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Understanding the personality of Europe's only World Surfing Reserve

Abstract

Purpose

This study aims to (1) uncover the destination personality of the World Surfing Reserve (WSR) in Europe, Ericeira, from local stakeholders' perspectives; (2) understand if WSR recognition influences the perception of destination personality; (3) understand if there is an alignment between the vision of the Destination Management Organization (DMO) and stakeholders in terms of destination personality.

Design/methodology/approach

An extensive literature search was conducted to identify personality traits, which were then filtered and included in a survey of Ericeira's stakeholders and in a DMO interview. A principal components analysis enabled the identification of the most relevant personality traits.

Findings

Cool, Appealing and *Self-assured* emerged as destination-specific personality traits of Ericeira, indicating that other similar destinations can consider them in future branding actions. The findings indicate that WSR recognition can be a determinant for local tourism but has no impact on destination personality as viewed by local stakeholders. Therefore, one can suggest that personality is embedded in a tourist destination and is somewhat resistant to external WSR recognition. In general, alignment was found between the views of the local stakeholders and the DMO.

Originality/Value

This study reinforces the literature on the importance of stakeholder involvement in place brand development. It also suggests that external recognition may have an impact on local tourism but has a limited impact on destination personality. Finally, this research constitutes a baseline for further studies on the destination personality traits of current and prospective WSR.

Keywords: Tourist Destination, Destination Marketing, Destination Branding, Destination Personality, Sense of Place

Introduction

Destination brand personality is a destination branding construct that has gained attention in the academic sphere (Han *et al.*, 2020; Huaman-Ramirez *et al.*, 2021; Kovacic *et al.*, 2020; Lin & Roberts, 2019; Sharifsamet *et al.*, 2020; Soundari & Shankar, 2019; Yang *et al.*, 2020). Personifying destination brands is the act of endowing destination brands' identities with human personality traits. There has been a growing trend of destination branding because travelers increasingly seek emotional links and connections when selecting tourist destinations, and brand personality allows for such connections (Huaman-Ramirez *et al.*, 2021; Sharifsamet *et al.*, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2019).

Several authors argue that destination brand personalities should be based on local stakeholders' views on destination personality (Kumar & Kaushik, 2017; Perkins *et al.*, 2020; Saraniemi & Komppula, 2019; Wassler *et al.*, 2019). According to Campelo *et al.* (2014), a destination brand truly represents a place when it is based on socially agreed constructions that provide insights into the place's socially ingrained habits, dispositions, and skills regarding that brand's target segments. Hence, actively requesting and seeking input from local stakeholders regarding a destination's personality and image to engage them in the branding process is advantageous and beneficial for every stage of a destination brand's development, including research, brand development, implementation, and control (Kumar & Kaushik, 2017; Perkins *et al.*, 2020; Saraniemi & Komppula, 2019; Wassler *et al.*, 2019). Research has shown that destinations that have been successful and effective in their branding efforts are usually based on intensive stakeholder, competitor, and consumer research and involvement (Tasci, 2011). The literature also suggests that stakeholders play an important role in tourism consumption, as they can have a crucial impact on destination image in their direct interactions with visitors.

In 2011, Ericeira, a small village in Portugal, was conferred World Surfing Reserve (WSR) recognition by the Save The Waves Coalition (STWC) organization, making it the first and only WSR in Europe. Taking this location as an example of a surf destination, this study has three main goals: (1) to understand what Ericeira's destination personality is, from the supply side perspective, that is, based on perceptions of local stakeholders; 2) to understand if the WSR recognition, obtained in 2011, influences the way the destination's personality is perceived since this recognition was the trigger for destination brand development by the main Destination Management Organization (DMO) - Mafra's City Hall (MCH); (3) to understand if the brand identity development by MCH for destination brand "Ericeira" agrees with the destination personality perceptions of local stakeholders.

Literature Review

Destination Brand Personality

Brand personality is a construct of branding that results from consumer behavior research and can be defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Therefore, destination brand personality can be defined as the set of human traits associated with a tourist destination, and is, thus, a multidimensional construct (Kumar & Nayak, 2018).

Marketers have realized that an increasing number of consumers look for emotional connections in the brands they select, which is not different from destination choice. Therefore, destination marketers have had to move their brand promises beyond functional and physical characteristics, because positioning based on these does not mitigate substitutability, and consumers create emotional expectations regarding the destination (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011).

