

The influence of Web Summit attendees' age and length of stay on leisure activity preferences and city image

The influence
of Web Summit
on bleisure

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Abstract

Purpose – Web Summit is an annual technological event which takes place annually in November and has great worldwide impact. The event fits into the MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) typology and has mega-event proportions, not only due to the number of participants but also in relation to its media coverage. The aim of this study is to analyse the participation of Web Summit participants in leisure activities outside the event, namely regarding entertainment and culture and heritage. It was also intended to know their perception of the city's brand image, according to the participants' age and the number of days they stay in the city.

Design/methodology/approach – This investigation is anchored in a quantitative methodology. Data were collected during the four days of the event from a convenience sample of 410 participants. For this purpose, a 15-item questionnaire was used, specifically designed to meet the study's objectives, assessing three dimensions: entertainment, culture and heritage and brand image.

Findings – Entertainment and culture and heritage positively influence tourists' perception of brand image. It was also possible to ascertain that the age of the tourists and their interest in culture and heritage are correlated. Finally, it was found that tourists' perception of entertainment varies depending on the number of days they stay in Lisbon.

Research limitations/implications – The main limitation of the study is related to the fact that a convenience sample was used in a single destination, which does not allow generalization to other contexts. Therefore, it would be interesting to apply the study in other geographical and cultural contexts, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, where the event will also take place next year (2023). This research contributes to extending the reflection on the role that events play in the brand image of a tourist destination. This study also highlights the importance of understanding consumer behaviour in MICE typology events.

Practical implications – The MICE sector plays an important role in the tourism industry as it constitutes a driving force of the global economy. Thus, it is considered that this research draws attention to the importance of the regions invested in this sector (e.g. expansion of facilities, ease of access to the site). Thus, in practical terms, the findings allow the authorities and the different stakeholders to better understand the impact of the event on the city's image and, at the same time, adapt the services according to the attendees' preferences.



Social implications – Considering the results, the study may have an impact on the organization of tours and events related to local culture and heritage, particularly in old quarters, where there is a greater lack of resources and the standard of living of the inhabitants is more precarious.

Originality/value – This research contributes to extending the reflection on the role that mega-events play in the brand image of a tourist destination. This study also highlights the importance of understanding the behaviour of consumers of different ages in events of the MICE typology, in leisure activities outside the event.

Keywords Web summit, MICE, Leisure, Brand image, Entertainment, Culture and heritage

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Events such as meetings, conferences, conventions and summits are relevant drivers of demand for hospitality, tourism and leisure in the regions and cities where they are held (Müller, 2015). The benefits to destinations resulting from holding relevant international events are widely documented in the literature and can be categorized into direct and indirect benefits (Bowdin *et al.*, 2012; Davidson, 2003). The economic benefits result directly from the promotion of tourism, lodging establishments, restaurants and associated services, which can include various forms of entertainment and cultural activities such as visits to museums, art galleries or artistic events that coincide with the event (Al Hallaq *et al.*, 2021; Draper *et al.*, 2018). In this context, the city's image ends up benefiting from all the accumulated positive experiences that go beyond the event (Davidson, 2003; Zenker, 2011). On the other hand, the association of the event's organization with the city is a co-branding process, which results in mutual association gains (Getz *et al.*, 2012).

Regarding business tourism or MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions), it has been found that cultural and entertainment activities are highly valued, with higher spending levels than the average tourist (Economist, 2019; Expedia, 2018). The link between attendance at MICE events and activities in the destination fits into the concept of bleisure, which defines the combination of leisure and business and has been occupying an important place in the tourism literature (Chung *et al.*, 2020). While fulfilling their job responsibilities, they can participate in many entertainment activities and get to know different cultures that provide memorable experiences which a positive effect on the intention to visit the destination again (Ünal and Özgürel, 2021).

In Portugal, events play an important role in terms of development of the economy and have been included in the National Strategic Tourism Plan (PENT) and more recently, have also been highlighted in the priority lines of action of the strategic axes for the operationalization of the Tourism Strategy 2027 (Turismo de Portugal, 2017). As regards the holding of events, in 2019 Portugal rose to tenth place in the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) ranking with 342 international events held and Lisbon reached second position in the city category in the same organization's ranking, having hosted 190 international events (ICCA, 2022).

Web Summit is an annual technology conference, presently held in Lisbon, Portugal since 2016 and has been described as one of the most important tech events in the world. It is Europe's largest technology conference and has been noted for its aggressive marketing (Amorim *et al.*, 2018). Web Summit lasts four days, is held in November and "brings together the people and companies redefining the global tech industry" (Cosgrave, 2018). The event is strategically held in November, a low seasonal time for the city of Lisbon, with lower occupancy and lower prices which means that during the days before and before the event, hotel occupancy rates rise exponentially, as does revenue per available room (Bento *et al.*, 2021). The Portuguese government decided to support Web Summit coming to Portugal and it will continue to do so by investing 11 million Euros per year until 2028 (Amorim *et al.*, 2018).

