

HEURISTICS AND EMOTIONS IN TOURIST DESTINATION SELECTION: A REVIEW AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

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Abstract: *The rational choice assumption dominates most research on the decision-making process in the tourism field. As human beings, tourists have limited cognitive abilities, limited time, and a large amount of information, resulting in irrational decisions and cognitive biases. Tourism research in tourist decision-making concerning cognitive biases is still in its initial phase. This study aims to investigate state-of-the-art research regarding the role of heuristics in tourist destination selection to explore its research opportunities, focusing on destination image and emotions. Destination image is an alternative heuristic indication for selecting a destination, which can be based on emotions as specific feelings. This study applied a systematic literature review using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol to select the reviewed literature. The review involved seventeen documents, covering journal articles and a conference paper from the Scopus and Web of Science databases. Investigation using a structured review framework of theory, context, and methods in this study revealed that most researchers use several relevant theories related to behavioural economics and psychology discipline to conduct empirical research in the context of a general destination. Furthermore, this study discusses the advantages and dark side of exploiting emotions in selecting a destination and provides future research directions.*

Keywords: cognitive bias; destination image; mindless emotion; tourist decision.

JEL classification: D91, M31, Z32

1. Introduction

As consumers act to satisfy their needs and wants, tourists also behave in ways that optimise their satisfaction and encourage others to visit. However, tourism is a different sector to consumer products. To enjoy and experience the service directly, tourists must visit tourist destinations. Accordingly, because of limited resources, tourists must be able to make correct decisions in the pre-, during, and post-visitation phases. Decision-making is also critical in consumer or tourist behaviour, predominantly supported by rational decision-making assumptions (Cohen, Prayag and Moital, 2014).

The assumption that tourist decision-making is a cognitive process, with a complete decision-making process occurring before the ultimate purchase, has been widely established in the study of tourist decision-making for many years (McCabe, Li and Chen, 2016). However, as human beings, tourists have limited cognitive ability, time constraints,

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and an information overload, which leads to an irrational and biased decision, recognised as a cognitive bias (Mayer, Santos and Marques, 2020; Cong, 2021; Wang, Feng and Wang, 2022). In their study, Wattanacharoensil and La-ornual (2019) identified the type of cognitive biases that occur in the pre-, during, and post-tourism visit phases, as illustrated in Figure 1. The authors posit that the pre-visit decision-making process is rife with cognitive biases, influencing the selection of a destination, the evaluation of tourism products, and the choice of a product. They considered heuristics to be one of the four most prevalent biases. The others are social bias and stereotypes, framing effect, and cognitive dissonance.

Moreover, research in the tourism field and tourists' decision-making processes concerning cognitive biases is still in its preliminary stages (Li et al., 2022). Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the state-of-the-art research concerning the role of heuristics and emotions in tourist destination selection. Seven questions serve as the research's guiding principles.

- RQ 1. Does selecting a destination by applying mindless emotion to its image receive greater attention from researchers today?
- RQ 2. What are the general characteristics of the existing articles?
- RQ 3. What theories are often used to learn about the role of heuristics and emotions in destination selection?
- RQ 4. In what context has the relevant research been conducted, and what methodology has been employed?
- RQ 5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of considering heuristics and emotions in tourism research, particularly in destination marketing and branding research, and why do we need to pay more attention to this area of enquiry?
- RQ 6. To what extent do affective factors outweigh cognitive and conative considerations when selecting a destination?
- RQ 7. In what ways might this review contribute to the development of the research field and guide future studies?