Generally, consumers respond to symbolic meanings associated with brands because they form expectations regarding the brand's attributes and benefits, and often couple brand identities with human personality traits, which produces the symbolic nature of/meaning consumers give to the brand (Huaman-Ramirez *et al.*, 2021; Ye *et al.*, 2020). Attributing symbolic meanings and human personality traits to brands is an unconscious process known as animism, which implies that people need to anthropomorphize things to simplify their interactions with the inanimate and non-material world (Han *et al.*, 2020). Hence, using brand personality in destination communication generates the emotional link that consumers search for and help build a destination brand that understands visitors' perceptions and presents a unique identity (Huaman-Ramirez *et al.*, 2021; Sharifsamet *et al.*, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, the current body of research suggests that personality traits are omnipresent in consumers' destination evaluations, have a positive impact on consumers' behavioral intentions, and can help distinguish brands with similar attributes and build sustainable competitive advantages (Chi *et al.*, 2018; Huaman-Ramirez *et al.*, 2021; Kumar & Kaushik, 2017; Ye *et al.*, 2020). The authors argue that a distinctive, well-established, and emotionally attractive brand personality can aid in the creation of a set of unique associations that positively influence consumer preferences and behavior while fostering strong emotional connections, brand loyalty, and trustworthiness, and, consequently, leveraging the image formed regarding the destination (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Kumar and Kaushik, 2017).

Brand personality and brand image are related constructs because images encapsulate personality, but personality is more connected to affective images (Kim & Lehto, 2013). Therefore, brand personality should also influence brand identity to ensure that the latter matches the destination brand image and conveniently interacts with the target markets (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009).

The majority of studies focused on brand personality have sought to group human personality traits perceived by consumers regarding a product, service, or brand into personality dimensions, and the most common dimensions identified in the literature are sincerity, competence, and excitement (Aaker, 1997; Kim & Lehto, 2013).

Importance of Stakeholders' Involvement in Destination Branding

Stakeholders are individuals or groups that simultaneously affect and are affected by the activities of an organization in pursuit of its purpose. In a tourist destination, stakeholders actively participate in co-creating a place, public goods, and services (García *et al.*, 2012).

A visitor's experience in a tourist destination encompasses encounters with multiple local tourism stakeholders and, therefore, their overall image of the destination develops through such interactions (Buhalis, 2000), This means that destination brand value is created not only in the direct effect it has on the final consumer but also in the relationship with all stakeholders involved in the marketing and distribution network of the destination (García *et al.*, 2012).

Even though the role of local stakeholders in destination branding has received minimal attention in the literature, and their crucial role has been neglected, different authors have already recognized that local people are a critical part of place branding (Jain, Shroff, Merchant, & Bezbaruah, 2021). For example, Braun *et al.* (2013) suggested that residents do not have a limited role in place branding; in fact, they are seen to be not only important as an antecedent of a place brand but also as place ambassadors and representatives, as well as as voters. Rasoolimanesh *et al.* (2017) showed that there were differences between residents' perceptions of the place and their participation in supporting tourism activities. Finally, Jain *et al.* 's(2021) findings indicate that when the place and certain aspects of place branding are perceived positively, residents become ambassadors as they feel a strong involvement.

If stakeholders understand, accept, agree, and identify with the destination brand's values and what they represent, they are likely to be influenced and use them in their ways of working, behaving, and thinking. Thus, the values of the local community should serve as the basis for the brand's values and identity, which in turn will make stakeholders more committed to destination branding, contributing to a sustainable destination identity and consequent perceived image by visitors (Wheeler *et al.*, 2011). By contrast, not involving local stakeholders in the process of destination branding results in a lack of acceptance, recognition, and commitment to the brand by the local community, which affects the quality of the tourism experience and can have a consequent negative impact on destination image (Perkins *et al.*, 2020). To reinforce this idea, Wheeler *et al.* (2011, p. 23) also argued that "a brand that is more befitting of the place it represents"—i.e., that genuinely reflects the sense of place of the destination and its stakeholders—is perhaps more likely to be embraced by these stakeholders, as its

identity better aligns with their values and objectives. Thus, a brand promise has a greater chance of being fulfilled, with a reduced potential for dissonance between branding communication and visitor experience.

