

# Examining the structural relationships between perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty among disabled tourists in two world heritage sites

Jessenia Moreno-Manzo, Lluís Coromina and Ariadna Gassiot-Melian

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to explore the dimensions of perceived value of tourists with disabilities at heritage sites. Second, it examines the differences in the precedents of satisfaction and loyalty among tourists with disabilities in two different World Heritage Sites (WHS).

**Design/methodology/approach** – The sample consists of 150 and 184 questionnaires given to tourists with disabilities in Ecuador's WHS of Quito and Cuenca, respectively. To test the hypotheses, data were analysed using confirmatory factor analyses and structural equation modelling.

**Findings** – This study suggests a five-dimensional structure for perceived value of tourists with disabilities in WHS. However, differences in the behaviour of people with disabilities are found depending on the specific WHS. While the perceived value factors that determine satisfaction are different according to the WHS, the loyalty precedents remain the same.

**Practical implications** – This study contributes to the formulation of actions and strategies towards a more sustainable and inclusive future, where all tourism stakeholders in WHS have role. By understanding the behaviour of tourists with disabilities, these stakeholders will be more informed about the destinations' elements that need to be improved and enhanced to satisfy this loyal market segment.

**Originality/value** – Although the importance of accessible tourism is widely recognised, there is a dearth of literature investigating the behaviour of tourists with disabilities in heritage destinations. This study proposes a model to understand the role of perceived value in cultural heritage destinations.

**Keywords** Disability, Accessibility, Heritage destinations, Perceived value construct, Tourists with disabilities

**Paper type** Research paper

Jessenia Moreno-Manzo is based at the Department of Business Administration, Management and Product Design, University of Girona, Girona, Spain.

Lluís Coromina is based at the Department of Economics, University of Girona, Girona, Spain.

Ariadna Gassiot-Melian is based at the Department of Business Administration, Management and Product Design, University of Girona, Girona, Spain

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## Introduction

Tourism is a significant global revenue source, with over 960 million international travellers in 2022, marking a remarkable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic (UNWTO, 2022, 2023a). Accessible tourism is also a business opportunity (UNWTO, 2023b), given that an estimated 1.3 billion people have disabilities. This number indicates that one in three older adults is a person with a disability, with the highest prevalence observed in Europe and America (WHO, 2022).

This study is focused on World Heritage Sites (WHS), the designation given to locations that possess outstanding universal value to humanity (UNESCO, 2023). Cultural heritage sites, museums and galleries play a special role in encouraging immersion in cultural life and fostering social cohesion and inclusion (Mastrogioseppe *et al.*, 2021). Recognising the right of people with disabilities (PwD) to participate in cultural life on an equal basis with people

without disabilities (United Nations, 2006) is essential to creating products and services appropriate for all at the heritage destination. Tourists with disabilities should be able to visit heritage attractions on equal terms and have comparable experiences to all other visitors (Goodall, 2006).

Academic interest in accessible tourism has increased over the last two decades (Chen and Chen, 2012; Sarmah *et al.*, 2022; Stumbo and Pegg, 2005), and this market is still growing due to the potential of COVID-19 long-term health impacts that may increase the prevalence of disability (Pomeroy, 2021).

The perceived value, satisfaction (SAT) and loyalty (LOY) of tourists without disabilities have been studied in the tourism literature (Chen and Chen, 2010; Pandža Bajs, 2015; Valverde-Roda *et al.*, 2022; Wu and Li, 2017; Zhang *et al.*, 2022). The relationships between perceived value, SAT and LOY have been addressed in previous studies to compare the behaviour of people with and without disabilities. These are focused on religious destinations (Gassiot-Melian *et al.*, 2016) and outdoor recreation (Humagain and Singleton, 2021). However, there seems to be a lack of research to understand the behaviour of tourists with disabilities in heritage sites and to analyse the impact of perceived value factors on SAT and LOY. If they understood tourists' behaviour, destination tourism managers would have a better idea about how to develop their marketing strategies to optimise the efficient use of their available resources (Ramseook-Munhurrun *et al.*, 2015). Specifically, the evaluation of the behaviour of PwD is critical for the improvement of the accessibility of products and services in tourism destinations (Gassiot-Melian *et al.*, 2016; Zhang *et al.*, 2022), and it may be crucial in the cultural context of WHS. Consequently, this research may be especially useful for cultural tourism stakeholders, such as curators or public cultural entities, to understand PwD needs (Mastrogiuseppe *et al.*, 2021) and create safe environments for them.

In light of this, the objective of this study is twofold:

1. to explore the dimensions of perceived value in heritage sites so as to understand how tourists with disabilities value these places; and
2. to examine the differences in behaviour in different WHS (i.e. Quito and Cuenca) and establish which factors of perceived value influence tourists with disabilities' SAT and LOY.

This research is based on two WHS located in Ecuador. The city of Quito was declared a WHS in 1978 and the Historic Centre of Cuenca in 1999 (UNESCO, 2021). Ecuador is also the first Latin American country to receive an award for universal accessibility from the French Design for All Foundation, demonstrating that accessibility has been important for the country's strategy recently (Cancillería del Ecuador, 2015).

After this introduction, a review is conducted of the theoretical background of the constructs of perceived value, SAT and LOY and their relationships, and the research hypotheses are formulated. Then, the methodological approach is presented. The components of this research are developed considering previous literature (Gallarza and Gil Saura, 2006; Gassiot-Melian *et al.*, 2016; Pandža Bajs, 2015; Zhang *et al.*, 2022), and confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) are developed to confirm the dimensions of these components and test their relationships. Finally, results, conclusions, a discussion and implications are presented.