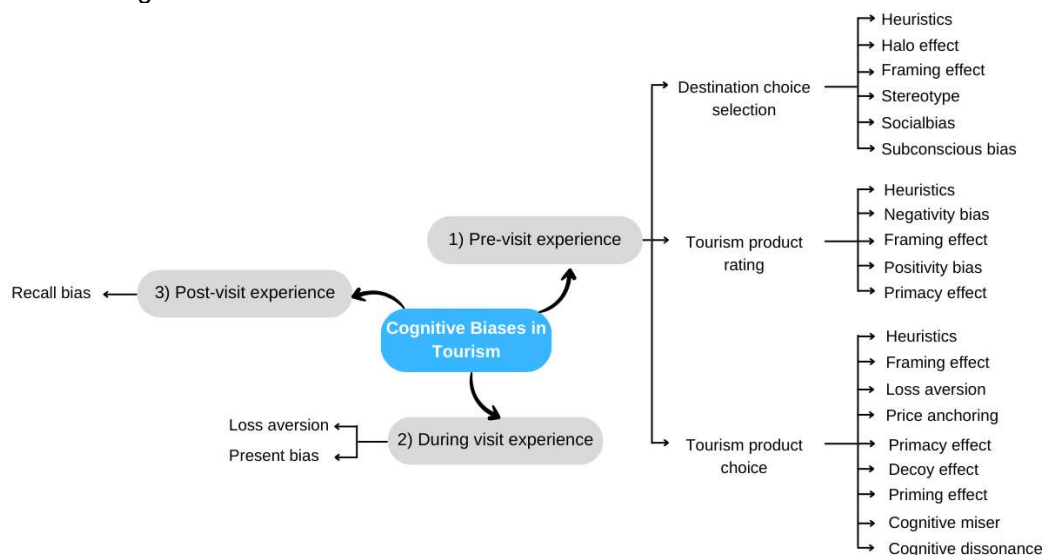


Figure 1: Type of cognitive bias found in pre-, during, and post-visit experience
Source: Modified from Wattanacharoensil and La-ornual (2019)

Based on the above explanation, the structure of this study will consist of five parts. The first part is the introduction, which provides the study's background and contribution. The second part presents the theoretical background, which discusses several related concepts, e.g., feelings and emotions, heuristics, and destination image. Next, the third section will be the

research method. After that, section four will discuss the findings and answer the research questions (RQ 1-7). Last, section five will provide conclusions.

2. Theoretical background

This study develops a framework of thinking to understand the role of heuristics sourced from emotions in selecting a destination, as portrayed in Figure 2. In the figure, emotions are a proxy of feelings or affect. In the tourism context, destination image can be used as a proxy of heuristics (Castelltort and Mäder, 2010). The next part will further explain the related concept.

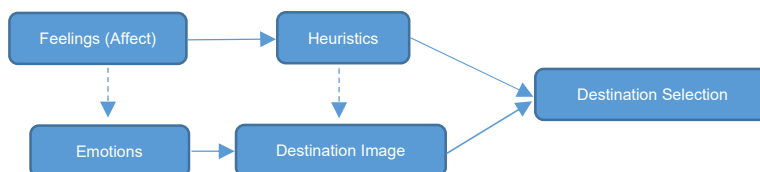


Figure 2: Framework of thinking

Source: Own elaboration

2.1 Feelings as a source of information

Feelings and their variety, such as moods, emotions, and affect, are eminent sources of information for tourist decision-making (King and Slovic, 2014). In their study, King and Slovic (2014) discussed the concept of moods as blurred feelings, emotions as specific feelings (Mothersbaugh, Hawkins and Kleiser, 2020) and affect as a subjective state of feelings (like and dislike). Affect can also refer to a certain quality of goodness or badness (Slovic et al., 2007). Related to tourism and destination marketing/branding research, this study focuses more on emotions.

Emotions are critical in studying tourism consumer behaviour to understand the decision process (Cohen, Prayag and Moital, 2014; Gomez-Diaz, 2019). Positive emotions play a significant role in tourism decision-making (Gnoth, 1997; Goossens, 2000). Gnoth (1997) suggested a motivation and expectation development model in which emotional and cognitive characteristics are essential when assessing tourism reasons for choosing a destination. According to Goossens (2000), emotions are critical in vacation decision behaviour because they are positive feelings related to the expected leisure experience. Both studies empirically indicate the importance of studying emotions to understand individual motives for selecting tourism destinations.

2.2 Heuristic

Heuristics is a “mental shortcut” often used to simplify decisions (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974; Mothersbaugh, Hawkins and Kleiser, 2020). This concept is valuable and applicable, especially when people lack the resources or time to make better decisions. Based on the concept of affect heuristics, feelings are used for generating judgments and decisions because feelings are instant and automatic; people tend to base their decisions and judgments on their feelings and emotions instead of using reasoned analysis (Slovic et al., 2007).