Nonetheless, the literature suggests that local stakeholders, particularly residents, are often disregarded in destination branding processes, resulting in branding strategies that do not fully convey locals' sense of place (Campelo *et al.*, 2014). Sense of place is determined by the meanings given to the place by those who reside in it; it is acquired and developed by the experiences one has in that place and encompasses the place's social, cultural, natural, historical, and physical dimensions. Guiding destination branding by local stakeholders' sense of place is essential because they have intimate and experienced knowledge of the destination's benefits, attributes, and limitations. In other words, local stakeholders have the "inside scoop" of the destination's identity and reality and, directly or indirectly, influence a visitor's experience at the destination (Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou, 2015). Based on this notion, DMOs should act as leaders in the collaborative facet of destination branding and facilitate it by engaging in a bottom-up approach to empower local stakeholders and ensure that the destination brand is authentic in its representation of the true local identity (Tasci, 2011). Understanding the sense of place also helps DMOs understand the behavior of locals, which is a valuable asset for developing proper cooperation with local stakeholders (Campelo *et al.*, 2014). In conclusion, "positioning the sense of place, as it is constituted and experienced by residents, at the center of the brand strategy creates an inclusive, collaborative, and effective branding process" (Campelo *et al.*, 2014, p. 163).

The WSR in Europe

Ericeira is a small village located in Portugal. This coastal village is in the county of Mafra, and in the 19th century was one of the most competitive fishing harbors. Over the years, fishing as a primary income resource has begun to decrease, and tourism has gained more relevance.

Surf arrived in Ericeira at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. Australian, American, British, and South African surfers would travel to Portugal in pursuit of different waves. These surfers are called Ericeira a "Little Hawaii" because of the quantity and quality of the waves on some of Ericeira's beaches (Marques, 2017). In 1977, the first national surfing championship occurred in Ericeira (Marques, 2017). Since then, Ericeira has hosted massive international surfing competitions.

STWC-*Save The Waves Coalition* organization decided to award the recognition of WSR to Ericeira because of the character of its coastline, which is defined by rocky cliffs punctuated with few bays and

secluded beaches. Moreover, the organization found the diversity of the waves in the area, coupled with the various degrees of difficulty they present, to offer consistent opportunities for surfers at all levels. The marine ecosystem in Ericeira, the surf culture, and the fact that the local community in the village is highly centered on the pursuit and enjoyment of the ocean explain why STWC believed Ericeira was a good setting for the successful management of local coastal resources (STWC, 2011).

The emergence and growth of this new segment of tourists made the village's population and businesses understand that there were new market opportunities that could be explored, leading to a notable increase in the number of surf schools, accommodation units linked to surf, and businesses that mostly targeted the surfer lifestyle.

However, Ericeira was also subject to many challenges and problems faced by tourism in this type of destination. According to Román *et al.* (2022), the implications of surfing go beyond direct users (i.e., surfers), as destinations suffer from consequences in diverse dimensions (environmental, socio-cultural, and economic) and involve many stakeholders (e.g., local communities). In terms of sustainability, Rodrigues Garcia *et al.* (2017) argued that research on such issues on surf locations has been largely unexplored and that research is in need, as recreational marine activities can harm ecosystems if carried out unsustainably. Some examples of the environmental impacts of surf tourism include an increase in coastal urbanization, sewage and waste, and fuel burning (Román *et al.*, 2022).

Methodology

Collection of Personality Traits

Aaker (1997) was a pioneer in the development of the Brand Personality Scale (BPS), which comprises 42 personality traits, grouped into five personality dimensions (excitement, sincerity, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness). Throughout the years, researchers have reproduced this BPS in tourist destinations but realized that, while being the most structured and trustworthy scale to measure brand personality, it was not necessarily fit for measuring destination personality, especially when different destinations have culture-specific characteristics. Hence, the authors have attempted to develop Destination Personality Scales (DPS) that are more appropriate for the subject; however, arguably, most of the produced DPS have resulted in markedly culture-specific traits. To gather a more comprehensive set of traits, data from brand and destination personality literature were collected to garner personality traits that are not only appropriate to measure destination personality but also reflect different cultures from different parts of the world, in the hope that they would be more generalizable (Table I).

Table I - References selected to collect Personality Traits. Source: Authors own creation.