The conference's topics centre on Internet technology, emerging technologies and venture capitalism. The conference had over 40.000 attendees in its 2022 edition, below the pre-Covid

numbers (around 70.000 attendees), due to limitations imposed by the Portuguese health authority (Web Summit, 2022).

Regarding leisure activities during the Web Summit, the organization promotes extra-event activities such as the night summit, with the aim of exploring the city and its typical neighbourhoods, with cultural and gastronomic activities (Web Summit, 2022). Each of the three nights has a different theme, with a different location. These actions are carried out by the organization of the event, partnering with the city council and local traders. In addition, attendees are free to explore the city on their own, before, during and after the event, they may even extend their stay (Lichy and McLeay, 2018).

The relation between the role of leisure activities (namely, exploring local culture and heritage) in leveraging the brand image, during mega-events, in an urban context is not yet fully explored in literature. To date, there are no studies that attribute a relation between these activities and the positive reinforcement of the destination image. Hence, this study intends to analyse attendees' perception about leisure activities during the Web Summit and its influence on the image of Lisbon, the host city. It was also sought to understand whether age and length of stay are correlated with the participants' perception of the cultural, historical and leisure activities that the city offers.

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Literature review

Events typologies

Events as organized acts have accompanied the history of humanity in different civilizations and cultures and play an important social role (Raj *et al.*, 2017). Today, events are part of our daily lives, possibly more so than in the past. Events are planned to take place at a given time and each one is unique, due to its specificities, but also because of the interaction between the scenario, the place and the people who participate in it (Getz, 2008).

There is no consensus on the definition of event typologies in the literature; thus, we may find different classifications of events, due to their multiple functions and objectives (Bowdin *et al.*, 2012; Getz, 2009). Broadly speaking, there seems to be consensus among scholars on these typologies: (1) sporting events; (2) religious events; (3) corporate events; (4) business events; (5) cultural events; (6) musical events; (7) political events; (8) entertainment events; and (9) gastronomic events (Getz and Page, 2016; Raj *et al.*, 2017).

Over the last decades, there has been an increase in mega-events, supported by governments and local authorities as a way of leveraging economies and positioning the image of destinations (Draper *et al.*, 2018). These mega-events with global social media coverage have catapulted the events industry to centre stage, contributing to the mainstream contemporary lifestyle (Getz and Page, 2016).

MICE and mega-events

The designation MICE was introduced in 2006 in accordance with a decision carried out by the ICCA, Meeting Professionals International (MPI), Reeds Travel Exhibitions and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2006) to standardize different concepts and create a stronger image of the industry (Marques and Santos, 2016). Although there is some ambiguity in the definition of mega-events, some MICE events may be included in this category because of their dimension, like expos, conventions, or summits (Müller, 2015). MICE mega-events usually take place in an urban environment, with accommodation capacity for a huge number of attendees, better transportation networks, support services and other necessary facilities (Al Hallaq *et al.*, 2021).

MICE mega-events can bring several primary and secondary benefits to the host city or country (Bowdin *et al.*, 2012). Among the primary benefits: (a) leverage for the local economy; (b) more private investment; and (c) infrastructure improvement (Draper *et al.*, 2018), with

secondary benefits including: (a) awareness of the local culture; (b) aesthetics and improvement of the city/place image; (c) improving the living conditions of the population; and (d) increased local pride (Al Hallaq *et al.*, 2021; Ferrari and Guala, 2017). On the other hand, MICE participants have some characteristics that differentiate them from other travellers, namely: (a) high average expenditure; (b) little seasonal variation; (c) high degree of demand; and (d) demand for personalized services and unique experiences (Rojas Bueno *et al.*, 2020). Hence, the profile of people attending MICE events forces destinations to be more competitive and to improve the quality of their services and products (Hashemi *et al.*, 2020).

MICE events and bleisure

Bleisure, a portmanteau of “business and leisure” combines these two activities in a single trip (Chung *et al.*, 2020). Bleisure travellers are those who do not abstain from leisure activities when they have the need to travel on business or participate in MICE events (Pinho and Marques, 2021). This type of travellers has freedom to manage their time better and participate in relaxing activities, ranging from things they have never experienced before to things they usually do, rather than being conditioned to office work (Walia *et al.*, 2021).