The application of affect heuristics in tourism research is still very limited. The search in the Scopus database using the keyword of *tourism AND “affect heuristics”* only found two articles, entitled: *Why pay more for sustainable services? The case of ecotourism* (Kazemini, Hultman and Mostaghel, 2016) and *Understanding local policy elites’ perceptions on the benefits and risks associated with high-voltage power line installations in the State of Arkansas* (Moyer and Song, 2016). The former discussed affect heuristics in the

context of ecotourism interest, while the latter discussed affect heuristics as a perception of benefits and risks of high-voltage power line installations to the tourism-based local economy in influenced regions. Accordingly, this study focuses on reviewing tourism research that discussed selecting a destination through emotions-based heuristics as a cognitive bias in decision-making. In tourism, the primary variable frequently considered as a heuristic signal before tourists make a final selection is destination image (Wattanacharoensil and La-oruual, 2019).

2.3 Destination image

Destination image has been widely researched in tourism concerning its critical concept for the decision-making process, which was introduced in the early 1970s. Various disciplines including psychology (Fridgen, 1987), marketing (Assael, 1995), and consumer behaviour (Herzog, 1963) highlight the complex and multidimensional nature of destination image. Scholars generally agree that destination image comprises cognitive and affective components (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). The cognitive dimension encompasses knowledge, perceptions, and beliefs about a destination (Gensch, 1978), forming the basis for comparison and evaluation (Blackwell, Engel, and Miniard, 2006). The affective dimension involves emotional responses, such as favourability or excitement, which are influenced by cognition (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). Some researchers argue for their separation in order to better understand tourists' evaluations (Russel and Snodgrass, 1987). Empirical evidence confirms that affective image exerts a more significant influence on overall destination image than cognitive image (Kim, 2003). Furthermore, Zhang's (2014) meta-analysis reveals that affective image significantly enhances tourist loyalty. The destination image is also linked to behavioural intentions, or the conative component, which reflects the likelihood of visiting a destination (Gartner, 1994; Pike and Ryan, 2004). Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) propose a holistic approach, integrating functional and psychological traits.

Further, Gartner (1994) explained the cognitive component of image as the entire set of an object's beliefs and attitudes, the affective component of image as motives for selecting a destination, which affects an assessment, and the conative as the action component. Additionally, Agapito, Oom do Valle and da Costa Mendes (2013) empirically tested Gartner's image formation process and found that the mediated role of the affective component has made the influence of cognitive on the conative component higher. Typically, destination image influences tourist choice, implying that destinations with very positive images are more likely to be selected (Mikalaukas, Strunz and Afifi, 2014). Therefore, the destination image is critical in destination selection through its heuristics part. While modern studies increasingly emphasise the behavioural aspects of destination image, incorporating theories of consumer behaviour and emotions, research on the affective component (emotions) remains limited (Mikalaukas, Strunz and Afifi, 2014; Gomez-Diaz, 2019).

3. Research method

This study carried out a systematic literature review using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol to select the reviewed literature, as depicted in Figure 3.

The PRISMA protocol has been widely applied in business and management research, i.e. by Hollebeek et al. (2023). Based on the PRISMA protocol, this study selected relevant articles in three steps as follows:

1. First was the identification step. This study searched articles in Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases which were published between 1960 and 2022, by applying the keywords of *"destination image" AND emotion AND decision*. In this case, the

destination image was the proxy of heuristics, and emotion was the proxy of feelings and affect. The process was conducted in March 2023. The document search found eleven and 23 relevant documents collected from Scopus (title-abstract-keywords) and WoS (topic), respectively. In the identification step, this study also removed documents considered duplicates, non-English articles, and review articles. This process obtained twenty documents.

2. Second was the screening step. This study manually screened those twenty documents consisting of journal articles and conference papers based on their title, abstracts, and keywords. This process excluded two unrelated content documents.
3. Third was the screening steps. This step provided eighteen documents to be retrieved. Unfortunately, one document was not accessible. Therefore, only seventeen documents were included in step three and ready to be reviewed.

After that, this study answered research questions using a structured theory, context, and method (TCM) framework to answer several questions as implemented in Rosado-Serrano, Paul and Dikova (2018).