## Literature review

PwD are defined as those with long-term mental, physical, intellectual or sensory impairments (United Nations, 2006). PwD experiences are often very different from those of people without disabilities. In heritage sites, it is usually less of an experience due to numerous diversions and inaccessible areas (Pearn, 2010). In addition, the disability market

has been acknowledged as the largest and the fastest-growing market segment of the travel and tourism industry (Gassiot *et al.*, 2018; WHO, 2022; World Tourism Organization, 2016), specifically within the cultural and heritage sector (Pegg and Stumbo, 2008). It has been identified as a growing group of paying and discerning customers looking for opportunities to participate in several heritage tourism activities. This literature review focuses on three main aspects of PwD behaviour and their relationships: perceived value, SAT and LOY.

### ***Perceived value***

The construct of perceived value results from assessing costs and benefits related to an offering (Paulose and Shakeel, 2022). This construct helps tourism companies know how visitors value their services (Carrascosa-López *et al.*, 2021). Previous studies have focused on the perceived value of tourists in general. Gallarza and Gil Saura (2006) examine the underlying factors affecting perceived value of university students' travel behaviour. The results identified service quality, social value, play and aesthetics as contributing dimensions to perceived value. Similarly, a previous study analysed the behaviour of tourists in a Croatian historical heritage city, Pandža Bajs (2015). It found six dimensions: quality of tourist services, destination appearance, emotional experience, reputation and monetary and non-monetary costs (MNC). In addition, for the general behaviour of tourists in WHS, in a study about perceived value, Valverde-Roda *et al.* (2022) found that it included 15 indicators related to beauty, accessibility to buildings and monuments, tourist information, service and quality, value for money, diversity, cleanliness, opportunity to buy handicrafts, complementary offer, security, transport services and heritage conservation.

Although perceived value is crucial for gaining a competitive advantage, it varies across people and situations (Gallarza and Gil, 2008). While tourists with and without disabilities have the same desire to travel, travelling poses unique challenges for tourists with disabilities (Yau *et al.*, 2004). Consequently, heritage tourism operators, to differentiate themselves, must be willing to offer better-perceived value for PwD than their competitors (Pegg and Stumbo, 2012). Despite this relevance, research on perceived value among PwD is scarce. Gassiot-Melian *et al.* (2016) evaluate and compare the perceived value of accessibility for people with and without disabilities at religious destinations (Gassiot-Melian *et al.*, 2016) but, to date, no studies have been found that analyse the multidimensional construct of the perceived value of PwD in WHS. In this context, it is essential to consider that there are needs and services that, if fulfilled and improved appropriately, will create a high perceived value in heritage tourism (Pegg and Stumbo, 2012).

In summary, previous studies have analysed relevant factors such as MNC, staff service quality (SSQ) and destination attractiveness (DA) for the non-disability market in tourist destinations. In comparison, no studies have analysed the perceived value factors of disabled tourists in WHS. In this study, before explaining the effects of perceived value on other components of PwD behaviour, and as stated in the first objective of this paper, perceived value dimensions are addressed.

### ***Satisfaction***

SAT refers to an assessment made by the consumer between earlier formed expectations and the result derived from the consumption of that product or service (Forgas-Coll *et al.*, 2012).

Previous research has studied the relationship between perceived value and SAT in the tourism sector in general and proved that perceived value has a positive impact on SAT (Carrascosa-López *et al.*, 2021; Gallarza and Gil Saura, 2006; Lee *et al.*, 2007; Pandža Bajs, 2015; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2016). In these studies, specific perceived value dimensions

linked to price (Eid, 2015; El-Adly, 2019), DA (Nguyen Viet *et al.*, 2020) and quality factors (Eid, 2015; El-Adly, 2019) have a positive impact on SAT.

Notwithstanding, there are prior studies that identify the attributes that can add value and produce a high level of SAT in the tourism experience for PwD. On the one hand, Buhalis and Darcy (2011) state that the accessibility of the destination and the information are decisive elements to have satisfactory holiday experiences in the destination, and Gassiot-Melian *et al.* (2016) suggest that the perceived value of accessibility has a positive and direct impact on SAT. On the other hand, pricing decisions (Burnett and Baker, 2001), staff attitudes towards disabled tourists (Chang and Chen, 2012; Zhang and Cole, 2016) and the fulfilment of information needs (Eichhorn *et al.*, 2008) may also lead to higher SAT.

Despite all this research on PwD, until now, the factors of perceived value that impact their SAT and their relationship have not been assessed in a WHS, which encourages the formulation of the following hypotheses:

- H1.* The perceived value factor of monetary and non-monetary costs positively influences SAT in the WHS of Quito (H1.1) and Cuenca (H1.2) among PwD.
- H2.* The perceived value factor of SSQ positively influences SAT in the WHS of Quito (H2.1) and Cuenca (H2.2) among PwD.
- H3.* The perceived value factor of DA positively influences SAT in the WHS of Quito (H3.1) and Cuenca (H3.2) among PwD.
- H4.* The perceived value factor of tourist offer accessibility (TOA) positively influences SAT in the WHS of Quito (H4.1) and Cuenca (H4.2) among PwD.
- H5.* The perceived value factor of information accessibility (IA) positively influences SAT in the WHS of Quito (H5.1) and Cuenca (H5.2) among PwD.

The research model posited is reflected in [Figure 1](#).

