

Article

The Determining Factors of Attractiveness in Urban Tourism: A Study in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima

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Abstract: This research aims to examine the tourist recognition of the different attractions of the four most populous Spanish-speaking cities in Latin America: Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogotá, and Lima, and determine the factors that group these attractions and evaluate their degree of importance. Factor analysis technique was used to reduce the perceptions into relevant factors. The methodology used is quantitative, transversal, and non-experimental. The results indicate that the tourist attraction of a city has four main factors: the nucleus, the tourism ecosystem, Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions/Events (MICE) and shows, and the related services. The research has theoretical implications because it determines that tourists perceive attractions at four levels in these Latin American cities, each of which is made up of tourist attractions different from those mentioned in the literature. The research has practical implications, since officials and those responsible for tourism in Latin American cities can improve their plans by considering the factors of tourist attraction that generate a greater influx of tourists in the cities examined.

Keywords: destination marketing; tourism attractiveness; urban tourism; Latin American marketing; city branding; tourism cities



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1. Introduction

Urban tourism is one of the industries in Latin America that, for several decades before the COVID-19 pandemic, had been attracting domestic and foreign visitors to cities. At the same time, it has brought in investment and development of urban infrastructure that has stimulated the flow of visitors into cities. From this perspective, it is important to understand the factors that determine urban attractiveness in Latin America, based on these cities' particular characteristics. This study seeks to determine what the factors that determine urban attractiveness in Latin America were before the pandemic in order to generate a greater understanding so that decisions can be made in the urban tourism sector in the post-pandemic rebuilding period.

Moreover, since 1980, within the framework of contemporary international tourism, urban spaces and cities have been increasing in importance. From that point on, it has been possible to observe a gradual touristification of many cities and also an urbanization of the tourist experience. That is to say, cities have become more attractive as destinations [1].

Due to the growth of urban tourism, there has also been a growing interest in defining and measuring cities' tourism attractiveness [2]. Theoretical models have been created to understand the vectors of urban tourism development, and studies on tourism attractiveness have already been carried out in multiple cities [3]; however, there is little information on urban tourism in Latin American cities in general.

Previous research to examine visitor perceptions shows that tourists perceive tourist attractions at four levels in a city (context, tourist belt, complementary attractions, and nucleus). However, these levels are not generalizable. All cities have particular characteristics in quantity and type of attractions [3]. Due to the previous argument, we found a gap in the literature. So this study aims to find the levels on which tourists perceive attractions in Latin American cities.

The objective of this research is to examine the tourist recognition of the different attractions in four Latin American cities that most attract tourists in the region and to determine the factors that group these attractions and evaluate their degree of importance in these cities using a survey in the four largest cities in Spanish-speaking Latin America: Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima, which are the most alike for tourists in the region. In this study, the theoretical model of tourism attractiveness developed by Gunn [4] is applied to determine which factors were perceived by the tourists who visited these cities and which tourism attractiveness variables can be classified into each of the model's factors.

The research is significant because it contributes to the gap in the literature by examining, in four Latin American cities that most attract tourists in the region, how tourists perceive the levels or factors that group these attractions in these cities. Furthermore, it is significant due to the definition of "urban tourism" itself, which is tourism that is carried out in places that possess large populations and that are strategically important in terms of services offered, industrial production, the generation of knowledge, cultural venues, and innovation. These places also have had and continue to have an important political weight and play a key role as global hubs [5], so it helps to understand if these urban destinations have specialized in various attractions or have diversified their urban attractions [6].

The structure of the paper is as follows. In Section 2 the literature review is described. Section 3 describes the study area. Section 4 presents the data and the methodology. Section 5 reports the results. In Section 6, the results are discussed. Finally, Section 7 presents the conclusions and implications.

2. Review of Literature

Theories of the competitiveness of tourist destinations mention that destinations can be more competitive when they add more value in products and services to tourists using the basic resources and attractions existing in the destination [6–10], because urban tourist attractions are a key factor for the competitiveness of these destinations [11,12]. This increases the competitiveness of the brand based on the client, which influences consumer behavior through a greater selection of the brand and tourist destination [13], so the attractions allow destinations to draw long-term tourists [14], and help tourism development supported by infrastructure and basic services in the destinations [15].

Urban tourism attractiveness variables are those attributes of a destination, such as geography, climate, and weather [16], culture, history, and activities available to tourists, as well as the entertainment options [10,17] and natural attractions [18], or built infrastructure present in these cities [10,19]. Primary tourism attractiveness variables are those that are most relevant when deciding upon a destination to visit; these include historic buildings, urban neighborhoods, and special events. Secondary tourism attractiveness variables include the infrastructure that is offered to the visitor: shops, convention centers, lodging, and transportation [17].

In the specialized literature, urban tourism attractiveness variables have been classified in the following categories: (a) variables related to the infrastructure of urban destinations [10,19] including hotels, especially the location of the hotel, which is an important factor in the satisfaction and attraction of the tourist [20], and shops, because certain types of shopping in stores at a destination can attract tourists [21]; (b) variables related to the history and culture of destinations, such as museums and monuments that are the pillars of cultural tourism in cities [19,22–24], festivals, due to the past experience in these events and the attributes of the festival that generate satisfaction to the tourist [25], cultural attractions, as the value of historical-cultural heritage at the local level and cultural services affect the

decision to visit heritage sites [10,26–28], lifestyle in the cities due to the quality of life and comfort in the cities [29], nightlife, which attracts the adventurous and fun seekers [30], and gastronomy, which is an important motivation to visit tourist destinations because tourists can be attracted by a particular type of gastronomy [31]; (c) variables related to urban life: transportation that can help maintain more sustainable forms of tourism [32], tourist information that informs the visitor of the offer of products and services, and promotes knowledge of the tourist attractions, in addition to the signage at the destination, and public spaces, which affect the destination's image [11,17]; and (d) variables related to the sustainability of the destination because tourists are attracted by cultural sustainability, especially the preservation of heritage, and also attracted by visiting destinations that seek environmental sustainability [33–35].

