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From destination attributes to tourist satisfaction: novelty-seeking as a bridge between liminality and place attachment

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses how destination attributes influence tourist satisfaction via perceived quality, price, and safety, and how these relationships differ by novelty-seeking orientation. Framed at the intersection of liminality and place attachment, novelty-seeking is conceptualised as the behavioural mechanism linking extraordinary experiences to emotional bonds with place, offering the first empirical integration of these frameworks in tourism research. Using data from 1,488 tourists visiting the Algarve (Portugal) in 2022–2023 and Partial Least Squares Multigroup Analysis (PLS-MGA), the results show that for conservative tourists, destination attributes enhance perceived quality, lower perceived prices and safety concerns, and increase satisfaction. For adventurous tourists, satisfaction is driven mainly by perceived price and is negatively affected by in situ safety concerns, indicating that novelty-seekers do not uniformly discount risk. The findings highlight how novelty-seeking conditions cognitive pathways to satisfaction and inform market segmentation strategies aligned with distinct motivational orientations.

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Tourism destination attributes; tourists' satisfaction; novelty-seeking tendencies; liminality; place attachment

Introduction

Tourism research increasingly recognises that travellers construct destination experiences through the interplay of cognitive evaluations and affective responses. Two dominant frameworks, liminality and place attachment, have been central to advancing this understanding (Lança et al., 2017; Lee & Jeong, 2021; Selännemi, 2003; Sharpley, 2021; Vada et al., 2019; Zhang & Xu, 2019; Zou et al., 2022). Liminality conceptualises tourism as a temporary suspension of everyday norms, during which exploration, novelty-seeking, and behavioural liberation are enabled (Selännemi, 2003; Sharpley, 2021). In contrast, place attachment explains how emotional bonds emerge from repeated or meaningful interactions with a destination, fostering familiarity, satisfaction, and loyalty (George & George, 2012; Lee & Jeong, 2021). Although both frameworks have been widely applied, they have evolved in theoretical isolation, with virtually no empirical tourism research integrating them within a unified explanatory structure. The few instances of integration appear outside tourism, in urban and

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community studies (Imai, 2013; Roberts & Matos, 2022), underscoring both the novelty and urgency of developing such a connection within tourism research.

This conceptual separation is increasingly untenable. Tourist behaviour rarely aligns exclusively with a single framework. Instead, individuals often transition between liminal and attachment-oriented modes of engagement. High novelty-seeking tourists typically avoid familiar destinations and report weaker intentions to revisit (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2015), reflecting a liminal disposition. Conversely, emotionally attached visitors exhibit stronger loyalty, as evidenced by repeat visitation and recommendation behaviour (Dwyer et al., 2019; Lee & Jeong, 2021; Vada et al., 2019; Zou et al., 2022). Yet novelty-seeking and attachment are not mutually exclusive states: novelty-seeking can mediate the development of attachment (George & George, 2012) or even reinforce the satisfaction–loyalty link (Albaity & Melhem, 2017; Chang & Lu, 2018; Mun et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2020; Wong & Zhao, 2016). These contrasting findings suggest that novelty-seeking is best understood not as a binary trait, but as a behavioural mechanism that regulates movement between liminal and place-attached experiences. Rather than opposing paradigms, liminality and place attachment constitute interconnected states shaped by underlying motivational orientations.

In parallel, research highlights the central role of tourism destination attributes (TDA), the functional and experiential features that underpin the cognitive appraisal of destinations. TDA influence perceived quality, price, and safety, all of which are established determinants of satisfaction (Adam & Adongo, 2016; Küçükerin et al., 2020; Tran et al., 2019; Vich et al., 2022). However, the effects of these attributes may vary across traveller profiles, and safety concerns remain under-examined as antecedents of satisfaction, especially when differentiated by motivational orientation (Min et al., 2020; Zou & Meng, 2020). This gap limits the explanatory power of current tourism models, which typically examine perceptual and emotional drivers in isolation.

This study addresses these gaps by analysing how tourism destination attributes shape perceived quality, perceived prices, safety concerns, and satisfaction, and by assessing whether these relationships differ between adventurous (high novelty-seeking) and conservative (low novelty-seeking) tourists. Positioning novelty-seeking as a moderating mechanism enables the empirical testing of the proposition that liminality and place attachment are dynamically linked through behavioural orientation, rather than being theoretically distinct. In doing so, this research offers an integrative perspective that advances the conceptual relationship between two foundational tourism theories and provides a more nuanced account of how cognitive evaluations translate into emotional and behavioural outcomes across heterogeneous visitor segments.

Theoretical background and hypotheses development

Tourism destination attributes

In tourism research, destination image is commonly conceptualised through cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions (Cai, 2002; Pike & Ryan, 2004), with the cognitive dimension grounded primarily in destination attributes (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Cognitive evaluations are comparatively more stable and less context-dependent than emotional or behavioural responses, and therefore tend to shape tourists' initial impressions and guide subsequent decision-making (Kotsi & Pike, 2020; Pasquinelli et al., 2022). However, the conceptualisation of destination image remains fragmented and at times inconsistent (Lai & Li, 2016), prompting a renewed focus on more concrete and measurable constructs, such as attributes, attractions, and service elements, as clearer indicators of how tourists evaluate destinations (Kim, 2022; Schlesinger et al., 2020).

Against this backdrop, the present study adopts tourism destination attributes (TDA) as its analytical point of departure (Crouch, 2011; Kim, 2014). TDA encompass both tangible and intangible characteristics that define the functional and experiential composition of a destination, including infrastructure, built environment, public spaces, tourism services, and cultural or hospitality-

related elements (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Kim, 2014). Since these attributes align with rational information processing (Pasquinelli et al., 2022), they offer a comprehensive and measurable basis for examining how tourists construct perceptions of quality, price, safety, and ultimately satisfaction. In this sense, TDA serve as the cognitive foundation from which subsequent evaluations emerge, particularly when interpreted through the lens of novelty-seeking tendencies.