Travellers included in the bleisure designation, often extend, or anticipate their stay beyond the time of the event, to take more advantage of what the destination has to offer and thus enjoy the trip more (Chung *et al.*, 2020). A survey conducted by Expedia, in 2018, found that about 60.0% of business travel in the United States was converted to bleisure. It also found that this trend is consistent with four other countries: the UK, Germany, India and China. A sample of about 2,500 individuals from these five countries confirmed that there is a tendency to extend their stay on bleisure trips - an average of 2.9 leisure days in addition to 3.9 business days. Furthermore, bleisure tourists tend to spend more than the average tourist and participate in a greater number of activities outside the scope of the event (Economist, 2019). According to Ünal and Özgürel (2021) this scenario may be due to the fact that the travel expenses (e.g. food, accommodation) are paid by the company where the person works, which leaves them some financial leeway to be able to visit more cultural attractions and enjoy additional recreational activities.

Aspects related to participants’ companions (e.g. friends, spouses, or family members) who travel or join the event attendee later should also be considered (Davidson, 2019). Attendees’ companions also tend to participate in activities at the destination, which increases the economic impact for the destination (An *et al.*, 2021). Hence, event planners often organize a programme of activities related not only to the event, but also to the culture, history, gastronomy and the destination landscape (Yoo *et al.*, 2016). In terms of marketing, bleisure destinations should promote the length of stay of visitors and attractions suited to the profile of the visitors to promote the economy as well as the image of the destination (Lichy and McLeay, 2018). In this regard Chung *et al.* (2020) report that recreational activities can be added to business travel in the following ways: (a) participants extending their business trip before or after the business event for leisure; (b) companions attending an official program for spouse or family or spending free time at a destination alone; (c) participants engaging in a social and tourism program as part of the event; (d) participants returning with their families for vacation after the event they attended.

Destination image and bleisure

Cities have long been seen as brands, with the aim of boosting their image and thus obtaining economic benefits (Zenker, 2011). Place image results from the complex construction of cognitive, affective and behavioural components, often associated with visual symbols which represent the place (Ferrari and Guala, 2017). Hence, positioning the city as a brand must be done through the exploration of the identity of the city and its attributes: the aesthetic, architectural, cultural, heritage and entertainment aspects it provides to visitors (De Carlo *et al.*, 2009).

Business and MICE tourism can contribute to promoting the image of the destination through holding relevant events (Davidson, 2003). Mega-events with great media impact work positively in terms of shaping the city image in two ways: (a) promoting the place as an international high-profile city; and (b) as an incentive to visit the place (Dwyer *et al.*, 2000; Wang and Jin, 2019). Naturally, the more prestigious the event, the greater the positive effects for the city (Deng *et al.*, 2015). Hosting an event is an exercise of co-branding, where promoters join efforts with the destination to promote themselves and obtain mutual gains (Wang and Jin, 2019). Events of international renown are, therefore, a factor in promoting and developing tourism for destinations and host cities (Getz, 2008).

The image perceived by the participants is a key element in understanding how the event is seen by the public and what aspects should be improved for the next editions or when planning similar events (Deng *et al.*, 2015). The perceived image of the host city is not limited to the event itself, but to the set of experiences accumulated during their stay, which includes entertainment, culture and heritage (Richards, 2018).

Development of assumptions

Entertainment and length of stay. Entertainment activities and tourism are inextricably linked, whatever the reason for the visit and is one of the realms of Pine and Gilmore's model of economic experience commonly adapted to tourism (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Regarding business tourism and MICE, entrepreneurs, executives and event attendees enjoy leisure activities in their free time outside the event (Chung *et al.*, 2020). The importance of entertainment for leisure participants during their visit is clear, especially when the visit is extended, as presented in recent studies (Economist, 2019; Expedia, 2018). Entertainment experiences such as exploring local culture and historical sites are very valuable for leisure travellers (Pinho and Marques, 2021). In fact, there seems to be a positive relation between length of stay and participation in leisure and entertainment activities. Visitors with longer stays tend to enjoy more of the destination's entertainment activities (Feitosa and Silva, 2022). On the other hand, novelty affects, in a positive way, the entertainment activities. That is, first time visitors, when compared to repeaters tend to have a different perception of entertainment because they have never experienced leisure and entertainment activities in the destination before (Aguiló *et al.*, 2017). Viuda and Vargas (2021) add that most MICE event attendees generally convert business travel into bleisure travel by staying two or three nights additionally in the event's host city. Entertainment activities and local cuisine constitute two of the main factors influencing the decision to extend the stay. The longer they stay in the city, the more they can enjoy leisure and recreational programs that go beyond their business events. Then, given the above, the first hypothesis of this study is outlined:

- H1. Tourists' perception of entertainment varies depending on the number of days they stay in Portugal.

