

**Highlights:**

- Parent heritage brand preference contributes to the formation of brand-extension loyalty
- Parent heritage brand preference improves the image of tourists of the brand extension.
- The effect of parent heritage brand preference on brand extension loyalty is mediated by brand extension attitude and image.
- The brand extension fit moderate the brand extension loyalty-formation.
- Managers of heritage sites should promote customer preference for the WH brand to contribute to the brand extension success.

## HOW DOES PARENT HERITAGE BRAND PREFERENCE AFFECT BRAND EXTENSION LOYALTY? A MODERATED MEDIATION ANALYSIS

### ABSTRACT

Firms with high brand equity often employ the strategy of brand extension to place new products on the market. Very few studies have analyzed brand extensions in the cultural heritage context, and fewer still have dealt with brands carrying the World Heritage hallmark. This work contributes to the existing knowledge in this field by examining how cultural heritage brand preference contributes to the formation of brand-extension loyalty, taking into account the tourists' perceptions of the extension (via attitudes and image) and the moderating role of brand extension fit and authenticity. A 2 (high vs. low brand extension fit) x 3 (high, moderate, and low degree of brand extension authenticity) between-subjects experimental design was used. The results show that parent brand preference exerts a positive effect on brand extension loyalty, mediated by brand extension attitude and brand extension image. These relationships are moderated by brand extension fit.

### KEYWORDS

Brand extension loyalty, Brand extension fit, Brand extension authenticity, Brand extension, Heritage brand

### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, brands are used by organizations as a wealth-creation tool and are considered a major business asset (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2005; Maymand & Razmi, 2017). In this sense, cultural heritage brands also have a tremendous capacity to contribute to the socio-economic development of territories (Domínguez-Pérez & Martín-Fernández, 2015). Indeed, cultural heritage constitutes a driver of economic growth and job-creation (Backman & Nilsson, 2016). In the European Union (EU), where almost half of the heritage sites on the UNESCO World Heritage (WH) List are located, the jobs indirectly related to cultural heritage alone total 7.8 million (Pasikowska-Schnass, 2018). Over the past decade, many managers of cultural institutions have recognized the applicability and added value of brand management for their sector (Baumgarth, Kaluza, & Lohrisch, 2016). These institutions seek to create a unique image and identity that encourage tourists to visit them and to become “ambassadors” who make recommendations for future visits (Camarero, Garrido-Samaniego, & Vicente, 2012). According to Caldwell & Coshall (2002), the strongest brand associations made by visitors to cultural products are linked to functional characteristics. That is, each visitor links the cultural brand with a number of benefits and positive expectations, on the basis of which they differentiate it from other brands and create their own brand personality for it (Venable et al., 2005).

A brand, in the context of tourist destinations, constitutes a set of meanings and experiences that express a promise of value about a particular place as a differentiating element (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2003). Brands associated with heritage landmarks—and, in particular, those bearing the WH hallmark—have been shown to incite beliefs, evoke emotions, and prompt future behaviors and values (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Ryan & Silvanto, 2009). Cultural Heritage sites that carry this hallmark generate high brand equity, stimulating positive thoughts and associations (Ryan & Silvanto, 2009) and generating greater visitor appeal (Wuepper & Patry, 2016). Organizations also often strategically employ brand extensions to establish and communicate strong brand positioning, develop brand awareness, and establish quality

1 associations with the parent brand, which helps implement the brand extension and accelerate its  
2 entry into new market segments (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Chen & Liu, 2004; Schlegelmilch,  
3 2016).

4 Various studies in the marketing field have demonstrated that the strategy of brand extension  
5 enables the organization to expand its business into new areas, primarily thanks to the security  
6 that a well-known parent brand brings (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Kim, Stephenkova, & Yilmaz,  
7 2019; Ozretic-Dosen, Brlic, & Komarac, 2018). Due to the scholarly interest in strategic brand  
8 extension, several studies have sought to understand the factors that can help ensure the success  
9 of such extensions (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Czellar, 2003; Ozretic-Dosen et al., 2018; Völckner  
10 & Sattler, 2006). Studies have examined, for example, how different variables related to the  
11 parent brand (quality, brand image, loyalty, attitude, brand breadth, familiarity, etc.), influence  
12 consumer attitude toward extensions (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Bottomley & Holden, 2001;  
13 Czellar, 2003; D'Astous, Colbert, & Fournier, 2007; Del Barrio-García & Prados-Peña, 2019;  
14 Prados-Peña & Del Barrio-García, 2018; Spiggle, Nguyen, & Caravella, 2012; Wu & Yen,  
15 2007). Determining consumer brand preference is an essential step toward understanding  
16 consumer choice behavior (Ebrahim et al., 2016). Consumers react to a brand based on their  
17 level of preference (Maymand & Razmi, 2017; Tucker, 1964), this being a predictor of their  
18 brand choice (Liu et al., 2019; Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000). Consumers have been found to  
19 show a greater preference toward those brands that have high brand equity (Chang & Liu, 2009;  
20 Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995).

21 Among the predictors of consumer behavior toward the brand and the capacity of the brand to  
22 influence purchase intentions are brand attitude (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Shimp, 2010;  
23 Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2013), and brand image (Aaker, 1990; Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990).

24 Most of the studies dealing with brand extensions have been conducted in the context of goods  
25 and, to a lesser extent, services (Van Riel, Liljander, & Jurriens, 2001). These authors hold that  
26 the accumulated knowledge derived from years of research on brand extensions for products  
27 cannot simply be extrapolated to the service sector and that greater scholarly efforts are required  
28 in this field. Furthermore, within the service field, the arts and culture sector has certain  
29 peculiarities stemming largely from its symbolic, hedonic, and aesthetic dimensions (Bourgeon-  
30 Renault, 2000). Some of the features that characterize services in particular are that: (a) they are  
31 consumed at the same time as they are produced (simultaneity); (b) their quality depends on the  
32 provider (heterogeneity); (c) they cannot be inspected by the consumer prior to purchase  
33 (intangibility); and (d) they cannot be stored to meet fluctuations in demand (lack of durability)  
34 (d'Astous, Colbert, & Fournier, 2007).

35 The extant literature dealing with the success factors of brand extensions in the service context  
36 is relatively limited (Sichtmann, Schoefer, Blut, & Kemp, 2017), and even more so in the area  
37 of heritage brands—the focus of the present study (Kim et al., 2019; Prados-Peña & Del Barrio-  
38 García, 2018; Del Barrio-García & Prados-Peña, 2019). Furthermore, few studies to date have  
39 addressed the formation of loyalty toward heritage brand extensions. Thus, the present research  
40 seeks to advance the existing knowledge about heritage brand extensions and, in particular,  
41 about the process of building tourist loyalty toward such brand extensions, taking into account  
42 tourist perceptions of the extension in terms of brand image and attitudes (Aaker, 1991), as well  
43 as the strength of the parent brand measured in terms of brand preference (Kim et al., 2019). A  
44 further original contribution of the present study is that it responds to the current lacuna  
45 regarding the moderating factors that determine visitor loyalty to heritage brand extensions.  
46 Specifically, it focuses on two key factors taken from the academic literature on extensions that  
47 have scarcely been examined in the heritage field: brand extension authenticity (Lu et al., 2015)  
48 and brand extension fit (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Evangeline & Ragel, 2016).

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Cultural heritage and destination management

As competition between tourist destinations is increasingly fierce, it is necessary to identify factors that contribute to generating competitive advantages (Pike & Page, 2014) and effective differentiation from the offers of destinations with similar characteristics that are easily substituted (Pike, 2005). The destination brand is one of the key resources in achieving differentiation (Pike, 2009). Authors including Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2005) hold that marketing strategies based on brand management that increases (or at least maintains) brand equity, that enables the differentiation of products through the brand, and that creates positive associations are essential in facing the challenges arising from today's increasingly complex and dynamic markets. On this premise, the academic literature dealing with destination brand management considers the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model developed by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) to be the appropriate instrument to measure and evaluate destination performance and customer perceptions about the brand associated with the destination (Chekalina, Fuchs, & Lexhagen, 2018; Frías-Jamilena et al., 2017).

In the tourist destination context, Kladou and Kehagias (2014) introduce the concept of destination brand equity and define it as marketing activities to create a logo, name, symbol, or other graphic elements of the brand to identify and differentiate a destination from its competitors. Various studies show that achieving high destination brand equity is equivalent to achieving significant competitive advantage (Frías et al., 2017; Pike, 2009). Within the management of heritage sites, the recognition that comes with the WH brand generates a differential effect in consumer response in terms of: the tourist's preference for such destinations (King, 2011); its positive effect on tourism demand patterns (Poria et al., 2011); the volume of visitors generated around the heritage destination (Boyd & Timothy, 2006); increased tourist confidence (Hassan & Rahman, 2015); and significant potential to develop brand extensions (Kim et al., 2019). With regard to this latter aspect, the brand extension strategy has been shown to build powerful brands and achieve important competitive advantages. The brand extension strategy has been widely addressed in the scholarly literature dealing with tangible goods. However, very few studies have been conducted in the service sector context and, more specifically, in the context of heritage tourist destinations, pointing to the need for more extensive research in this realm (Kim et al., 2019; Del Barrio-García & Prados-Peña, 2019).

In the context of heritage site management, museums deserve special mention as they constitute something of a magnet with which to attract visitors to heritage destinations. A number of authors have examined the process of brand equity-formation in museums (Caldwell, 2000; Camarero et al., 2012). These latter authors introduce the cultural brand equity (CBE) concept and propose five determining factors that affect its formation in artistic and cultural exhibitions: (a) brand quality; (b) brand values; (c) brand loyalty; (d) brand recognition; and (e) brand uniqueness. These authors found that CBE exerted a significant effect on tourist future visit intention—a fundamental dimension of heritage brand loyalty.