Recent empirical evidence reinforces the relevance of destination attributes as antecedents in structural models predicting tourist evaluations. Studies across various tourism contexts show that attributes influence perceptions of destination equity (Tasci, 2018), experience quality (Moon & Han, 2018), memory formation (Kim, 2022), and post-visit behavioural intentions (Bagheri et al., 2023; Schlesinger et al., 2020). This growing body of research suggests that destination attributes are not merely descriptive features but operate as predictive mechanisms within tourist decision-making. Accordingly, these insights provide the theoretical and empirical justification for positioning TDA as the starting point of the model proposed in this study.

Perceived quality and pricing

Defining quality in tourism is challenging since it reflects an individual's subjective assessment of goods and services (Gartner & Ruzzier, 2011). Perceived quality (PQ) refers to consumers' judgment of a brand's overall excellence or superiority relative to alternatives (Aaker, 1996) and has been identified as a key driver of consumer-based brand equity and destination competitiveness (Tasci, 2018). By signalling reliability, value, and differentiation, PQ contributes to a destination's market positioning and competitive advantage (Verissimo et al., 2017). In tourism contexts, PQ is shaped by tourists' evaluations of functional performance, including infrastructure, accommodation, hospitality services, and amenities, which together contribute to the perceived reliability and safety of the destination's offerings (Tran et al., 2019).

Price perceptions operate alongside quality judgements and influence tourists' evaluations of destinations. The price reflects not only the monetary cost of goods and services but also the value that tourists believe they receive in exchange (Zeithaml, 1988). Although price alone is no longer the primary driver of purchase decisions, it remains essential to understanding profitability and market share (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011) and continues to shape tourist behaviour (Kozak, 2003; Küçükergin & Dedeoğlu, 2014). Tourists are willing to pay premium prices when they perceive high quality (Can et al., 2023), yet unfair or unreasonable pricing can undermine satisfaction and loyalty (Adongo et al., 2015; Prakash et al., 2018). Consequently, perceived prices (PP) are crucial, as they represent tourists' judgment of value and fairness, influencing their purchasing intentions, satisfaction, and destination loyalty (Küçükergin et al., 2020).

The physical and service environment of a destination plays a central role in shaping both quality and price evaluations. Environmental cues such as cleanliness, architectural design, and general ambience influence how tourists interpret the value of what they receive relative to what they pay (Prakash et al., 2018). Poor environmental conditions or unattractive surroundings can diminish perceived quality and lead tourists to question the fairness of prices (Küçükergin et al., 2020), whereas positive impressions of destination attributes enhance perceptions of value and justify expenditures (Chi & Qu, 2008; Stylos et al., 2016).

In line with this evidence, the proposed relationship between TDA, perceived quality, and perceived prices is supported by recent modelling approaches, which show that tourists' functional evaluations of destinations directly activate quality judgements (Can et al., 2023; Kim, 2022). Research also indicates that, in competitive tourism environments, destination attributes increasingly serve as salient quality cues that influence perceptions of value and price fairness (Bagheri et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2019). Although empirical research explicitly testing this causal mechanism remains limited (Küçükergin et al., 2020), current findings converge to suggest that positive evaluations of TDA shape subsequent cognitive assessments of quality and price. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Positive perceptions of tourism destination attributes (TDA) lead to higher perceived quality (PQ) of the destination.

H2: Positive perceptions of tourism destination attributes (TDA) lead to lower perceived prices (PP) of the destination.

Safety concerns

Tourists' perceptions of safety depend on the alignment between external conditions and their personal safety needs (Zou & Meng, 2020). When travelling, visitors implicitly expect a minimum standard of safety, and any failure to meet this expectation can compromise the experience and the destination's reputation (Preko, 2021; Zou & Meng, 2020). Safety and security in tourism encompass multiple dimensions, including access to reliable information, disaster preparedness, political and social stability, public order, hygiene and sanitation, data protection, and legal safeguards (Kövári & Zimányi, 2011). Disruptions in any of these dimensions, such as terrorism, political violence, crime, or corruption, have been shown to increase tourists' perceived risk and discourage travel (Fourie et al., 2019; Preko, 2021). Health risks, natural disasters, and environmental hazards (e.g. earthquakes, flooding, pollution) present further threats that negatively influence tourists' safety evaluations (Min et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020), as observed during the COVID-19 pandemic (Vich et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2021). As a result, safety concerns (SC) play a critical role in destination choice and satisfaction (Adam & Adongo, 2016).

Recent studies suggest that tourists no longer evaluate safety solely based on external threats; rather, they form safety perceptions partially through their assessment of destination attributes (Seger-Guttmann & Gilboa, 2023; Vich et al., 2022). Functional elements such as cleanliness, maintenance of public spaces, architectural quality, and cultural interaction increasingly act as safety signals, shaping tourists' sense of security during their stay (Fourie et al., 2019). This implies that positive evaluations of a destination's attributes may mitigate perceived risk by conveying order, organisation, and reliability. Consequently, destination attributes may not only inform cognitive evaluations of quality and value but also reduce the extent to which tourists feel exposed to physical, social, or environmental threats. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Positive perceptions of tourism destination attributes (TDA) lead to lower safety concerns (SC) with the destination.

Satisfaction with the destination

Tourist satisfaction (Sat) is a central outcome in destination marketing, as it influences destination choice, expenditure patterns, revisit intentions, and word-of-mouth recommendations (Bagheri et al., 2023; Eid et al., 2019; Küçükerin & Dedeoğlu, 2014; Schlesinger et al., 2020). The concept of satisfaction has been examined from several perspectives. Cognitive approaches interpret satisfaction as the evaluative judgement of whether post-consumption experiences meet or exceed prior expectations (Eid, 2015), whereas affective perspectives portray satisfaction as an emotional response to the consumption experience (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015). Despite this diversity, two dominant frameworks have emerged (Nam et al., 2011): transient satisfaction, which relates to specific service encounters (Oliver, 1997), and cumulative satisfaction, reflecting an overall evaluation formed across multiple interactions (Eid et al., 2019). The present study adopts the cumulative perspective, conceptualising satisfaction as tourists' overall assessment of their most recent experience at the destination.