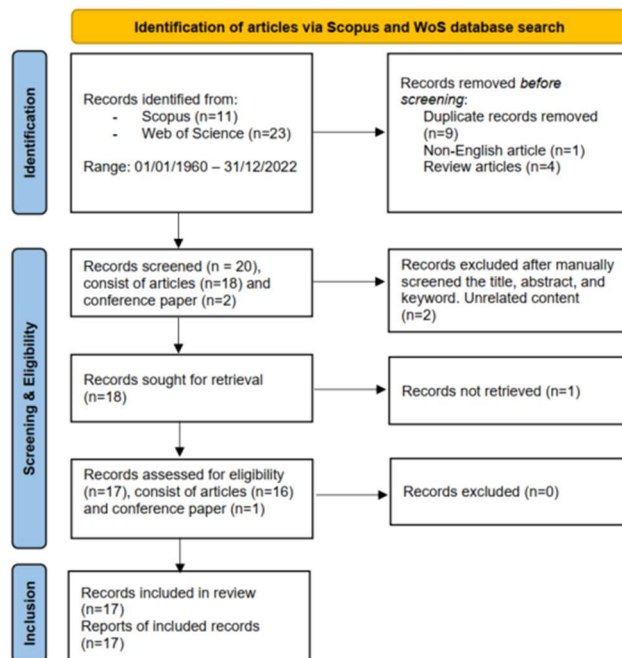


Figure 3: Selection procedure based on Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)

Source: Own elaboration, adapted from Hollebeek et al. (2023)

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Research interest and general characteristics of existing relevant articles

This section answers the first and second research questions. Regarding the first question, whether selecting a destination by applying mindless emotion to its image receives greater attention from researchers today. Figure 4 depicts the rise and fall of the seventeen documents on “using emotion in selecting a destination” from 2014 to 2023. Nevertheless, the figure shows an increasing trend of interest, although the total number of relevant publications was still limited. Of the seventeen relevant documents, the highest number of publications was published in 2022, with four documents.

Additionally, Figure 5 provides a word cloud generator. It shows the interest of researchers in exploring the relevant keywords. The size of each keyword revealed its frequency. The high-frequency keywords were destination, image, emotions, tourism, customer, tourist, risk, behaviour, marketing, perceived, decision-making, and affective. Interestingly, researchers used the keyword of emotions more often than affective.

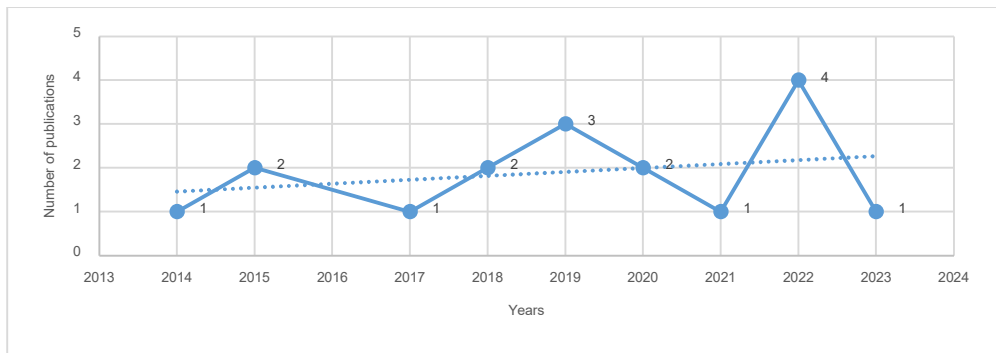


Figure 4: Number of publications

Source: Own elaboration



Figure 5: Word cloud of author keywords

Source: Own elaboration

Meanwhile, regarding the second research question, Table 1 provides the general characteristics of the existing articles. It details the author and year, Google Scholar (GS) citations, title of documents, source title, Scopus rank, aims of the research, and country of study. The order of the documents in the table is based on the GS citations, with the highest citation value of 84 citations and the lowest of 0. Additionally, most documents in Table 1 were published in the Q1 Scopus rank journal.

Further, Table 1 presents the aims of the relevant documents. Several documents aim to investigate one variable/construct's impact on the other (Articles No. 2 and 15). Moreover, some articles aim to clarify or gain an understanding of specific issues (Articles No. 3, 4, 5, and 6). There are also articles which aim to make comparisons (Articles No. 7 and 11). Furthermore, Table 1 portrays the country of study of each article. Most articles studied China, three studied Spain, and one studied Belgium and Japan. Besides, the two articles did not specify the country of study because they were conceptual works.

