (2021) disaggregate types of attributes (accommodation, food and beverages, attractions, safety, and transportation) to analyse their influence on tourist satisfaction.

Another dimension that may influence the tourist's opinion on satisfaction with the trip is his own motivation or motives for making such a trip. Tourist motivation has been identified as an antecedent of tourist satisfaction (Yoon and Uysal, 2005; Lee, 2009), and Battour et al. (2012) indicated that it has a direct effect on satisfaction. Olague de la Cruz et al. (2017) reflected on the determinant effect of travel motivation on tourist satisfaction, having as mediating variables the two components of the perceived image (cognitive and affective) of the destination. Motivations can be classified into push (internal) and pull (external) factors, although there are researchers who believe that they should not be seen as strictly different since they are related to each other (Albughuli, 2011). Khuong and Ha (2014) showed that push and pull motivations have a strong positive relationship with satisfaction. The motivation dimension reflects the number of possible reasons why the tourist has decided to take a trip. These motives can be linked to psycho-sociological benefits sought in tourists' experiences (Prebensen et al., 2014). The motivation to travel is driven by needs or motives (Bettman et al., 1990). Push motivations are linked to the desires, feelings and instincts of tourists and include the desire to disconnect, rest, enjoy, achieve prestige, practice sports, and engage in social interaction. Pull motivations are related to the attractiveness of the destination and its historical, cultural, or natural resources (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979).

Although it can be considered that knowledge is what remains after information seeking and analysis (individual information processing), in this research, the knowledge dimension is defined as the amount and kind of sources of information that a tourist uses in deciding on his or her next vacation, which is also important when evaluating tourist satisfaction once the trip has been completed (Prebensen et al., 2014). In this sense, the image that a destination offers through the media is a fundamental element in its promotion since what differentiates one destination from another is key to its success (Carballo et al., 2015). Several studies have examined the relationship between the image that a destination offers through different media and tourist satisfaction (Chen and Tsai, 2007; Lee et al., 2014; Prayag et al., 2017). Martín-Santana et al. (2017) confirm that the time spent searching for information directly influences the pre- and postvisit gap in cognitive image. Therefore,

tourists need to gather information before traveling to a destination to ensure that the destination can satisfy their needs. This information comes from different sources that have been extensively studied in the tourism literature (Llodrà-Riera et al., 2015). Today, one of the main sources of information that significantly influences tourists, especially young tourists, is recommendations through the internet/social media, as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Song et al., 2021) is perceived by tourists as a reliable source of information (Almeida-Santana and Moreno-Gil, 2018).

Finally, the fourth dimension to be analysed in this study is involvement. Following Ozdemir et al. (2012), the way in which the tourist plans a trip should be considered. On many occasions, this factor is also related to the emotions that the tourist develops throughout the trip (Jing and Rashid, 2018; Sharma and Nayak, 2019). Santos et al. (2022) conducted an interesting analysis of these two factors in the tourism sector and the relationship between them. Their critical analysis demonstrates a significant relationship between involvement and emotions. Furthermore, positive, and negative emotions have been examined to determine tourist satisfaction in different contexts (Hosany and Prayag, 2013; Tlitli and Amara, 2016). Lu et al. (2015) found a direct and positive relationship between tourists' involvement and satisfaction with a historic district. Therefore, in this research, the involvement dimension is related to the way in which the tourist plans the trip, i.e., type of accommodation, types of transportation and with the number of people with whom the tourist makes the trip and the relationships between them (Ozdemir et al., 2012). Similarly, the allocation of the main tourist expenditures to different travel-associated expenses and the total expenditure per day and per tourist (Deaton and Muellbauer, 1980) can also represent the way in which a tourist plans a trip. Therefore, four hypotheses can be postulated:

H1: The quality of a destination's attributes has a significant and positive influence on tourist satisfaction.

H2: Tourist motivation has a significant and positive influence on tourist satisfaction.

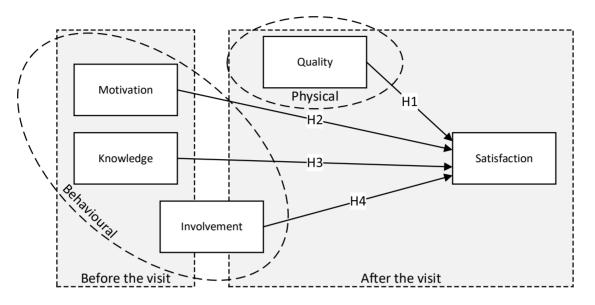
H3: Tourist knowledge has a significant and positive influence on tourist satisfaction.

H4: Tourist involvement has a significant and positive influence on tourist satisfaction.