Selected References	Methodology/Number of Traits	Dimensions	Destinations Studied
Chi *et al.* (2018)	Structured: 12 traits based on Aaker's (1997) + Unstructured: free elicitation of personality traits in focus groups	Conviviality; Sophistication; Vibrancy	Sardinia, Italy
Huang *et al.* (2017)	Structured: 22 traits based on Aaker's (1997) BPS	Excitement; Competence; Charming; Outdoorsy	Jeju Island, South Korea
Lin & Roberts (2019)	Structured: 42 traits from Aaker's (1997) BPS	N/D	Kansas, USA
Zhang *et al.* (2019)	Structured: 33 traits based on works from several other authors	Temperament; Competence; Attitude; Mood	Respondents' most recently visited destination
Yang *et al.* (2020)	Structured: 14 traits based on Aaker (1997) and Chua *et al.* (2019)	Sincerity; Excitement; Competence; Sophistication, Ruggedness	Glasgow, Scotland
Kovacic *et al.* (2020)	Unstructured: 35 traits from free elicitation based on Aaker's (1997) personality dimensions	Excitement; Sincerity; Competence; Ruggedness; Sophistication	Respondents' most recently visited destination
Soundari & Shankar (2019)	Structured: 17 items based on Aaker (1997); Hosany *et al.* (2006); Murphy *et al.* (2007); d'Astous and Boujbel (2007)	Sincerity; Excitement; Conviviality; Sophistication; Ruggedness; Conformity	Coimbatore, India
Huaman-Ramirez *et al.* (2021)	Structured: 15 items based on Aaker (1997); Bartikowski *et al.* (2009)	Sincerity; Excitement; Competence; Sophistication; Ruggedness	Aix-en-Provence, France
Pan *et al.* (2017)	Structured: 18 items based on Aaker (1997); Kaplan *et al.* (2010)	Competence; Sacredness; Vibrancy; Femininity; Excitement	Dimensions relevant for Chinese travelers
Gómez Aguilar *et al.* (2016)	Structured: 26 items based on Aaker (1997)	Sincerity; Excitement; Competence; Sophistication; Ruggedness	Granada and Torremolinos, Spain
Kumar & Nayak (2018)	Structured: 32 items based on Aaker (1997) and d'Astous and Boujbel (2007) + Unstructured: free elicitation of personality traits by travelers	Courteousness; Vibrancy; Conformity; Creativity; Viciousness; Tranquility	Cities in India
d'Astous & Boujbel (2007)	Unstructured: 24 items from free elicitation of personality traits by travelers + Structured: based on Aaker (1997)	Agreeableness; Wickedness; Snobbism; Assiduousness; Conformity; Unobtrusiveness	Several countries
Aaker (1997)	Structured: 42 items based on Big Five Human Personality Traits (Psychology)	Sincerity; Excitement; Competence; Sophistication; Ruggedness	American Brands, USA
Aaker *et al.* (2001)	Japanese Market – Structured: 37 items	Japanese Market: Excitement; Competence;	Japanese Market:

Selected References	Methodology/Number of Traits	Dimensions	Destinations Studied
	Spanish Market – Structured: 33items based on Big Five Human Personality Traits (Psychology)	Peacefulness; Sincerity; Sophistication Spanish Market: Excitement; Sincerity; Sophistication; Peacefulness; Passion	Japanese Brands, Japan Spanish Market: Spanish Brands, Spain
Hosany *et al.* (2006)	Structured: 13 items based on Aaker (1997)	Sincerity; Excitement; Conviviality	Respondents' most recently visited destination
Kaplan *et al.* (2010)	Unstructured: 14 items from free elicitation of personality traits by travelers + Structured: based on Aaker (1997); Hosany *et al.* (2006); Aaker *et al.* (2001)	Excitement; Malignancy; Peacefulness; Competence; Conservatism; Ruggedness	Cities in Turkey
Usakli & Baloglu (2011)	Unstructured: 24 items from free elicitation of personality traits by travelers + Structured: based on Aaker (1997)	Vibrancy; Sophistication; Competence; Contemporary; Sincerity	Las Vegas, USA
Kumar (2016)	Structured: 23 items based on Kumar and Nayak (2014/2018)	Well-mannered; Vibrancy; Creativity; Conformity; Viciousness	Cities in India
Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou (2015)	Unstructured: 8 items from free elicitation of personality traits by travelers	Excitement; Sincerity	Patras, Greece

Filtering Personality Traits

This study generated 485 personality traits. We then adopted a mixed (qualitative and quantitative) approach to reduce this set of traits, which would otherwise be impossible to address in a survey directed at Ericeira's stakeholders. Naturally, repeated traits were the first traits to be eliminated, resulting in 182 traits. Out of them, the 76 most frequent traits in the literature were selected to conduct a pilot study. They were presented to 24 respondents, who were asked to imagine the destination as a human being and rate their level of agreement with each trait on a 7-point Likert scale of agreement (1-Strongly disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Slightly disagree; 4-Neutral; 5-Slightly agree; 6 = agree; 7-Strongly agree). A correlation-based analysis was conducted and a complementary substantive analysis supported the exclusion of redundant and synonymous traits. The results of this approach enabled us to select 40 personality traits included in the final survey to study Ericeira's personality.