### 2.2. Brand extensions

Strategic brand extension is defined as the use of an established brand name (or other related references) to launch a new product category (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Keller, 2013). Strategic brand extension encourages consumers to transfer their positive perceptions and attitudes regarding the parent brand to the extension (Aaker & Keller, 1990). According to Keller (2013), the success of the extension is mainly reliant on the benefits with which the main brand provides it. As long as the extension is well managed, it can provide a source of additional income for the firm, in addition to achieving an improved parent brand image (Shahrokh, Sedghiani, & Ghasemi, 2012). Furthermore, the use of this strategy reduces the costs associated with launching a new brand name and increases the chances of success in a new category (Buil, Chernatony, & Hem, 2009; Chen & Liu, 2004); reduces communication costs (Aaker, 1990; Aaker & Keller, 1990), and leverages the brand equity of the parent brand, which facilitates market acceptance of the extension (D'Astous et al., 2007) by transferring positive affect to it

1 (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Kim & John, 2008). The literature finds that brand extensions can  
2 reduce customer perceived risk (Aaker & Keller, 1990), even if the customer has no prior  
3 experience of the parent brand (DelVecchio, 2000). All of these benefits lead many firms to  
4 seek to create positive mental connections in the minds of consumers by branding their  
5 extensions with their “parental heritage” (Miniard et al., 2018).

6 However, firms that opt to make use of a brand extension strategy must analyze their decision  
7 very carefully, taking into account the perceptions and preferences of consumers toward the  
8 main brand. As noted by Ozretic-Dosen et al. (2018) and Völckner and Sattler (2006), the parent  
9 brand plays a critical role in the future success of the brand extension, as does how it is  
10 evaluated by consumers (Czellar, 2003; Völckner & Sattler, 2006). There is much academic  
11 research providing data on how consumers evaluate brand extensions (Aaker & Keller, 1990;  
12 Boisvert & Ashill, 2018; Buil et al., 2009; Czellar, 2003; Eren-Erdogmus, Akgun, & Arda,  
13 2018; Hem, de Chernatony, & Iversen, 2003; Miniard et al., 2018; Völckner & Sattler, 2006; Wu  
14 & Yen, 2007). The success of the extension depends on many factors, but two stand out in  
15 particular: the degree fit perceived by the consumer between the parent brand and the extension  
16 (Buil et al., 2009; Eren-Erdogmus et al., 2018) and the degree of authenticity perceived between  
17 the extension and the main brand (Boisvert & Ashill, 2018; Prados-Peña & Del Barrio-García,  
18 2018; Spiggle et al., 2012). The degree of perceived fit refers to the degree of proximity that  
19 consumers perceive between the parent brand and the extension—that is, the degree of  
20 congruence between the two. And the degree of authenticity is the extent to which, in the  
21 consumer’s opinion, an extension is legitimately and culturally consistent with the parent brand.  
22 This determines the degree of acceptance of the extension in the market.

23 However, even though these two factors are important, Miniard et al. (2018) warn that they may  
24 not be enough to ensure the success of an extension and that the connection between the parent  
25 brand and the extension needs to form a *mental* presence—that is, a mental association needs to  
26 occur when consumers are evaluating products or services, forming consideration sets, and  
27 making their choices. Specifically, the authors refer to this mental association as the extension’s  
28 parental association. In the case of heritage brands carrying the WH hallmark, this association is  
29 very strong as a result of the strong mental presence the brand enjoys in the mind of the  
30 consumer.

31 Most of the extant literature dealing with brand extension and the factors that affect its success  
32 has focused on tangible assets (Lahiri & Gupta, 2005; Van Riel et al., 2001). Much more scant,  
33 however, is the literature addressing brand extensions in the service sector (Sichtmann et al.,  
34 2017), the tourist destination context (Kim et al., 2019), and particularly destinations branded  
35 WH (Prados-Peña & Del Barrio-García, 2018; Del Barrio-García & Prados-Peña, 2019). As  
36 noted by Kim et al. (2019), despite the known benefits of the brand extension strategy, to date it  
37 has not been sufficiently addressed in the tourist destination literature. These authors find that  
38 the perceived fit between the destination parent brand and its brand extension influences the  
39 brand equity-formation of the extension, demonstrating the viability of this type of extension as  
40 an alternative marketing strategy for tourist destinations. More specifically in the area of WH  
41 destinations, Prados-Peña and Del Barrio-García (2018) demonstrate that there is a transfer of  
42 positive affect from the heritage destination parent brand toward the brand extension. This  
43 transfer is greater, the higher the degree of authenticity between the parent brand and the  
44 extension. More recently, these authors found that the degree of authenticity of a brand  
45 extension vis-à-vis a WH (parent brand) destination has a direct effect on the brand equity of the  
46 extension, as well as an indirect effect via brand extension credibility (Del Barrio-García and  
47 Prados-Peña, 2019).

### 54 ***2.3. The effect of parent brand preference on brand extension loyalty***

55 Consumer reactions to a given brand are manifested through preference toward that brand  
56 (Maymand & Razmi, 2017; Tucker, 1964), hence brand preference is a key aspect in  
57 understanding consumer choice behavior (Ebrahim et al., 2016). As consumers react to a brand  
58 based on their level of preference for it (Maymand & Razmi, 2017; Tucker, 1964), this is a  
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1 predictor of consumer choice (Ebrahim et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2019; Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000).  
2 Brand preference can be defined as the customer's inclination toward a particular brand (Chang  
3 & Liu, 2009), and it is a measure of consumer choice (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000; Tucker,  
4 1964). In the service context, Hellier et al. (2003) defined brand preference as "the extent to  
5 which the customer favours the designated service provided by his or her present company, in  
6 comparison to the designated service provided by other companies in his or her consideration  
7 set" (p. 1765). Nilson (2000) states that brand preference should be taken into account in  
8 managing the brand, while Jiang, Luk, and Cardinali (2018) affirm that it leads to an emotional  
9 response. Lin (2002) contends that brand choice plays a crucial role in product development,  
10 stating: "Businesses that want to develop new products or expand their product line can use  
11 brand preference as a key factor in allocating resources to develop effective product strategies"  
12 (p. 259). Some scholars have noted that consumers display a preference for brands with high  
13 brand equity (Chang & Liu, 2009; Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995; de Chernatony, Harris, &  
14 Christodoulides, 2004; Jalilvand et al., 2016). Keller (1993) holds brand preference to be an  
15 essential prerequisite for brand equity and an antecedent of brand loyalty.  
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17 In the context of cultural heritage brands, Ryan and Silvanto (2009) find that, as the WH brand  
18 is so coveted, heritage sites that carry the WH hallmark generate high brand equity, stimulating  
19 positive feelings and attitudes among different target audiences. The WH hallmark also "offers a  
20 promise of value and differentiation" (Ryan & Silvanto, 2009, p. 292). Therefore, based on  
21 Keller's (1993) definition of CBBE, WH-branded heritage sites have distinctive characteristics  
22 that render them preferable compared to sites that do not enjoy this hallmark.  
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24 On the other hand, according to Ryan and Silvanto (2009), the WH brand is perceived as a  
25 measure of guaranteed quality and authenticity that attests to the artistic, cultural, and historical  
26 importance of the site, rendering it a highly credible brand. Hall and Piggin (2003) also note that  
27 the recognition of a heritage site as worthy of WH branding increases its international visibility  
28 and makes the site more appealing from the tourist's point of view (Pavlič et al., 2020). In turn,  
29 this increases the level of confidence among tourists (Hassan & Rahman, 2015) and heightens  
30 the brand equity they present (Poria et al., 2011). In short, WH-branded sites enjoy high brand  
31 preference and make perfect candidates for generating brand extensions that are readily  
32 accepted in the market (Del Barrio-García & Prados-Peña, 2019).  
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34 Turning to brand loyalty, this is considered a major dimension of CBBE (Frías, Polo &  
35 Rodríguez, 2017; Im et al., 2012; Yoo et al., 2000). Engel and Blackwell (1982) describe it as a  
36 complex concept associated with an attitudinal or behavioral approach. That is, brand loyalty is  
37 achieved via consumer responses in the form of preferences, attitudes, and behaviors in relation  
38 to a brand. As a concept, loyalty has been widely discussed in the academic literature  
39 (Monferrer et al., 2019; Oliver, 1999). According to Aaker (1991), loyalty is a measure of the  
40 relationship between the customer and the brand and constitutes the very heart of brand equity.  
41 This author defined brand loyalty as a customer's attachment or commitment to a brand. In  
42 highly competitive markets, firms need to take full advantage of a loyal customer base, since  
43 loyalty has important benefits for brands. These benefits include: greater market share  
44 (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001); the ability to charge higher prices (Aaker, 1996; Chaudhuri &  
45 Holbrook, 2001); greater sales-generation (Knox & Walker, 2001); the establishment of barriers  
46 to entry against competitors (Aaker, 1996); a reduction in customer-acquisition costs, by  
47 inhibiting customers' susceptibility to competitors' marketing efforts (Knox & Walker, 2001);  
48 and positive word-of-mouth (WOM) (Dick & Basu, 1994).  
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50 Specifically, in the field of tourism, destination loyalty manifests in tourists' intention to visit  
51 the destination and in their willingness to recommend it to others (Chi, 2011; Oppermann, 2000;  
52 Polo-Peña, Frías-Jamilena, & Rodríguez Molina, 2013). Pike (2007) holds that the brand loyalty  
53 concept has received little attention from the marketing scholarship dealing with destinations  
54 and that greater research is required.  
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56 According to Keller (2013), brand preference exerts a significant influence on brand loyalty.  
57 Also, Baalbaki and Guzmán (2016) and Seo and Park (2018) show this influence in their  
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1 studies. According to Bhat and Reddy (2001), when a consumer is exposed to a new brand  
2 extension for the first time, in the absence of previous references about it (as it is new to the  
3 market), they will derive their references from the knowledge and experience they have of the  
4 main brand. Therefore, parent brand associations play a pivotal role in the formation of  
5 consumers' initial evaluations of the brand extension (Bhat & Reddy, 2001). It is well  
6 documented that consumers transfer the associations of the parent brand to its extensions (Aaker  
7 & Keller, 1990; Boush & Loken, 1991), hence it can be concluded that new brand extensions  
8 face a lower level of risk if they pertain to parent brands with high brand loyalty (Rundle-Thiele  
9 & Mackay, 2001). Brands that enjoy high brand equity, then, will be evaluated more favorably  
10 by consumers, leading them to display greater preference toward them (Chang & Liu, 2009) and  
11 greater loyalty, compared to those brands with lower brand equity (Chinomona, Mahlangu, &  
12 Poole, 2013). Therefore, given that heritage brands featuring the WH hallmark enjoy high brand  
13 equity (Ryan & Silvanto, 2009), they can be expected to generate high tourist preference, which  
14 will be transferred to their brand extensions along with greater loyalty toward those extensions.  
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16 The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