Table 1: General characteristics of the existing articles

No	Authors, year, & GS citations	Titles	Source title & Scopus rank	Aims	Country of study
1	Rodríguez-Molina, Frías-Jamilena, and Castañeda-García; 2015; 84	The contribution of website design to the generation of tourist destination image: The moderating effect of involvement	Tourism Management (Q1)	to explore how a tourist's view of a destination is shaped by the website's design and how they digest information	Spain
2	Bastiaansen et al.; 2018; 59	My destination in your brain: A novel neuromarketing approach for evaluating the effectiveness of destination marketing	Journal of Destination Marketing and Management (Q1)	to examine how a popular destination marketing film affects tourist destination photo emotions	Belgium and Japan
3	Torres, Milman and Park; 2018; 22	Delighted or outraged? Uncovering key drivers of exceedingly positive and negative theme park guest experiences	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights (Q3)	- to determine what makes customers happy or unhappy - to analyse causes of positive and negative experiences - to develop models for delight and disappointment	North America
4	Jin et al.; 2020; 19	Effects of place attachment and image on revisit intention in an ecotourism destination: Using an extended model of goal-directed behaviour	Sustainability (Q1/Q2)	to discover how tourists choose sustainability	China
5	Zheng et al.; 2017; 18	Exploring sub-dimensions of intrapersonal constraints to visiting dark tourism sites: a comparison of participants and non-participants	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research (Q1)	to examine intrapersonal limits on visiting cemeteries and compare participants to non-participants	China
6	Pelegrín-Borondo et al.; 2015; 14	Dimensions and basic emotions: A complementary approach to the	Journal of Vacation Marketing (Q1)	to examine the basic and dimensional approach of emotions in the tourism industry	Spain

		emotions produced to tourists by the hotel			
7	Iordanova and Stainton; 2019; 9	Cognition, emotion and trust: A comparative analysis of Cambodia's perceived and projected online image	Tourist Studies (Q1)	to compare projected images from destination management organisations and perceived images from UGC (such as travel blogs), consider cognitive and affective aspects and trust in destination image building	Cambodia
8	Quan, Al-Ansi and Han; 2021; 9	Spatial and human crowdedness, time pressure, and Chinese traveller word-of-mouth behaviours for Korean restaurants	International Journal of Hospitality Management (Q1)	to investigate the links between the perceptions of crowdedness (Human, Spatial), emotions, customer satisfaction, and word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions when visiting a bustling eatery in Korea.	Korea
9	Stojanovic, Andreu and Curras-Perez; 2022; 5	Social media communication and destination brand equity	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology (Q1)	to examine the impact of social media communications on each destination's brand equity components, as produced by both users (UGC) and tourist destinations (DGC).	Spain
10	Zhang, Cai and Qiu; 2019; 3	The Chinese Cohort 60s and Japan: A journey of emotions	Tourist Studies (Q1)	to find out how the country's collective memory has impacted the Chinese Cohort 60's feelings and perceptions of Japan and how this has affected their travel choices regarding Japan.	China
11	Sónmez and Tasci; 2020; 3	Characteristics and behaviours of anti-gun and pro-gun travellers	Tourism Review (Q1)	to compare anti- and pro-gun opinions with Florida's permissive gun laws and high tourism	Florida, USA

12	Javed, Tučková and Jibril; 2022; 3	Towards understanding tourist revisit of zoo attraction: Evidence from the Czech Republic	Cogent Social Sciences (Q2)	to determine what factors influence tourists' desire to return to the famous zoo	Czech Republic
13	Campo and Alvarez; 2022; 3	Animosity based on traditional enmity versus other causes	Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics (Q2)	to see if traditional and other enmity affect tourism destination product perception and decisions differently	China
14	Mikalauskas, Strunz and Afifi; 2014; 2	Relationship between sport events and destination image: Some theoretical approaches	Transformations in Business and Economics (Q2/Q3)	to identify the main theories linking sports and tourism	Not specified
15	Gomez-Diaz; 2019; 0	The influence of emotions and country stereotypes on destination image and word of mouth	Proceedings of the International Conference on Tourism Research	to determine how basic emotions and country stereotypes affect destination image	Not specified
16	Zhang; 2022; 0	Model Construction of the Influence of Tourist Destination Image on Tourists' Word-of-Mouth Communication Based on Cognitive and Emotional Environment	Journal of Environmental and Public Health (Q2)	to develop a model of tourism awareness and word-of-mouth communication based on cognition and emotion to study how tourist destination image affects such communication	China
17	Luo et al.; 2023; 0	Exploring destination image through online reviews: an augmented mining model using latent Dirichlet allocation combined with probabilistic hesitant fuzzy algorithm	Kybernetes (Q2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to understand travellers and how they view scenic sites to provide recommendations based on their needs - to help scenic area managers make decisions to improve their sites through optimisation. - to dynamically understand scenic area management and operating difficulties 	China