Sampling and Final Survey

The final survey was conducted over a week and distributed via social media platforms and groups via direct email. The sampling process was non-probabilistic; where convenience and snowball sampling were adopted, which allowed some respondents to share the questionnaire with other individuals, contributing to an increase in the scope of the sample (Malhotra, Nunan, & Birks, 2017).

First, respondents were asked to name three attributes or features that they associated with Ericeira as a tourist destination that, in their opinion, made it a unique destination. Based on the responses to this open question, answers were categorized into two groups considering if respondents referred to the WSR recognition and mentioned "surf" or "waves," or not. In total, 40 personality items were then presented to the respondents.

To further understand how local stakeholders perceived the impact of Ericeira's recognition as WSR, two additional control questions were presented to respondents on a 7-point Likert scale of agreement: 1) "The WSR recognition was and is determinant for Ericeira's tourism development and growth" and 2) "The WSR recognition has a direct positive impact on Ericeira's tourism development." These statements sought to further understand local stakeholders' perceptions regarding the impact of WSR recognition on Ericeira's tourism development and growth, and whether perceived impact influenced personality perceptions.

Interview with the President of MCH

Based on the results of the final survey and literature review, an email interview was conducted with the president of Mafra's City Hall, the acting DMO. The main goal was to determine whether MCH branding development for Ericeira follows the local stakeholders' perception of Ericeira's identity and, more specifically, its personality.

Results and Discussion

Respondents' Profile

The final survey gathered 408 responses from 327 residents (80.1% of the total sample), 61 local business owners (15%), 8 non-profit associations (2%), and 12 local news outlets (2.9%) from Ericeira. Among the respondents, 58.1% were female, 34.6% were male, 4.9% were non-binary, and the remainder preferred not to disclose their gender identity. In terms of respondents' nationality, the majority were Portuguese (93.4%), German (1.5%), and Brazilian (1.5%). The majority of respondents were aged between 35 and 54 years (51.7%) and had either a high school diploma (35.3%) or a bachelor's degree (38.7%).

Destination Personality: The Underlying Personality Dimensions

The 40 original personality traits were analyzed using principal component analysis (PCA). The obtained Kaiser-Mayer Olkin measure (0.964) indicated the suitability of the PCA. Then (Varimax rotated) principal components (PCs) were then extracted, accounting for over 75% of the total variance explained. The minimum communality obtained was 0.624 (referred to as the personality trait "Trendy").

WSR recognition and Surf Heritage

Several analyses were conducted to uncover potential differences among the group of respondents who mentioned WSR or Surf and Waves (group WSR), among the top-of-mind attributes of Ericeira, and the group that did not (group NO).

Among the demographics, only gender identity and age class presented differences between the two groups in the sample: the NO group had 62% women and the group WSR 47%, and according to a 95% Bootstrap Confidence Interval (BootCI) for Cramer's V, (0.081, 0.261) there was a weak (significant) association in the population between gender and the groups; individuals between 25 and 34 years old represented 25% of the WSR group and only 10% of the NO group. According to the 95% BootCI for Cramer's V, (0.131, 0.326) there was a weak association in the population between age and the groups.

- Personality dimensions do not differ between these groups in general, except for the *Cool* dimension (rotated 4th PC): for group NO, *Cool* is above average (bootstrap 95% confidence interval is (0.049;0.223)); for group WSR, *Cool* is below average (bootstrap 95% confidence interval is (-0.731; -0.150)), suggesting that this group is more familiar with surf.

- Only the answers to the control question "The WSR recognition was and is determinant for Ericeira's tourism development and growth" showed significant differences between the groups according to a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of equality of distributions (in the sample, only 29% of the NO group strongly agreed with the statement compared with 44% of the WSR group).