17 *H1: The greater the preference for the parent heritage brand, the greater the brand*  
18 *extension loyalty.*  
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#### 21 **2.4. The mediating role of brand extension attitude and image**

22 Mitchell and Olson (1981, p. 318) define attitude as “as an individual's internal evaluation of an  
23 object such as a branded product”. According to these authors, “the attitudes should be useful  
24 predictors of consumers' behavior toward a product”. Brand evaluation therefore plays an  
25 important role in shaping consumer attitudes toward the brand (Esch et al., 2006). Reast (2005)  
26 has shown that brand extension attitude will be more favorable when the consumer has  
27 confidence in the parent brand (Reast, 2005), is committed to it (Völckner & Sattler, 2006) or is  
28 loyal to it (Hem & Iversen, 2003; Park & Kim, 2001).  
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30 According to Shimp (2010), attitude is also a reliable predictor of consumer behavior toward a  
31 brand, as it has an enormous capacity to influence purchase intentions (Zarantonello & Schmitt,  
32 2013). Positive brand attitude arising from consumer evaluation is manifested not only in the  
33 consumer's continuous preference for the brand (Wu & Wang, 2011) but also in a positive  
34 effect on their purchase intention (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Other authors also argue that brand  
35 attitude is a key determinant of brand loyalty (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Oliver, 1999), finding a  
36 positive and significant effect (Chaudhuri, 1999; Liu et al., 2012).  
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38 In the tourist destination context, Um and Crompton (1990) found that tourist prior attitude has  
39 a determining influence on tourist destination selection. Similarly, Lee (2009) and Jalilvand and  
40 Samiei (2012) found that tourist prior attitude affects future behavior. Therefore, it can be  
41 expected that the more favorable the tourist's attitude becomes toward a brand extension, the  
42 greater the loyalty they will display toward it.  
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44 On this premise, the following hypotheses are proposed:  
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46 *H2: The greater the preference for the parent heritage brand, the more favorable the*  
47 *brand-extension attitude.*  
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49 *H3: The more favorable the brand extension attitude, the greater the brand extension*  
50 *loyalty.*  
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52 Brand image is defined as “consumer perceptions of and preferences for a brand, as reflected by  
53 the various types of brand associations held in consumers' memory” (Keller & Brexendorf,  
54 2019). Brand image can be regarded as a key element in understanding how consumers feel  
55 about a brand and whether there is a positive relationship between the two (Plumeyer et al.,  
56 2019). It has also been considered a relevant construct in the study of consumer behavior since  
57 the 1950s (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Brand associations, on the other hand, facilitate  
58 consumers' decision-making process as they provide the basis for differentiation, provide a  
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1 reason to purchase, and create positive feelings toward the brand (Aaker, 1990). Furthermore,  
2 according to Aaker (1992, 1996), brand associations are one of the constituent elements of  
3 brand equity. In the literature, brand image has often been used as a substitute for brand  
4 associations (Bose, Roy, & Tiwari, 2016), and indeed brand image does influence brand  
5 preference (Lin, 2002). In this sense, consumers respond by preferring the brand that enjoys a  
6 superior perceived image over other competing brands (Lin, 2002; Raji, Rashid, & Ishak, 2019).  
7 More specifically, according to Raji et al. (2019), consumers trust brand images (both functional  
8 and hedonic) and subsequently respond favorably to them via purchase or preference. Various  
9 studies have demonstrated the link between brand image and loyalty (Cretu & Brodie, 2007).

10 The literature on tourist destinations has shown that the tourist's prior image of the destination  
11 is a key factor in their choice the destination to visit and in their subsequent evaluation of the  
12 trip (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Those destinations with a strong and positive image are more  
13 likely to be selected (Pavlić et al., 2020). Chi and Qu (2008) found that the image of a  
14 destination directly affects the tourist's behavioral intention—specifically, revisit intention,  
15 which is a key dimension of loyalty. In heritage tourism, it is well known that cultural assets are  
16 an important resource for the development of such tourist destinations (Carbone, 2016; Pavlić et  
17 al., 2020). In particular, heritage sites carrying the WH brand generate exceptional interest  
18 thanks to this universal and highly-recognizable hallmark that constitutes a true heritage brand  
19 (Kim et al., 2019). Several studies have also demonstrated the relationship between destination  
20 image and destination loyalty (Bianchi et al., 2011; Boo et al., 2009; Pike et al., 2010; Martins,  
21 2015; Polo-Peña et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2014). In their studies dealing with brand extensions  
22 in particular, Anwar et al. (2011) and Martinez, Montaner, and Pina (2009) confirmed the effect  
23 of brand image on brand loyalty. On this basis, the following hypotheses are proposed:  
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26 *H4. The greater the preference for the parent heritage brand, the more favorable the*  
27 *brand-extension image.*

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29 *H5. The more favorable the brand-extension image, the greater the brand-extension*  
30 *loyalty.*

### 31 32 33 34 **2.5. The moderating effect of brand extension fit and brand extension authenticity**

35 Scholars define brand extension fit as the perceived similarity (in terms of product category or  
36 usage situation) and relevance of the parent brand's associations (attributes or benefits) relative  
37 to the brand extension (Bouch & Loken, 1991; Broniarczyk & Alba, 1994). The success of  
38 brand extensions depends to a great extent on how they are evaluated by consumers (Buil et al.,  
39 2009; Park et al., 1991; Völckner & Sattler, 2006), with many studies considering fit to be one  
40 of the key factors in an extension's success (Buil et al., 2008; Park et al., 1991; Völckner &  
41 Sattler, 2006) and a necessary condition for a positive evaluation of the extension (Eren-  
42 Erdogmus et al., 2018). Although there are no studies dealing specifically with the moderating  
43 role of the fit between the parent brand and the extension on the antecedent relationships of  
44 loyalty-formation proposed here, some authors do suggest that this factor can be considered a  
45 moderator of the subjects' behavioral response to brand extensions.  
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48 On this point, a considerable number of scholars affirm that consumers' perceptions of fit or  
49 similarity exert a strong effect on their attitude toward the extension (Aaker & Keller, 1990;  
50 Park et al, 1991; Prados-Peña & Del Barrio-García, 2018; Wang et al., 2017). Perceived fit  
51 facilitates the transfer of knowledge of, and/or affect toward, the parent brand to its extension  
52 (Aaker & Keller 1990; Boush et al., 1987; Boush & Loken, 1991; Czellar, 2003; Fedorikhin,  
53 Park, & Thomson, 2008). Furthermore, the degree of consumer loyalty toward brand extensions  
54 has been found to increase as the degree of fit between the parent brand and the extension  
55 increases (Evangeline & Ragel, 2016). Fedorikhin et al. (2008) also showed that certain  
56 dimensions of loyalty—such as purchase intent, the willingness to pay a premium price, and  
57 WOM—were affected by the degree of fit between the parent brand and the extension.  
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1 In light of these findings, it is contended that the greater the degree of fit between the parent  
2 brand and the brand extension, the more likely consumers are to evaluate the extension  
3 positively. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

4 *H6: Brand extension fit positively moderates the antecedent relationships of brand extension*  
5 *loyalty-formation.*

6 A further important concept that has generated interest among scholars in the field of brand  
7 extension in recent years is that of brand extension authenticity (Spiggle et al., 2012). According  
8 to these authors, “consumers perceive a brand extension as authentic when it preserves and  
9 sustains the uniqueness, originality, heritage, values, and essence of the parent brand. As such,  
10 an authentic brand extension conveys internal consistency even as it stretches in a new  
11 direction” (Spiggle et al., 2012, p. 969). Meanwhile, the authenticity of the parent brand lends  
12 legitimacy to the extension, validating its claims as the rightful heir of the parent. Staying true  
13 to itself, an authentic parent brand resists the pressure to be something it is not and avoids  
14 illegitimate extensions (Spiggle et al., 2012).

15 Beyond the scope of brand extensions, Gilmore and Pine (2007) reviewed numerous studies  
16 concerning the brand authenticity construct and determined that it is a critical driver of brand  
17 loyalty. Perceived brand authenticity provokes strong emotional ties between a consumer and  
18 the brand, which will contribute to improving consumer loyalty in terms of purchase intention,  
19 willingness to pay a premium price, or tolerance of poor experiences of the brand (Fritz,  
20 Schoenmueller, and Bruhn, 2017). In the hospitality context, Rodríguez-Lopez, Del Barrio-  
21 García, and Alcántara-Pilar (2020) show that the level of restaurant authenticity, as perceived by  
22 visitors during their dining experience, is an antecedent of restaurant brand equity-formation. In  
23 the specific context of ethnic restaurants, Lu et al. (2015) showed that consumers’ perceptions  
24 of a restaurant’s authenticity influenced their loyalty toward the establishment. Likewise, Choi  
25 et al. (2015), in their study of the fashion sector, found that perceived brand authenticity  
26 affected loyalty.

27 In the context of tourist destinations, Chen et al. (2020) demonstrated that destination brand  
28 authenticity exerts a direct and positive effect on destination recommendation. In the cultural  
29 tourism and, in particular, WH-branded heritage sites, Shen, Guo, and Wu (2014) found that  
30 involvement, attitude, and authenticity all had a significant effect on tourist loyalty. Morhart et  
31 al. (2015) concluded that authenticity is closely related to brand attitude, such that the latter  
32 is indicative of the presence of authenticity. Butcher, Sung, and Raynes-Goldie (2019) and  
33 Spiggle et al., 2012) found that, as brand extension authenticity increases, so too does positive  
34 brand extension attitude. Del Barrio-García and Prados-Peña (2019) demonstrated that brand  
35 extension authenticity had a direct and positive effect on extension brand equity. That is, the  
36 greater the brand extension authenticity, the more positive the tourist’s brand extension attitude.  
37 Finally, Fritz et al. (2017) contend that brand extension authenticity has a more marked positive  
38 effect on the response of those consumers with a lower preference for the parent brand in  
39 question.

40 In line with these findings, it is hypothesized that:

41 *H7: Brand extension authenticity positively moderates the antecedent relationships of brand*  
42 *extension loyalty-formation.*

43 Figure 1 summarizes the relationships (direct effects, mediation, and moderation) proposed in  
44 the research hypotheses.