Entertainment and city image. Urban centres are the main targets for business tourism not only because of the conditions of infrastructures, but also due to the entertainment offer and multi-attractions, which work as a differentiating factor regarding the destination image (Park *et al.*, 2019). This reality is very present in the organization of MICE events in cities with an eminently entertainment profile such as Las Vegas or Macau (McCartney, 2014). The dynamic nature of the hospitality industry, in which the event and the hotel and casino sectors are interdependent, ends up benefiting everyone involved, which translates into not only economic gains for the destination but also in terms of image (Wong *et al.*, 2019). Following this reasoning, the creation of unique entertainment experiences by event organizers can be a determining factor for participants to decide to travel and well as for extending their stay (Chung *et al.*, 2020). Hence it can be concluded that the attractiveness of entertainment activities in the destination is an important decision factor for MICE attendees

and helps to leverage the city image (Pinho and Marques, 2021). Therefore, the main task of destination managers will be to try to link the needs of tourists to the megatrends emerging in the market based on three clusters: (1) conservative cluster that focuses on historical and cultural attractions; (2) fun-seeker cluster that values entertainment (e.g. nightclubs, music shows, movies, shopping, amusement parks, beaches); and (3) variety-seeker cluster that combines work with the pleasure of enjoying the tourist destination. These factors assume a critical role in binding tourists to the city, which will influence their image of it (Atsız *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the following hypothesis is presented:

H2. Entertainment has a positive impact on tourists' perception of the city's brand image.

Culture, heritage and the city's image. Culture, heritage and tourism have always been inextricably linked to the tourist experience, regardless of the type of tourist and the travel motivations (Buonincontri *et al.*, 2017). In a more restricted sense, tourist attractions of cultural, architectural and heritage interest, as well as cultural events, are in themselves a reason to travel and the act of travelling generates culture (Richards, 2018). From a broader perspective applied to tourists in general, local culture and heritage are the emblem of positive emotional connections that are established between the visitor and the place (Woosnam *et al.*, 2018). As far as European countries are concerned, this reality is supported by the patrimonial evidence of monuments, museums, guardians of the timeless history of the art of humanity and cultural events that galvanize the most famous touristic cities (Richards, 2016). Regarding bleisure travellers, it is reasonable to state that they contribute to the economic growth of income related to cultural activities, considering their fascination with museums, art galleries and relevant architectural landmarks in the destination (Chung *et al.*, 2020).

Exploring historical places and attending cultural events are determining factors that affect MICE travellers' decision to extend their stay for more days (Economist, 2019; Expedia, 2018). According to the categorization of McKercher and Du Cros (2003), business and MICE tourists can be considered either casual (superficially involved with the culture in the destination) or incidental (with active participation in cultural activities). This seems to reinforce the idea that bleisure tourists seek out local culture activities, even if this is not the reason for the visit (Chung *et al.*, 2020). More related to the authenticity factor, the study conducted by Perry *et al.* (2020) highlights the importance of integrative experiences that combine tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage. Although participants spend most of their time at the conferences/congresses, the brand image of the city is a decisive factor when choosing the event in which to participate (Pavlukovic and Cimbalevic, 2020). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Culture and heritage positively influence tourists' perception of brand image.

Attendees age and attractiveness of culture and heritage. The profile of tourists decisively influences their behaviour at the destination, regardless of the type of tourism (Lichy and McLeay, 2018). In the specific case of business and MICE events, the needs of visitors vary according to the event (Wang and Jin, 2019). Thus, it is necessary to evaluate the segments and sub-segments of practitioners in each event, to align efforts to develop an adequate value chain (Chung *et al.*, 2020). That is, understanding the profile of bleisure tourists in each context is crucial to adapting services directly and indirectly related to the event (Lichy and McLeay, 2018). For example, in a study carried out by The Economist (2019), it was found that activities such as exploring cultural and historical places and visiting museums and art galleries are activities which are much appreciated by European and Asian tourists, while Americans in the same segment prefer to visit bars and nightclubs. In addition to the cultural differences of the participants, in the analysis of studies related to MICE and bleisure, other sociodemographic factors and the participants must be analysed in detail due to their influence on the experience (Wang and Jin, 2019).

Thus, it is important to understand why different generations are attracted so that their needs and expectations are met (Vujić *et al.*, 2020). According to Tomić *et al.* (2019) tourism industry segments are often based on demographic criteria, in particular age, as it is found that members of Generation X (born between 1960 and 1979) enjoy adventure travel and entertainment. Members of Generation Y (born between 1980 and 2000), on the other hand, are strongly influenced by the culture of the city and their perception of brand image when choosing a tourist destination. Viuda and Vargas (2021) adds that among the various socio-demographic characteristics, only age has a significant relationship with the choice of tourist destination, with 7.7% of the trips made by Millennials combining work and leisure. The age of the attendees turns out to be decisive in the perception of the experience that results from the visit and, consequently, the perceived image of the destination where the event takes place (Mair, 2010). In this context, the age of the participants plays a prominent role in the most eclectic events such as Web Summit, which attracts the interest of several generations with different consumption habits (Pinho and Marques, 2021). Thus, the following hypothesis is presented:

H4. The age of tourists and interest in culture and heritage are correlated.