* GS stands for Google Scholar

Source: Own elaboration

4.1 Theoretical underpinnings

Based on Table 2, this section answers the third question by identifying theoretical underpinnings to further study the role of heuristics and emotions in selecting a destination. This study discovered that each research used various theoretical frameworks. The earliest research used the Theory of Destination Involvement. In contrast, the latest research used the Theory of Sentiment Tendency Analysis. However, the three documents (in Table 1) did not mention any theoretical framework. They only used their interpretations of the terms and ideas in other theories, i.e., Articles No. 2, 12, and 13.

Table 2: Theories used

Theories	Article number and authors
Destination involvement	14 (Mikalauskas, Strunz and Afifi, 2014)
The componential theory of emotion	6 (Pelegrín-Borondo et al., 2015)
Social judgment theory	1 (Rodríguez-Molina, Frías-Jamilena, and Castañeda-García, 2015)
Leisure constraints theory	5 (Zheng et al., 2017)
Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT)	3 (Torres, Milman and Park, 2018)
Grounded theory	10 (Zhang, Cai and Qiu, 2019)
Sociolinguistic theoretical perspectives of the tourism language	7 (Iordanova and Stainton, 2019)
Stereotype content model & Appraisal Tendency Framework (ATF)	15 (Gomez-Diaz, 2019)
Model of goal-directed behaviour	4 (Jin et al., 2020)
The cultural theory of risk	11 (Sönmez and Tasci, 2020)
Attribution theory	8 (Quan, Al-Ansi and Han, 2021)
Cognitive theory of emotion	16 (Zhang, 2022)
Schema theory from cognitive psychology	9 (Stojanovic, Andreu and Curras-Perez, 2022)
Theory of sentiment tendency analysis	17 (Luo et al., 2023)

Source: Own elaboration

4.2 Contexts and methods used

Regarding research question No.4 on the context and methods of the relevant research, this section presents the context in which the relevant research has been done, as depicted in Table 3. Most articles (18 percent or three) conducted research in the context of general destination. Additionally, two articles focused on the context of scenic spot research. Moreover, some articles focused on tourism marketing concepts, i.e., destination marketing, destination websites, social media, and generational cohorts. Meanwhile, the rest of the documents researched other specific destinations.

Table 3: Contexts

Contexts	Article count	%	Article number and authors
Destination	3	18	2 (Bastiaansen et al., 2018); 13 (Campo and Alvarez, 2022); 15 (Gomez-Diaz, 2019)
Scenic spot	2	12	16 (S. Zhang, 2022); 17 (Luo et al., 2023)
Destination marketing	1	6	7 (Iordanova and Stainton, 2019)
Destination website	1	6	1 (Rodríguez-Molina, Frías-Jamilena, and Castañeda-García, 2015)
Social media and tourist destination	1	6	9 (Stojanovic, Andreu and Curras-Perez, 2022)

Generational cohort	1	6	10 (Zhang, Cai and Qiu, 2019)
Dark tourism sites	1	6	5 (Zheng et al., 2017)
Ecotourism destination	1	6	4 (Jin et al., 2020)
Hotel	1	6	6 (Pelegrín-Borondo et al., 2015)
Restaurant	1	6	8 (Quan, Al-Ansi and Han, 2021)
State destination	1	6	11 (Sönmez and Tasci, 2020)
Sports tourism/Events	1	6	14 (Mikalauskas, Strunz and Afifi, 2014)
Theme Park	1	6	3 (Torres, Milman and Park, 2018)
Zoological garden	1	6	12 (Javed, Tučková and Jibril, 2022)
Total	17	100	