Tourist motivations are a mixture of needs and desires that tourists have to enjoy the attractions or tourist destination [36]. Motivation theory, through pull factors and push factors [37–41], explains tourists' motivations when selecting a travel destination. According to this theory, pull factors emanate from the destination itself and attract tourists to visit it. These include tourist sites, historical attractions that are relevant to their cities' heritage, entertainment facilities [42–47], interest in conserving the urban tourism landscape [48], and activities that protect the environment, which are the result of sustainable urban tourism [49].

The pull factors that attract urban tourists vary according to the cities, thus Bozic et al. [50] found in Ljubljana that the pull factors that most attracted tourists were cultural events, entertainment, nightlife, shopping, festivals, and gastronomy; Wu and Wall [51] found in Hangzhou-China that with heritage sites, museums are the most important pull factor to visit the city; Romão et al. [52] found that in smart cities cultural dynamics are the most important pull factor as a tourist attraction; and Miller et al. [49] found in eco-cities that the sustainability of the destination and the pro-environmental behavior of the tourist is an important attraction.

Push factors, according to motivation theory, arise from psychological forces that inspire tourists to want to travel in general [45]. These factors are intrinsic motives that include a desire to escape from personal pressures, the need to generate new connections, self-esteem, the desire to learn, the desire to discover, and the need to get away from it all [47,53]. These push factors help resolve the emotional asymmetry that individuals experience in their social environment [54].

In urban tourism, a destination's tourism attractiveness variables are what determine its competitiveness and success [9,11,55,56]; moreover, they influence the success and development of urban tourism companies [57]. Tourism attractiveness variables are linked to the specific characteristics of the destinations in question because the supply of tourism destinations is linked to their environment [58,59]; as urban destinations have cultural spaces, tourism helps these cities to promote their culture and the cultural activities available, which leads to the preservation of their cultural identity [60].

Since the tourist attractions in the cities are related to the competitiveness of the destination [11,12], determining how visitors recognize the factors that group these tourist attractions helps cities and tourism companies to maximize the existing potential of tourism, and assists in the development of tourism resources that are supported by existing infrastructure and facilities and agreements on the environmental conditions of tourist destinations [15].

In the specialized literature, various theoretical models have been proposed to represent urban tourism, including a matrix designed by [61], which describes the relationships between places and the demand for them, their development, and their impact; Gunn's model [4] of urban attractiveness variables, which groups the variables according to three levels of visitor-assigned priority; Lew's model [62], which considers three perspectives: the ideographic, the organizational, and the cognitive; and Leiper's model [63], which explains urban tourism as a system or set of interconnected elements.

The relationship between the attributes of urban tourism and visitors' general satisfaction with a given destination is asymmetrical, as these ideas have generally been

studied separately: some studies focus on urban tourism attractiveness variables, and others analyze tourist satisfaction with the urban destination [64].

Gunn's model [4] provides a theoretical framework to understand a city's tourism attractiveness variables. In this model, pull factors and urban assets are key variables to be tested, as they allow the impact of a tourism destination to be understood better from the visitors' perspective. To do this, Gunn envisions three concentric circles or levels: the nucleus, the inviolate belt, and the zone of closure. The nucleus consists mainly of the attractions to be found at the destination, such as monuments, natural areas, festivals, fairs, events, and entertainment opportunities [17,65,66]. The inviolate belt refers to the attractions that surround the nucleus [67]. They are physical and social facilities, including the architecture, urban environment, and public spaces [17]. The zone of closure is the general environment that surrounds the destination, such as restaurants, hotels [68], and shops [21].

Leipe and Park [69] used Gunn's model [4] to examine whether skyscrapers are part of the core of tourist attractions in a city and concluded that Gunn's model can be used to examine the attractions of a city and skyscrapers, and found very few of them, only the most famous, are part of the nucleus of urban attractions that can influence the decision to visit a city and are an important attraction only for certain types of tourists.

Boivin and Tanguay [3] carried out a study on urban tourism in Quebec City and Bordeaux, which are cultural heritage sites, and they found discrepancies with Gunn's model [4]: in the cities they analyzed, they found four levels of urban tourism instead of three, as the original model had proposed. They concluded that the nucleus was the main set of attractions for visitors, including monuments, historical sites, museums, and art galleries, while the level of complementary attractions, which contributed to the central attractions or nucleus, included festivals, conventions, exhibitions, theaters, concerts, and nightlife. The tourism belt provided the urban atmosphere, the architecture, public spaces, parks, and gardens, and the urban context factor included public services, tourist information, shops, and commercial services.

The levels or factors that group the tourist attractions cannot be generalized to the various cities, because each city has differences in quantity and type of attractions [3]. Because of this, there is a gap in the literature regarding the levels on which tourist attractions are perceived by tourists in the Latin American cities, and whether urban tourism in these cities could be modeled through Gunn's original method [4], consisting of three factors, or if it should utilize Boivin and Tanguay's expanded model [3], which has four factors. Thus, it is necessary to determine the most important tourism attractiveness variables [2]. Based on the existing gap in the literature, the following research question was formulated:

RQ1: What, according to tourists in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima, are the factors that make those tourism destinations attractive and what variables make up those factors?

In the same way, there is a need to know how each one of these cities performs in terms of each factor mentioned. Thus, a second research question was formulated:

RQ2: How strong is each factor that determines the tourism attractiveness of Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima?