### **Loyalty**

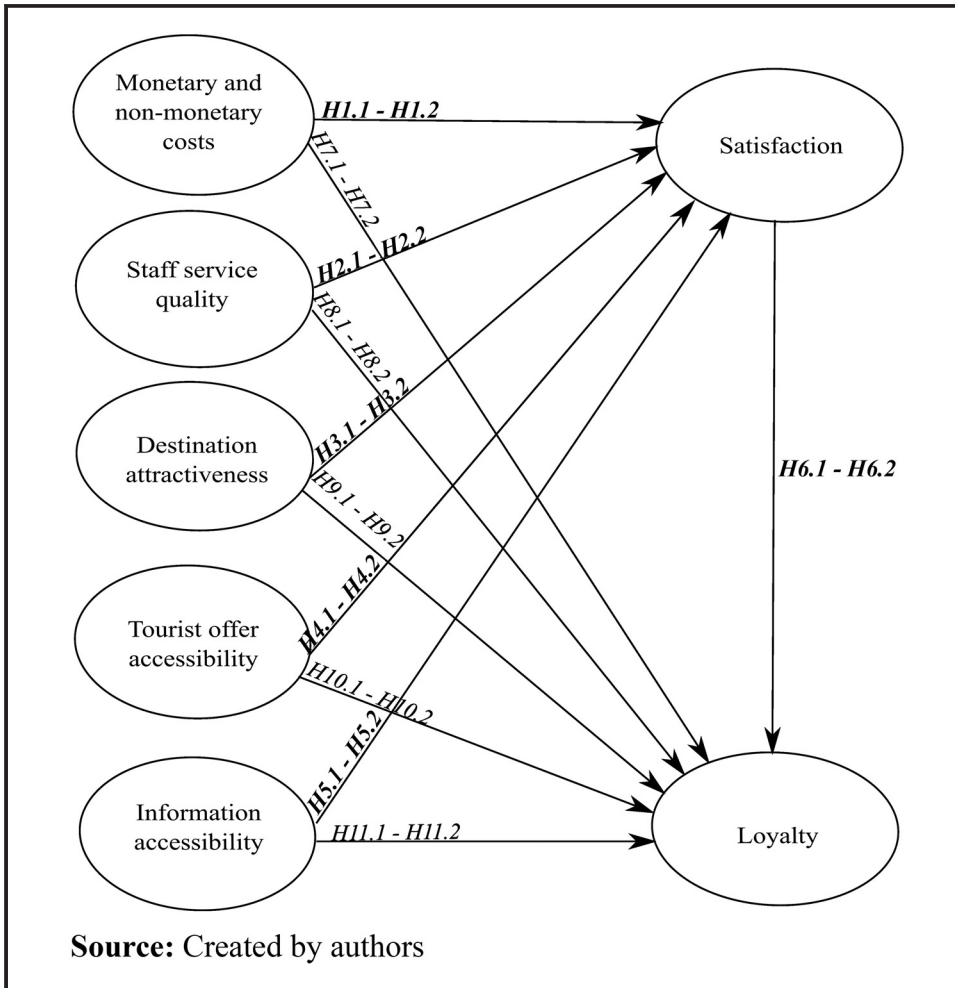
LOY is conceptualised and evaluated by both behavioural and attitudinal measures (Rather *et al.*, 2019). SAT is found to affect LOY directly and positively (Eid, 2015; El-Adly, 2019). For PwD, previous studies confirm that they are more loyal to the offerings when satisfied (Bowtell, 2015; Burnett and Baker, 2001; Domínguez Vila *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, in line with the previous literature, a hypothesis is proposed as follows:

- H6.* SAT positively influences LOY in the WHS of Quito (H6.1) and Cuenca (H6.2) among PwD.

In general, multiple studies have been accumulated on the relationship between perceived value and LOY (Damanik and Yusuf, 2022; Lee *et al.*, 2007; Paulose and Shakeel, 2022; Valverde-Roda *et al.*, 2022).

In the perceived value models of people without disabilities, price (El-Adly, 2019), service quality (Gallarza and Gil Saura, 2006) and DA factors (Um *et al.*, 2006; Vigolo, 2015) have a positive impact on LOY. Even though studies have been carried out on the relationship between factors of perceived value and LOY of tourists without disabilities, to date, there is little research in the literature that evaluates perceived value factors and their direct impact on LOY of PwD. In a study on outdoor recreation trips, Humagain and Singleton (2021) found that the overall perceived value and SAT significantly impact the recommendation intention. This relationship between perceived value and LOY is interesting to analyse as, for example, PwD return to the providers that offer a completely accessible experience, increasing LOY (Ambrose *et al.*, 2012), and once functional and accessible facilities and services are ensured, they recommend and promote them to their friends and relatives

**Figure 1** The research model



(Navarro *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, to explore the effect of perceived value on LOY, the hypotheses arise as follows:

- H7.* The perceived value factor of monetary and non-monetary costs positively influences LOY in the WHS of Quito (H1.1) and Cuenca (H1.2) among PwD.
- H8.* The perceived value factor of SSQ positively influences LOY in the WHS of Quito (H2.1) and Cuenca (H2.2) among PwD.
- H9.* The perceived value factor of DA positively influences LOY in the WHS of Quito (H3.1) and Cuenca (H3.2) among PwD.
- H10.* The perceived value factor of TOA positively influences LOY in the WHS of Quito (H4.1) and Cuenca (H4.2) among PwD.
- H11.* The perceived value factor of IA positively influences LOY in the WHS of Quito (H5.1) and Cuenca (H5.2) among PwD.

## Methodology

A quantitative methodology was applied through a structured questionnaire based on previous studies, as shown in [Table 1](#). The questions and factors/items in the questionnaire

**Table 1** Measurement for constructs and literature sources

<i>Constructs and factors</i>	<i>Measurement item sources</i>
Perceived value	
Tourist offer accessibility (TOA)	Gassiot-Melian <i>et al.</i> (2016)
Information accessibility (IA)	Burnett and Baker (2001), Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Destination appearance (DA)	Pandža Bajš (2015)
Staff service quality (SSQ)	Cronin <i>et al.</i> (2000), Gallarza and Gil Saura (2006)
Monetary and non-monetary costs (MNC)	Gallarza and Gil Saura (2006), Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2022)
	Pandža Bajš (2015); Wu and Li (2017)
Satisfaction (SAT)	Forgas-Coll <i>et al.</i> (2012), Lee <i>et al.</i> (2007)
Loyalty (LOY)	Wang and Leou (2015), Wu and Li (2017)
<b>Source:</b> Created by authors	

were taken from the previous studies specified in this table and were adapted and reworded according to the conclusions of the focus group, as explained below.