Method

Profile of web summit

Web Summit is one of the largest technology conferences in the world and is currently considered the largest technology, entrepreneurship and innovation event in Europe, founded in 2009 by Paddy Cosgrave, David Kelly and Daire Hickey. The event had its first edition in 2011 in Dublin, with only 400 participants from the Irish tech community, far from the approximately 70.000 participants that it attracts today (Web Summit, 2022).

The summit was kept in Dublin until 2015, when it was announced that it would move to Lisbon in the 2016 edition, due to the need to increase the dimension of the event and to the capacity for response that Lisbon could provide compared to Dublin. In November 2018, Paddy Cosgrave officially announced that the event would remain in Portugal until 2028 (Cosgrave, 2018). Web Summit intends to create connections between various sectors connected in some way by technology, from health (HealthConf), to surf (SurfSummit), environment (Planet:tech), sports (SportsTrade) and music (MusicNotes), among many others (Web Summit, 2022). Hence, Web Summit may be considered a mega-event, due to its ability to affect several sectors of the economy (tourism, hospitality, culture and entertainment) as well as its great attractiveness, prestige and international media coverage (Getz, 2009; Müller, 2015).

Participants

A total of 410 attendees aged between 18 and 67 years old ($M = 31.58$; $SD = 9.84$) participated in the study, 55.4% of whom were male. It was also found that the majority of participants (32.0%) are from Europe (e.g. Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, Ukraine). The percentage of Portuguese attendees was 6.8%. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (82.9%) have academic qualifications equal to or higher than a bachelor's degree. It was possible to ascertain that 14.9% of the attendees travelled alone and that 78.0% of the respondents were accompanied by people who also participated in the Web Summit. Also, 92.9% of the people who participated in the Web Summit were students, teachers and/or professionals in the area of technologies. The remaining 7.1% of companions were family members or friends, who came just to get to know the city. Regarding the duration of stay, 21.2% of the participants stayed in Portugal only for the four days of the event and 33.2% extended their stay to five or more days after attending the event. Only 1.1% of the participants had already participated in the event in Portugal (Table 1).

Table 1.
Sample
sociodemographic
characteristics
(n = 410)

Sociodemographic characteristics	Number of respondentes (%)
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	227 (55.4)
Female	183 (44.6)
<i>Age</i> (years; M = 31.58; SD = 9.84)	
<25	140 (34.1)
26–35	146 (35.6)
>36	124 (30.2)
<i>Education</i>	
High school graduate	70 (17.1)
Bachelor's degree	186 (45.4)
Master's degree	140 (34.1)
PhD degree	14 (3.4)
<i>Nationality</i>	
Europe	131 (32.0)
America	103 (25.1)
Africa	91 (22.2)
Asia	85 (20.7)
<i>Length of stay in Lisbon</i>	
1 day	64 (15.6)
2 days	48 (11.7)
3 days	75 (18.3)
4 days	87 (21.2)
5 days or more	136 (33.2)
<i>Attendees</i>	
Came alone	61 (14.9)
Came with 1 person	134 (32.7)
Came with 2 people	105 (25.6)
Came with 3 or more people	110 (26.8)
Note(s): M = Mean; SD = Standard-deviation	
Source(s): Author's own creation/work	

It is important to mention that the choice of target audience is related to the fact that they are technology fans, goal-oriented, self-disciplined, ambitious and persevering workers, who think deeply about issues without losing sight of their priorities (Gutova *et al.*, 2020). Despite the profile of the visitors, around a third took advantage of the event to extend their stay in Lisbon and get to know the city better. Thus, the Web Summit significantly contributed to the increase in tourist activity and to the improvement of the economic conditions of the tourism industry in the Lisbon region.

Measure

Data were collected through a questionnaire developed specifically for this purpose. It is a self-administered instrument composed of 15 items, developed from the consulted literature, which assess three dimensions consisting of 15 items that assess three dimensions: (1) entertainment (Park *et al.*, 2019; e.g. *I want to enjoy going to bars/clubs*); (2) culture and heritage (Richards, 2018; e.g. *I want to visit places with history*); and (3) brand image (Rola *et al.*, 2018; e.g. *Lisbon is a city with a good image*). The answers were given using a five-point Likert scale that ranges between “I totally disagree” (1) and “I totally agree” (5) depending on the degree of agreement with each of the statements. The results were calculated as the sum of all

items, so the higher the average value, the more positive the participants' perception of each of the dimensions. The Likert scale was chosen because it was developed to measure 'attitudes' in a scientifically validated way (Cannon and Edmondson, 2005; Likert, 1932). An attitude can be defined as the preferred way of acting/reacting in a given circumstance, based on a relatively stable organization or in beliefs and ideas about a certain object, subject, situation and/or event (e.g. events) acquired through social interactions (McLeod, 2014). The Likert scale consists of a set of statements (items) created for a real situation in which participants are asked to show their level of agreement in relation to that situation, with responses ranging from totally disagree to agree.