45 (Figure 1 about here)

### 46 **3. Methodology**

#### 47 **3.1. Scope of the study**

1 In 1984, the Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and the Generalife (MCAG) in Granada,  
2 Spain, was denominated a Site of Cultural Interest and was placed on UNESCO's World  
3 Heritage List. Registering 2.8 million visits in 2018, it is the most-visited monument in Spain  
4 and one of the most popular tourist sites in the whole of Europe. An economic impact study  
5 conducted in 2010 concluded that the MCAG brings more than 113 million Euros in taxes per  
6 year into the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, with a contribution to the gross added  
7 value of Andalusia of more than 409 million Euros and turnover of almost 750 million Euros. It  
8 also generates more than 10,000 jobs for Andalusia, over 6,000 of which correspond to the area  
9 in closest geographical proximity to the heritage site, the City of Granada (Suriñach & Murillo,  
10 2013).

11 The visual symbols and iconography associated with the MCAG have been reproduced in a  
12 multitude of works of art and commercial establishments throughout its history, becoming a  
13 major benchmark for many national and international enterprises. The MCAG is therefore  
14 highly suitable as the framework for this empirical study as a parent heritage brand with the  
15 capacity to extend into different product categories.

### 16 **3.2. Independent variables and experimental stimuli**

17 To test the proposed hypotheses, an experimental design between-subjects was carried out: 2  
18 (high vs. low degree of fit between the parent brand and the extension) x 3 (high, moderate, and  
19 low degree of brand extension authenticity).

20 To manipulate the degree of authenticity, first, the aforementioned conceptual understanding of  
21 the term was taken into account: the consumer's perception of the extent to which a brand  
22 extension is legitimate and culturally consistent with the parent brand (Spiggle et al., 2012).  
23 Brand extension authenticity can also be determined via the benefit of indexical cues vs. the  
24 benefit of iconic cues. Indexical cues are the attributes of a brand or its behavior; they provide  
25 objective evidence and thus verification of what the brand claims to be (Morhart et al., 2015).  
26 By contrast, iconic cues convey feelings or impressions about the brand's essence that influence  
27 perceived brand authenticity (Ewing et al., 2012). Bearing these factors in mind, the levels of  
28 brand extension authenticity were manipulated, based on both symbolic and normative aspects  
29 of the brand (logo and typeface) together with its identification with what the MCAG represents  
30 (brand name). To determine the different levels of authenticity, a focus group with senior and  
31 operational managers of the MCAG was held (see Appendix A), in which all these aspects were  
32 explored. It was agreed that three levels of brand extensions authenticity would be manipulated  
33 thus: (1) high level, which would correspond to use in the brand name, the logo and typeface of  
34 references to the MCAG; (2) moderate level of authenticity, which would correspond to use  
35 references to brand parent in the brand name only; and (3) low level of authenticity, where  
36 neither the name, nor the logo, nor the typeface would allude to the MCAG.

37 To manipulate the level of fit between the parent brand and the extension, the characteristic of  
38 'product category similarity' was chosen. To decide on the product category itself, a pretest was  
39 conducted among 250 university students from a marketing degree course, who all attended a  
40 lecture on brand extensions in which the concept of extension similarity was explained. They  
41 were then asked to indicate a list of product categories (and attributes within these) that, in their  
42 opinion, presented a greater vs. a lesser degree of similarity with the core activity of the MCAG,  
43 namely, cultural tourism (see Appendix B). The results showed that the product category  
44 perceived most consistent with/similar to the MCAG's primary activity was that of a hotel, and  
45 the least consistent/similar was that of a clothing and accessories business. These two product  
46 categories were used to manipulate the levels of the degree of brand extension fit: (1) low  
47 degree (clothes and accessories store) and (2) high degree (hotel).

48 To conduct the experiment, six stimuli were designed that would be shown to tourists for  
49 evaluation. These stimuli were in the form of promotional advertisements (flyers) (see  
50 Appendix C). Two fictitious brands were created, one for a hotel and the other for a clothes and  
51 accessories store. The reason for using a fictitious brand was to avoid a scenario in which the  
52 subjects might have prior brand awareness and attitudes, which could skew the response

1 (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2018). For each fictitious brand, three different flyers were created, all  
2 with the same layout and the central design elements of a brief description of the brand, its  
3 name, its logo, and a series of images. The only difference between the three versions was in the  
4 use of the authenticity attributes.

5 In the case of the hotel product category, the flyers sought to promote a typical Nasrid-style  
6 hotel located in the center of Granada. They included a brief description of the location of the  
7 hotel and its services and showed various images of typical Nasrid elements such as a courtyard,  
8 latticework features, and a decorative fountain. To convey a high level of brand extension  
9 authenticity in the flyer (T1), the name selected for the hotel was ‘Alhambra’, mirroring the key  
10 feature of the MCAG. The logo of the hotel was based on a detail taken from a miniature wall-  
11 tile formation typical of the monumental complex, and a characteristically Arabic typeface was  
12 used for the hotel name, which evoked the many inscriptions found at the Alhambra palace  
13 complex. To represent a moderate level of authenticity (T2), ‘Alhambra’ was again used as the  
14 name of the hotel, but the typeface chosen for the name was very distinct from the Arabic style  
15 of the MCAG, and the logo was based on an image of a flower rather than a typical Nasrid  
16 feature. The low degree of authenticity (T3) was achieved by applying a name, a logo, and a  
17 typeface that made no allusion to the MCAG.

18 The same design approach was taken for the clothing and accessories product category, and the  
19 flyers in this case featured a very similar number of words in their description of the products  
20 and their features. As in the case of the hotel, the design included three images of the  
21 establishment, and the name, typeface, and logo were altered to convey the three treatments  
22 denoting levels of authenticity. For the high level of authenticity (T4), the name ‘Treasures of  
23 the Alhambra’ was used, in clear reference to the MCAG, and both the typeface and logo were  
24 designed to be reminiscent of the Nasrid monument, in the same vein as T1. At the moderate  
25 level of authenticity (T5), the clothes store retained the name as a reference to the monumental  
26 complex, but both the logo and the typeface were very different from the visual style of the  
27 Nasrid palace (mirroring T2). Finally, to convey a low level of authenticity (T6), the brand  
28 name was changed to ‘Treasures of Al-Andalus’, making no direct reference to the MCAG  
29 either in the logo or the typeface.

### 30 **3.3. Sample**

31 The sample subjects were randomly selected from among tourists during their visit to the  
32 MCAG and were recruited at various ‘rest and relaxation’ points that had been set up within the  
33 grounds where they could take a short break from their tour. The interviewers, thoroughly  
34 briefed on the study, informed the tourists about the purpose of the research, and invited them to  
35 participate. Those who accepted were first asked a series of introductory questions. They were  
36 then shown the flyer corresponding to the particular treatment to which they had been assigned,  
37 and invited to read it carefully for a maximum of one minute. Finally, they were asked to  
38 respond to a questionnaire covering the dependent measures.

39 The final sample comprised 491 tourists and was well-balanced in terms of both degree of fit  
40 (274 high fit vs. 217 low fit) and authenticity (163 high authenticity; 163 moderate authenticity;  
41 165 low authenticity). The sample was also balanced in terms of socio-demographic variables  
42 (see Table 1).

43 (Table 1 about here)

### 44 **3.4. Dependent measures**

45 The measurement scales used for the present study were based on scales that have been tested  
46 and validated in other contexts by different authors and were adapted to the study context (see  
47 Table 3). Parent brand preference was measured via a 3-item, 5-point Likert scale adapted from  
48 Chang and Liu (2009). Brand extension loyalty was measured using a 5-point, 3-item Likert  
49 scale adapted from that of Zeithaml et al. (1996), which has also been used by other authors  
50 including Boo et al. (2009) and Im et al. (2012). Brand extension attitude was measured on a 3-  
51

1 item, 5-point Likert scale adapted from the work of Mittal (1990) and Keller (1987). Brand  
2 image was measured using a 3-item, 5-point Likert scale also adapted from other previous  
3 studies such as that of García, Gómez, and Molina (2012).

4 The questionnaire was also designed to measure two other variables that were used as  
5 covariables: level of knowledge of the product category and general attitude toward the flyer.  
6 With regard to the former, the individual's level of knowledge of the product category is a  
7 construct considered by the academic literature on consumer behavior to be an important  
8 moderator of their response (Alba & Hutchinson, 2000). Customers prefer to trust the products  
9 or services of a brand of which they have a high degree of knowledge over those of a brand of  
10 which they know little (Lu, Gursoy, & Lu, 2015). The tourist's level of prior knowledge of the  
11 product category to which the brand extension belonged was measured using a 5-point, 4-item  
12 Likert scale adapted from other previous research (Kalro et al., 2013).

13  
14 Turning to attitude toward the flyer, Mitchell and Olson (1981) analyzed the role of ad attitude  
15 within the process of attitude-formation and attitudinal change regarding the brand. This  
16 variable was deemed to be important for the experimental design, to control tourists' attitudes  
17 toward the flyer to which they were exposed. This variable was measured on a 5-point, 6-item  
18 Likert scale adapted from other previous studies (Neese & Taylor, 1994; Shimp & Dyer, 1978).