First, a focus group was conducted online in March 2020 with the aim of adapting the items from previous studies (Table 1) to this research. The participants were 11 senior university researchers who have previous experience in accessible tourism projects and WHS. An initial list of items to evaluate the conceptual components of the behavioural model (i.e. perceived value, SAT and LOY) extracted from previous literature was presented in the focus group to discuss them. Participants were asked about the appropriateness of these items and the need to include additional elements to cover these behavioural components. This focus group resulted in the adaptation of the items for PwD in WHS and the incorporation of two new factors of perceived value: TOA and IA.

Second, an on-site survey of PwD was developed with the following structure. Initially, the perceived value, SAT and LOY questions were formulated on a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 7 means “strongly agree”. Then, the multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions related to sociodemographic aspects were formulated. Finally, the disability profile questions included the type and level of disability, the need for an assistant and the need for devices.

Data were collected *in situ* by two interviewers trained for the occasion on weekdays and weekends in October, November and the first week of December 2020. In Quito, 150 valid questionnaires were collected, and in Cuenca, 184 valid questionnaires were considered for the data analysis. Only tourists with disabilities were part of the sample. A sample of national tourists with disabilities was contacted through support centres for PwD in Ecuador, and national and international tourists were contacted through hotels in the destination. The surveys were agreed to be taken after they visited and were leaving the tourist attractions in the city of Quito and the Historic Centre of Cuenca to ensure they could evaluate the perceived value after having the tourism experience. The classification of disability levels and typologies used in this study were based on their own perception of the constrained abilities and to what extent they felt them.

The estimation of minimum sample size has been calculated using Soper's statistics calculator, which is required for this study because it applies a SEM (Soper, 2022). Regarding the number of observed variables (24), the number of latent variables (7), the anticipated effect size (0.3), the desired statistical power level (0.8) and the probability level (0.05), the minimum sample size for model structure was deemed to be 145 for each destination.

The SPSS statistical software (version 25) was used for the descriptive analysis of the sample. In contrast, the AMOS software (version 24) was used for the CFA, and the hypotheses were tested via SEM. The constructs' reliability and validity were measured using composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha and discriminant validity.

## Results

This section uses CFA to assess the reliability and validity of perceived value, SAT and LOY. Then, SEM is used to test the hypotheses of the study.

### Sample profile

Regarding the respondents' profile, there are more males than females in the WHS of Quito and Cuenca (55.3% and 55.4%, respectively). Similarly, more than half of visitors with disabilities of both WHS are more than 60 years old (57.3% and 65.7% for Quito and Cuenca, respectively), as seen in [Table 2](#). Finally, the general profile of the visitors with disabilities is shown in [Table 3](#).

### Testing of model

The CFA is used to confirm the factor loadings of the three constructs: perceived value factors, SAT and LOY, and to evaluate the model fit. First, the standardised factor loadings of items were found to be significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) for the two groups with disabilities for the perceived value (see [Table 4](#)). Thus, the perceived value factors were validated in this study. The standardised factor loadings of SAT and LOY included in the analysis were

**Table 2** Demographics aspects

<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Categories</i>	N = 150 (%) <i>Quito</i>	N = 184 (%) <i>Cuenca</i>
Gender	Male	83 (55.3)	102 (55.4)
	Female	67 (44.7)	82 (44.6)
Age	<20	3 (2.0)	8 (4.3)
	20–29	11 (7.3)	34 (18.5)
	30–39	12 (8.0)	23 (12.5)
	40–49	17 (11.3)	20 (10.9)
	50–59	21 (14.0)	13 (7.1)
	>60	86 (57.3)	86 (46.7)

Source: Created by authors

**Table 3** Profile of the visitors with disabilities

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Categories</i>	N = 158 (%) <i>Quito</i>	N = 204 (%) <i>Cuenca</i>
Type of disability	Hearing impairment	19 (12.0)	30 (14.7)
	Visual	58 (36.7)	134 (65.7)
	Vocal (speaks)	0 (0)	4 (2.0)
	Motor disability	55 (34.8)	36 (17.6)
	Mental impairment	1 (0.6)	0 (0)
	Others	25 (15.8)	0 (0)
Level of disability	Low	37 (23.4)	143 (70.1)
	Moderate	58 (36.7)	53 (26.0)
	Serious	63 (39.9)	8 (3.9)
Need for assistant	Yes	N = 150 (%) 31 (20.7)	N = 184 (%) 7 (3.8)
	Not	119 (79.3)	177 (96.2)
Need for devices	Yes	100 (66.7)	131 (71.2)
	Not	50 (33.3)	53 (28.8)

Source: Created by authors



**Table 4** Summary of the confirmatory factor analysis result of perceived value

Factors	Items	Standardised factor loading	
		Quito	Cuenca
Monetary and non-monetary costs	Physical effort invested in the trip was reasonable	0.656***	0.918***
	The time cost of planning the trip was reasonable	0.604***	0.732***
	Prices for transportation within the destination	0.703***	0.903***
	The cost associated with the full payment was reasonable	0.859***	0.824***
	Entrance fees to cultural sites were reasonable	0.717***	0.777***
Staff service quality	Generally, the employees of the tourist sites visited make an effort to understand my needs	0.953***	0.846***
	Generally, the employees of the tourist sites visited listen to me, and we understand each other	0.967***	0.763***
	Generally, the food service provided was at the right time	0.799***	0.784***
Destination attractiveness	There are interesting cultural places in Quito/Cuenca (museums, exhibitions, art galleries, etc.)	0.779***	0.949***
	Quito/ Cuenca has urban attractions	0.748***	0.891***
	The historic centre of Quito/Cuenca is an interesting place to visit	0.696***	0.827***
	Quito/Cuenca has natural attractions	0.650***	0.914***
Tourist offer accessibility	Accessibility to cultural tourist sites	0.887***	0.630***
	The accessibility of restaurants, cafes and bars	0.831***	0.974***
	The accessibility of shopping centres	0.700***	0.889***
Information accessibility	The availability of tourist information	0.940***	0.921***
	Accessibility to tourist information	0.998***	0.997***

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$   
Source: Created by authors

statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) in the different destinations (i.e. Quito and Cuenca), as seen in Tables 5 and 6.