The link between satisfaction and loyalty has been widely documented in tourism research (Albaity & Melhem, 2017; Bagheri et al., 2023; Dodds & Holmes, 2020; Schlesinger et al., 2020). Although empirical evidence varies across destinations and traveller profiles (Assaker et al., 2011; Bhat & Darzi, 2018; Chi & Qu, 2008), the literature consistently shows that satisfied tourists are

more likely to return and recommend a destination to others (Albaity & Melhem, 2017; Eid, 2015). Importantly, satisfaction does not arise in isolation; it is shaped by tourists' evaluations of the destination's core attributes and performance. Research highlights the roles of perceived quality, price, and safety in forming satisfaction judgements (Eid et al., 2019; Vich et al., 2022; Zou & Meng, 2020), as these elements structure the tourism experience and influence perceived value (Bagheri et al., 2023; Kim, 2014; Küçükerjin et al., 2020; Moon & Han, 2018). Destinations that meet tourists' expectations on these dimensions are more likely to generate positive experience evaluations, thereby reinforcing satisfaction and future loyalty. Building on this rationale, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Higher perceived quality (PQ) of the destination leads to higher satisfaction (Sat) with the destination.

H5: Lower perceived prices (PP) of the destination lead to higher satisfaction (Sat) with the destination.

H6: Lower safety concerns (SC) with the destination lead to higher satisfaction (Sat) with the destination.

Novelty-seeking as a behavioural bridge between liminality and place attachment

Novelty-seeking reflects tourists' pursuit of heightened stimulation and emotionally rich experiences during travel-related decision making (Albaity & Melhem, 2017; Assaker et al., 2011; Crompton, 1979; Jang & Feng, 2007; Mitas & Bastiaansen, 2018; Wong & Zhao, 2016; Yuan & Hong, 2023). Rooted in sociological and anthropological theory, this concept draws on the idea that tourism offers an escape from the routines of everyday life. According to Cohen (1972), Graburn (2001), and Turner (1974), novelty generates enjoyment by enabling visitors to encounter experiences that differ from daily norms, fulfilling a key motivation for travel (Selänniemi, 2003).

Turner's (1974) development of Van Gennep's (1960) 'rites of passage' framework and Durkheim's (1914) distinction between the 'sacred' and the 'profane' emphasises that daily life constrains individuals within social structures. Travel provides a temporary suspension of these constraints: tourists leave their ordinary environment (separation), enter a liminal space where normal rules are relaxed (transition), and later return to everyday life (reincorporation), often with altered perspectives (Graburn, 1977; Jafari, 1987; Selänniemi, 2003). Liminality, therefore, represents a state in which the extraordinary becomes possible. In this state, individuals may behave in ways that diverge from their usual patterns, emphasising the pursuit of novelty, spontaneity, and emotional enrichment (Andrews, 2012; Lança et al., 2017; Thomassen, 2014; Zhang & Xu, 2019). As such, the liminal nature of tourism reinforces novelty-seeking (Selänniemi, 2003; Sharpley, 2021), and travellers with higher novelty-seeking tendencies are less inclined to revisit familiar destinations (Assaker et al., 2011; Kim & Kim, 2015).

Conversely, tourists with lower novelty-seeking tendencies, or higher place attachment, display a greater propensity to revisit destinations (George & George, 2012). Satisfaction nurtures this attachment, strengthening the emotional bond with place and increasing the likelihood of return (Zou et al., 2022). Originating in environmental psychology, place attachment refers to the emotional connection individuals develop with specific locations (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001). In tourism, place attachment enhances experience evaluations (Vada et al., 2019) and fosters loyalty through revisit and recommendation intentions (George & George, 2012; Zou et al., 2022). Positive destination experiences, personal relevance, and exposure to meaningful attributes contribute to this process (Dwyer et al., 2019; Lee & Jeong, 2021; Xu & Zhang, 2016).

Novelty-seeking does not always impede attachment. In some cases, it reshapes how attachment forms. For example, novelty-seeking may mediate the connection between past visits and place attachment (George & George, 2012). It can also strengthen the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty, leading some novelty-seeking tourists to recommend or revisit destinations despite initially preferring new experiences (Albaity & Melhem, 2017; Chang & Lu, 2018; Mun et al., 2018;

Nguyen et al., 2020; Wong & Zhao, 2016). These findings suggest that novelty-seeking influences not whether attachment emerges, but rather how and under what conditions it develops.

Taken together, liminality and place attachment should not be understood as opposing frameworks. Instead, novelty-seeking operates as the bridge between them. High novelty-seeking strengthens immersion in liminal states where behaviours deviate from the ordinary and the pursuit of difference dominates, which may delay or inhibit the development of place-based bonds. Low novelty-seeking, by contrast, promotes familiarity and emotional continuity, encouraging repeat visitation and the consolidation of attachment. In this sense, novelty-seeking acts as a behavioural hinge, determining whether tourists remain in temporary liminal engagement or transition toward more enduring place-based commitment. This conceptualisation forms the theoretical contribution of the present study, as it positions novelty-seeking as the pathway connecting these two parallel frameworks.

Building on this synthesis, novelty-seeking may also influence how tourists perceive destination attributes and shape their subsequent evaluations. Evidence suggests that tourists process destination information differently according to their novelty-seeking profile (Wong & Zhao, 2016; Yuan & Hong, 2023). Novelty-seeking influences attention allocation, risk perception, and value construction (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2015), implying that destination attributes may not exert uniform effects across traveller segments. Therefore, novelty-seeking is expected to moderate the relationships between tourism destination attributes and the core evaluative dimensions of the present model. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: Novelty-seeking (NS) moderates the relationships between perceptions of tourism destination attributes (TDA), perceived quality (PQ), perceived prices (PP), safety concerns (SC), and satisfaction (Sat) with the destination.