3. Study Area

The study was carried out in the four largest Spanish-speaking cities of Latin America. Figure 1 shows the location of each of the studied cities (Google Maps, Google, Mountain View, CA, USA), and Table 1 shows the population in each metropolitan area [70] of the four cities that are examined in this research: Mexico City, Lima, Bogota, and Buenos Aires are among the cities with the largest populations in Latin America.

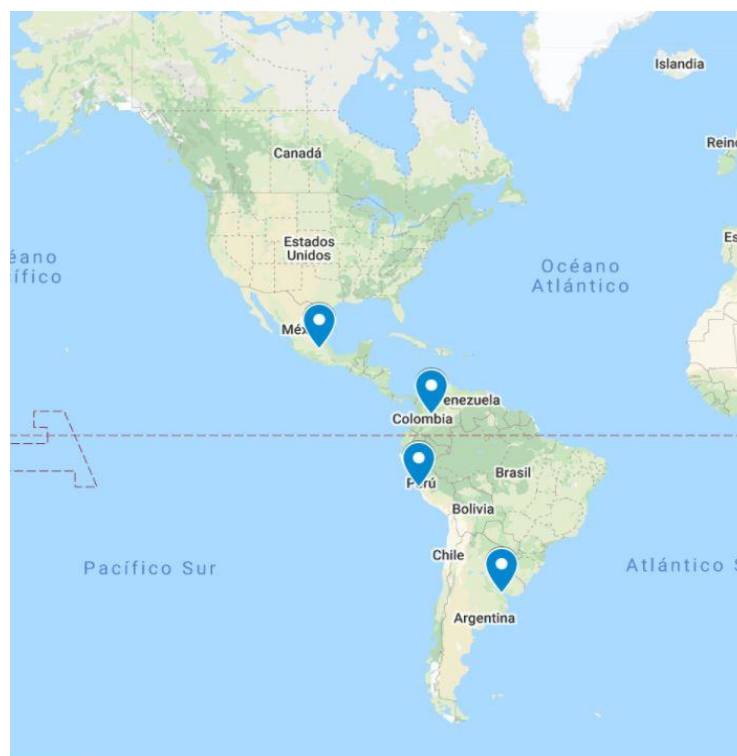


Figure 1. Location of the four most populous cities in Spanish-speaking Latin America. Note: Created in Google Maps.

Table 1. Most populous metropolitan areas in Latin America (in millions).

City	Country	Number of Inhabitants
São Paulo	Brazil	22.2
Mexico City	Mexico	21.9
Buenos Aires	Argentina	15.3
Río de Janeiro	Brazil	13.5
Bogota	Colombia	11.2
Lima	Peru	10.9
Santiago de Chile	Chile	6.8
Belo Horizonte	Brazil	6.1
Guadalajara	Mexico	5.3
Monterrey	Mexico	5.0

3.1. Mexico City

Mexico City is the capital and largest city of Mexico, with more than 9.2 million inhabitants; this also makes it the fifth-largest city in the world in terms of population, according to the United Nations [71]. Mexico City is located in the Valley of Mexico and covers 1485 square kilometers.

The city possesses notable historical and cultural value. The historic center of Mexico City was built on top of an ancient lake and still preserves the urban structural elements of the preexisting pre-Hispanic city, which is also true of the neighborhood of Xochimilco. Due to this fusion of two cultures, Mexico City has been on the list of World Heritage sites since 1987 [72].

Mexico City has maintained a high position on the world urban tourism index put out by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) in terms of number of visitors received, infrastructure, and accessibility. However, it is necessary to improve its development policies in terms of long-term infrastructure, including water and transportation, so that it can receive a higher number of tourists without straining its capacity [73].

According to Mexico City's Tourism Secretary, 78% of its international tourists came from the Americas in 2017. The country from which the largest number of visitors came was the United States (25%). What visitors to Mexico City most appreciated was its historical and cultural heritage, its architecture and buildings, its diverse array of tourism activities, and its gastronomy.

One of the most important events in the country is Día de los Muertos, celebrated on November 1 and 2, which honors loved ones who have passed away and showcases Mexican culture and cuisine. More than seven million people attended this event organized by the government of Mexico City in 2019 [74].

3.2. Buenos Aires

The city of Buenos Aires, capital of Argentina, is located on the shores of the Río de la Plata. At 15.3 million inhabitants, this is one of the largest metropolitan areas in South America and is an important tourism destination. In 2019, 2.9 million international tourists arrived in the city, an 8.9% jump from 2018 to the highest number of visitors since 2011, breaking its own record for international arrivals. Brazil was the market that most contributed to Buenos Aires' tourism growth by air, with more than 97,000 tourists, followed by the rest of the Americas with more than 33,000 and Europe, with around 24,000 tourists. The segment that grew the most was "vacations and leisure" by 23%, which compensated for a fall in "business" [75].

Buenos Aires is the city with the most soccer stadiums in the world; among the most famous are "La Bombonera" (Boca Juniors stadium), and the River Plate stadium. Moreover, the city is recognized for the tango. This popular dance, a national symbol that appears on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, was developed on the streets of Buenos Aires at the end of the 19th century. Foreign tourists feel very attracted to this dance that is performed in cultural centers, old ballrooms, cafés, and clubs [76].

One of the country's most important events is the Tango World Championship, presented by the City of Buenos Aires Ministry of Culture. It lasts five days and brings together spectators and the most talented dancers from around the world in more than 50 locations. Another important event in Buenos Aires is the Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Cinema. In 2019, more than 180,000 people enjoyed this festival, with more than 2800 artists attending [77].