The fit indices evaluate the model's adequacy. Accordingly, the model fit shows that the measurement model is within the acceptable level for the city of Quito: ( $\chi^2 = 344.234$ ,  $df = 209$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.647$ , TLI = 0.932, CFI = 0.944,  $p$ -value = 0.021, SRMR = 0.061, RMSEA = 0.066).

**Table 5** Summary of the confirmatory factor analysis results of satisfaction

Factor	Items	Standardised factor loading	
		Quito	Cuenca
Satisfaction	I am satisfied with my visit to Quito/Cuenca, considering the time and effort dedicated	0.979***	0.919***
	My expectations of Quito/ Cuenca have been fulfilled	0.846***	0.908***
	Overall, I am satisfied with my visit to Quito/Cuenca	0.851***	0.925***

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$   
Source: Created by authors

**Table 6** Summary of the confirmatory factor analysis results of loyalty

Factor	Items	Standardised factor loading	
		Quito	Cuenca
Loyalty	I will recommend the tourist destination to family and friends	0.890***	0.965***
	I would return to the same tourist destination in the future	0.891***	0.928***
	I will say positive things about Quito/Cuenca to my acquaintances	0.853***	0.958***

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$   
Source: Created by authors



Similarly, the model fit for Cuenca is within the acceptable level ( $\chi^2 = 369.285$ ,  $df = 210$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.758$ ,  $TLI = 0.951$ ,  $CFI = 0.959$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.017$ ,  $SRMR = 0.045$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.064$ ). Furthermore, CFA results demonstrated good convergent and discriminant validity.

Second, the composite reliability for Quito ranges from 0.811 to 0.969 and for Cuenca from 0.840 to 0.965, along with their coefficients of Cronbach's alpha, surpassing the critical value of 0.7 and representing adequate estimations for both WHS, as seen in Tables 7 and 8. Third, the average variance extracted (AVE) of all the constructs for Quito ranges between 0.512 and 0.939, and for Cuenca, between 0.637 and 0.921. Both values are above the recommended value of 0.5. Finally, all the coefficients of the construct's square root of the AVE were higher than their intercorrelation coefficients in both WHS. Hence, the measurement models for both heritage sites are consistent and significant in evaluating the structural association among the constructs.

### Structural equation model

The SEM is conducted with a maximum likelihood estimation method to test the causal relationship between perceived value factors, SAT and LOY. The structural model results indicate an acceptable level of the model fit for Quito and Cuenca, as seen in Table 9.

Regarding the second objective of this study, the results showed some differences in behaviour between tourists with disabilities depending on the destination (Table 10). Accordingly, the factors of perceived value generating a positive impact on SAT tended to

**Table 7** Discriminant validity results for the disability measurement model of Quito

Quito	MNC	SSQ	DA	TOA	IA	SAT	LOY
MNC	0.715						
SSQ	0.624***	0.909					
DA	0.166†	0.054	0.720				
TOA	0.274**	0.298***	-0.029	0.809			
IA	0.036	0.222**	0.054	0.209*	0.969		
SAT	0.452***	0.439***	0.126	0.316***	0.168*	0.896	
LOY	0.431***	0.433***	0.159†	0.383***	0.200*	0.693***	0.878
$\alpha$	0.851	0.929	0.803	0.826	0.968	0.920	0.907
CR	0.838	0.934	0.811	0.850	0.969	0.924	0.910
AVE	0.512	0.827	0.518	0.655	0.939	0.802	0.772

Notes: CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha coefficient; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; † $p < 0.100$

Source: Created by authors

**Table 8** Discriminant validity results for the disability measurement model of Cuenca

Cuenca	MNC	DA	TOA	SSQ	IA	SAT	LOY
MNC	0.834						
DA	0.244***	0.897					
TOA	0.037	0.102	0.842				
SSQ	0.439***	0.376***	0.081	0.798			
IA	0.115	0.276***	0.173*	0.248**	0.960		
SAT	0.279***	0.359***	0.149*	0.321***	0.642***	0.917	
LOY	0.203**	0.289***	0.351***	0.242**	0.570***	0.774***	0.950
$\alpha$	0.915	0.942	0.858	0.839	0.957	0.940	0.965
CR	0.919	0.942	0.876	0.840	0.959	0.941	0.965
AVE	0.695	0.804	0.710	0.637	0.921	0.841	0.903

Notes: CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted;  $\alpha$  stand for Cronbach's alpha coefficient; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Source: Created by authors

**Table 9** Comparison of model fit measures for tourists with disabilities from Quito and Cuenca subsamples

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	p-value
Quito	344.234	209	1.647	0.944	0.932	0.061	0.066	0.021
Cuenca	369.285	210	1.758	0.959	0.951	0.045	0.064	0.017

Source: Created by authors

**Table 10** Comparison of model fit measures for tourist with disabilities from Quito and Cuenca

		Quito (HX. 1)	Cuenca (HX.2)
$H_1$	MNC → SAT	Supported	Supported
$H_2$	SSQ → SAT	Supported	Not supported
$H_3$	DA → SAT	Not supported	Supported
$H_4$	TOA → SAT	Supported	Not supported
$H_5$	IA → SAT	Not supported	Supported
$H_6$	SAT → LOY	Supported	Supported
$H_7$	MNC → LOY	Not supported	Not supported
$H_8$	SSQ → LOY	Not supported	Not supported
$H_9$	DA → LOY	Not supported	Not supported
$H_{10}$	TOA → LOY	Supported	Supported
$H_{11}$	IA → LOY	Not supported	Not supported

Source: Created by authors

be different in Quito than in Cuenca, except for the MNC factor, which is the only factor that has a positive and significant impact on the SAT of PwD in both heritage destinations. On the one hand, the WHS of Quito has TOA and SSQ as the significant factors contributing to SAT. On the other hand, the WHS of Cuenca has IA and DA as the significant influencing factors on SAT. Nevertheless, no differences were found when evaluating the perceived value factors influencing LOY. Both groups asserted that TOA was the only significant factor of perceived value that determines LOY. Additionally, SAT has a positive and significant impact on LOY in both destinations.