In order to characterize the sample under study, data of a sociodemographic nature (e.g. age, sex, educational qualifications, nationality) were also collected.

Procedures

The questionnaires were administered by students attending the Master in Tourism, under the supervision of the authors in person. For this purpose, a convenience sampling process was used. The use of this type of sampling is due to the ease of access to the participants and the fact that they are available to answer the questionnaires (Mweshi and Sakyi, 2020).

Results

Measurement validation

Construct validity was analysed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation, which allowed the internal structure of the instruments to be known, the dimensions associated with them to be identified and the information to be synthesized and grouped according to similarities (Hair *et al.*, 2018). The extraction of components was based on three assumptions: (1) the Kaiser-Guttman criterion, which consists of selecting components with eigenvalues greater than unity; (2) the analysis of the scree plot, which consists of taking as a reference the point from which the curve tends to be parallel to the abscissa axis; (3) and a percentage of explained variance greater than 60.0% (Fullmer and Daniel, 2020). It should be noted that only items that have an item-factor correlation equal to or greater than 0.40 and a difference between correlations greater than 0.20 were selected (Furr, 2021).

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value (0.89) and the significance level ($p < 0.001$) associated with Bartlett's sphericity test [$\chi^2_{(105)} = 2747.29$] showed that the factor matrix consisting of the three extracted components is adequate for the sample under study. It was also possible to ascertain that the percentage of explained variance (60.79%) is quite satisfactory. After reordering the items, it was found that the first component concerns entertainment (items 1 to 7), which with a self-weight of 6.20 explains 23.34% of the total variance. The second component has an eigenvalue of 1.75 and consists of items 8 to 12, which assess culture and heritage and are responsible for explaining 20.33% of variance. Items 13 to 15 measure the brand image and have a lower weight (1.15), explaining 17.07% of total variance (Table 2).

Internal consistency was analysed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which proved to be quite adequate for all variables under study, since according to Fullmer and Daniel (2020) values greater than 0.70 are satisfactory.

In order to test the results obtained in the exploratory analysis and verify that the model under study fits the sample data, an exploratory factor analysis was performed, with values revealing a good adjustment of the model to the sample under study [$\chi^2_{(84)} = 3.63$, $p < 0.01$, CFI = 0.91, GFI = 0.90, RMSR = 0.05, RMSEA = 0.08, LO90 = 0.07, HI90 = 0.09].

Using the method proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), it was ascertained that the questionnaire has adequate convergent and discriminant validity. All average variance extracted (AVE) values were equal to or greater than 0.60 and present values higher than the maximum shared variance (MSV) and the average shared variance (ASV; Table 3). Through the analysis of the composite reliability (CR) it was seen that the inventory has good reliability

Table 2.

Factorial matrix with
varimax rotation

Items	C1	C2	C3
1. I want to go to restaurants run by famous chefs	0.778		
2. I want to take the opportunity to go to the Lisbon Casino.	0.710		
3. I want to enjoy going to bars and/or clubs	0.697		
4. I want to experience Lisbon's nightlife	0.622		
5. I want to taste and/or drink local wines	0.579		
6. I want to tour the city	0.560		
7. I want to visit typical neighbourhoods	0.540		
8. I want to taste the local cuisine		0.779	
9. I want to interact with the local population		0.711	
10. I want to know places with history		0.690	
11. I intend to discover the best views of the city		0.687	
12. I want to visit monuments/museums		0.591	
13. I will recommend my friends to visit the city			0.826
14. Lisbon is a city with a good image			0.800
15. After this visit I became a fan of Lisbon			0.698
Eigenvalue	6.20	1.75	1.15
% explained variance	23.34	20.33	17.07
Cronbach's alpha	0.83	0.80	0.80

Note(s): C1 (Component 1) = Entertainment; C2 (Component 2) = Culture and heritage; C3 (Component 3) = Brand image

Source(s): Author's own creation/work

Table 3.