3.3. Bogota

Bogota, the Colombian capital, has around 7.1 million inhabitants. It is a multicultural city composed of people from different regions of the country. Urban tourism in Bogota has changed due to demographic and cultural shifts and changes in the urban landscape, and it now offers infrastructure that articulates its attractions and tourism resources through different ways of life. Around 43% of Bogota's international tourists come for vacations, and many others also come for business. The city can easily accommodate both segments [78].

According to the government agency ProColombia [79], Bogota attracts specialized travelers with diverse profiles and relatively large travel budgets. For Colombian cities, urban tourism has stimulated the creation of specialized tourism packages that are focused on gastronomy, religious art, architecture, sports, cultural events, nature, fashion, and more.

The Instituto Distrital de Turismo [78] maintains that the city is well-known for its large green spaces, a network of 376 km of bicycle paths, more than 60 museums, around 80 theaters, 80 malls, and a growing variety of food innovation districts. An interesting fact is that UNESCO declared Bogota the "City of Music." Additionally, it is the capital city with the greatest number of bird species in the world, due to the large numbers of wetlands within city limits.

One of the most well-attended events in the country in 2019 was the International Book Fair, where more than 600,000 people enjoyed panels, talks, workshops, concerts, and film exhibitions. This fair is considered the most important cultural event in the country and the region, as more than 110 participating companies attend, with business expectations

exceeding USD 4.8 million. Another important event for the country is AGROEXPO, which has lectures, expositions, and knowledge-sharing sessions on Colombian farming [80].

3.4. Lima

Lima is the capital of Peru, located on the central coast of the country, right on the Pacific Ocean. According to the 2020 National Census, Lima is also the largest Peruvian metropolitan area, with 10.9 million inhabitants, fully 29.5% of the Peruvian population. It was founded in 1535 as “The City of Kings;” in addition to being the capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru, it was the largest and most important South American city during Spanish rule [81].

Among the most important urban attractions in the city of Lima are its majestic colonial monuments and architectural elements such as its famous balconies; moreover, in the historic center, there are more than 1600 properties built in the colonial Spanish style. Also important to tourism are Lima’s parks, gardens, and beaches, especially those along the Green Coast [67].

The impact of Peruvian cuisine in recent years is reflected in the growth of the restaurant industry and other establishments linked to gastronomy, as well as the related productive chain, which has generated not only increased appreciation for Peruvian products but also an increase in domestic tourism from one part of the country to another. Moreover, Peru’s cuisine has come to be one of the main pillars of its national tourism policy, which is why the Ministry of External Trade and Tourism has been developing a Peruvian cultural policy plan abroad that focuses on promoting Peruvian cuisine, naming Lima the gastronomic capital [82].

According to the newspaper *El Peruano* [83], Lima is the second most-visited city in Latin America by foreign tourists, according to the Top 100 City Destinations 2016 index, which is put together by the consulting agency Euromonitor International. According to PromPerú [84], the Peruvian capital leads the continent in terms of international meetings organized, as can be seen in the 2015 ranking by the International Congress and Convention Association [85].

4. Methodology

This study was carried out using an online survey of tourists who were 18 and older, and who visited any of the four following cities in Latin America, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima, between January 2018 and March 2020. A convenience sampling was used, which is a non-probabilistic and non-random technique, based on the ease of access of the tourist in answering the survey. To calculate the sample, an equation for an infinite population with a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$, a 95% level of confidence, and 50% variance were used.

The potential respondents were identified through lists of events and congresses in the four cities under study and frequent travelers referenced to the authors. Through a phone call it was found that they had traveled as a tourist to one of the four cities under investigation between January 2018 and March 2020, and after this tourist trip verification was carried out, the access link to the survey was sent to them. In total about 700 potential respondents were identified. They were asked not to evaluate the city they lived in. Due to the method of identification and data collection, it is emphasized that the nature of the survey was decidedly exploratory.

The questionnaire included a group of tourism attractiveness variables based on previous studies [3,45,86]. It had 24 questions: 4 on sociodemographic features, 3 on travel preparations and motivations, 16 on tourism attractiveness variables, and 1 on the recommendation of the tourism destination to friends or family. The questions on tourism attractiveness variables used a five-point Likert scale to evaluate the results. The survey was carried out from September to December 2020.

The sample obtained included 599 valid responses: 198 about visits to Mexico City, 117 about visits to Buenos Aires, 128 about visits to Bogota, and 156 about visits to Lima.

The software used for data processing was SPSS version 22. To evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement scale, Cronbach's alpha was used, obtaining a result of 0.924, which is an acceptable level of consistency [87,88].

In order to identify the cities' attractiveness factors and the variables that make them up (RQ1), considering the exploratory nature of the survey and that the objective was to identify factors that group the different urban attractions, an exploratory factor analysis was used, and four factors were detected. Moreover, before the exploratory factor analysis, two tests were carried out to verify if it would be possible to carry out a factor analysis: (a) Bartlett's test of sphericity (which tests the null hypothesis that the variables being analyzed are not correlated and that the diagonal of the correlation matrix is equal to one), and (b) the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin test, which measures the adequacy of the sample, as indicated by values between 0.5 and 0.7, to ensure it is appropriate to carry out a factor analysis.

In order to evaluate the four cities, the participants were surveyed and a comparative analysis of the means of the variables and factors that had been identified in the factor analysis was carried out. The incidence of each urban tourism factor for each of the cities in the study helped identify possibilities for development and improvement (RQ2).

With the aim of making a comparison between the cities examined at the level of factors of tourist attractions, the averages and rankings of the variables were processed and put in order from greatest to least so as to identify the relative importance of the tourism attractiveness variables for the cities analyzed.