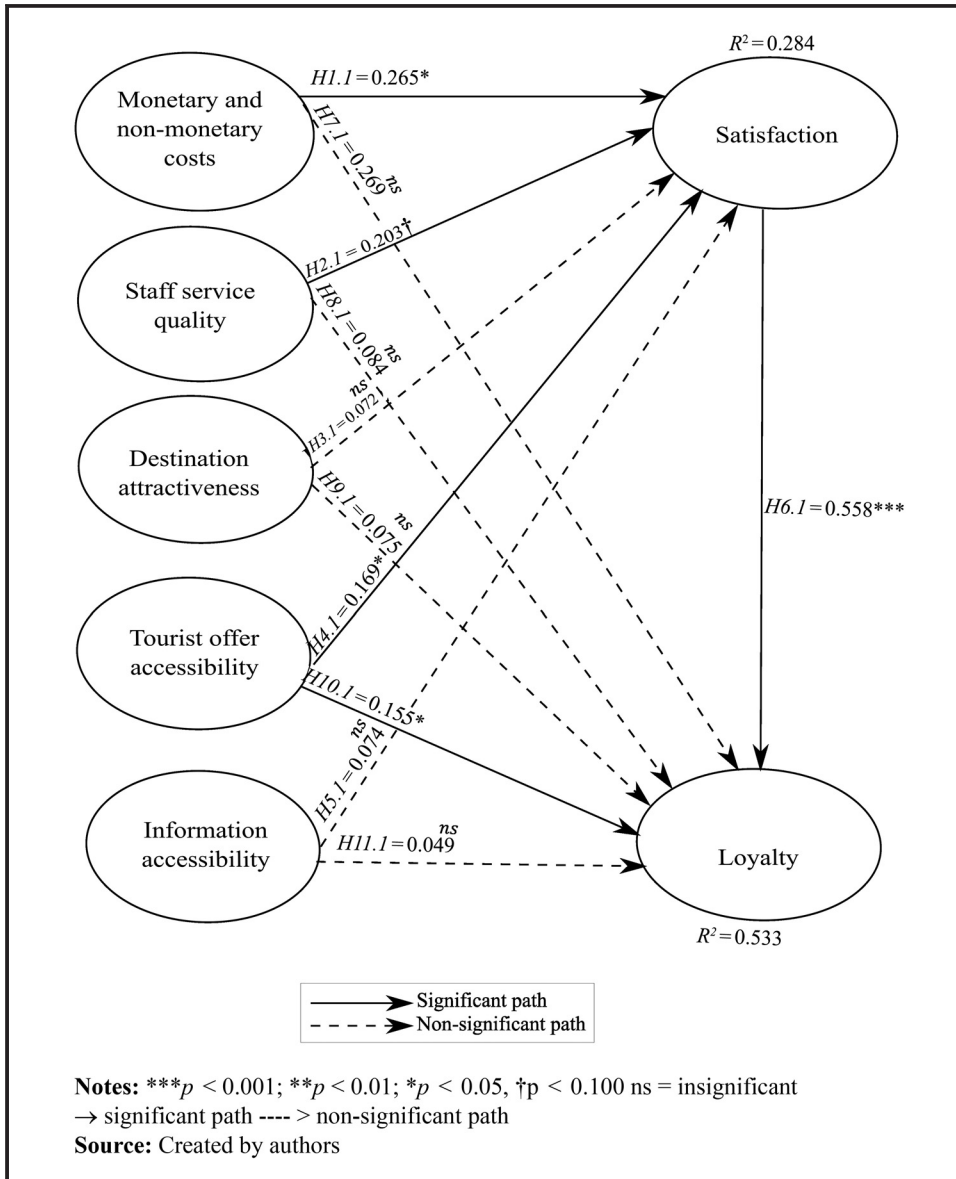
Figures 2 and 3 summarise the results of hypothesis testing in terms of intensity. Results show that MNC was the most salient predictor of SAT for PwD in Quito; contrary to Cuenca, the most contributing factor of SAT was IA. The analysis also shows that TOA is the only significant predictor of LOY for PwD in both destinations.

## Conclusions and implications

This study's first aim concerns the factors that constitute the perceived value of PwD in heritage sites. Findings suggested a five-dimensional structural framework of perceived value, including these factors: monetary and non-monetary costs, SSQ, DA, TOA and IA. These results are similar to those of Valverde-Roda *et al.* (2022), Pandža Bajcs (2015) and Gallarza and Gil Saura (2006).

In general, when testing the relationships in the models, results show which factors of perceived value influence SAT and LOY of PwD. The results coincide with previous research on the following precedents of SAT and LOY: monetary and non-monetary costs (Burnett and Baker, 2001; Eid, 2015; El-Adly, 2019); tourist offer accessibility (Buhalis and Darcy, 2011; Gassiot-Melian *et al.*, 2016); SSQ (Chang and Chen, 2012; Eid, 2015; El-Adly, 2019; Zhang and Cole, 2016); IA (Buhalis and Darcy, 2011; Eichhorn *et al.*, 2008); and DA (Nguyen Viet *et al.*, 2020). In addition, in general, a positive and significant effect of SAT on LOY is found. This result is in line with previous studies that showed that PwD are loyal to