Source: Own elaboration

Meanwhile, this section identifies the methods used in research, which consider the use of mindless emotion in selecting a destination, as depicted in Table 4. Of the seventeen articles in Table 4, around 41 percent or seven articles used empirical methods in their research. This status implies that the empirical method was still popular in relevant research. However, relatively rare or new methods were also used in the context of tourism, such as experimental design, neuromarketing experiments, and sentiment analysis. A neuromarketing experiment is a research method for observing people's reactions to travel images after viewing marketing materials (Bastiaansen et al., 2018), while sentiment analysis can help the researcher obtain emotional information through the mining and analysis of the emotional content expressed in the text, sentence, or word level (Luo et al., 2023).

Table 4: Used methods

Methods	Article count	%	Article number and authors
Empirical	7	41	13 (Campo and Alvarez, 2022); 12 (Javed, Tučková and Jibril, 2022); 4 (Jin et al., 2020); 6 (Pelegrín-Borondo et al., 2015); 8 (Quan, Al-Ansi and Han, 2021); 11 (Sönmez and Tasci, 2020); 9 (Stojanovic, Andreu and Curras-Perez, 2022)
Content analysis	2	12	7 (Iordanova and Stainton, 2019); 3 (Torres, Milman and Park, 2018)
Experimental design	2	12	1 (Rodríguez-Molina, Frías-Jamilena, and Castañeda-García, 2015); 16 (Zhang, 2022)
A neuromarketing experiment	1	6	2 (Bastiaansen et al., 2018)
Exploratory analysis	1	6	5 (Zheng et al., 2017)
Interview	1	6	10 (Zhang, Cai and Qiu, 2019)
Literature review	1	6	15 (Gomez-Diaz, 2019)
Sentiment analysis	1	6	17 (Luo et al., 2023)
Theoretical analysis	1	6	14 (Mikalauskas, Strunz and Afifi, 2014)
Total	17	100	

Source: Own elaboration

4.3 The advantages and dark side of emotions and heuristics

This section discusses research questions No.5 and 6: Why do academicians and researchers need to pay more attention to heuristics and emotions in tourism research, particularly in destination marketing/branding research, based on their advantages and

drawbacks? Is the affective component more important than the cognitive and conative part in selecting a destination?

The review of research findings of relevant documents revealed that emotions and heuristics play significant roles in selecting destinations, which implies their advantages. First, emotion is a strong predictor of tourist behaviour. In their study, Stojanovic, Andreu and Curras-Perez (2018) found that both user-generated content (UGC) and destination-generated content (DGC) influence tourist behaviour positively. Therefore, researchers can suggest that to boost destination brand equity and future behaviour, Destination Management Organizations must create extremely relatable material that elicits emotion and inspires travellers to share their experiences.

Second, the affective destination image contributed to a more decisive influence than the traditional one (cognitive destination image). For example, affective destination image in the form of amateur travel blogs created more influence on consumer decision-making than the material presented by tourist websites because travel bloggers usually share their experiences and position as the same audience as travellers (Iordanova and Stainton, 2019). Therefore, researchers can suggest that destination marketers cooperate with travel bloggers.

Third, emotions could be used to establish tourist segments. For example, three types of emotional stimuli can affect purchasers, as Pelegrín-Borondo et al. (2015) revealed: emotions caused by the purchased product, emotions caused by various components of the assessment process, and emotions caused by variables unconnected to buying itself. These different types of emotions can help hospitality managers design appropriate strategies for different tourist segments defined by their emotions.

On the contrary, some research implies the drawback of applying heuristics that are based on emotion in tourist decision-making. First, emotions are dynamic and complex. The findings of Zhang, Cai and Qiu (2019) revealed that emotional reactions appeared at different degrees based on diverging reasons, influenced by memory, and changed over time. Therefore, to consider tourist emotions as a critical factor for tourist decision-making, marketing research should be conducted regularly to define an appropriate strategy because tourist decision-making based on emotion will occasionally differ. Nevertheless, emotional branding and marketing, which identifies consumers' unique emotional demands, applies companies' emotional marketing strategies, and weaves the main line of "emotion" throughout the marketing process, might be one solution (Zhang et al., 2022). Second, decision-making based on feelings (affect, mood, and emotions), such as heuristics, can lead to cognitive biases. Additionally, affect can be manipulated, particularly in business (Slovic et al., 2007). Therefore, to protect consumers and ensure efficient resource usage by producers, public and non-profit organisations might adopt policies based on common biases, as exemplified in the case of food safety (James, Segovia and Giwa-Daramola, 2023).