19  
20 Finally, the questionnaire also included several measures, as recommended by Spiggle et al.  
21 (2012), to be used as a manipulation check for the experimental factors (fit and authenticity). To  
22 ensure the correct manipulation of the brand extension fit, a 2-item, 5-point Likert scale for  
23 similarity or perceived congruence between the brand extension and the parent brand was used:  
24 "Please indicate the extent to which you agree (5) or disagree (1) with the following statements:  
25 (1) *My image of the brand [hotel/clothes and accessories store] is consistent with that of the*  
26 *MCAG; (2) My image of the brand [hotel/clothes and accessories store] is similar to that of the*  
27 *MCAG". To control the correct manipulation of brand extension authenticity, a 5-point Likert*  
28 *scale with one single item that measured one of the main characteristics of authenticity was*  
29 *used—namely, what Spiggle et al. (2012) termed "self-brand connection": "Please indicate the*  
30 *extent to which you agree (5) or disagree (1) with the following statement: Clients of*  
31 *[hotels/clothes and accessories stores] share interests similar to those of visitors to the MCAG.*  
32

#### 33 34 35 **4. Data analysis**

##### 36 ***4.1. Analysis of the psychometric properties of the scales***

37  
38 Prior to performing the data analysis and testing the proposed hypotheses, the validity and  
39 reliability of the multi-item scales were examined by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis  
40 (CFA) with Lisrel 8.8 software. The robust maximum likelihood (RML) estimation method was  
41 used, as the variables in this case did not follow a normal multivariate distribution (Del Barrio  
42 & Luque, 2012; Hair et al., 2010). Table 2 shows the results of the CFA for the brand  
43 preference, attitude, image, and loyalty scales, together with the control variables, level of  
44 knowledge of the product category, and attitude toward the flyer. The overall goodness-of-fit  
45 indicators were within the recommended limits (SB Chi-Square: 291.23; p-value: 0.00;  
46 RMSEA: 0.05; CFI: 0.99), the standardized loadings were significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) and of a high  
47 magnitude ( $> 0.70$ ), and the values for individual reliability of each indicator ( $R^2$ ) were above  
48 the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Del Barrio & Luque, 2012; Hair et al., 2010). Composite  
49 reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were both above the recommended limits  
50 of 0.80 and 0.50, respectively. Finally, the different constructs were shown to have adequate  
51 discriminant validity (see Table 3), according to the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion.

52  
53 With all the variables confirmed to be valid and reliable, an indicator variable was then  
54 calculated (based on the mean of the scores of the different items) for each of the constructs  
55 under study.  
56

57  
58 (Table 2)

#### 4.2. Manipulation check

To verify the correct manipulation of the independent variable, brand extension fit, an ANOVA was performed, in which the independent factor was ‘degree of fit’ (with two manipulated levels, high and low) and the dependent variable was ‘perceived similarity between the brand extension and the MCAG’. This variable was measured using 2 items and presented a high correlation (0.86), which enabled us to create an indicator variable as the mean of both items. The results showed that this experimental factor was correctly manipulated between subjects, ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the mean values for perceived similarity.

To check the manipulation of the other experimental factor, brand extension authenticity, an ANOVA was performed. In this case, the ANOVA was based on authenticity (high, moderate, low) as an independent factor and the self-brand connection as a dependent variable. Again, the results showed the correct manipulation of this independent variable, ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the mean scores were observed.

#### 4.3. Testing the hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested using a moderated mediation regression model via OLS and bootstrap estimation with PROCESS 3.4 software (10,000 sub-samples) (Hayes, 2017). The independent variable in the model was parent brand (MCAG) preference; the dependent variable was brand extension loyalty; the mediating variables were brand extension attitude and brand extension image; the moderating variables were brand extension fit and brand extension authenticity; and the covariables were tourist degree of knowledge of the product category and tourist attitude toward the flyer.

Tables 4, 5, and 6 show the results obtained for the direct effects and interaction. Parent brand preference exerted a direct, positive, and significant effect on brand extension loyalty, in line with H1 ( $\beta_{MCAGPreference \rightarrow ExtensionLoyalty}$ : 0.14;  $p$ : 0.00). This direct effect is mediated via brand extension attitude, as the effects of parent brand preference on brand extension attitude ( $\beta_{Preference \rightarrow ExtensionAttitude}$ : 0.12;  $p$ : 0.00) and brand extension attitude on brand extension loyalty were positive and significant ( $\beta_{ExtensionAttitude \rightarrow ExtensionLoyalty}$ : 0.20;  $p$ : 0.00). These results thus also confirm H2 and H3. The direct effect of parent brand preference on brand extension loyalty is mediated by extension image. Preference also exerts a direct and significant effect on image ( $\beta_{MCAGPreference \rightarrow ExtensionImage}$ : 0.11;  $p$ : 0.00), as does image on brand extension loyalty ( $\beta_{ExtensionImage \rightarrow ExtensionLoyalty}$ : 0.29;  $p$ : 0.00), as hypothesized in H4 and H5, respectively.

H6 proposed that the degree of fit between the parent brand and the extension would exert a moderating effect on the antecedent relationships of heritage brand extension loyalty. The results showed that the degree of fit has a significant direct effect on brand extension image ( $\beta_{Fit \rightarrow ExtensionImage}$ : 0.15;  $p$ : 0.01) and on brand extension loyalty ( $\beta_{Fit \rightarrow ExtensionLoyalty}$ : 0.32;  $p$ : 0.01). This means that when the degree of fit between the parent brand and the brand extension is high (hotel), the tourist’s image of, and loyalty toward, that extension is significantly higher than when the degree of fit is low (clothing and accessories). Turning to the interaction effects of the degree of fit with the rest of the antecedent variables, a significant effect was only observed in the case of degree of fit and attitude on loyalty ( $\beta_{Fit \times ExtensionAttitude \rightarrow ExtensionLoyalty}$ : -0.39;  $p$ : 0.00). Degree of fit and image were found to exert a quasi-significant effect on loyalty ( $\beta_{Fit \times ExtensionImage \rightarrow ExtensionLoyalty}$ : 0.32;  $p$ : 0.06). As shown in Figure 2, the moderating effect of fit occurs in a different direction in the two cases. In the case of the moderating effect of fit and attitude, the increase in loyalty toward the MCAG brand extension as a result of the increase in attitude occurs only when the degree of fit is low (the clothing and accessories brand extension) and not when it is high (hotel brand extension). By contrast, in the case of the moderating effect of fit and image, the increase in loyalty occurs in both high- and low-fit scenarios, albeit the increase is greater when there is a high degree of fit. These results confirm hypothesis H6, that the

1 degree of brand extension fit moderates the antecedent relationships of brand extension loyalty-  
2 formation. However, turning to the other moderator under analysis, degree of authenticity, no  
3 significant interaction effect was observed ( $p > 0.10$ ). Hypothesis H7 therefore cannot be  
4 confirmed.

5 Nevertheless, the results do show a significant effect for both covariables. In the case of the  
6 regression model with brand extension loyalty as a dependent variable, the ‘degree of product  
7 category knowledge’ coefficient is positive, significant, and of moderate magnitude  
8 ( $\beta_{\text{CatKnowledge} \rightarrow \text{ExtensionLoyalty}}$ : 0.21;  $p$ : 0.00), as is also the case with attitude toward the flyer  
9 ( $\beta_{\text{AttitudeFlyer} \rightarrow \text{ExtensionLoyalty}}$ : 0.26;  $p$ : 0.00).

10 (Figure 2 about here)

11  
12 (Table 4 about here)

13  
14 (Table 5 about here)

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16 (Table 6 about here)

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23  
24 PROCESS software enables the direct and indirect conditional effects of the independent  
25 variable (in this case, parent heritage brand preference) on the dependent variable (brand  
26 extension loyalty) to be calculated, taking into account the different levels of the moderators  
27 (degree of fit and degree of authenticity) (see Table 7). It can be observed that the direct effect  
28 is positive and significant in the case of moderate and high brand extension authenticity, but not  
29 significant in the case of low authenticity—in both cases, regardless of the degree of fit.  
30 Furthermore, the greater the degree of authenticity, the greater the transfer of preference from  
31 the parent brand to the brand extension. The conditional indirect effect of parent heritage brand  
32 preference on brand extension loyalty via attitude is significant and positive only in the case of  
33 low degree of fit (clothing and accessories) and high brand extension authenticity (where more  
34 extensive references to the parent brand are made). In contrast, the indirect effect via the other  
35 mediator, brand extension image, is significant when there is a high degree of fit (hotel) and the  
36 degree of authenticity is moderate–high.  
37  
38

39  
40 (Table 7 about here)

## 41 42 43 **5. Conclusions**

44 Several studies have examined brand preference within brand strategy (Jalilvand et al., 2016).  
45 However, there remains a lacuna in the literature regarding the relationship between brand  
46 preferences and other constructs such as brand attitude, image, and loyalty, particularly in the  
47 literature dealing with brand extensions. The present study responds to this research gap by  
48 examining the effect that parent brand preference exerts on brand extension loyalty, and it does  
49 so in the novel context of WH-branded heritage sites. Using an experimental design, a model of  
50 heritage brand extension loyalty-formation was proposed and validated that takes into account  
51 the tourist’s previous evaluations (preferences) regarding the parent brand and the mediating  
52 effect of two of the most important constructs in determining consumer behavior, namely  
53 attitudes and image. The model is enriched by two moderating constructs of particular  
54 importance in brand extensions that have been analyzed jointly in only a few previous studies:  
55 brand extension fit and authenticity.  
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58 The results of the present research provide new insights into brand extension in the context of a  
59 heritage brand. First, the findings show that parent brand preference is a determining factor in  
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1 the individual's assessment of the brand extension, in line with previous research (Völckner &  
2 Sattler, 2006; Wernerfelt, 1988). It was found that the greater the tourist's heritage site (MCAG)  
3 parent brand preference, the greater their brand extension loyalty, this being measured in terms  
4 of purchase intention and recommendation. Second, the results show that the effect of  
5 preference on loyalty is actually mediated by brand extension attitude and image. It was also  
6 found that brand extension attitude has a mediating effect on the relationship between parent  
7 brand preference and brand extension loyalty. That is, parent heritage brand preference  
8 generates a transfer of affect toward the brand extension, which translates into a more positive  
9 attitude toward it and, in turn, positively affects loyalty-formation. This effect of attitude on  
10 loyalty is also in line with the findings of other previous studies (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001;  
11 Chen & Liu, 2004; Liu et al., 2012). The results also show that the main effect of preference on  
12 loyalty is mediated by brand extension image. Thus, parent brand preference enhances tourists'  
13 image of the brand extension, as a result of which brand extension loyalty is improved. Brand  
14 extension image is therefore found to be a further major driver of loyalty, echoing the findings  
15 of other previous studies (Martensen et al., 2000).  
16