Methods

Study context

The Algarve region in southern Portugal is a renowned tourism destination recognised for its exceptional beaches (World Travel Awards, 2023). The tourism sector is central to the region's economy, contributing approximately 66.0% to the local GDP and employing over 60.0% of the workforce (RTA, 2023).

In 2022, the Algarve welcomed around 4.7 million guests in classified tourist accommodations, accounting for 27.5% of all overnight stays in Portugal, thus solidifying its position as the leading tourism destination in the country (INE, 2023). Most of the tourists visiting the Algarve come from Portugal (31.2%), followed by the United Kingdom (22.5%), Spain (7.1%), Germany (6.6%), France (5.9%), Ireland (5.8%), the Netherlands (4.1%), and other countries (16.8%) (INE, 2023).

Sampling process

All adult tourists (aged over 18) in the Algarve formed the target population of this study ($N \approx 5$ million) (INE, 2020). The sample size was determined based on the number of tourists visiting the Algarve prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, assuming a proportional allocation of the sample by country of origin (INE, 2020; Xufre et al., 2021). The sample was calculated to achieve a 95.0% confidence level and a maximum sampling error of 1.0%. Thus, a sample size of 1,500 tourists was computed for both the high and low seasons of tourism activity in the Algarve (August–September 2022 and March–April 2023).

Instrument and data collection

A questionnaire was conducted at Faro Airport, which serves the entire region of the Algarve, aiming to delve into tourists' travel features, perceptions, behaviours, satisfaction, and loyalty. The

questionnaire consisted of 29 sets of questions, also encompassing sociodemographic details. This study focused on five key categories of questions, exploring tourists' perceptions of destination attributes, quality, prices, safety concerns, and satisfaction. Additionally, the moderating effect of novelty-seeking was examined. To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, established scales and items from previous studies were employed (Albaity & Melhem, 2017; Assaker et al., 2011; Chi & Qu, 2009; Crouch, 2011; Dolnicar & Grün, 2013; Jang & Feng, 2007; Kim, 2014, 2022; Kozak, 2003; Küçükergin et al., 2020; Lee & Crompton, 1992; Moon & Han, 2018; Pasquinelli et al., 2022; Schlesinger et al., 2020; Veríssimo et al., 2017; Vich et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2015, 2021; Zou & Meng, 2020). Each item was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement, very bad to very good, very low to very high, and much worse to much better. Novelty-seeking was operationalised using a binary variable derived from the item 'On holidays, I like to visit exotic and unknown destinations', where 0 ('no') classified respondents as conservative and 1 ('yes') as adventurous tourists. Although multi-item novelty-seeking scales are available (e.g. Jang & Feng, 2007; Lee & Crompton, 1992), single-item measures are recognised as appropriate when the construct is unidimensional, behaviourally specific, and conceptually unambiguous (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007). In this study, the behavioural focus of the model justifies this operationalisation, as destination choice is a validated proxy for novelty orientation (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Wong & Zhao, 2016) and offers a direct link to tourism behaviour. Moreover, single-item classification is particularly suitable for multigroup segmentation in PLS-MGA, which benefits from conceptually grounded behavioural grouping rather than psychometric scale variation (Hair et al., 2021).

Over 1,700 questionnaires were distributed at the boarding gates of Faro Airport. The ones with non-response rates exceeding 10% were discarded (Creswell, 2015). As a result, 1,488 valid questionnaires were collected (974 in the high season of 2022 and 514 in the low season of 2023). The questionnaires were administered in a traditional pen-and-paper format. Tourists, whenever possible, self-administered it after providing verbal consent for their data to be used for research purposes. The research team randomly selected participants by choosing every second person from among those seated at the boarding gates.

Data analysis

The analysis was undertaken using two software tools: IBM SPSS 28 and SmartPLS 4. Initially, descriptive analyses were conducted to generate a profile of tourists based on their sociodemographic characteristics. Subsequently, Multigroup Analysis in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-MGA) was performed to model estimation and test the research hypotheses, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Hair et al., 2021).

Multigroup or between-group analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equations Modeling (PLS-SEM) tests predefined data groups to identify significant differences in group-specific parameter estimates (Matthews, 2017). By applying MGA, researchers can assess the distinctions between tourists who do not seek novelty (conservative) and those who do (adventurous).

Results

Descriptive results

As indicated in Table 1, most respondents were female (54.5%), aged between 25 and 64 years old (64.3%), and with a university degree (53.0%). Most respondents reported median wages ranging from € 1,001 to € 2,000 (26.1%) or from € 2,001 to € 3,000 (23.2%). They came mainly from the domestic market, specifically Portugal (30.8%) and the United Kingdom (24.5%). Most respondents were repeat tourists in the Algarve (62.0%), but more than one-third indicated that it was their first visit to this destination.

