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Push and pull factors as determinants of destination loyalty

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PURPOSE

In the tourism sector, according to the the *Theory of push and pull motivations* (Crompton, 1979; Su et al., 2020), it is possible to distinguish between *push* factors (or motivations) – tourist desires for rest, health, adventure, social interaction – and *pull* factors– attributes of the destination, such as parks, beaches, events, monuments, and cultural places. The main purpose of this study is to appplay this theory in the specific sector of heritage tourism (Brida et al., 2012; González-Rodríguez et al., 2019). Therefore, the research try to identify possible *push* and *pull* factors that can determine tourists heritage destination loyalty, defined in terms of their revisit intention and word-of-mouth (WOM) (Fig. 1).

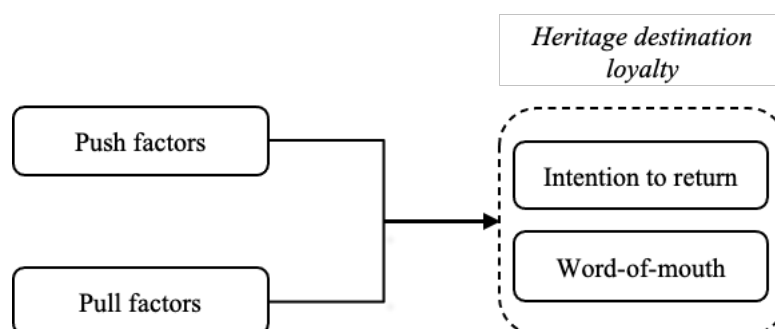


Fig. 1: The conceptual framework used in the study

RESEARCH METHODS

To identify *push* and *pull* factors, a pilot study has been conducted considering as tourist heritage destination the *Carlo V Castle*, located in Lecce, a baroque city in Southern Italy. An open-ended questionnaire was administered to a sample of 20 subjects, aged between 20 and 59 years old ($M = 28.9$). Intrinsic factors were identified by asking to enumerate the advantages/disadvantages of the fruition of cultural organizations. Extrinsic factors were identified by asking to enumerate facts/circumstances that could facilitate/impece the visit cultural organizations. Only items with a relative frequency greater than 25% were used for the main study.

A survey, which measures the relevance (importance and probability of occurrence) of *push* and *pull* factors, Revisit intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), and WOM, was conducted by selecting a convenience sample of 200 participants: 89 men and 111 women, aged between 18 and 69 years old ($M = 36.8$), 58.1% were Italians. Considering these factors as independent variables and Revisit intention and WOM as dependent variables, two multiple regression models were carried out using SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The pilot study identified 5 positive and 5 negative *push* factors, and 4 positive and 4 negative *pull* factors. Multiplying the importance by the probability, the relevance of positive intrinsic factors is greater than the negative intrinsic ones ($M_{PosPush} = 29.98$, $M_{NegPull} = 9.32$; $p < .001$). The same result was obtained for extrinsic factors ($M_{PosPush} = 28.13$, $M_{NegPull} = 16.05$; $p < .001$). By comparing *push* and *pull* factors, there is a significant difference in the relevance attributed to negative factors ($M_{NegPush} = 9.32$, $M_{NegPull} = 16.05$; $p < .001$) but not for that attributed to positive factors ($M_{PosPush} = 29.98$, $M_{PosPull} = 28.13$; $p = .099$). Negative factors are less importance for tourists but are perceived with low probability of occurrence. The positive factors besides are perceived with greater importance and almost certain.

Results of the regression analysis show that *push* factors have a significant positive effect on Revisit intention ($b = .261$, $p < .001$) and WOM ($b = .195$, $p < .001$), while *pull* factors have no significative effect on Revisit intention ($b = .033$, $p = .535$) and WOM ($b = .057$, $p = .255$).

IMPLICATIONS

The factors identified in the specific context of heritage tourism are different from those identified in other tourism sectors (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Su et al., 2020). Moreover, the choice of a destination is often the result of the tourist's will, instead of the destination manager's desire to attract.

Results could suggest to territorial manager and policy makers more effective tourism policy strategies as networks of economic incentives (to improve *push* factors) and international marketing campaigns on national cultural heritage (which leverage *pull* factors). Future research could investigate the model by evaluating the differences between the tourism sector in general and heritage tourism.

KEYWORDS

Push and Pull factors, Destination Loyalty, WOM, Intention to return.

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