The quality of the attributes defines the physical characteristics of the destination, while motivation, knowledge, and involvement define the traveller's behavioural characteristics (Kozak et al., 2004; Franch et al., 2006; Huh et al., 2006; Castano et al., 2007). Both have a direct influence on the selection of the destination and, in principle, on the tourist's assessment of the destination's performance, i.e., on tourist satisfaction (Hui et al., 2007; Ozdemir et al., 2012). The relationship between all these dimensions has also been analysed by many other studies. For example, Jeong and Kim (2020) explored the structural relationships between quality, destination image, perceived value, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in the context of small-scale sporting events. In a similar manner, as previously mentioned, this paper aims to analyse the influence of these four dimensions on tourist satisfaction in the province of Burgos.

Figure 1 displays the theoretical model, which illustrates the connections between the previously mentioned dimensions, i.e., it reflects the relationships hypothesized. The relationships between the quality, motivation, knowledge, and involvement dimensions and the satisfaction dimension can be seen. The dimensions that represent tourist behavioural

characteristics and the dimension that represents physical characteristics of the destination are also reflected. In the same way, the dimensions with implications before making the trip, after making the trip and those with implications both before and after making the trip (such as the involvement dimension) are identified.





III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section first identifies the variables that allow measuring each of the dimensions defined in the theoretical model of the previous section (Figure 1). Next, the data collection process is detailed, determining its technical characteristics. Third, the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample are reviewed. Finally, a justification of the statistical technique used to evaluate the model is shown.

3.1. Model variables

Scholars have not yet agreed on a generally accepted method of measuring the tourist satisfaction dimension (Adinegara et al., 2021). Two perspectives on satisfaction measurement are generally found in the literature: the unidimensional method and the multidimensional method. The former approach involves using one variable to identify overall satisfaction. The latter approach involves using multiple variables that together represent the measure of global satisfaction (Chi and Qu, 2009; Albayrak and Caber, 2018; Cossío-Silva et al., 2019). Logically, satisfaction will be influenced by unfavourable incidents experienced by tourists during the travel experience (Alrawadieh et al., 2019). Kozak (2007) proposed that a tourist who has had an experience without incidents is more likely to be satisfied, to have the intention to recommend and to visit the destination again than those who have had unfavourable incidents. In addition, it stands to reason that a satisfied tourist is more likely to use positive WOM endorsement (Yoon and Uysal, 2005).

Source: Prepared by the authors

In summary, the variables used to measure each of these dimensions (motivation, knowledge, involvement, quality, and satisfaction) can be seen in Table 1. Thus, for the motivation, knowledge, and satisfaction dimensions, there is one variable, while for the involvement dimension, there are 6 variables, and for the quality dimension, there are 12 variables.

DIMENSION	CODE	VARIABLE				
MOTIVATION	MO_RT	Reasons to travel (Number of reasons why you make the trip) (1; 2; 3; 4; >5)				
KNOWLEDGE	КN_НК	How did you know about the place? (Number of information sources used to learn about the destination) (1; 2; 3; 4; >5)				
	IN_HT	How do you travel? (Number and types of people you will be travelling with) (1; 2; 3; 4; >5)				
	IN_ME	Main expenses (Number of activities/needs in which the main expenses have been incurred) (1; 2; 3; 4; >5)				
INVOLVEMENT	IN_PT	Planning the trip (Number of means used to plan the trip) (1; 2; 3; 4; >5)				
	IN_TA	Type of accommodations (Number of types of accommodation to be use) (1; 2; 3; 4; >5)				
	IN_TE	Total expenses (€) (<50; 50-100; 101-150; 151-250; >250)				
	IN_TT	Type of transportation (Number of types of transportation to be used) (1; 2; 3; 4; >5)				
	QU_AO	Accommodation offer (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
	QU_BM	Brochures/maps (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
	QU_CA	Cultural areas (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
	QU_HS	Hotel staff (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
	QU_IP	Information point (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
QUALITY	QU_LG	Local guides (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
QUALITY	QU_LS	Local shops (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
	QU_MS	Monuments schedule (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
	QU_PA	Parking (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
	QU_QC	Quality-cost relationship (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
	QU_SP	Signpost (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
	QU_WI	Web/internet (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				
SATISFACTION	SA_GS	Global satisfaction (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied)				

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Table 1. Decis	ion variables	s for the to	urism satisi	faction model

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Once the variables that allow each dimension of the theoretical model (Figure 1) to be measured were identified, the questionnaire (Annex I) was designed to collect the data necessary to achieve the proposed main objective. To develop the final questionnaire, three different pretests⁴ were conducted: (1) review of the questionnaire by the technical teams of the Burgos Tourism Observatory and SODEBUR, (2) review of the questionnaire by the interviewers themselves, and (3) review of the questionnaire by University of Burgos students majoring in tourism. The final questionnaire covers all these variables and contains other categorization variables (tourist profile) and open variables to collect the subjective opinions of the travellers. The open variables allow us to gather ideas for improvement and to conduct

⁴ Older versions of the questionnaire are available upon request from the authors.

an evaluation to increase the performance of different tourist service provisions in future works.