17 However, based on these results, it cannot be concluded that the degree of brand extension  
18 authenticity plays any moderating role in the antecedent relationships of brand extension  
19 loyalty. Previous studies hold that this variable is an important factor in the sphere of brand  
20 extensions and that it will affect the formation of attitudes toward the extension (Spiggle et al.,  
21 2012), image (Lu et al., 2015), and loyalty (Lu et al., 2015; Spiggle et al., 2012). The study only  
22 found a positive and significant effect of brand extension authenticity on attitude  
23 ( $\beta_{\text{Authenticity} \rightarrow \text{ExtensionAttitude}}: 0.14; p: 0.00$ ), but no such effect on image or loyalty was observed, and  
24 no interaction effect of authenticity with the different antecedent variables of loyalty was  
25 identified. A possible reason for this result may be that the parent brand used in the research  
26 (MCAG) is a WH brand that is widely known and enjoys high brand equity. Such a brand may  
27 generate a very powerful transfer from the parent to the extension, regardless of the degree of  
28 authenticity tourists perceive that extension to have. However, the present analysis of the direct  
29 conditioned effects does show that, in the case of moderate and high levels of authenticity, the  
30 direct effect of parent brand preference on loyalty is significant—that is, when the tourist is  
31 exposed to a more authentic brand extension, this appears to positively influence the transfer of  
32 affect from the parent brand, resulting in brand extension loyalty.  
33  
34

35 The results also showed a degree of moderation exerted by the level of fit between the primary  
36 type of activity carried out by the MCAG and the brand extension in the relationships of attitude  
37 and image to brand extension loyalty. Thus, when the fit between the MCAG product category  
38 and its brand extension is high (in the present study, in the case of the hotel), the effects of  
39 attitude and image on brand extension loyalty are significantly greater than in the case of a low  
40 degree of fit (clothing and accessories business). However, it could not be demonstrated that the  
41 degree of fit moderates the antecedent effect of parent brand preference on brand extension  
42 loyalty, in contrast to the findings of the extant literature (Völckner & Sattler, 2006).  
43  
44

## 45 **6. Theoretical and managerial implications**

46 Brand extension strategy has been the object of scholarly study since the 1980s (Minirad et al.,  
47 2018). However, most studies have focused on brand extensions relating to tangible goods and,  
48 to a lesser extent, services (Sichtmann et al., 2017). The academic literature is particularly  
49 scarce in the context of heritage brands associated with heritage tourism destinations (Kim et al.,  
50 2019; Del Barrio-Garcia & Prados-Peña, 2019). The present work therefore represents an  
51 advancement on the little knowledge that has existed to date about market acceptance and  
52 success (in terms of loyalty) of brand extensions created by heritage destinations, especially  
53 those recognized with the WH hallmark. Some interesting theoretical implications for the  
54 scholarship can be derived from this research. First, parent brand preference has been shown to  
55 be an important factor influencing the probability that a brand extension will be successful.  
56 Second, the formation of positive brand extension image and attitude will enhance the positive  
57 benefits that parent heritage brand preference delivers in terms of the formation of brand  
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1 extension loyalty. Third, the degree of fit between the parent heritage brand and its extension  
2 acts as a moderator of those antecedent relationships, as does the degree of authenticity, albeit to  
3 a lesser extent.

4 These results have a range of implications for both managers of heritage organizations and  
5 managers of the businesses launched by such organizations as part of their brand extension  
6 strategy. One initial implication is. In this regard, the findings offer valuable information to the  
7 managers of heritage sites that can help them harness the strengths of the parent brand and  
8 generate optimal expectations and positive emotions that transfer across to the brand extension.  
9 This will enable managers to effectively differentiate, distinguish, and position the extension,  
10 leading to an increase in loyalty toward it, with all the advantages this brings: greater purchase  
11 intent, greater recommendation, the scope to charge premium prices, and so on. Heritage  
12 managers are therefore recommended to take these factors into account vis-à-vis any brand  
13 extension they intend to create from the parent heritage brand (for example, pertaining to  
14 merchandise). Similarly, those charged with managing the enterprises created out of the parent  
15 heritage brand must seek to create a positive image of, and attitude toward, the extension, as this  
16 will deliver benefits derived from increased loyalty.

17  
18 Parent brand preference, then, has been shown to be an important factor influencing the  
19 probability that a brand extension will be successful. Therefore, in line with the position of  
20 Nilson (2000), implementing actions to increase brand preference should be a priority task for  
21 managers who plan to carry out brand extension strategies, given the benefits of this preference  
22 for brand extensions. More specifically, by reinforcing and promoting customer preference for  
23 the WH parent brand, heritage site managers will be contributing to the success of any  
24 associated brand extensions: brand extension loyalty will be enhanced, which, in turn, will  
25 increase brand extension equity (Aaker, 1991). In this way, efficient brand management can  
26 help heritage sites enhance their contribution to the economic development of their respective  
27 territories, as noted by Domínguez-Pérez and Martín-Fernández (2015), rendering such sites  
28 drivers of economic growth and job-creation (Backman & Nilsson, 2016).

29  
30 At the same time, fostering positive attitudes toward the brand extension and its image, where  
31 there is a high degree of fit, will boost loyalty to the extension and, consequently, its brand  
32 equity. Therefore, it is crucial that, when heritage managers are considering the implementation  
33 of a brand extension strategy, they design extensions that are consistent with the primary  
34 activity delivered by the heritage site and are perceived as being entirely authentic, to thereby  
35 achieve more effective transfer of affect from the parent brand over to the extension. Similarly,  
36 managers of the commercial activity that constitutes the heritage brand extension must also take  
37 into account this finding: the greater the degree of congruence or similarity between the  
38 commercial activity and that of the heritage site, the more highly-rated that activity will be by  
39 customers and therefore the greater its brand equity.

## 40 41 42 43 44 **7. Future research**

45 As in any scientific investigation, the findings of this study give rise to many other questions  
46 and variables that could point to future research directions regarding the use of heritage brand  
47 extensions in tourist destinations. First, it would be interesting to examine the extent to which  
48 the product category might affect tourist response; hence, examining the moderating role of  
49 tourist involvement in the product category in building heritage brand extension loyalty could  
50 shed new light on this area. According to the seminal work of Kapferer and Laurent (1986), the  
51 subject's level of involvement with a certain product category is a major moderator of  
52 marketing stimuli. Some previous studies show that consumers who feel heavily involved with a  
53 product are more likely to accept new extensions (Albrecht et al., 2013; Choi et al., 2010), while  
54 others have found that product involvement contributes to the success of extensions and  
55 mitigates the negative impact of certain factors such as the low level of fit between the parent  
56 brand and the extension (Barone, 2005; Fedorikhin et al., 2008).

57  
58 Likewise, future works could analyze the degree to which other variables such as the tourist's  
59 involvement with the promotional message they have seen about the brand extension (in the  
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present case, via the flyers) may affect their responses to this type of extension. On this point, Laczniaak and Muehling (1993) and Del Barrio-García and Luque-Martínez (2003) already demonstrated the moderating power of this variable in the formation of attitudes and attitudinal change.

This study has focused on one category of heritage site in which a monumental complex (cultural site) constitutes the parent brand. It would be interesting for future studies to replicate this approach but to focus instead on other WH site categories in UNESCO's classification, such as 'natural sites' or 'mixed sites'. It would also be of great interest, from both a theoretical and a practical point of view, to analyze the extent to which cultural differences between countries may moderate tourist responses to brand extensions, as the effect of national culture on individuals' information-processing is already well-established in the literature (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2018).

Finally, a further interesting aspect to study, in light of the work of Miniard et al. (2018), would be the role played by the mental association created in the minds of tourists between the extension and its heritage parent brand at the time of the evaluation of the extension, and how this might affect the formation of brand extension loyalty in the case of this type of brand (that is, those carrying the WH hallmark).

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## Appendix A.

### Focus group interview guidelines

1. What do you understand by “authenticity of a heritage site”?
2. In your opinion, what kind of physical features would indicate that a heritage site is authentic?
3. More specifically, in the case of the Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and Generalife, in your view, what are its most emblematic and representative physical features?
4. Out of all the features you have named, which three do you believe most clearly reflect the authenticity of the Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and Generalife?
5. Imagine that the Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and Generalife launches a new business or brand using one of the aforementioned features to convey an image of authenticity. How do you think it should use those features when designing its messages so that the brand successfully projects that image of authenticity to its target publics?
6. On the basis of those three features that denote brand authenticity, how would you combine them to achieve different *levels* of authenticity (low, moderate, and high)?
7. What characteristics should a given business activity have in order for it to be perceived as very similar to a particular heritage site, such as the Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and Generalife, for instance?
8. In your view, which kinds of businesses would be the most similar to the activities of the Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and Generalife? And which would be the least similar?

**Appendix B.**

**Pretest questionnaire**

We are conducting a piece of research into potential brand extensions for the Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and Generalife (MCAG). Bearing in mind the MCAG's fundamental association with the fields of tourism and culture, please indicate a list of product categories that, in your opinion, present a lesser (1) vs. greater (7) degree of similarity with the core activity of the MCAG.

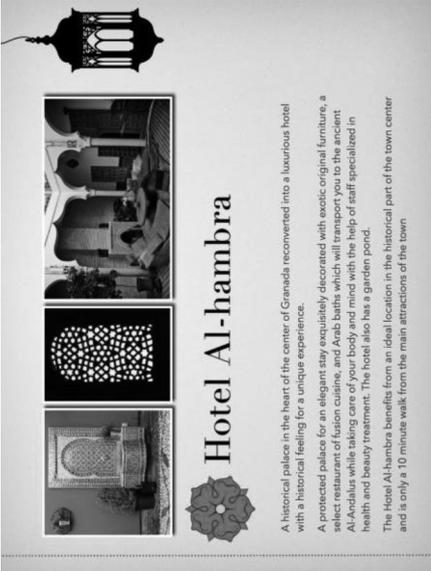
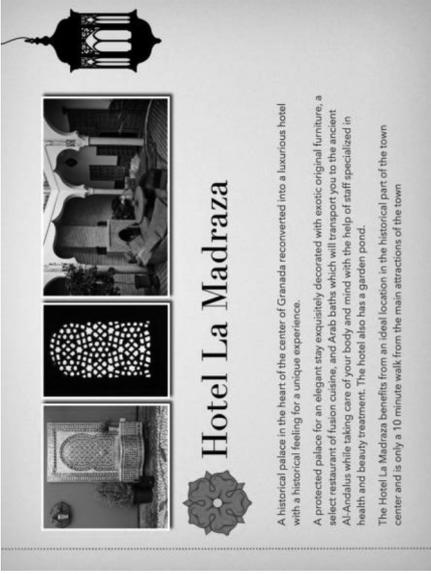
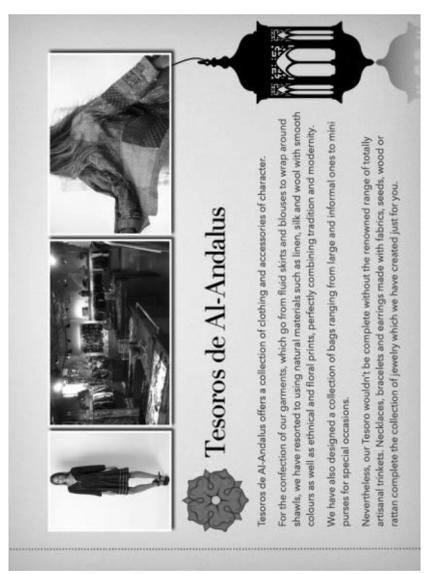
List of product categories (PCs)	Very low degree of similarity							Very high degree of similarity
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
PC1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
PC2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
PC3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Next, for each of the product categories named, please indicate the attributes that best characterize that category.