5. Results

5.1. Descriptive Results

Descriptive processing was performed for the 599 valid surveys. In Table 2, the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics can be seen, in which it is shown that the respondents were mainly in the age segment between 46–60 years, with 46.1%, and 31–45 years, with 33.1%; in addition, the country of origin of the respondents shows they came mainly from Latin America—Peru, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico—and also from countries in Europe and the USA and Canada.

Table 2. Sociodemographic characteristics.

Demographics	Categories	N = 599	%
Age	18–30 years old	87	14.5
	31–45 years old	198	33.1
	46–60 years old	276	46.1
	>60 years old	38	6.3
Origin	Peru	222	37.1
	Argentina	90	15.0
	Colombia	88	14.7
	Ecuador	45	7.5
	Mexico	40	6.7
	Other countries of Latin America	38	6.3
	Chile	24	4.0
	Costa Rica	20	3.3
	Europe	16	2.7
	US and Canada	14	2.3
Asia	2	0.3	

The means of each attractiveness variables were processed, and the results are presented in Table 3 in the form of a ranking, which shows the relative importance of each variable in the evaluation of tourists. The variables with the highest score are the attractions that most attract tourists, and they represent the most important pull factors that emanate from the destination itself and attract tourists to visit it. The variables with higher values

are: accommodation and restaurants, monuments and historical sites, urban atmosphere, public spaces, parks, and gardens, urban architecture.

Table 3. Means of tourism attraction variables and their relative importance.

Indicators	Mean	Rank
Accommodation and restaurants	4.3813	1
Monuments and historical sites	3.9411	2
Urban atmosphere	3.8822	3
Public spaces, parks, and gardens	3.8445	4
Urban architecture	3.7758	5
Tourist information	3.7741	6
Shops and commercial services	3.6907	7
Museums and art galleries	3.6743	8
Pedestrian-friendly places	3.6285	9
Theaters, concerts, and nightlife	3.5679	11
Access and signage	3.5597	12
Fairs, conventions, and exhibitions	3.5254	13
Public services	3.5139	14
Excursions	3.5008	15
Festivals and events	3.4157	16

5.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was carried out on the urban tourism variables in order to generate the factors. In order to initially verify them, a Pearson correlation matrix containing the 16 tourism attractiveness variables was created, as can be seen in Appendix A. It was verified that the variables have correlations of less than 0.8. Bartlett's test of sphericity also verified that the significance achieved was 0.00, while the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin test yielded a result of 0.942, which indicates that the variables are correlated enough to carry out a factor analysis.

The factor analysis was carried out using principal components analysis and examined the variance obtained in the factors; it found that four factors explained 68.07% of the variance. The results in Table 4 show the recognition by tourists of the different factors that group the variables of tourist attractions, which are pull factors and urban assets that attract tourists to the destination. They also show the degree of importance of each factor based on the explained variance; it is shown that the tourist ecosystem is the most important factor with 31.70% of the internal explained variance, followed by the nucleus with 28.11% of the internal explained variance. The visitors identified four significantly relevant factors of tourism variables in these cities: the tourist ecosystem (accommodation and restaurants, access and signage, pedestrian-friendly places, urban atmosphere, public services, and shops and commercial services) that represents the attractions of the urban environment and urban services; the nucleus (monuments and historical sites, urban architecture, museums and art galleries, and public spaces, parks, and gardens) represents the attractions that primarily attract tourists to a destination; MICE and shows (festivals and events, fairs, conventions, and exhibitions, museums and art galleries, and theater, concerts, and nightlife) are related to the events that take place in the city, and related services (tourist information and excursions) to services provided to the tourist; a fifth factor, visits with friends and families (contact with residents), was also identified but was discarded as significantly irrelevant.

Table 4. Factor analysis of the tourism attraction variables.

Components and Variables	Coefficients	Variance Explained	
		Real	Internal
Tourist ecosystem		21.58%	31.70%
Accommodation and restaurants	0.664		
Access and signage	0.742		
Pedestrian-friendly places	0.669		
Urban atmosphere	0.627		
Public services	0.666		
Shops and commercial services	0.524		
Nucleus		19.14%	28.11%
Monuments and historical sites	0.799		
Urban architecture	0.749		
Museums and art galleries	0.676		
Public spaces, parks, and gardens	0.657		
MICE and shows		16.01%	23.51%
Festivals and events	0.762		
Fairs, conventions, and exhibitions	0.791		
Theaters, concerts, and nightlife	0.587		
Related services		11.28%	16.46%
Tourist information	0.767		
Excursions	0.725		
Total variance		68.07%	100%

With this exploratory factor analysis, the first research question (RQ1) can be answered: What, according to tourists in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima, are the factors that make those tourism destinations attractive and what variables make up those factors? It can be concluded that the identified factors do not correspond to Gunn's three factors. Additionally, it is important to note that, although the study of the cities of Bordeaux and Quebec City, like this present study, identified four factors, in Latin America the variables are grouped differently than they were in the former study.

5.3. Differences between the Cities Studied

In this study, Latin America has been taken as a whole, and characteristics have been studied on a regional level. However, it is still relevant to compare the cities studied to see how each one of them behaves in terms of the factors identified. That way, the competitive advantages of each one will be clear, as will the areas in which each one must improve. The comparison was made with the averages of the evaluation made by tourists of the tourist attractions of each city.

Table 5 shows that due to the differences between the cities in type and quantity of tourist attractions, these present slight differences between the valuations of the factors that group the variables of tourist attractions. Bogota was the city that performed the best in terms of the first valuation factor (tourist ecosystem); in contrast, Mexico City excelled in terms of the second factor (nucleus). Buenos Aires led in terms of MICE and shows and ranked second in terms of the first two factors. Lima led in no particular factor but was close to the regional average in terms of all of the factors and above average for related services. It is also worth mentioning that the first factor, whose regional average was 3.78, presents the greatest challenge for local governments, since it had to do with city infrastructure. In this sense, Bogota and Buenos Aires were above the regional average.