3.2. Data collection process

The field work was driven by two researchers and eight students from Burgos University through in-person interviews during the holiday periods of Easter, summer break (July and August) and Christmas, and through collaborations with hotels, rural tourism establishments and tourist offices throughout the province. Interviewers did not collect data from tourists who did not want to be interviewed, so an assessment of nonresponse bias could not be made. For this same reason, the response rate cannot be evaluated either, since only complete surveys are included. However, the deployment of forced-choice response options, to some extent, eliminated the need for additional control of response bias (Brown and Maydeu-Olivares, 2018).

Moreover, based on the Touristic Potentiality Index for the province of Burgos (Aparicio-Castillo et al., 2023), eight target points for interviews were selected. Subsequently, the population under study and the sampling method were identified. Regarding the former, the target population was people over 16 years of age who were not residents of nearby municipalities and who visited the province of Burgos. Regarding the latter, a simple random sample at each target point was used. The confidence interval was higher than 95% with an error margin of less than [-2.5% + 2.5%] for the 1,554 interviews. A reliability of 0.78 (Cronbach's alpha⁵) for the measurement instrument was obtained.

Year of realization	2019 (Easter, July August, Christmas)
Methodology	Personal interview through questionnaire in tourist places and in collaborating establishments
Information collection instrument	Questionnaire elaborated according to the proposed objective with application of ordinal and binary scales. Additionally, there are categorization variables and open variables.
Interviewers	Two professors and eight students from the University of Burgos involved in the tourism course of study, who were on scholarship and/or trained for this purpose, as well as collaborators in hotels, rural tourism establishments and tourist offices.
Universe	People over 16 years of age, who were not residents of nearby municipalities, and who visited the province of Burgos. 1,503,199 travellers + 633,450 day trippers + 319,561 private accommodation tourists = 2,456,210 tourists.
Sample size	385 is the representative sample size with a heterogeneity of 50%, a margin of error of 55 and a confidence level of 95%. Finally, 1,554 interviews were obtained.
Type of sampling	Simple Random Sample according to Touristic Potentiality Index of the province of Burgos.
Error margin	Less than ± 2.5% with a heterogeneity of 50% and a confidence level of 95% for 1,554 interviews.
Cronbach's Alpha	0.78

Table 2. Statistical tee	chnical file
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Source: Prepared by the authors.

⁵ A value greater than 0.6 can be considered acceptable (Malhotra, 2009).

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Next, the data obtained in the 1,554 surveys were processed (coding and tabulation) to facilitate their analysis.

3.3. Sample characteristics

The first analysis that has been conducted with the data focused on the profile (sociodemographic characteristics) of the tourist. According to Ozdemir et al. (2012), the features that constitute the tourist profile are critical factors in analysing satisfaction. This time, the features collected are related to gender, age, education level, occupation, origin of the tourist and the existence of a previous visit to Burgos province (Table 3).

CHARACTERISTIC	OPTIONS	%
Gender	Male	41.96
	Female	58.04
Age	Under age 25	7.59
	[25-39]	22.39
	[40-54]	40.28
	[55-64]	18.92
	65 and older	10.81
Education level	High school and less	37.39
	University	62.61
Occupation	Employer	14.16
	Employee	53.73
	Student	7.46
	Household task	3.54
	Retired	15.96
	Unemployed	5.15
Origen	Spanish	87.64
	No Spanish	12.36
Previous experience	No	12.36
	Yes	87.64

Table 3. Sample characteristics (N =	= 1.554)
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Source: Prepared by the authors.

In summary, the information obtained through the 1,554 surveys of tourists in the province of Burgos gave us their sociodemographic profile. The tourists were relatively balanced with respect to gender, with slightly more females (58.04%), and most were between 40 and 54 years old (40.28%), had studied at a university (62.61%), were employed by others (53.73%), had Spanish nationality (87.64%) and had previous experience with their destination of choice (87.64%).

3.4. Formative vs. reflective model

To provide an empirical assessment of the proposed research, this study adopts a quantitative technique using a cross-sectional data collection approach. Specifically, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) has been employed. SEM is a second-generation multivariate data analysis method that can test theoretically supported linear and additive causal models. SEM is an appropriate statistical analysis technique to simultaneously assess constructs (previously dimensions) of the model and the hypothesized structural relations through the structural model and constructs with their respective indicators (previously variables) through the measurement model. Within the constructs, exogenous constructs that

act as predictor or causal variables of endogenous constructs can be distinguished. Therefore, an exogenous construct is consistent with the idea of an independent variable, while an endogenous construct is consistent with the notion of a dependent variable.