List of product categories
PC1
Attribute 1
Attribute 2
...
PC2
Attribute 1
Attribute 2
...
PC3
Attribute 1
Attribute 2
...

## Appendix C.

### Experimental stimuli

<p>T1. Hotel (high fit) flyer: high degree of brand extension authenticity</p>  <p><b>Al-hambra</b></p> <p>A historical palace in the heart of the center of Granada, reconvered into a luxurious hotel with a historical feeling for a unique experience.</p> <p>A protected palace for an elegant stay exquisitely decorated with exotic original furniture, a select restaurant of fusion cuisine, and Arab baths which will transport you to the ancient Al-Andalus while taking care of your body and mind with the help of staff specialized in health and beauty treatment. The hotel also has a garden pond.</p> <p>The Hotel Al-hambra benefits from an ideal location in the historical part of the town center and is only a 10 minute walk from the main attractions of the town.</p>	<p>T2. Hotel (high fit) flyer: moderate degree of brand extension authenticity</p>  <p><b>Hotel Al-hambra</b></p> <p>A historical palace in the heart of the center of Granada reconvered into a luxurious hotel with a historical feeling for a unique experience.</p> <p>A protected palace for an elegant stay exquisitely decorated with exotic original furniture, a select restaurant of fusion cuisine, and Arab baths which will transport you to the ancient Al-Andalus while taking care of your body and mind with the help of staff specialized in health and beauty treatment. The hotel also has a garden pond.</p> <p>The Hotel Al-hambra benefits from an ideal location in the historical part of the town center and is only a 10 minute walk from the main attractions of the town.</p>	<p>T3. Hotel (high fit) flyer: low degree of brand extension authenticity</p>  <p><b>Hotel La Madraza</b></p> <p>A historical palace in the heart of the center of Granada reconvered into a luxurious hotel with a historical feeling for a unique experience.</p> <p>A protected palace for an elegant stay exquisitely decorated with exotic original furniture, a select restaurant of fusion cuisine, and Arab baths which will transport you to the ancient Al-Andalus while taking care of your body and mind with the help of staff specialized in health and beauty treatment. The hotel also has a garden pond.</p> <p>The Hotel La Madraza benefits from an ideal location in the historical part of the town center and is only a 10 minute walk from the main attractions of the town.</p>
<p>T4. Clothes and accessories (low fit) flyer: high degree of brand extension authenticity</p>  <p><b>Tesoros de la Al-hambra</b></p> <p>Tesoros de la Al-hambra offers a collection of clothing and accessories of character.</p> <p>For the confection of our garments, which go from fluid skirts and blouses to wrap around shawls, we have resorted to using natural materials such as linen, silk and wool with smooth colours as well as ethical and floral prints, perfectly combining tradition and modernity.</p> <p>We have also designed a collection of bags ranging from large and informal ones to mini purses for special occasions.</p> <p>Nevertheless, our Tesoro wouldn't be complete without the renowned range of totally artisanal trinkets. Necklaces, bracelets and earrings made with fabrics, seeds, wood or rattan complete the collection of jewelry which we have created just for you.</p>	<p>T5. Clothes and accessories (low fit) flyer: moderate degree of brand extension authenticity</p>  <p><b>Tesoros de la Al-hambra</b></p> <p>Tesoros de la Al-hambra offers a collection of clothing and accessories of character.</p> <p>For the confection of our garments, which go from fluid skirts and blouses to wrap around shawls, we have resorted to using natural materials such as linen, silk and wool with smooth colours as well as ethical and floral prints, perfectly combining tradition and modernity.</p> <p>We have also designed a collection of bags ranging from large and informal ones to mini purses for special occasions.</p> <p>Nevertheless, our Tesoro wouldn't be complete without the renowned range of totally artisanal trinkets. Necklaces, bracelets and earrings made with fabrics, seeds, wood or rattan complete the collection of jewelry which we have created just for you.</p>	<p>T6. Clothes and accessories (low fit) flyer: low degree of brand extension authenticity</p>  <p><b>Tesoros de Al-Andalus</b></p> <p>Tesoros de Al-Andalus offers a collection of clothing and accessories of character.</p> <p>For the confection of our garments, which go from fluid skirts and blouses to wrap around shawls, we have resorted to using natural materials such as linen, silk and wool with smooth colours as well as ethical and floral prints, perfectly combining tradition and modernity.</p> <p>We have also designed a collection of bags ranging from large and informal ones to mini purses for special occasions.</p> <p>Nevertheless, our Tesoro wouldn't be complete without the renowned range of totally artisanal trinkets. Necklaces, bracelets and earrings made with fabrics, seeds, wood or rattan complete the collection of jewelry which we have created just for you.</p>