Table 5. Comparison of the measurements of the variables by city.

	LATAM	Mexico City	Buenos Aires	Bogota	Lima
Tourist Ecosystem	3.78	3.72	3.82	3.88	3.73
Accommodation and restaurants	4.38	4.41	4.35	4.36	4.38
Access and signage	3.56	3.56	3.44	3.78	3.47
Pedestrian-friendly places	3.63	3.62	3.70	3.66	3.56
Urban atmosphere	3.88	3.82	4.01	4.00	3.77
Public services	3.51	3.45	3.66	3.62	3.40
Shops and commercial services	3.69	3.48	3.73	3.85	3.79
Nucleus	3.81	3.93	3.80	3.74	3.72
Monuments and historical sites	3.94	4.21	3.78	3.70	3.93
Urban architecture	3.78	3.82	3.89	3.74	3.67
Museums and art galleries	3.67	3.82	3.63	3.69	3.52
Public spaces, parks, and gardens	3.84	3.87	3.93	3.83	3.76
MICE and Shows	3.50	3.45	3.67	3.47	3.47
Festivals and events	3.42	3.43	3.55	3.33	3.37
Fairs, conventions, and exhibitions	3.53	3.50	3.48	3.49	3.62
Theaters, concerts, and night life	3.57	3.42	3.98	3.59	3.43
Related Services	3.64	3.78	3.45	3.55	3.67
Tourist information	3.77	3.91	3.61	3.75	3.75
Excursions	3.50	3.65	3.28	3.36	3.59

With this analysis, the second research question (RQ2) is answered: How strong is each factor that determines the tourism attractiveness of Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima? Figure 2 shows the relative position of each city in terms of the factors that were identified.

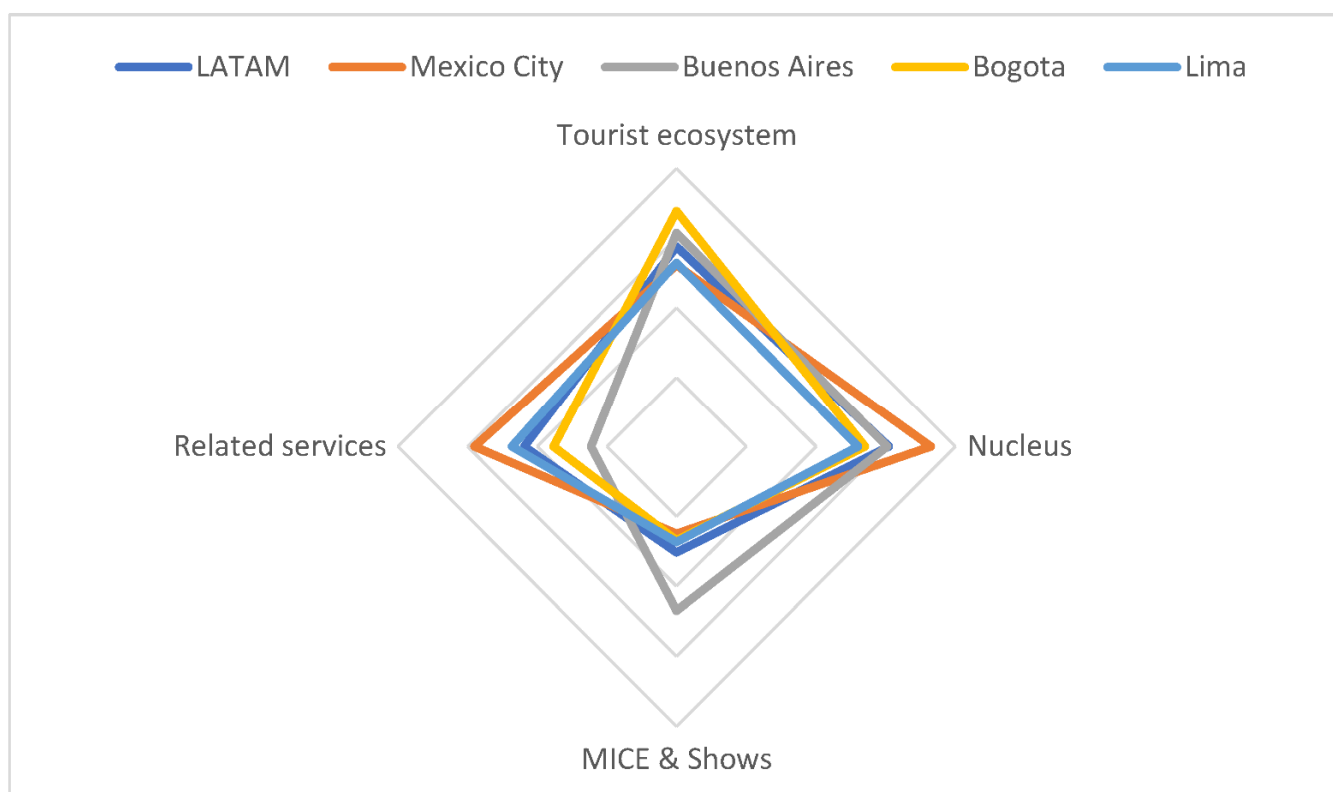


Figure 2. Impact of the tourism attractiveness variables on the cities studied.