There are two SEM approaches, namely, the component-based approach (PLS-SEM) and the covariance-based approach (CB-SEM). On the one hand, PLS-SEM does not require a large sample size and normal distribution. PLS-SEM can also be utilized for models that comprise both reflective and formative natures simultaneously. PLS-SEM uses a nonparametric test oriented to an exploratory-predictive test. On the other hand, CB-SEM is extremely sensitive to data normality, interdependence of observation, large sample size, and uniformity of variable metrics. Problematic explanation of the covariance of all indicators is an important reason for CB-SEM to become an inappropriate technique for formative models. CB-SEM uses a parametric test oriented to a confirmatory-explanatory test (Hair et al., 2017).

In this study, the PLS-SEM approach is employed for two reasons. First, the modelling of tourist satisfaction in Burgos is at an early stage, so the approach seeks to build and assess a model that predicts new or future observations or scenarios instead of confirming an already defined theory (Shmueli and Koppius, 2011; Henseler et al., 2016). Second, the model nature is formative. Two types of linkage between constructs and indicators are known: (1) reflective, in which the indicators are reflections of the theoretical construct, and (2) formative, in which the indicators form the theoretical construct. The first case gives rise to reflective models (effects), and the second gives rise to formative models (cause) (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2006; Simoteo, 2012). The choice of one or another alternative is important because the validation procedures are different (Hair et al., 2022). In this case, there was an existing correlation between the indicators measuring the different constructs of the model. In general, a low correlation showing a higher correlation. Therefore, we could consider that the direction of causality was from indicators to constructs. In this way, the model used has a formative approach (Hair et al., 2022).

1 IN_HT IN ME 0.8 IN_PT IN TA 0.6 IN TE IN_TT 0.4 KN_HK MO_RT 0.2 QU_AO 0.4 OU BM 0.40 QU CA 0 0.40 QU HS 0.4 0.40 QU IP 0.50 0.40 -0.2 QU_LG 0.4 0.40 0.40 0.40 QU_LS -0.4 QU_MS 0.40 0.50 0.40 0.40 QU_PA -0.6 0.50 QU_QC 0.4 QU SP 0.4 -0.8 QU W 0.4 0.4 0.60 SA GS 0.5 0.60 0.60 0.60 0.60 0.60 0.4 0.60 0.50 0.50 -1

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To achieve the objective defined in Section I, further analysis of the data was conducted, as shown in the following section on the results.

IV. RESULTS

After analysing the characteristics of the sample (Section 3.3), a descriptive analysis of the data was conducted. As shown in Figure 3, most tourists visiting the province of Burgos are satisfied with their experience, with an average score of 3.61 out of 5. In the same way, quality-related indicators also offer quite high and similar average values for all indicators, although with a somewhat greater standard deviation than for satisfaction. The indicator related to motivation reflects that most tourists make a trip for at least three reasons. The indicator related to knowledge indicates that almost all tourists use a single source of information to learn about the destination. Finally, the indicators related to involvement indicate that tourists mainly use two types of transportation, have less than €50 of total

Source: Prepared by the authors.

expenditures, use two types of accommodations, use two means to plan the trip, spend most of their money on a single activity and usually make the trip with three types of people.

		Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	
IN	I_HT	3.01 (0.11)	0.000%	0.000%	98.970%	0.965%	0.064%	
IN	I_ME	2.26 (1.13)	34.299%	24.453%	22.458%	18.404%	0.386%	
IN	I_PT	2.11 (0.95)	31.532%	32.947%	31.145%	2.059%	2.317%	
IN	I_TA	1.59 (0.55)	43.501%	53.990%	2.252%	0.193%	0.064%	
IN	I_TE	1.57 (1.06)	70.399%	13.835%	7.722%	3.990%	4.054%	
IN	I_TT	2.06 (0.87)	31.017%	35.199%	31.789%	1.094%	0.901%	
к	№_НК	1.31 (0.66)	77.671%	15.959%	4.633%	1.416%	0.322%	
М	O_RT	2.81 (1.33)	20.592%	23.745%	23.874%	17.825%	13.964%	
Q	U_AO	3.53 (0.81)	0.257%	1.287%	61.390%	19.176%	17.889%	0
Q	U_BM	3.53 (0.83)	0.257%	1.287%	63.063%	15.508%	19.884%	25
Q	U_CA	3.73 (0.91)	0.837%	1.737%	48.520%	21.686%	27.220%	- 75
Q	U_HS	3.70 (0.87)	0.644%	1.287%	49.871%	23.745%	24.453%	100
Q	U_IP	3.68 (0.91)	0.772%	1.480%	54.118%	16.538%	27.091%	Percent
Q	U_LG	3.40 (0.78)	0.515%	1.416%	71.622%	10.875%	15.573%	
Q	U_LS	3.28 (0.73)	1.351%	3.539%	69.820%	16.474%	8.816%	
Q	U_MS	3.49 (0.86)	1.094%	4.183%	56.499%	21.429%	16.795%	
Q	U_PA	3.82 (1.05)	2.317%	5.663%	34.556%	22.201%	35.264%	
Q	U_QC	3.65 (0.84)	0.386%	1.737%	50.837%	26.384%	20.656%	
Q	U_SP	3.86 (0.99)	2.317%	4.891%	28.185%	33.462%	31.145%	
Q	U_WI	3.48 (0.81)	0.901%	0.965%	64.414%	17.053%	16.667%	
s	A_GS	3.61 (0.62)	0.000%	0.322%	45.946%	46.525%	7.207%	