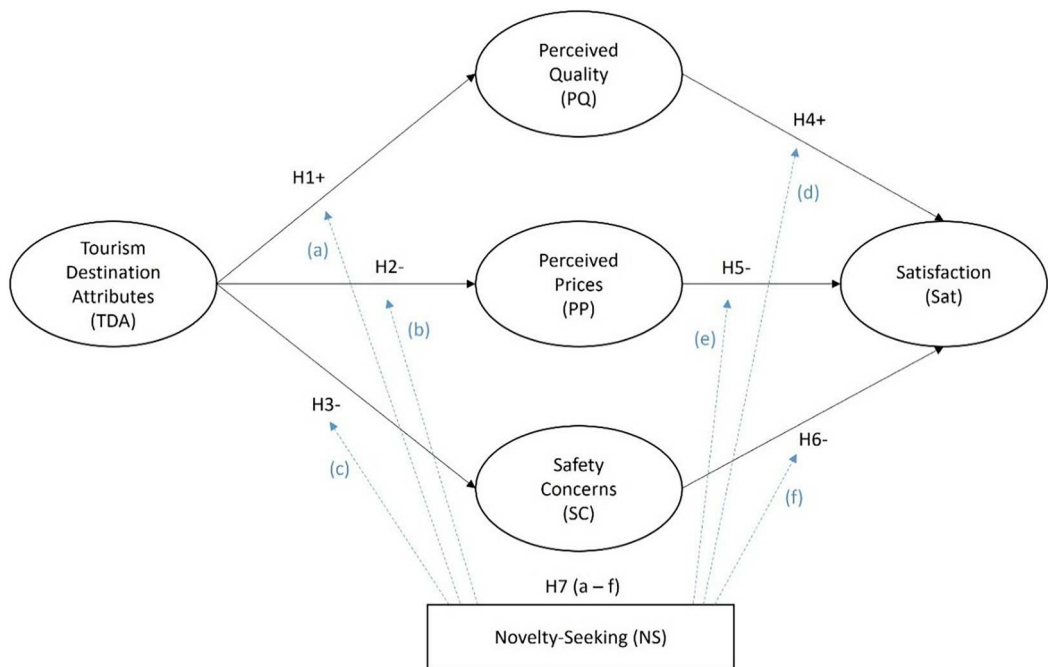


Figure 1. Research model and hypotheses.

Source: Own elaboration.

Concerning novelty-seeking, most tourists were categorised as adventurous (56.5%) due to their willingness to explore unknown and exotic destinations. In contrast, a small percentage were labelled conservative (14.4%), indicating a preference for familiar travel destinations.

Multicollinearity and data normality

Precautions against Common Method Bias (CMB) and assessments were implemented to ensure the integrity of the data (Jordan & Troth, 2020). A Harman's one-factor test was conducted, involving an unrotated exploratory factor analysis on all 18 items that cover the five constructs within the model (Podsakoff et al., 2012). The results indicate that no single factor accounted for more than 19.09% of the variance among the variables, reducing concerns about CMB as it remains well below the recommended threshold of 50%. Furthermore, skewness and kurtosis values were examined to evaluate data normality. The findings demonstrate that skewness and kurtosis coefficients fall below the critical threshold of 3.0, supporting the normality of the data for maximum likelihood estimation and confirming the data's suitability. Additionally, Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) are below 3.0, and tolerance values exceed 0.1. These results confirm the absence of multicollinearity and ensure the robustness of the analyses (Hair et al., 2021).

Model assessment in PLS-SEM

Assessment of the measurement model and invariance measurement

The evaluation of the reflective measurement model involves thoroughly examining its reliability and validity with respect to Latent Variables (LVs) (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2021). This scrutiny entails analysing the relationships between the LVs and their corresponding items using two pivotal metrics: Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which are

Table 1. Profile of respondents.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	664	44.6
Female	811	54.5
Other	3	0.2
DK/DA	10	0.7
Age (Years)		
18–24	225	15.1
25–64	957	64.3
65 and above	93	6.3
DK/DA	213	14.3
Level of Education		
Primary school	67	4.5
High school	250	16.8
Technical/Professional Education	281	18.9
University	788	53.0
DK/DA	102	6.8
Country of Origin		
Portugal	458	30.8
United Kingdom	365	24.5
Germany	138	9.3
Spain	112	7.5
The Netherlands	79	5.3
France	74	5.0
Ireland	56	3.8
Other	206	13.8
Net Monthly Income		
Up to 1,000€	205	13.8
1,001€–2,000€	389	26.1
2,001€–3,000€	345	23.2
3,001€–4,000€	174	11.7
4,001€ or more	158	10.6
DK/DA	217	14.6
Type of Tourist		
First-time tourists	565	37.9
Repeat tourists	922	62.0
DK/DA	1	0.1
Novelty-seeking		
No (Conservative)	214	14.4
Yes (Adventurous)	840	56.5
DK/DA	434	29.1

Note: DK/DA = Does not know/Does not answer.

commonly employed to assess internal consistency reliability and convergence validity. This study's measurement model incorporates five LVs: tourists' perceptions of tourism destination attributes (TDA), perceived quality (PQ), perceived prices (PP), safety concerns (SC), and satisfaction (Sat). In assessing a model's reliability, it is crucial to calculate the loading of each indicator on its respective LV and compare it against a predetermined threshold. Typically, an indicator loading above 0.7 is considered adequate for reliability (Hair et al., 2021). According to Table 2, all items exhibit loadings above 0.7. Additionally, the CR coefficients, which evaluate construct reliability, should exceed 0.7 to establish internal consistency (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2021). Across all reflective LVs, the CR values for each group surpass 0.7. These results show a high level of reliability in the measurement model.

Ensuring the credibility of research findings hinges on assessing convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2021). Convergent validity is deemed satisfactory when the AVE of reflective LVs exceeds 0.5 (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2021). The AVE values in this study exceed the 0.5 threshold, indicating robust convergent validity.

Discriminant validity gauges the distinctiveness of each LV from other constructs within the model (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2021). The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio has recently become a more effective criterion for confirming discriminant validity. Prior research has proposed thresholds

Table 2. Assessment of convergent validity, reliability, and full collinearity.