Table II- Destination Personality Dimensions – Ericeira. Source: Authors own creation

Dimensions	% of total variance	Factor Loadings	Dimensions	% of total variance	Factor Loadings
Extroverted (rPC1)	**13.3**		**Self-assured (rPC5)**	**7.782**	
Spirited		0.733	*Adventurous*		0.703
Cheerful		0.703	*Confident*		0.589
Outgoing		0.688	*Romantic*		0.521
Exciting		0.651	*Enthusiastic*		0.502
Spontaneous		0.633	*Optimistic*		0.474
Outdoorsy		0.589	**Welcoming (rPC6)**	**7.192**	
Funny		0.586	*Hospitable*		0.8
Fashionable (rPC2)	**10.073**		*Welcoming*		0.729
Up to date		0.734	*Friendly*		0.506
Sophisticated		0.718	*Generous*		0.392
Dynamic		0.564	**Peaceful (rPC7)**	**6.021**	
Flourishing		0.509	*Calm*		0.828
Trendy		0.481	*Peaceful*		0.768
Sincere (rPC3)	**8.043**		*Patient*		0.521
Honest		0.721	**Practical (rPC8)**	**5.72**	
Mannered/Polite		0.668	*Family-oriented*		0.715
Thoughtful		0.615	*Down to earth*		0.637
Sincere		0.488	**Wholesome (rPC9)**	**4.386**	
Dignified		0.468	*Wholesome*		0.536
Cool (rPC4)	**7.857**		*Genuine*		0.471
Unique		0.743	*Happy*		0.462
Fascinating		0.642	**Appealing (rPC10)**	**4.197**	
Cool		0.537	*Charming*		0.666
Glamorous		0.482	*Contemporary*		0.618

The MCH's President's perspective

Through an email interview, the president of MCH highlighted attributes/features/interest points that can be categorized as cognitive/functional and psychological (Table .

Table III. Components of Ericeira's destination image highlighted by the president of the MCH. Source: Authors own creation

Functional Attributes/Features		Psychological Attributes/Features
Surf	Architecture (white-washed, colors of the village)	Environment/Atmosphere
Beach	Safety and security	Welcoming
Ocean	Accessibility (proximity to main emission markets and airport)	
Gastronomy (seafood, fresh fish)	Sustainability	
Historical and cultural heritage	Outdoor tourism	
Natural resources	Cultural diversity (multiculturality)	

Functional Attributes/Features	Psychological Attributes/Features
Mild climate	

The results show that generally and in terms of functional and cognitive attributes, the brand "Ericeira" is in agreement with the local stakeholders' opinions on attributes/features that make Ericeira a unique tourist destination. However, the psychological attributes highlighted in the email interviews were scarce, showing that the focus was on the cognitive components of the destination's image.

Regarding psychological attributes, although the ones highlighted by the president of MCH agree with those highlighted by the local stakeholders, there is a clear difference between the number of psychological and affective attributes listed by local stakeholders and by the president of MCH. The lack of effective and psychological attributes/features highlighted by president MCH shows a clear focus on functional and cognitive components and aspects, which could be deemed concerning when literature identifies the search for emotional connections and anthropomorphization as trends in travelers' behaviors.

In terms of personality, the traits holistically identified were "young," "dynamic," "traditional," "welcoming," "active ("village that never sleeps")," "contemporary," and "diverse." For the most part, they were not identified as relevant by the local stakeholders in their descriptions of Ericeira's personality, but were instead identified as attributes/features that make Ericeira a unique tourist destination, such as "young," "traditional," "diverse," and "active." As for the remaining traits, "dynamic," "welcoming" and "contemporary," they have prominent places in Ericeira's personality dimensions, identified by residents, business owners, non-profit associates, and news media outlets, which shows an alignment between local stakeholders' point of view and the president of MCH.

Table IV. The president of MCH level of agreement with Ericeira's personality dimensions identified by local stakeholders. Source: Authors own creation

Personality Dimensions	Level of Agreement
Extroverted	7
Fashionable	5
Sincere	5
Cool	7
Self-assured	6
Welcoming	7
Peaceful	5
Practical	4
Wholesome	6

Results show that there is an alignment between the local stakeholders' views of Ericeira's personality, captured by PCA analysis, and the brand personality as perceived by the president of MCH (Table IV).