Figure 3. Descriptive analysis of the indicators

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Finally, as discussed in Section 3.4, this research uses SEM and the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach to analyse the theoretical model proposed. PLS-SEM is the preferred approach when formatively specified constructs are included in the model, so it is advisable to evaluate the measurement model and then the structural model (Hair et al., 2021). However, there is no clear consensus on the required sample size for PLS-SEM application. Hoyle (1995) recommends a sample size of 100 to 200 to maximize the results of the model. Marcoulides and Saunders (2006) advise a minimum of 70 observations when the structural model contains five relationships. Reinartz et al. (2009) indicated that at least 100 observations may be sufficient to reach acceptable levels of statistical power, given a certain quality in the measurement model. Kock and Hadaya (2018) present several methods to obtain the minimum sample size in PL-SEM, among them, the 10-times rule, which builds on the assumption that the sample size should be greater than 10 times the maximum number of inner or outer model links pointing at any construct in the model. For further information on the minimum sample size, please also consult Hair et al. (2019) and Sarstedt et al. (2021). Considering any of these alternatives, 1,554 observations constitute an adequate sample size. The SEMinR package of R statistical software was used to obtain the results.

4.1. Evaluation of the formative measurement model

Three key steps are defined for the evaluation of formative measurement models (Hair et al., 2021): (1) assessment of convergent validity, (2) assessment of indicator collinearity and (3) assessment of statistical significance and relevance of the indicator weights.

Convergent validity refers to the degree to which the formatively specified constructs correlate with an alternative reflectively measured indicator(s) of the same concept. Hair et al. (2022) suggested that the correlation of the formatively measured construct with the reflectively measured indicator(s) should be 0.708 or higher, which implies that the construct explains (more than) 50% of the alternative measure's variance. A separate redundancy analysis for each formative construct was conducted. For quality and involvement constructs, this analysis yields path coefficients of 0.900 and 0.776, respectively, which are above the recommended threshold of 0.708, thus providing support for the formatively measured construct's convergent validity.

Collinearity occurs when two or more indicators in a formative measurement model are highly correlated, causing an increase in the standard error of the indicator weights. The standard metric for assessing indicator collinearity is the variance inflation factor (VIF). VIF values of 5 or more indicate collinearity problems (Hair et al., 2021). Moreover, if all VIFs are equal to or lower than 3.3, the model can be considered free of common method bias (Kock, 2015). According to the results in Table 4, all VIF values are uniformly below the conservative threshold value of 5.

INDICATOR	VIF
MO_RT	1.000
KN_HK	1.000
IN_HT	1.000
IN_TT	1.001
IN_PT	1.003
IN_TA	1.132
IN_ME	1.114
IN_TE	1.016
QU_SP	1.228
QU_CA	1.639
QU_HS	1.576
QU_IP	1.639
QU_MS	1.557
QU_AO	1.500
QU_LG	1.540
QU_QC	1.613
QU_WI	1.332
QU_PA	1.186
QU_LS	1.216
QU_BM	1.614
SA_GS	1.000

Table 4. VIF values for the measurement model

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The third step is examining the statistical significance and relevance (i.e., size) of the indicator weights. The indicator weights result from regressing each formatively measured construct on its associated indicators. As such, they represent each indicator's relative importance for forming the construct. Significance testing of the indicator weights relies on the bootstrapping procedure, which facilitates the derivation of standard errors from the data without relying on any distributional assumptions (Hair et al., 2014). Assuming a significance level of 5%, a t value above 1.96 (two-tailed test) suggests that the indicator weight is statistically significant. All indicators offer a t value greater than 1.96 except IN_HT, IN_TT, and IN_PT (Table 5). To decide their elimination from the model, their absolute contribution must also be considered, which is determined by the formative indicator's loading. Indicator loadings of 0.5 and higher suggest that an indicator makes a sufficient absolute contribution to forming the construct; even if it lacks a significant absolute contribution but the indicator loading is significant (t value \geq 1.96), the indicator can be maintained in the model (Cenfetelli & Bassellier, 2009). Therefore, only the IN_HT, IN_TT and IN_PT indicators were eliminated from the model (Table 5).