LVs and corresponding items	Conservative	Adventurous	Loading	CR	AVE	VIF
	Mean	Mean				
Tourism Destination Attributes (TDA)	3.95	4.02		0.758	0.579	1.472
1. Generally, the Algarve is a safe tourism destination	4.30	4.22	0.752			
2. Generally, the Algarve has a good environmental quality	3.89	4.03	0.797			
3. Generally, the Algarve is a destination that preserves its cultural heritage	3.79	3.87	0.750			
4. Generally, residents in the Algarve treat tourists with sympathy	3.80	3.95	0.743			
Perceived Quality (PQ)	3.95	3.94		0.816	0.637	1.422
1. The overall quality level of tourist services	4.04	3.97	0.847			
2. The quality level of accommodation services	4.06	4.05	0.782			
3. The quality level of restaurants and similar services	3.95	3.95	0.818			
4. The quality level of local trade/traditional stores	3.75	3.78	0.740			
Perceived Prices (PP)	3.54	3.21		0.895	0.741	1.038
1. The overall level of prices	3.62	3.21	0.893			
2. The level of prices in accommodation services	3.72	3.28	0.813			
3. The level of prices in restaurants and similar services	3.54	3.22	0.902			
4. The level of prices in local trade/traditional stores	3.29	3.13	0.831			
Safety Concerns (SC)	2.06	2.46		0.946	0.772	1.080
1. The possible existence of crime and violence was a concern during my visit to the Algarve	2.03	2.49	0.900			
2. The possibility of global threats, such as those posed by terrorist attacks, was a concern during my visit to the Algarve	1.79	2.27	0.933			
3. The possibility of the occurrence of epidemics, such as COVID-19, was a concern during my visit to the Algarve	2.09	2.47	0.894			
4. The possibility of the occurrence of epidemics, such as COVID-19, affects my choice of tourism destinations	2.31	2.62	0.781			
Satisfaction (Sat)	3.83	3.81		0.892	0.714	1.284
1. Compared to other sun and sand tourism destinations, how do you evaluate Algarve	3.57	3.51	0.729			
2. Your overall satisfaction with the Algarve	4.08	4.11	0.946			

Scales: TDA: 1 – Strongly disagree; 5 – Strongly agree. PQ: 1 – Very bad; 5 – Very good. PP: 1 – Very low; 5 – Very high. SC: 1 – Strongly disagree; 5 – Strongly agree. Sat(1): 1 – Much worse; 5 – Much better. Sat(2): 1 – Very low; 5 – Very high.

of 0.85 and 0.9 for the HTMT criterion to establish discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). This study applied the more conservative threshold of 0.85. Through group-specific model estimation, the outcomes related to the HTMT criterion (Table 3) demonstrate the successful establishment of discriminant validity.

Before proceeding with PLS-MGA to compare path coefficients between conservative and adventurous tourists, verifying the adequacy of the measurement model and measurement invariance is crucial (Cheah et al., 2023; Hair et al., 2021).

Henseler et al. (2016) introduced the Measurement Invariance of Composites (MICOM) approach, which assesses measurement invariance in composite models using variance-based SEM techniques such as PLS path modelling.

Table 3. Assessment of discriminant validity (HTMT criterion).

LVs	TDA	PP	PQ	SC	Sat
TDA	0.761				
PP	0.157	0.861			
PQ	0.634	0.179	0.798		
SC	0.219	0.043	0.223	0.879	
Sat	0.597	0.251	0.589	0.089	0.845

Note: The diagonal values in bold represent the square root of the shared variance (AVE) between the constructs and their measures. The non-diagonal values represent the correlations between the constructs. Regarding discriminant validity, the diagonal values should exceed all corresponding entries in their respective rows or columns.

The MICOM process involves three essential steps: (1) assessing configural invariance, (2) establishing compositional invariance, and (3) examining equal means and variances. The outcomes from the MICOM procedure confirm partial measurement invariance for both groups, as presented in Table 4. This procedural step is imperative for facilitating the comparison and interpretation of group-specific differences in PLS-SEM results through MGA (Cheah et al., 2023; Henseler et al., 2016).

Assessment of structural model and multigroup analysis

To gauge the effectiveness of the structural model in predicting outcomes, the coefficients of determination (R^2) for the endogenous LVs were calculated. The structural model explains 37.4% of satisfaction, largely driven by perceived quality (37.8%) and perceived prices (14.9%), while safety concerns exert only a modest influence (3.8%).

The evaluation of the structural model, along with the comparison of path coefficients (β) between the two groups (conservative vs adventurous), is detailed in Table 5. *P*-values were calculated using bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 sub-samples to ascertain the significance of path coefficients.

The results show that H1 is supported for both groups, as destination attributes significantly increase perceived quality (conservative: $\beta = 0.615$, $p < 0.01$; adventurous: $\beta = 0.482$, $p < 0.01$). H2 is partially supported, as destination attributes reduce perceived prices only for conservative tourists ($\beta = -0.386$, $p < 0.01$). H3 is supported for both groups, with destination attributes mitigating safety concerns ($\beta = -0.195$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = -0.221$, $p < 0.01$). H4 is supported, confirming that perceived quality increases satisfaction among both conservative ($\beta = 0.526$, $p < 0.01$) and adventurous tourists ($\beta = 0.403$, $p < 0.01$). H5 is partially supported, as lower perceived prices increase satisfaction only for adventurous tourists ($\beta = -0.141$, $p < 0.01$). H6 is also partially supported, as lower safety concerns drive satisfaction only among conservative tourists ($\beta = 0.139$, $p < 0.05$). Multigroup analysis reveals significant differences for three paths (H1a, H2b, H6f), and in all cases, the effects are stronger for conservative tourists, indicating that low novelty-seeking amplifies the influence of destination attributes, prices, and safety on satisfaction, whereas high novelty-seeking places greater emphasis on price perceptions when forming satisfaction.

Discussion and conclusion

This study investigated the relationships between tourists' perceptions of tourism destination attributes, quality, prices, safety concerns, and satisfaction. These relationships were analysed with the

Table 4. Assessment results of invariance measurement testing using permutation.