Composite reliability,
convergent and
discriminant validity

Variables	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Entertainment	0.83	0.85	0.72	0.64
Culture and heritage	0.82	0.65	0.53	0.63
Brand image	0.81	0.77	0.55	0.54

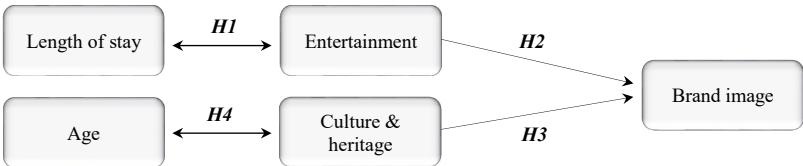
Note(s): CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted; MSV = Maximum shared variance; ASV = Average shared variance

Source(s): Author's own creation/work

and convergent validity, with values greater than 0.70 (Rebello-Pinto *et al.*, 2014). These indexes provide useful evidence to establish construct reliability and validity (Clark and Watson, 2019).

Validation of research hypotheses

After analyzing the psychometric indicators of the measurement instrument, the research hypotheses were validated. In this context, correlation analyses and multiple linear regression analyses were performed. The relationship between the variables under study and the respective research hypotheses are graphically represented in Figure 1.



Source(s): Author's own creation/work

Figure 1.

Conceptual model

To analyse the correlation between length of stay and entertainment, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. The results revealed that the constructs are positively correlated, which suggests that the longer participants stay in the country, the more positive their perception of entertainment is ($r = 0.161, p < 0.001$; Hypothesis 1).

Next, the impact of entertainment and culture and heritage on brand image was analysed and it was found that the linear model is significant [$F_{(2, 407)} = 111.257, p < 0.001$] and that 36.4% of the variation in brand image is explained by the two independent variables included in the model (Table 4). Through data analysis, it could be concluded that the participants' perception of the brand image of the city of Lisbon is positively influenced by entertainment ($\beta = 0.271, t = 5.735, p < 0.001$; Hypothesis 2) and culture and heritage ($\beta = 0.412, t = 8.710, p < 0.001$; Hypothesis 3).

Finally, it was found that age and culture and heritage are negatively correlated ($r = -0.109, p < 0.001$; Hypothesis 4), which suggests that the younger the study participants are, the more interest they have in learning about culture (e.g. museums, monuments) and heritage (e.g. places with history, typical neighbourhoods) in the city of Lisbon.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to analyse the participation of Web Summit attendees in leisure activities outside the event and at the same time, know the perception of the participation on these attendees' perception of the city's brand image. The discussion of the results was carried out following the hypotheses formulated.

Data analysis revealed that tourists' perception of entertainment varies depending on the number of days they stay in Lisbon, which allowed the validation of Hypothesis 1. These results are in line with those found in studies by Lichy and McLeay (2018) according to which bleisure destinations must promote the length of stay for visitors, which is why it is important to offer attractions that are appropriate to the profile of visitors. In this sense, Richards (2018) adds that visitors' perception of the city is not restricted to the event, as it is largely influenced by the set of experiences (e.g. entertainment, culture, heritage) lived during the time they stay at the place. Chung *et al.* (2020) goes further and mention that visitors frequently extend their stay to make the most of what the city has to offer. Currently, the line between business travel and leisure travel is becoming blurred, particularly in terms of the activities in which tourists participate, as it is found that there is a tendency for MICE event attendees to extend their stay so that they can participate in more leisure activities (Atsız *et al.*, 2022). In addition, cultural attributes contribute to increase the intention to visit the destination again (Haigh, 2020).

Hypothesis 2, which postulates that entertainment positively affects the perception of the city brand image by tourists, was also supported by the results obtained. These findings are compatible with the studies developed by Chung *et al.* (2020) and Pavlukovic and Cimbaljevic (2020), according to which leisure activities contribute to improve the perception of the destination brand image. Pinho and Marques (2021) complement this idea and state that entertainment activities considerably influence people's decision when choosing the events in

Predictor variables	Brand image (β)
Entertainment	0.271
Culture and heritage	0.412
Adjusted R^2	0.364
$F_{(2, 407)}$	118.257**

Source(s): Author's own creation/work

Table 4.
Impact of
entertainment and
culture and heritage
on brand image

which they wish to participate. In the same vein, [Lee and Yoon \(2022\)](#) refer that entertainment is one the factors that most contribute to improving the visitors' opinion about the brand image. In addition, events constitute a strategic lever for the development of the country and for attracting a greater number of tourists, because the image of the city that are released together with the event, encourage people to get to know the city/country ([Pedeliento and Kavaratzis, 2019](#)). Hence, the MICE sector plays a significant role in the field of tourism and constitutes a significant driving force of the global economy, being particularly important for regions that invest in this sector of activity ([Crouch and Chiappa, 2020](#)).

