

THE IMAGE OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS AND TOURISTS' Loyalty Attitude or Behavior?

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Urban tourist destinations show high levels of increasing competition, generated by improved transport facilities –coming both from a rise in the number of routes and also from price wars- which enables a much wider range of option for tourists to choose. For this reason it is of much relevance to know the processes generating satisfaction and loyalty in visiting tourist destinations, since a loyal tourist may return to a particular destination or speak favorably of it. While numerous studies do exist concerning the components of overall image and its impact on tourist loyalty and satisfaction, very few of them relate these variables to the so-called disconfirmation process and to emotions –these variables having an important effect on consumer behavior. This study analyzes, in the case of the city of Seville (Spain), the influence exerted by destination image on tourist's loyalty. The issue of the mediating role played by emotions (split in its dimensions of arousal and pleasure) between disconfirmation and satisfaction is also addressed. The methodology used in the research was based on structural equation modeling –specifically by applying the PLS technique. The study findings confirm both the proposed relationships among variables and the mediating role played by some personal tourist's variables (i.e. previous visit to the city and tourist's origin). However, some shifting effects on the above relationships have been also found depending on what measurement of tourist's loyalty was being used: personal recommendations to other travelers versus intention to revisit the destination.

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