6. Discussion

The objective of this research was to examine the perception of tourists about the urban attractions of four largest cities in Spanish-speaking Latin America: Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima, which are the most alike for tourists in the region, with the purpose to identify the different levels or factors of grouping of these tourist attractions, for which two questions were proposed. RQ1: What, according to tourists in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima, are the factors that make those tourism destinations attractive and what variables make up those factors?, and RQ2: How strong is each factor that determines the tourism attractiveness of Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima?

Considering the first question, RQ1, the results demonstrate that international tourists who traveled to these cities identified four factors that group the tourist attractions: the nucleus (monuments and historical sites, urban architecture, museums and art galleries, and public spaces, parks, and gardens); tourist ecosystem (accommodation and restaurants, access and signage, pedestrian-friendly places, urban atmosphere, public services, and shops and commercial services); MICE and shows, which are related to the events that take place in the city (festivals and events, fairs and conventions, and theaters and concerts); and related services (tourist information and excursions). This research indicates that Latin America behaves differently from other regions such as Europe or North America, concluding that tourists do not equally group the attractions of the different parts of the planet.

The results show that although the nucleus was relevant, it was not the most highly valued factor. The tourist ecosystem was the predominant factor (31.70% of the internal explained variance), while the nucleus was the main pull factor, in second place overall (28.11% of the internal explained variance). The other two factors that influenced the cities' attractiveness were MICE and shows (23.51%) and related services (16.46%).

These results concur with those of previous studies, such as that by García-Hernández et al. [48], who found that cities' historic centers are pull factors, as they attract many tourists due to their relevance in terms of heritage and urban landscapes. At the same time, these results confirm what Romão et al. [52] found, that a city's social and built environment have a high impact on its attractiveness to tourists. There is some similarity with the results of Andreu et al. [57], who found that fairs and conventions, festivals and events, and theaters and concerts are pull factors for urban tourists, and of Romão et al. [42] and Lim and Giouvriss [43], who found that festivals and events at tourism destinations attract urban tourists. Additionally, these results line up with Moreno Gil and Ritchie [22], with Brida et al. [26], and with Plaza [23], who found that museums attract urban tourists.

At the same time, these results differ from those of Romão et al. [52], who found that culture is the most important determining factor that attracts residents and tourists, and from those of Kourtiti et al. [89], who found that cultural identity and the city's history are reasons that citizens appreciate their city as well as factors that attract foreign and domestic visitors.

The study differs from Gunn's [4] theoretical model due to the fact that four factors were identified instead of the three in his traditional model: the nucleus, the tourism belt, and the closing zone or context. The results also differ from the classification of factors found in the study by Boivin and Tanguay [3] on Quebec City and Bordeaux: the nucleus, the complementary attractions, the urban context, and the tourism belt. The difference, in this latter case, is not due to the number of factors but rather to the variables they contain.

The difference between the factors identified in this study—those used in Gunn's [4] traditional, three-level model and Boivin and Tanguay's [3] four-level model—can be explained by motivation theory, in which pull factors are considered to be external forces that emanate from a destination that attract tourists to visit that destination. Therefore, the difference can be explained inasmuch as the four Latin American cities examined attract tourists for reasons that were different from those that caused tourists to visit Quebec City and Bordeaux, which are World Heritage sites. In the four Latin American cities researched,

the tourist ecosystem variables (accommodation and restaurants, access and signage, pedestrian-friendly places, urban atmosphere, public services, and shops and commercial services) were more attractive due to the fact that they have developed in a distinctive way so as to attract international tourists, complementing the attractiveness variables of urban architecture and historical sites with a good urban atmosphere, gastronomy, and hotel infrastructure. At the same time, the cities have promoted the organization of events and conventions in order to attract more visitors.

Once the region as a whole had been studied, how each city behaved in terms of these factors was also studied (RQ2). It was discovered that Bogota was the leader in terms of tourist ecosystem, while Mexico City predominated in terms of the nucleus. Buenos Aires appeared to be the most appreciated in terms of MICE and shows, and in related services, Mexico City again performed the best. Lima did not predominate in any of the factors but was close to the regional average.

The contribution of this research is that the previous literature indicates that the perception of tourists about the levels or factors that group tourist attractions are not generalizable due to the differences that each city presents in quantity and type of tourist attractions [3], so there is a gap in the literature regarding the levels or factors that group the tourist attractions for Latin American cities since their tourist attractions have their own characteristics. This research has theoretical implications in determining for Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima the four levels or groups of factors: nucleus, tourist ecosystem, MICE and shows, and related services, and the variables or attractions that each factor groups. These levels or groups of factors that group the tourist attractions are explained by the particular characteristics that these cities have in quantity and type of attractions such as accommodation and restaurants, historical sites, urban atmosphere, museums, galleries and festivals, and other attractions that show characteristics different from those of other cities studied.

This research has practical implications, given the different levels or groups of factors that group tourist attractions and their importance in the perception of tourists for these four important cities in Latin America. This knowledge can be used by tourism operators and administrators of tourism business to develop plans for the improvement of tourism in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima.

7. Conclusions

This study sought to determine the factors that make Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima attractive to visitors. This research concludes that concerning the tourism attractiveness variables of the Latin American cities studied, tourists perceive them at four levels or grouped into four factors that are: the nucleus (monuments and historical sites, urban architecture, museums and art galleries, and public spaces, parks, and gardens); tourist ecosystem (accommodation and restaurants, access and signage, pedestrian-friendly places, urban atmosphere, public services, and shops and commercial services); MICE and shows, which are related to the events that take place in the city (festivals and events, fairs and conventions, and theaters and concerts); and related services (tourist information and excursions). These four factors differ from those seen in other cities due to the specific characteristics of the Latin American region.