It was also found that the attendees' perception of culture and heritage positively influences tourists' perception of the brand image, which is in line with the work of [Huang and Liu \(2018\)](#), who reveal that cultural representations and historic buildings are powerful attractions of the destination, which allowed the validation of [Hypothesis 3](#). Similarly, [Rola et al. \(2018\)](#) state that the cultural and historical aspect of cities has been a preponderant vector for the construction of brand image. Therefore, cultural attractions are strategic tools that contribute to the construction of the tourist offer of destinations and, consequently, to places' cultural, social and economic development ([Pedeliento and Kavaratzis, 2019](#)). In the same sense, [Chen et al. \(2021\)](#) argue that the celebration of these events provides the creation of an image of the destination that can have positive effects on the internal and external image of the place. It is therefore important to identify and build an identity of tourist destinations based on their distinctive cultural and historical resources to ensure the success of the brand. Thus, one of the main objectives of bleisure is to encourage the extension of business tourists' stays, because when they stay longer in the city, they visit more attractions and enjoy more recreational activities, which contributes to a more positive perception of the brand image ([Chung et al., 2020](#)). [Atszy \(2022\)](#) add that there is a significantly positive relationship between length of stay, culture and heritage and tourists' satisfaction with the city image.

Finally, it was found that the younger the participants in the study, the more interest they have in learning about culture and heritage in the city of Lisbon, which enabled the validation of [Hypothesis 4](#). These conclusions are similar to those found by [Dou et al. \(2019\)](#) according to which tourists' age is correlated with their interest in cultural heritage. According to [Vujić et al. \(2020\)](#), although age significantly affects bleisure travelers' choice of tourist destinations, studies that relate these two variables are still rare, especially in the case of urban destinations with multiple attractions. When destinations provide memorable experiences to business event participants, brand recognition tends to increase ([Marques, 2020](#)).

Conclusion

Like companies, cities and countries can and should develop their own brands and become increasingly differentiated and competitive destinations ([Sousa and Ribeiro, 2018](#)). As such, competition between cities to attract large events with the capacity to create an impact has increased in recent years, since events have the ability to attract visitors and serve as a strategy to introduce a new image of the place to tourists, residents and investors ([González-Rosas et al., 2022](#)). The present research is part of this theme and its aim was to examine the participation of Web Summit attendees in leisure activities outside the event and at the same time, the impact of the participation in these activities on perception of the city's brand image.

The extra-event leisure activities are promoted by the organization, on its website, recommending what to do and visit during the event. At the same time, the City Council promotes the event all over the city. In typical neighborhoods such as Bairro Alto or Cais do Sodré, bars and restaurants also promote activities to attract attendees ([Web Summit, 2022](#)).

The results from the statistical analysis revealed that tourists' perception of brand image is positively influenced by entertainment and culture and heritage. A correlation was found

between the age of tourists and interest in culture and heritage, although it is negative, which suggests that the younger the visitors, the greater their interest in knowing about the culture and heritage of the city. Finally, it was possible to ascertain that the number of days that the study participants stay in Lisbon is positively correlated with their perception of entertainment. When tourists include leisure activities in their business trips, they are generally looking for a short vacation experience and by extending their stay at the destination, they will have a more satisfying experience, which will have a positive effect on their intention to visit the destination again (Ünal and Özgürel, 2021).

Theoretical and practical implications

The findings contribute to the current body of knowledge from different perspectives. The contribution of this research is theoretical as it links one of the most technological events in the world with leisure activities of the host city, namely, entertainment and culture, as well as its brand image. According to a study carried out by The Economist (2019), cultural and entertainment activities are highly valued, and it appears that the expenses incurred by tourists who participate in these types of events are significantly higher than those of tourists who only travel for leisure. In methodological terms, the contribution of the study is due to the originality of the conceptual model presented, because to date, no study has approached this scale. Finally, this study also strategically contributes to positioning Lisbon as MICE, for its leisure attributes, because it highlights the importance of understanding consumer behaviour in MICE typology events. The MICE sector plays an important role in the tourism industry as it constitutes a driving force of the global economy. Thus, it is considered that this research draws attention to the importance of the regions invested in this sector (e.g. expansion of facilities, ease of access to the site, a good alignment of services and leisure offer).

Limitations and suggestion for future research

The main limitation of the study is related to the fact that was used in a single destination, which does not allow generalization to other contexts. Therefore, it would be interesting to apply the study in other geographical and cultural contexts, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, where the event will also take place next year (2023). Also, considering the range of nationalities and cultures of the participants, it would be interesting to compare the results according to their place of origin, for example by continent. It would also be interesting to complement the results of the study with a qualitative questionnaire, which would allow us to understand what the attendees relate to the image of Lisbon as a bleisure destination and how the experience during their stay can be improved. It would also be interesting to measure the impact created by the events in the hospitality industry, namely in the restaurant business and in the hotel sector, that is, the extent to which they are a means of increasing the revenue and the occupancy of the hotel units. Finally, it is suggested that tourists' perceptions be measured using an instrument suitable for the purpose.

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