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49

Figure 1. Theoretical model of heritage brand extension loyalty-formation

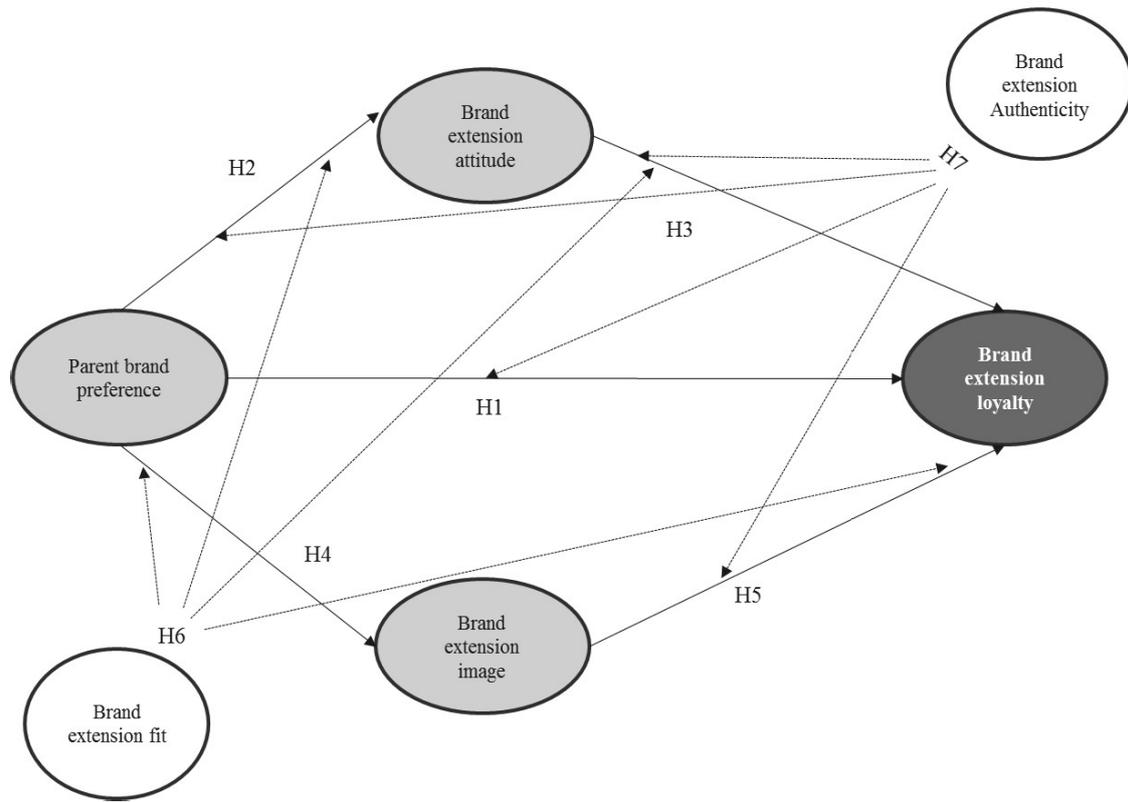


Figure 2. Moderating effect of fit

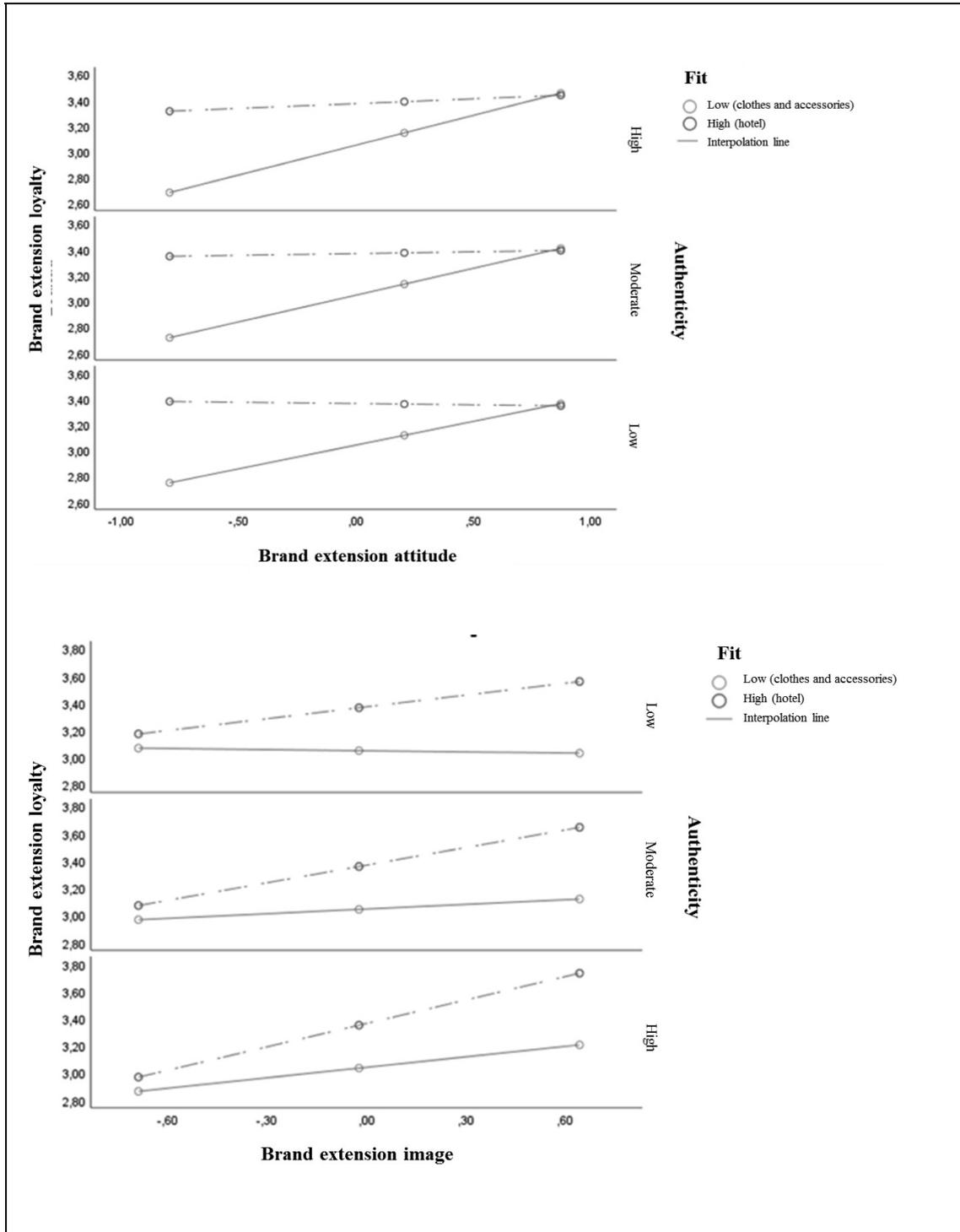


Table 1. Sample by socio-demographic variables

Gender	Age	TOTALS	%
Male	< 25	78	34.21
Male	25-40	66	28.95
Male	41-55	44	19.30
Male	>55	40	17.54
Totals male		228	100.00
Female	< 25	85	32.32
Female	25-40	75	28.52
Female	41-55	59	22.43
Female	>55	44	16.73
Totals female		263	100.00
TOTALS		491	

Table 2. CFA results

	Standardized coefficients	R2	CR	AVE
<b>Brand extension attitude (BEA)</b>				
I think it's a good brand	0.87 (+)	0.76	0.88	0.72
I think it's a pleasant brand	0.86 (***)	0.74		
I like that brand	0.81 (***)	0.66		
<b>Brand extension image (BEI)</b>				
I have a good image of that brand	0.86 (+)	0.74	0.92	0.79
I have a positive image of that brand	0.94 (***)	0.88		
I have a favorable image of that brand	0.87 (***)	0.76		
<b>Brand extension loyalty (BEL)</b>				
I would be happy to stay at a hotel like this [I would be happy to purchase a clothing brand like this one]	0.87 (+)	0.76	0.89	0.73
I would be very likely to stay at a hotel like this [I would be very likely to purchase clothes in a store like this]	0.88 (***)	0.77		
I would be happy to recommend this hotel to family or friends [I would be happy to recommend this store to family or friends]	0.82 (***)	0.67		
<b>Parent brand preference (PBP)</b>				
I would try a new product or service related to the Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and the Generalife	0.80 (+)	0.64	0.83	0.72
I would prefer to purchase products and services related to the Monumental Complex of the Alhambra and the Generalife over products and services that were not related to it	0.89 (***)	0.79		
<b>Product category knowledge (PCK)</b>				
How knowledgeable do you consider yourself to be about hotels/clothes and accessories?	0.88 (+)	0.77	0.89	0.67
Relative to most people, how knowledgeable do you consider yourself to be about hotels/clothes and accessories?	0.88 (***)	0.77		
How much do you know about the major features to take into consideration when booking hotel accommodation/purchasing clothes and accessories?	0.75 (***)	0.56		
Relative to most people, how familiar are you with the process of booking a hotel/purchasing clothes and accessories?	0.75 (***)	0.56		
<b>Attitude toward the flyer (ATF)</b>				
I like it	0.84 (+)	0.71	0.86	0.62
It is interesting	0.83 (***)	0.69		
It is appealing	0.79 (***)	0.62		
It is persuasive	0.67 (***)	0.45		

Note: (+) Value not calculated because the parameter was established at 1 in order to set the scale for the latent variable; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 3. Discriminant validity

	BEL	BEI	BEA	PBP	PCK	ATF
BEL	<b>0.85</b>					
BEI	0.62	<b>0.89</b>				
BEA	0.60	0.70	<b>0.85</b>			
PBP	0.44	0.41	0.41	<b>0.85</b>		
PCK	0.41	0.26	0.24	0.21	<b>0.82</b>	
ATF	0.58	0.63	0.62	0.43	0.31	<b>0.78</b>

Note: diagonal elements in bold are the square root of the AVE between the constructs and their indicators. Off-diagonal elements are correlations between the constructs

Table 4. Moderate mediation analysis. Outcome variable: brand extension attitude

Effect	Coef.	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Constant	-2.35**	.1816	12.9543	.0000	-2.7089 – -1.996
Parent brand preference (X)	.12**	.0333	3.7231	.0002	.0585 – .1898
Fit (W)	.038	.0617	.6123	.5406	-0.0835 – .1597
X*W	.07	.0600	1.2022	.2299	-0.0458 – .1907
Authenticity (Z)	.14**	.0371	3.8528	.000	.0700 – .2164
X*Z	.06	.0362	1.5558	.1204	-0.0148 – .1280
Product category knowledge	.08**	.0369	2.1995	.0283	.0087 – .1543
Attitude toward the flyer	.60**	.0478	12.5091	.0000	.5037 – .6920
R <sup>2</sup> : 0.39; SE: 0.45; F: 51.69; p: 0.00					

Note: \* p < 0.10; \*\*p < 0.05; \*\*\* p < 0.01; 95% CI does not contain 0.

Table 5. Moderate mediation analysis. Outcome variable: brand extension image

Effect	Coef.	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Constant	-2.3**	.1899	-12.056	.0000	-2.662 – -1.916
Parent brand preference (X)	.11**	.0327	3.4311	.0007	.0479 – .1765
Fit (W)	.15**	.0592	2.4529	.0145	.0289 – .2615
X*W	.02	.0611	.3472	.7286	-.0989 – .1414
Authenticity (Z)	.05	.0376	1.2672	.2057	-.0262 – .1215
X*Z	.02	.0403	.4849	.6280	-.0597 – .0989
Product category knowledge	.09**	.0348	2.4571	.0144	.0171 – .1539
Attitude toward the flyer	.58**	.0514	11.1983	.0000	.4746 – .6767
R <sup>2</sup> : 0.39; SE: 0.42; F: 42.08; p: 0.00					

Note: \* p < 0.10; \*\*p < 0.05; \*\*\* p < 0.01; 95% CI does not contain 0.

Table 6. Moderate mediation analysis. Outcome variable: brand extension loyalty

Effect	Coef.	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Constant	1.69**	.2737	6.1509	.0000	1.1457 – 2.2213
Parent brand preference (X)	.14**	.0432	3.2969	.0011	.0575 – .2273
Brand extension attitude (M1)	.20**	.0688	2.8925	.0040	.0638 – .3341
Brand extension image (M2)	.29**	.0826	3.5173	.0005	.1282 – .4526
Fit (W)	.32**	.0709	4.5515	.0000	.1835 – .4622
X*W	-.05	.0846	-.5567	.5780	-.2133 – .1191
M1*W	-.39**	.1314	-2.9588	.0032	-.6469 – -.1306
M1*W	.32*	.1689	1.8772	.0611	-.0148 – .6489
Authenticity (Z)	-.00	.0444	-.1031	.9179	-.0918 – .0826
X*Z	.05	.0518	.9221	.3569	-.0541 – .1497
M1*Z	-.05	.0928	-.5095	.6106	-.2295 – .1350
M1*Z	.14	.1087	1.3071	.1918	-.0715 – .3555
Product category knowledge	.21**	.0394	5.2049	.0000	.1277 – .2827
Attitude toward the flyer	.26**	.0658	3.9013	.0001	.1275 – .3861
R <sup>2</sup> : 0.50; SE: 0.53; F: 48.62; p: 0.00					

Note: \* p < 0.10; \*\*p < 0.05; \*\*\* p < 0.01; 95% CI does not contain 0.

Table 7. Conditional direct and indirect effects of X on Y

Conditional direct effects				
Fit	Authenticity	Effect	SE	95% CI
Low	Low	.12	.0961	-.0678 - .3099
Low	Moderate	.17**	.0686	.0341 - .3037
Low	High	.22**	.0745	.0703 - .3631
High	Low	.07	.0899	-.1028 - .2507
High	Moderate	.12**	.0526	.0185 - .2251
High	High	.17**	.053	.0654 - .2738
Conditional indirect effects				
Brand extension attitude				
Fit	Authenticity	Effect	SE	95% CI
Low	Low	.01	.0316	-.0544 - 0.0743
Low	Moderate	.04	.0217	-.0041 - .0818
Low	High	.05**	.0269	.0089 - .1129
High	Low	.01	.0151	-.0209 - .0427
High	Moderate	.00	.0124	-.0195 - .0302
High	High	-.00	.0226	-.0503 - .0398
Brand extension image				
Fit	Authenticity	Effect	SE	95% CI
Low	Low	-.00	.0191	-.0508 - .0318
Low	Moderate	.01	.0144	-.0145 - .044
Low	High	.03	.0223	-.0026 - .083
High	Low	.03	.0238	-.0127 - .081
High	Moderate	.05**	.0209	.0152 - .0971
High	High	.08**	.0346	.0182 - .1543

Note: \*  $p < 0.10$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; 95% CI does not contain 0.

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**Salvador del Barrio-García**



**Credit Author Statement**

The two authors contribute to the same extent