Conclusions

Brand personality is useful in destination branding, and it gives destination brands the emotional and affective links that travelers increasingly search for. However, there is a lack of research on building destination brand personality from the supply side, considering stakeholders' sense of place. Hence, this study aimed to uncover destination personality informed by a sense of place and to understand if branding strategies for a surf tourist destination, developed by a local, were aligned with local stakeholders (residents, business owners, non-profit associations, and media outlets) perceptions of destination personality.

The chosen tourist destination was Ericeira, a village that now lives in the aftermath of 11 years of being recognized as a WSR. After a preliminary extensive analysis derived from a PCA, Ericeira's personality dimensions were found to be *extroverted, fashionable, sincere, cool, self-assured, welcoming, peaceful, practical, wholesome,* and *appealing*. In terms of correspondence with personality dimensions uncovered in the literature, the dimension *extroverted* is similar to Aaker's (1997) BPS's "excitement" dimension, while *cool* could be considered a close match and *fashionable* which is a mixture of Aaker's (1997) dimensions of "excitement" and "sophistication." The dimension *peaceful* can be considered a match with Aaker *et al.*'s (2001) research on culture-specific personality traits for Japan and Spain, while *welcoming* matches Ekinci and Hosany's (2006) "conviviality" dimension. Nevertheless, it is interesting to point out different dimensions that arose, somewhat more specific and not as broad as some in the literature, such as the dimensions of *cool*, *appealing,* and *self-assured*.

Significant differences between those who mentioned WSR recognition in the survey and those who did not were only identified in one personality dimension, *Cool*. Therefore, one could argue that WSR's recognition did not impact or significantly influence the way local people perceived Ericeira's personality.

Furthermore, the results show that local stakeholders, as well as Ericeira's MCH, believe that WSR recognition has a positive and direct impact on the village's tourism development and growth, which could indicate that, despite not being a determining factor for personality, WSR recognition is a determinant for local tourism. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the majority of respondents, when asked about attributes or features that, in their opinion, make Ericeira a unique tourist destination, did not mention WSR recognition, surf, or waves. However, the MCH's perspective

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and projection of Ericeira are centered around surf and nature tourism (based on WSR recognition), which shows there could be room for improvement regarding the alignment between local stakeholders and the MCH as acting DMO for the tourist destination. The literature shows that stakeholder involvement in tourist destination management, planning, and branding is beneficial because it gives stakeholders a sense of ownership and shared responsibility in the destination's management (Robinson *et al.*, 2020) and it generates brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior (Bregoli, 2013).

Theoretical Implications

This study bridges a gap in the literature related to the lack of research on destination branding and personality in surf tourism settings. It addresses the personality of Europe's only WSR and opens the discussion toward endogenous but potentially differentiating factors as determinants of destinations' personalities and their impact on locals' sense of place in this type of destination.

Current research is mostly focused on the destination image formed by visitors and congruence with their expectations. However, there is a lack of research on local stakeholders' inputs and perspectives and a disregard for the relevance of a sense of place and how it affects the tourist experience in interactions with local tourism providers. This study addresses this gap by suggesting that external recognition may have an impact on local tourism but a limited impact on destination personality.

Finally, because numerous personality traits have been identified in the literature, a methodological approach was proposed to filter the initial set of traits and end up with a manageable list of attributes to be considered. This approach has been used in similar studies.

Practical Implications

DMOs can use the findings of this study as a guide to promoting destinations. In other words, the fact that WSR recognition was not a determining factor for personality, but it was for tourism growth suggests that DMOs should direct marketing strategies not only based on external recognition but also destination personality, based on stakeholders' views of the destination. Thus, the congruence between stakeholders' views and decision-makers' views is crucial to highlight the personality traits that can enhance future branding actions in similar settings.

With this in mind, identifying personality dimensions for Europe's only WSR can be used to rightly promote this destination but also to serve as baseline research for further studies on current and prospective WSR on destination branding and personality.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations. First, in the sample used, the number of local business owners responding to the survey was relatively low (15% of the sample). Second, peer-to-peer interviews could not be conducted, which was mostly due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Another limitation of this study is the focus on stakeholders. An eventual positive bias could result from focusing on local stakeholders only and not providing a holistic view of the personality. Future research may also include other actors, such as past visitors and tourists, to eventually gather personality traits ad hoc. Additionally, potential visitors could also be considered to understand destination personality from pre- and post-visitation perspectives. Differences between local stakeholders and visitors or potential visitors' views on the personality of Ericeira could then be explored.

Finally, future research can also conduct similar analyses in other WSR destinations using the proposed approach.

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