	BOOTSTRAPPED WEIGHTS							BOOTSTRAPPED LOADINGS				
Indicator	Origi	Origi Bootstr Bootstr T 2.5 97.5						Bootstr	Bootstr	Т	2.5	97.5
	nal	ар	ap SD	Stat.	% CI	% CI	nal	ар	ap SD	Stat.	% CI	% CI
	Est.	Mean					Est.	Mean				
MO_RT ->	1.000	1.000	0.000		1.0	1.00						
MOTIVATI					00	0					1.0	1.00
ON							1.000	1.000	0.000		00	0
KN_HK ->	1.000	1.000	0.000		1.0	1.00						
KNOWLED					00	0					1.0	1.00
GE							1.000	1.000	0.000		00	0
IN_HT ->	0.026	0.025	0.078	0.32	-	0.18					-	
INVOLVEM				6	0.1	6				0.29	0.1	0.19
ENT					27		0.025	0.024	0.086	1	47	8
IN_TT ->				-	-					-	-	
INVOLVEM	-			0.34	0.2	0.14	-			0.31	0.2	0.14
ENT	0.031	-0.031	0.088	9	10	5	0.029	-0.029	0.093	2	15	9
IN_PT ->					-						-	
INVOLVEM				0.80	0.1	0.25				1.22	0.0	0.30
ENT	0.077	0.075	0.095	8	21	6	0.118	0.116	0.096	6	80	3
IN_TA ->												
INVOLVEM				6.95	0.4	0.74				14.0	0.6	0.89
ENT	0.597	0.583	0.086	3	16	5	0.810	0.791	0.058	03	73	5
IN_ME ->												
INVOLVEM				6.85	0.3	0.72				12.2	0.6	0.86
ENT	0.578	0.567	0.084	9	89	0	0.765	0.750	0.063	29	15	2
IN_TE ->												
INVOLVEM				2.19	0.0	0.41				2.93	0.0	0.47
ENT	0.221	0.218	0.101	6	17	0	0.286	0.282	0.098	5	87	4
QU_SP ->				12.3	0.1	0.19				23.8	0.4	0.53
QUALITY	0.167	0.167	0.014	72	40	4	0.500	0.500	0.021	47	58	9
QU_CA ->				9.27	0.1	0.19				42.5	0.6	0.71
QUALITY	0.157	0.157	0.017	9	24	1	0.686	0.686	0.016	25	53	6
QU_HS ->				8.72	0.1	0.18				34.3	0.6	0.67
QUALITY	0.152	0.151	0.017	8	17	6	0.644	0.642	0.019	89	05	9

Table 5. Bootstrapped indicator weights and loadings

QU_IP ->				9.17	0.1	0.18				34.3	0.5	0.67
QUALITY	0.153	0.153	0.017	8	20	5	0.637	0.636	0.019	16	97	0
QU_MS ->				7.37	0.0	0.15				31.7	0.5	0.66
QUALITY	0.122	0.121	0.016	0	89	3	0.626	0.626	0.020	24	87	3
QU_AO ->				7.42	0.0	0.14				30.5	0.5	0.64
QUALITY	0.118	0.118	0.016	6	87	9	0.607	0.605	0.020	12	66	3
QU_LG ->				7.63	0.0	0.15				32.2	0.5	0.66
QUALITY	0.123	0.123	0.016	1	90	3	0.634	0.633	0.020	62	92	9
QU_QC ->				8.17	0.1	0.17				34.9	0.6	0.67
QUALITY	0.140	0.140	0.017	4	08	4	0.642	0.641	0.018	65	04	6
QU_WI ->				9.82	0.1	0.17				27.7	0.5	0.62
QUALITY	0.149	0.149	0.015	0	20	8	0.586	0.585	0.021	83	44	6
QU_PA ->				9.68	0.1	0.16				19.5	0.3	0.47
QUALITY	0.137	0.136	0.014	0	09	4	0.434	0.433	0.022	90	89	5
QU_LS ->				7.29	0.0	0.13				19.5	0.4	0.54
QUALITY	0.107	0.107	0.015	3	78	6	0.497	0.496	0.025	42	45	6
QU_BM ->				8.85	0.1	0.17				37.0	0.6	0.70
QUALITY	0.147	0.147	0.017	5	15	8	0.666	0.665	0.018	55	30	0
SA_GS ->												
SATISFACTI					1.0	1.00					1.0	1.00
ON	1.000	1.000	0.000		00	0	1.000	1.000	0.000		00	0

Determining factors for tourist satisfaction in inland destinations: Impact on the depopulation problem

Source: Prepared by the authors.

After the statistical significance of the formative indicator weights has been assessed, the final step is to examine each indicator's relevance. For the involvement construct, the IN_TA and IN_ME indicators have positive and moderate relevance (weights closer to 1 indicate strong relationships, and weights closer to 0 indicate weak relationships), while the IN_TE indicator has weak relevance (Table 5). Regarding the quality construct, all indicators have weak and uniform relevance (Table 5).

4.2. Evaluation of the structural model

Once the measurement of the constructs has been confirmed as reliable and valid, the results of the structural model are assessed. For this, it is recommended to follow three steps (Hair et al., 2021): (1) examine the structural model for potential collinearity issues, (2) evaluate the significance and relevance of the structural model relationship (i.e., the path coefficients) and (3) assess the model's explanatory and predictive power.