LVs	Configural Invariance (same algorithms for both groups)	Compositional Invariance (Correlation = 1)		Partial measurement invariance	Equal mean value		Equal variance		Full measurement invariance
		C = 1	CI		Dif.	CI	Dif.	CI	
TDA	Yes	0.986	[0.985, 1.000]	Yes	-0.076	[-0.162, 0.166]	0.125	[-0.278, 0.227]	Yes
PP	Yes	0.998	[0.969, 1.000]	Yes	0.507	[-0.149, 0.173]	-0.168	[-0.224, 0.196]	Yes
PQ	Yes	0.999	[0.995, 1.000]	Yes	0.084	[-0.167, 0.159]	-0.035	[-0.251, 0.197]	Yes
SC	Yes	0.984	[0.978, 1.000]	Yes	-0.406	[-0.168, 0.159]	-0.671	[-0.175, 0.135]	No
Sat	Yes	0.983	[0.976, 1.000]	Yes	-0.044	[-0.156, 0.160]	-0.351	[-0.249, 0.229]	No

Note: C = Correlation; CI = Confidence Interval; Dif. = Differences.

Table 5. Results of hypotheses testing.

Hypotheses	β -value Conservative	β -value Adventurous	β -value differences (Conservative – Adventurous)	Support Conservative Adventurous	p -value permutation test (H7: a –f)
H1: TDA → PQ	0.615**	0.482**	0.133	Yes Yes	(a) 0.019
H2: TDA → PP	–0.386**	–0.046	–0.341	Yes No	(b) < 0.001
H3: TDA → SC	–0.195*	–0.221**	0.026	Yes Yes	(c) 0.412
H4: PQ → Sat	0.526**	0.403**	0.123	Yes Yes	(d) 0.068
H5: PP → Sat	–0.093	–0.141**	0.048	No Yes	(e) 0.304
H6: SC → Sat	–0.139*	0.144**	–0.283	Yes No	(f) 0.003

Note: β = Path Coefficient; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$. Bold values indicate significant statistical differences.

moderating influence of tourists' novelty-seeking tendencies acting as a behavioural bridge between the theoretical frameworks of liminality and place attachment. Although novelty-seeking has traditionally been examined as a multidimensional construct, the findings suggest that even a simplified behavioural indicator can meaningfully differentiate tourists in the context of liminality and place attachment. This supports the view that the behavioural expression of novelty preference (where and why tourists choose to travel) can be theoretically sufficient to observe differences in destination perceptions and satisfaction. These findings directly address the theoretical gap identified by demonstrating that novelty-seeking is not merely a trait variable but the behavioural mechanism that determines when tourists operate in a liminal or attachment-oriented mode. In this sense, the results empirically verify that liminality and place attachment should not be treated as parallel conceptual strands, but as interdependent states shaped by motivational orientation.

Rather than reporting results sequentially, our findings can be understood as a layered evaluative chain, in which destination attributes activate cognitive assessments (quality, price, and safety), which subsequently shape satisfaction. This pattern is consistent with attribute-based destination evaluation models (Moon & Han, 2018; Tran et al., 2019) but extends them by demonstrating that the strength and direction of these relationships are contingent upon tourists' novelty-seeking orientation. This confirms that destination perception is not uniform but constructed through the interaction between contextual features and motivational states.

The PLS-MGA technique was employed for both model estimation and testing the research hypotheses. The PLS-SEM outcomes acquired full support for three of the six main hypotheses for conservative and adventurous tourists. First, positive perceptions of tourism destination attributes were observed to encourage the perceived quality of the destination. This result is consistent with previous studies, such as those by Chi and Qu (2009), Moon and Han (2018), Schlesinger et al. (2020), Tasci (2018), and Tran et al. (2019). Second, positive perceptions of tourism destination attributes were found to reduce safety concerns about the destination, as indicated by Seger-Guttman and Gilboa (2023), Wong and Zhao (2016), Yang et al. (2021), and Zou and Meng (2020). Third, the destination's perceived quality positively impacted tourists' satisfaction. This result aligns with previous research, such as those by Bagheri et al. (2023), Chi and Qu (2008), Eid et al. (2019), and Kozak (2003).

The MGA results revealed statistically significant differences between conservative and adventurous tourists. Regarding the influence of positive perceptions of tourism destination attributes on its perceived quality, conservative tourists showed a more robust path coefficient. This is likely because these tourists have had more exposure to the region, enabling them to recognise and appreciate its quality attributes better. This finding aligns with previous studies by Albaity and Melhem (2017), George and George (2012), Kozak (2003), and Zou et al. (2022).

Concerning the impact of positive perceptions of tourism destination attributes on reducing its perceived prices, the path coefficient was also more robust among conservative tourists. This

suggests that conservative tourists, pleased with the Algarve's attributes, are inclined to see prices as low. In contrast, the path coefficient for adventurous tourists was insignificant, meaning that the Algarve's attributes do not influence their perception of prices. Küçükergin et al. (2020) revealed that the ambience and harmony of a destination significantly influence perceived prices, prompting tourists to perceive it as having affordable prices. Furthermore, according to Bhat and Darzi (2018), moderate prices significantly enhance tourists' satisfaction and loyalty (Dodds & Holmes, 2020), particularly among repeat tourists, i.e. those with a solid attachment to the destination. Therefore, it can be inferred that conservative tourists in the Algarve often perceive prices as budget-friendly, which may contribute to their strong connection to the destination.

The impact of safety concerns on tourists' satisfaction also showed significant differences between conservative and adventurous tourists. Among the conservative, decreased safety concerns were associated with increased satisfaction, whereas for the adventurous, heightened safety concerns compromised their satisfaction. This pattern aligns with previous research indicating that familiarity with a destination tends to diminish perceived risk (Fourie et al., 2019; Fuchs & Reichel, 2011). However, it contrasts with studies suggesting that novelty-seekers typically downplay risk (Yang et al., 2015), indicating a more nuanced risk dynamic. A possible explanation is that adventurous tourists respond positively to the anticipated novelty of a destination yet may become more sensitive to in situ risk cues when confronted with unexpected threats, reflecting the distinction between anticipated and experienced danger (Fuchs & Reichel, 2011). Conversely, conservative tourists, many of whom are repeat visitors, may experience habituation through accumulated exposure to the destination, which reduces their perception of risk through familiarity and experiential knowledge (George & George, 2012; Zou & Meng, 2020). These findings suggest that risk perception operates as a context-dependent mechanism, fluctuating with tourists' stage in the visitation cycle and the transition from anticipation to lived experience.