Meanwhile, whether the affective component is more important than the cognitive and conative part in selecting a destination can be discussed from the perspective of dual system theory (Kahneman, 2013). Due to bias, emotions may not accurately reflect genuine decision-making. Again, people have two distinct systems: System 1 (relatively unconscious thinking process) and System 2 (analytical thinking process). System 1 operates with the assistance of System 2. Thus, there must be a balance between the two. Moreover, businesses should conduct ethics in exploiting customers' emotions, and people might consider the concept of smart economic decision-making introduced by Altman (2017).

Further, the findings of this study can inform the development of marketing strategies and business decisions within the tourism industry, assisting businesses in comprehending and capitalising on cognitive biases and emotional responses in their marketing activities.

4.4 Future research directions

Despite the limited sources of the relevant keywords, this review might fill in the gaps in the research field and serve as a direction for further study, which answers the last research question. This study gathers research progress and knowledge to better understand the tourist decision-making process. Several future research directions can be derived from the reviewed article. For example, some research could be expanded by cross-cultural analyses that allow for comparing the perceptions of tourists from different nations, giving the model more validity (Stojanovic, Andreu and Curras-Perez, 2022). The current research on destination image could also be expanded and related to research on destination brands. The branding extension approach could be a feasible strategy to strengthen the image (Mikalauskas, Strunz and Afifi, 2014), for example, by investigating the ability of a brand to evoke positive feelings.

Moreover, understanding cognitive and emotional biases can help design better tourism management and marketing strategies. Tourists often rely on heuristics to simplify complex decisions, leading to bounded rationality. Future research could delve deeper into specific biases like anchoring, mental accounting, and projection bias and their effects on tourism decisions (Mayer, Santos and Marques, 2020; Li et al., 2022). Social media-induced tourism behaviours and the associated cognitive biases, such as the bandwagon effect, also require further exploration (Siegel, Tussyadiah and Scarles, 2023; Oan-Oon and Choibamroong, 2025). Further, while cognitive biases stem from mental shortcuts and can lead to irrational choices, emotional biases are driven by feelings and can also significantly shape tourists' preferences and behaviours in pre-, during-, and post-visit experiences. For instance, 1) emotions in social media communication significantly impact travellers' intentions to visit and their word-of-mouth behaviour (Schoner-Schatz, Hofmann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2021); 2) emotions elicited by negative events during travel, such as flight delays, can lead to different emotional responses and subsequent actions, impacting tourists' behavioural intentions (Jiang, Huang and Scott, 2020); and 3) post-visit exposure to positive or negative stimuli can significantly influence destination loyalty (Godovykh and Tasci, 2021). Future research is needed to understand the complex and dynamic nature of emotions in tourism, including the integration of technology, social media and sustainability issues.

Additionally, this study proposes future research directions concerning context, methods, and empirical research ideas. Concerning the context, future research might be conducted in other specific contexts such as heritage destinations, smart destinations, sustainable tourism, or mountainous destinations. Moreover, regarding the methods, research using a multi-method approach has not appeared in relevant research, whereas this method can provide a more rigorous result. Further, due to minimal research on the affect heuristics in tourism, interesting empirical research can be designed for future research, such as the judgement of risk and benefit in visiting a destination in the post-pandemic era.

5. Conclusions

This study compiles research findings and information in the field of tourism research to better comprehend the tourist decision-making process in selecting a destination by applying heuristics using emotion. The increasing trend of reviewed documents also shows the growing interest in the discussed topic, which is supported by the visualisation of keywords on the word cloud generator. The framework of the review reveals underpinning theories, context, and methods. Various theories are used, such as the theory of sentiment tendency analysis and the theory of destination involvement related to marketing and psychology. Moreover, most research is conducted in the context of general destinations. Furthermore, the empirical research method has become popular in the reviewed articles. Despite the limitation of the chosen database, this study also provides recommendations for future research.

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Bio-note

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