Regarding collinearity issues, the process is like assessing formative measurement models, but in this case, the construct scores of the predictor constructs in each regression in the structural model are used to calculate the VIF values. VIF values of more than 5 are indicative of probable collinearity issues among predictor constructs (Becker et al., 2015). As shown in Table 6, all VIF values are clearly below the threshold of 5.

CONSTRUCT	VIF
MOTIVATION	1.092
KNOWLEDGE	1.122
INVOLVEMENT	1.121
QUALITY	1.081

Table 6. VIF values for the structural model

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In step 2, the significance of the path coefficients and relevance of the path coefficients are evaluated. Again, the significance assessment builds on bootstrapping standard errors as a basis for calculating t values of path coefficients (Streukens & Leroi-Werelds, 2016). Assuming a significance level of 5%, a t value above 1.96 (two-tailed test) suggests that the path coefficient is statistically significant. Thus, the paths between motivation and satisfaction (H2) and between knowledge and satisfaction (H3) are not significant, while the remaining two are significant (Table 7). In terms of relevance, the coefficient between quality and satisfaction (H1) represents a very strong positive relationship, and the coefficient between involvement and satisfaction (H4) represents a very weak positive relationship (Table 7).

Table 7. Estimates, significance, and confidence intervals for path coefficients

	Original Est.	Bootstrap Mean	Bootstrap SD	T Stat	2.5% CI	97.5% CI
QUALITY -> SATISFACTION	0.893	0.893	0.006	159.396	0.882	0.904
MOTIVATION -> SATISFACTION	-0.001	-0.001	0.012	-0.106	-0.023	0.022
KNOWLEDGE -> SATISFACTION	0.012	0.012	0.011	1.054	-0.010	0.035
INVOLVEMENT -> SATISFACTION	0.023	0.024	0.012	1.997	0.000	0.048

Source: Prepared by the authors

The next and final step involves examining the coefficient of determination (R^2) of the endogenous constructs. The R^2 represents the variance explained in each of the endogenous constructs and is a measure of the model's explanatory power (Shmueli et al., 2019). The R^2 ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater explanatory power; even on some occasions, values as low as 0.1 can be considered satisfactory (Raithel et al., 2012). An R^2 of 0.811 for the satisfaction construct indicates a substantial value. To complement the model's explanatory power, the f^2 effect size of the exogenous constructs can be evaluated. f^2 effect size indicates how the removal of a selected exogenous construct affects an endogenous construct's R^2 value. The results obtained for the f^2 effect size indicate that involvement (0.003) and knowledge (0.001) have a very weak effect size on satisfaction, while quality has a very strong effect size on satisfaction (3.901). Motivation has no effect on satisfaction. In this case, the rank order of effect sizes is identical to the rank order on the grounds of the path coefficients.

The bootstrapped model nomogram (Figure 4) shows the results obtained during evaluation of the model. Generally, an R^2 of 0.811 represents an adequate goodness of fit of the model to the construct that it intends to explain. In addition, it can also be seen that only the involvement and quality constructs have a significant effect on the satisfaction construct, with the effect of the quality construct being especially significant.

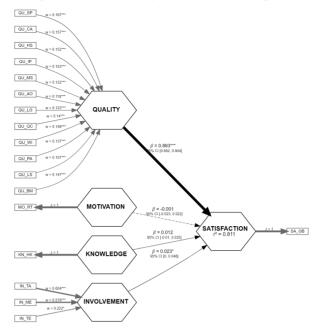


Figure 4. Bootstrapped model nomogram

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Finally, it is noted that the values obtained for RMSE and MAE in the PLS-SEM analysis of the indicators of the endogenous constructs are all higher than those obtained with a naïve linear regression model benchmark, so the model obtained lacks predictive power (Hair et al., 2021).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Since tourism could be fundamental in the generation of income, wealth, and employment, the tourism sector can be an important in preventing the depopulation of municipalities. Burgos, an inland province of northern Spain, is a clear example of this situation. Analysing the profile and behavioural characteristics of tourists together with the physical characteristics of the destination can aid in developing guidelines to increase tourists' satisfaction and, consequently, to enhance certain geographical areas. For this reason, developing an empirical exploratory model that allows us to identify the determinants of tourist satisfaction in the province can help increase the probability of successful management decision-making.

The results of the study indicate that tourists visiting the province of Burgos are relatively balanced with respect to gender, slightly more females (58.04%), are mostly age 40 to 54 years old (40.28%), have university studies (62.61%), are employed by others (53.73%), have Spanish nationality (87.64%) and have previous experience with the destination (87.64%). The results also show that most tourists are satisfied with their experience, with an average score of 3.61 out of 5, and the perception of quality during the visit has a high average value. In addition, most tourists make their trip for at least three reasons: almost all tourists use a single source of information to learn about the destination, tourists mainly use two types of transportation, have a total expenditure of less than ξ 50, use two types of accommodations, use two means to plan the trip, spend the most money on a single activity and usually make the trip with three types of people.