Regarding the importance of the factors in these cities, the results show that although the nucleus is relevant, it is not the most highly valued factor. The tourist ecosystem that represents the attractions of the urban environment and urban services is the predominant factor, while the nucleus is the main pull factor, in second place overall, including monuments and historic sites, and museums and art galleries. The other two factors that influence the cities' attractiveness are MICE and shows, which is an important factor in these cities and represents events, fairs, conventions, and concerts, and the last factor in importance is the related services that represents tourist information and excursions.

The theoretical implications of this research are that it contributes to the literature, since it is known that cities present differences in quantity and type of attractions, and this

research contributes to the gap in the literature by determining four levels or grouping factors of tourist attractions for these four important cities in Latin America: Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bogota, and Lima, that differ from those seen in other cities due to the specific characteristics of the Latin American region.

The practical implication of this research is that tourism attractiveness variables and the identified factors can help urban tourism operators and business managers prepare better industry improvement plans to improve their tourism competitiveness in these important cities in Latin America.

This research has social implications because the cities examined in Latin America have a good position in urban tourism in terms of number of visitors received, infrastructure, and accessibility, and identifying the tourist attractions and the factors that group them help the development of these cities as tourist destinations and the economic and social development of their populations.

This research has limitations due to the temporality of the data since it was carried out between September and December 2020. It is also suggested that future studies be carried out in other representative cities of Latin America and use confirmatory methods that can guarantee conclusions that can be extended to the objective universe, to confirm the results of this investigation. It is also suggested that future studies be carried out to determine the impact of the pandemic and compare the results with this research. In turn, this study opens the door to further research on each factor in order to analyze the relationship between the arrival of new tourists and the improvement in infrastructure or related services or events. This study opens up the possibility of future comparative studies between specific cities in order to deepen the existing knowledge about the distinctive attributes (similarities and differences) of each one.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Pearson correlation.

	Urban Atmosphere	Urban Architecture	Pedestrian-Friendly Places	Monuments and Historical Sites	Public Spaces, Parks, Gardens	Accommodation and Restaurants	Public Services	Tourist Information	Shops, Commercial Services	Museums and Art Galleries	Access and SIGNAGE	Excursions	Festivals and Events	Theaters, Concerts, and Nightlife	Fairs, Conventions, and Exhibitions
Urban atmosphere	1	0.511 **	0.575 **	0.418 **	0.516 **	0.482 **	0.493 **	0.443 **	0.453 **	0.463 **	0.556 **	0.387 **	0.477 **	0.528 **	0.366 **
Urban architecture	0.511 **	1	0.530 **	0.652 **	0.624 **	0.434 **	0.421 **	0.487 **	0.404 **	0.577 **	0.459 **	0.482 **	0.409 **	0.442 **	0.365 **
Pedestrian-friendly places	0.575 **	0.530 **	1	0.455 **	0.570 **	0.465 **	0.517 **	0.382 **	0.421 **	0.586 **	0.410 **	0.430 **	0.423 **	0.365 **	0.000
Monuments and historical sites	0.418 **	0.652 **	0.455 **	1	0.592 **	0.344 **	0.396 **	0.515 **	0.297 **	0.623 **	0.391 **	0.539 **	0.366 **	0.390 **	0.300 **
Public spaces, parks, gardens	0.516 **	0.624 **	0.570 **	0.592 **	1	0.427 **	0.458 **	0.456 **	0.432 **	0.483 **	0.477 **	0.485 **	0.440 **	0.462 **	0.354 **
Accommodation and restaurants	0.482 **	0.434 **	0.465 **	0.344 **	0.427 **	1	0.427 **	0.488 **	0.423 **	0.353 **	0.481 **	0.353 **	0.388 **	0.416 **	0.289 **
Public services	0.493 **	0.421 **	0.517 **	0.396 **	0.458 **	0.427 **	1	0.485 **	0.413 **	0.385 **	0.611 **	0.407 **	0.457 **	0.410 **	0.372 **
Tourist information	0.443 **	0.487 **	0.382 **	0.515 **	0.456 **	0.488 **	0.485 **	1	0.408 **	0.479 **	0.494 **	0.645 **	0.465 **	0.473 **	0.402 **
Shops, commercial services	0.453 **	0.404 **	0.421 **	0.297 **	0.432 **	0.423 **	0.413 **	0.408 **	1	0.341 **	0.457 **	0.319 **	0.464 **	0.457 **	0.400 **
Museums and art galleries	0.463 **	0.577 **	0.421 **	0.623 **	0.483 **	0.353 **	0.385 **	0.479 **	0.341 **	1	0.391 **	0.478 **	0.456 **	0.474 **	0.444 **
Access and signage	0.556 **	0.459 **	0.586 **	0.391 **	0.477 **	0.481 **	0.611 **	0.494 **	0.457 **	0.391 **	1	0.403 **	0.453 **	0.425 **	0.398 **
Excursions	0.387 **	0.482 **	0.410 **	0.539 **	0.485 **	0.353 **	0.407 **	0.645 **	0.319 **	0.478 **	0.403 **	1	0.448 **	0.450 **	0.391 **
Festivals and events	0.477 **	0.409 **	0.430 **	0.366 **	0.440 **	0.388 **	0.457 **	0.465 **	0.464 **	0.456 **	0.453 **	0.448 **	1	0.580 **	0.581 **
Theaters, concerts, and nightlife	0.528 **	0.442 **	0.423 **	0.390 **	0.462 **	0.416 **	0.410 **	0.473 **	0.457 **	0.474 **	0.425 **	0.450 **	0.580 **	1	0.404 **
Fairs, conventions, and exhibitions	0.366 **	0.365 **	0.365 **	0.300 **	0.354 **	0.289 **	0.372 **	0.402 **	0.400 **	0.444 **	0.398 **	0.391 **	0.581 **	0.404 **	1
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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