**Figure 2** Results of the structural model for tourists with disabilities from Quito

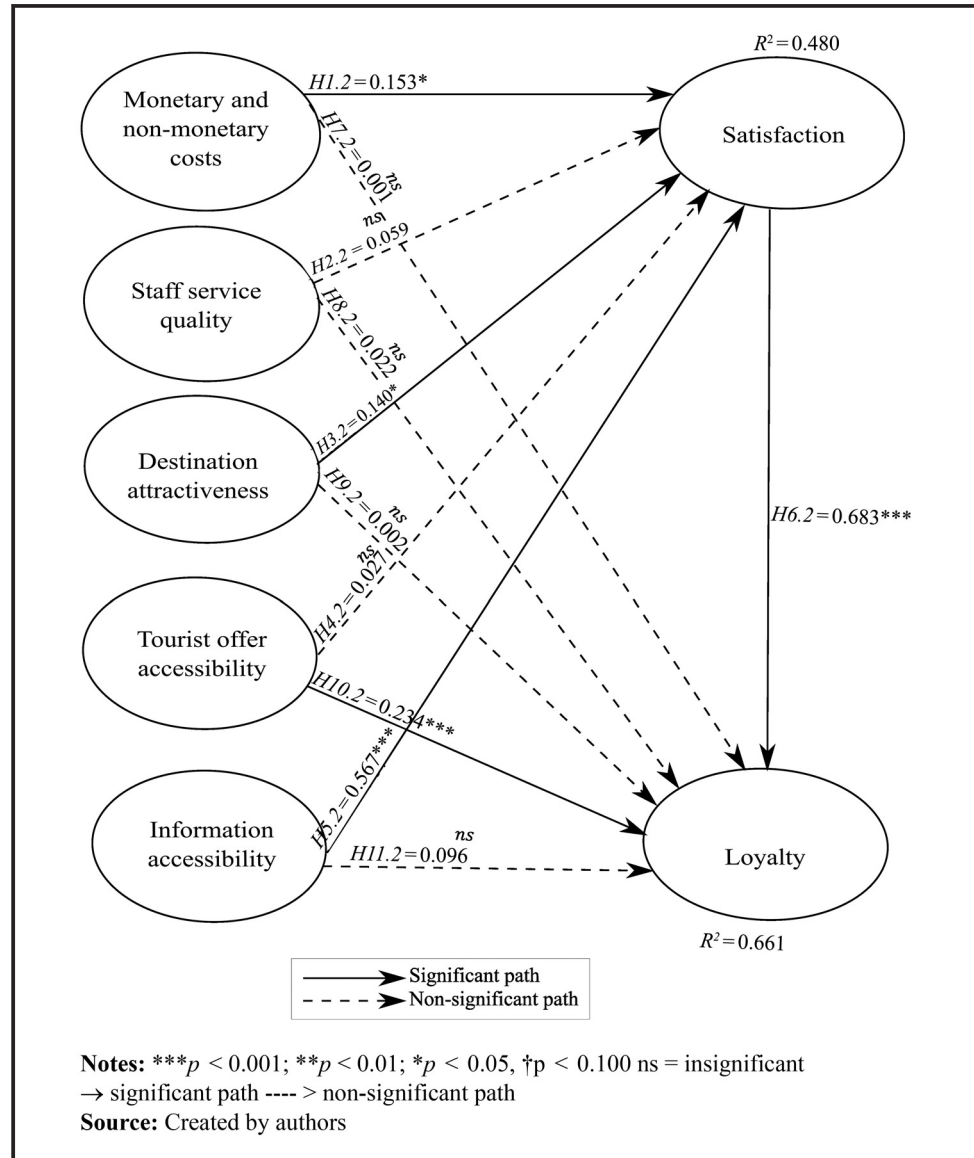


tourist offerings when they are satisfied with the service and products received (Bowtell, 2015; Burnett and Baker, 2001; Domínguez Vila *et al.*, 2019; Humagain and Singleton, 2021).

Despite these coincidences with previous research, when testing this study's second aim, which is about examining the differences in behaviour of PwD in different WHS in Ecuador (i.e. Quito and Cuenca), some differences are found.

First, findings showed that the perceived value factors that impact SAT differed between the two destinations, except for the factor of monetary and non-monetary costs. In Quito, this perceived value is based on tourist offer accessibility and service quality, while in Cuenca, it is based on IA and DA. This means that Quito and Cuenca may satisfy different types of tourists with varying preferences and expectations. On the one hand, in Quito, SSQ and TOA exert a positive impact on SAT of PwD visiting the city. This corroborates that accessibility must go beyond physical infrastructure evaluation and improvement (Michopoulou and Buhalis, 2013) and that accessible tourism experience development must be ensured

**Figure 3** Results of the structural model for tourists with disabilities from Cuenca



(Darcy *et al.*, 2020). In Quito, where recent policies and strategies may have been focused on physical infrastructure improvement and accessibility and staff training as well, they are now seeing PwD visiting the city and perceiving other benefits in their experiences that go beyond that, such as accessible information provision and attractiveness at this WHS. On the other hand, in Cuenca, DA and IA exert a direct influence on SAT among PwD. This corroborates that content integration, personalisation and accessible online information are basic to ensuring dignified tourism experiences (Michopoulou and Buhalis, 2013). It also coincides with the fact that DA is important, but only when visitors' special needs are accommodated can the extension and diversification of accessible facilities and services be addressed (Lee and King, 2019). In Cuenca, this may be because they are still focusing on information provision and DA. However, because these are still not significant to predict their SAT among PwD, they need to focus on the provision of accessible products and services and on staff training in the future.

Second, predecessors of LOY in the two WHS were similar. On the one hand, TOA is the only item of perceived value with direct and significant effect on LOY, and, on the other hand, SAT positively influences LOY in both WHS. This result coincides with past research (Ambrose *et al.*, 2012; Navarro *et al.*, 2014), which found that offering accessible experiences increases PwD LOY. In this context, it seems that the characteristics and differences between destinations do not change the importance of ensuring a good and accessible tourist offer when predicting their positive future intentions. So, as stated in other studies (Gassiot-Melian *et al.*, 2016), PwD express positive behavioural intentions once their needs are met and they are satisfied.