Finally, the results highlight that motivation (H2) and knowledge (H3) have no influence on satisfaction, involvement has a very weak positive influence on satisfaction (H4), and quality has a strong positive influence on satisfaction (H1). Therefore, we can conclude that regardless of motivation, knowledge, and involvement, what truly matters for improving tourist satisfaction is the tourists' perception of the travel experience; thus, improving the quality of products and services to improve this perception is the key to achieving higher tourist satisfaction. This conclusion is supported by similar results from applied studies in different settings (e.g., Chen & Chen, 2010; Al-Ababneh, 2013; Osman, 2013). Further, Pérez Campdesuñer et al. (2017) presented the influence of different destination attributes on tourist satisfaction.

Hence, understanding and monitoring the potential differences in tourist satisfaction levels is key to creating a sustainable competitive advantage for tourism destinations. To this end, institutions, managers, decision-makers, and other agents should detect the preferences of tourists and provide higher quality services related to these preferences. Obviously, tourists' perceptions will differ, for example, if they are day tripper or an overnight traveller (Pérez-Cabañero et al., 2017) or if they are first-time tourists or repeat tourists (Li et al., 2008; Alegre et al., 2011). However, the findings of this study make it clear that improving the perceptions of tourists has a great influence on tourists' satisfaction and on the likelihood that they will revisit the destination or recommend it. In short, fully understanding the quality perceptions of tourists is a crucial task for decision-making in the tourism sector in terms of designing memorable experiences and developing competitive marketing strategies to encourage tourism.

These considerations reflect the clear practical implications of this study. On the one hand, identifying the factors that determine tourist satisfaction with the province of Burgos can guide institutions to invest their limited resources into those factors with the greatest impact on attracting tourists. Increasing the number of tourists or building loyalty among tourists who have already visited the province will have a direct impact on tourism business managers. Notably, the tourism sector generates more than 300 million euros per year and more than 10,000 jobs in the province of Burgos (JCyL, 2022). In addition, the results obtained will make it possible to focus on those weaknesses found, such as the low percentage of international tourists and the low percentage of tourists who visit the province for the first time, to try to improve upon them. On the other hand, improving the tourism sector is often presented as a strategy for local territorial development related to sustainability and the attraction of new inhabitants in environments prone to losing population (Dot Jutglà et al., 2022) or with the reduction of poverty at the territorial level (Gálvez Gamboa and Muñoz Henríquez, 2022), thus contributing to the UNWTO⁶ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the case of the province of Burgos, tourism provides income through job creation (SDG 1 – No poverty), and the tax income generated from tourism can be reinvested, for example, in health care and other services (SDG 3 – Good health and well-being). Additionally, tourism in Burgos can be a powerful tool for developing the region and reducing inequalities (SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities) by promoting the inland destination of Burgos. An integrative vision that focuses the province's tourism evolution on the development of new information

⁶ Acronym for the United Nation World Tourism Organization

technologies, sustainability, innovation, and social cohesion can advance urban infrastructure and accessibility and promote the rejuvenation and preservation of cultural and natural heritage, assets on which tourism depends (SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities). Rich biodiversity and natural heritage are often the main reasons why tourists visit a destination (SDG 15 – Life of land). The pursuit of these objectives will help alleviate the urgent problem of depopulation suffered by many places in the Spanish interior.

Regardless of these conclusions, the study also has some limitations. The findings are influenced by the social and cultural contexts of the province of Burgos, so further research of similar cities can help reinforce these results by increasing their generalizability. Moreover, these results should be interpreted with caution due to the exploratory approach of the study and the subjective character of the responses, as they are based on opinion surveys. To alleviate this concern, some possible lines of future research can expand on the development and improvement of scientific progress initiated in this work. Examples include the incorporation of new dimensions and variables in the theoretical model that make it more robust and reliable or analyses and assessment of tourist destinations in social networks that avoid the use of surveys to obtain tourists' opinions. In any case, this study's findings can help decision-makers and managers make better decisions in favour of a tourist destination, thus contributing to the promotion of a given geographical area and reducing the risk of depopulation in that area.

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CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE AUTHORS

Author 1: the original conception of the work, the acquisition of data, and the critical review of the content.

Author 2: the analysis and interpretation of data, the writing of the content, and the final approval of the version to be published.

Author 3: the acquisition of data and the critical review of the content.

Author 4: the original conception of the work and the acquisition of data.

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HELP US TO IMPROVE

Your opinion matters to us

We would be very grateful if you pointed out those aspects that, in your opinion, should be IMPROVED

What things are better in other visited places that there is not in the province of Burgos? What other activities would you like to see carried out in the province of Burgos?

THANKS FOR YOUR COLLABORATION



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