Consequently, our results contribute to a more nuanced understanding of risk within novelty-seeking behaviour, indicating that novelty seekers do not uniformly disregard risk but rather respond to it situationally. This divergence from Yang et al. (2015) offers a reinterpretation that supports recent calls to examine safety concerns across different tourist profiles (Min et al., 2020; Zou & Meng, 2020).

Regarding the influence of perceived prices on tourists' satisfaction, the findings revealed that lower perceived prices were associated with increased satisfaction, particularly among adventurous tourists. Although the observed distinctions between conservative and adventurous tourists lack statistical significance, it is noteworthy that lower or reasonable perceived prices can positively influence tourists' purchasing decisions, ultimately contributing to their loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008; Kozak, 2003; Küçükergin et al., 2020; Stylos et al., 2016).

These differences suggest that novelty-seeking does not operate merely as a personal preference but as a cognitive filter that structures how information is processed. For conservative tourists (low novelty-seeking), prior familiarity and emotional anchoring appear to stabilise evaluations, making attributes more diagnostic of value and safety, consistent with attachment-based processing (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001; Zou et al., 2022). In contrast, adventurous tourists rely less on attribute cues and more on 'experiential triggers' (e.g. price and perceived vulnerability), which aligns with liminality-driven consumption logic where meaning is anchored in possibility and stimulation rather than familiarity (Sharpley, 2021). Overall, this study provides the first empirical confirmation that novelty-seeking is the behavioural bridge connecting liminality and place attachment, resolving an ongoing conceptual division in tourism theory.

Theoretical implications

Theoretically, this study advances tourism research by empirically demonstrating how novelty-seeking governs the transition between the liminal (extraordinary, exploratory) and attached (familiar, relational) modes of tourism engagement. While liminality and place attachment have

previously been treated as distinct or even opposing paradigms, our findings show that their interaction is conditional rather than dichotomous. Novelty-seeking is therefore not simply an antecedent to behaviour, but the mechanism that explains movement between the two frameworks, clarifying how tourists can simultaneously seek novelty and maintain loyalty, a relationship previously described as contradictory in the literature (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Wong & Zhao, 2016).

Furthermore, while most respondents were categorised as adventurous, it is notable that a significant portion of them are also repeat visitors to the Algarve. Their emotional connection to the region (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001) translated into elevated levels of perceived quality and satisfaction, as well as reduced perceptions of price and safety concerns when anticipating a visit to this place. Despite the allure of liminality, which offers the opportunity to experience extraordinary events in unfamiliar destinations, the evidence of numerous repeat visits to the Algarve suggests that place attachment outweighs the pursuit of adventure. This aligns with earlier research proposing that certain tourists revisited destinations even when their initial intention was to explore different locations (Albaity & Melhem, 2017; Chang & Lu, 2018; Mun et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2020; Wong & Zhao, 2016).

Practical implications

From a managerial perspective, these findings demonstrate that segmentation based solely on sociodemographic variables is insufficient. Instead, behavioural segmentation based on novelty-seeking provides clearer strategic direction: pricing communication, safety signalling, and messaging tone should be adapted depending on whether the target segment is operating in a liminal (novelty-oriented) or attachment-oriented mode of engagement.

Destination management organisations should enhance the overall quality of the Algarve by promoting positive perceptions of its unique environmental features and cultural offerings. By recognising the impact of perceived quality on satisfaction, destination managers should prioritise continuous improvement in infrastructure and services. Tailored marketing is essential, emphasising positive attributes, familiarity, and affordability for conservative tourists while focusing on safety measures for adventurous ones. Pricing strategies need to consider diverse perceptions. Conservative tourists respond positively to reasonable prices, viewing the Algarve as budget-friendly, while adventurous tourists prioritise other aspects. Encouraging repeat visitation through loyalty programmes and showcasing positive attributes contributes to a reinforcing feedback loop. In conclusion, considering the preferences of conservative and adventurous tourists, a comprehensive and customised approach is vital for successful destination management, effective marketing, and high satisfaction and loyalty.

Limitations and future research

While this research offers valuable theoretical and practical insights, it is essential to recognise its limitations, which also present opportunities for future research. First, the study is context-specific, focusing exclusively on tourists visiting the Algarve region; consequently, the generalisability of the findings to other destinations may be constrained. Applying this model to different geographical and cultural contexts would help assess its transferability and comparative relevance. Second, although this work examines tourists' perceptions of destination attributes, perceived quality, prices, safety concerns, and satisfaction moderated by novelty-seeking tendencies, future research could refine the model by incorporating additional variables, such as tourists' well-being, emotional solidarity with residents, and memory, to capture a broader spectrum of experiential and affective processes. Third, the classification of novelty-seeking based on a single binary item, while theoretically grounded and supported by previous studies, may not fully represent the dimensional nature of the construct. Future studies could therefore adopt established multi-item scales or apply latent class modelling to develop more nuanced behavioural segments and validate the

robustness of these findings. Collectively, addressing these limitations would advance understanding of the mechanisms shaping tourist behaviour and offer a stronger empirical basis for generalisation across destinations.

Author contributions

CRedit: **Milene Lança**: Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Luis Nobre Pereira**: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Writing – original draft; **João Albino Silva**: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Supervision; **Jorge Andraz**: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – review & editing; **Rui Nunes**: Conceptualization, Investigation, Validation.

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