### *Theoretical contributions*

Among the theoretical contributions, this study is the first attempt to evaluate the perceived value of tourists with disabilities at cultural heritage destinations, where the disability market often has less of an experience than tourists without disabilities. Thus, this research extends the tourism literature by incorporating five validated factors of the perceived value of tourists with disabilities in heritage destinations: monetary and non-monetary costs, SSQ, DA, TOA and IA. Also, this study contributes to the literature by identifying that the monetary and non-monetary and IA factors contribute most to creating SAT for tourists with disabilities in cultural heritage destinations. Thus, this study provides evidence that effective price policies, the reduction of time and effort in acquiring the tourist offering, and the quantity and quality of accessible information are the more prominent factors for consumers with disabilities when evaluating the tourism experiences in cultural heritage destinations. Also, this study contributes to the extant literature by identifying the TOA factor in creating LOY among tourists with disabilities in cultural heritage sites. In other words, the fact that tourists with disabilities perceive good accessibility is crucial for them to make recommendations, say positive things and return to the destination. Furthermore, prior research has advocated for assessing the behaviour of tourists with disabilities in various destinations, including their perceptions, SAT and LOY, while considering the potential variations that may emerge (Gassiot-Melian *et al.*, 2016). This study aimed to fill this research gap by examining the differences in behaviour between two specific destinations and providing evidence to support the existence of these variations.

### *Practical implications*

As for practical implications, this study's main contribution to companies is that it shows which factors of perceived value led to SAT for tourists with disabilities in Quito (monetary and non-monetary costs, SSQ and TOA) and in Cuenca (MNC, DA and IA). This information is helpful for tourism companies of Quito to improve their pricing policies and reduce time and effort for tourists with disabilities, as well as for disability organisations and national entities with tourist companies to provide customer service training to receive PwD. This information is also of interest to Quito's private and public tourism companies that want to implement accessibility in their tourism offerings. In coordination with the municipality of Quito, the national tourism authority should also periodically monitor the accessibility of tourist offerings, transportation and services to make tourism accessible and cultural destinations more inclusive. For example, it could be done through periodical internal or external audits and the subsequent analysis of PwD perceptions of the implemented changes. This close monitoring is important to quickly respond to changes in the market, both related to supply and demand needs and preferences.

Tourism companies in Cuenca should create pricing strategies and reduce the time and effort spent acquiring tourist offerings to appeal to tourists with disabilities. The destination management organisation of Cuenca should also promote a variety of cultural, urban, natural and historical attractions to ensure that tourists with disabilities have a satisfying visit. Furthermore, tourism companies should provide accessible tourist offerings (e.g. visits

to churches and museums) through their websites by mentioning what types of disabilities are accommodated by their tourist services and announcing whether the places they promote are accessible. In that way, tourists with disabilities can organise their trips better. Furthermore, the national tourism authority should keep providing information through its “virtual accessible tourism guide” webpage. Policymakers and DMOs should also consider web accessibility for tourists with disabilities, as this is a heterogeneous group with different types of disabilities. In this sense, they need to both consider the accessible tourism services and products offered and the accessible format of the information provided. Finally, the tourism companies of Quito and Cuenca should make their tourist offerings accessible and, for example, adapt the physical environment for people with special access needs (e.g. ramps, hand railings, etc.). This is crucial to creating LOY in the disability market at cultural heritage sites.

The findings of this study propose that TOA is the factor that contributes most to LOY. Therefore, incorporating accessibility measures in a heritage destination is a means of effectively honouring and safeguarding the fundamental rights of PwD to participate in cultural life. Recognising the rights of PwD is one of the most important goals for modern society. Accessible tourist offerings facilitate the social integration of PwD into the broader community, encouraging interaction, understanding and acceptance among people of different abilities and promoting a more inclusive society.

Furthermore, accessible tourist offerings cater not only to PwD but also to a broader range of people who will enjoy universal access to these destinations, such as families with young children, pregnant women, people with temporary mobility disabilities, etc., leaving no one behind.

### ***Limitations and future research***

This study is not without its limitations. A convenience sample was used in the data collection because of the ease of access to the data during the pandemic of COVID-19. Additionally, as this study was conducted in the low season, our findings were limited to that season. Future researchers can perform a similar analysis during the high season and compare the behaviour of tourists with disabilities during the low and high seasons in a heritage destination. In addition, perceived value has been measured by considering factors linked to the generic definition of costs and benefits. However, other dimensions or items that may be specific or different for PwD and, consequently, capture the essence of this group (e.g. social or emotional perceived value) should be considered in further studies.

This study has focused on two WHS of Ecuador (Quito and Cuenca); further studies can focus on other WHS to understand their variations in perception of values and their influence on SAT and behavioural intentions among tourists with disabilities. In addition, future research should focus on the individualities and needs of PwD according to type/degree of disability, etc. Finally, further inquiry into group differences between tourists with and without disabilities will be necessary to better understand if the perceived value factors affect tourists' behaviour, depending on whether they have a disability or not.

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### About the authors

Jessenia Moreno-Manzo is a PhD student at the Faculty of Tourism, University of Girona, Spain. Her research interests focus on tourism behaviour at heritage destinations. She has published in related fields such as social sciences and art and humanities. She is also a reviewer of international journals. Jessenia Moreno-Manzo is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: [u1943860@campus.udg.edu](mailto:u1943860@campus.udg.edu)

Dr Lluís Coromina is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Tourism, University of Girona. He completed his PhD in 2006. His research is associated with cross-cultural comparison,

quantitative research methodology and tourism behaviour. He also publishes in related fields such as sociology or political science. He is a reviewer of international journals, and his publications appear in *Tourism Management* and *Current Issues in Tourism*, among others.

Dra. Ariadna Gassiot-Melian is a part-time Professor of Tourism and Marketing at the Department of Business Administration, Management and Product Design, University of Girona, and at the Business Department, EU Mediterrani, Barcelona. She completed her PhD in 2016, and her research is related to accessible tourism, consumer behaviour, cruise tourism and text mining.

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