Determining outcome factors of city branding post-COVID-19: roles of brand satisfaction, brand experience and perceived risk

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Abstract

Purpose – *This study aims to investigate city branding as a post-pandemic COVID-19 outcome factor on brand satisfaction, brand experience, perceived risk and revisit intention. In addition, this research contributes to the discussion of post-COVID-19 city branding that needs to be considered in the development of future tourism marketing.*

Design/methodology/approach – *A quantitative approach was used with PLS-SEM statistical analysis and a 263-tourist sample. The study was conducted on tourists from Malang Regency in Indonesia by distributing questionnaires modified from previous studies in a similar context.*

Findings – *The results of this study found that there were significant influences of city brand personality on brand experience, brand satisfaction, brand experience on perceived risk, brand satisfaction on revisit intention and perceived risk on revisit intention. This study also presents the mediating role.*

Research limitations/implications – *The study was only conducted on a small regency in Indonesia, and therefore the results cannot be generalized for other cities over the world.*

Practical implications – *The proposed study model suggests that stakeholders must seek to socialize services to potential tourists, so that tourists can understand the description of tourism activities that can be enjoyed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the way they travel in the future.*

Social implications – *Understanding the determinant factors of city branding post-COVID-19 was valuable for developing marketing strategies to cope with intense competition among the city.*

Originality/value – *This study emphasizes the determinants of COVID-19 perceived risk and revisit intentions as explained in the tourism marketing literature by considering the role of brand satisfaction, brand experience and city brand personality which significantly contribute to build the city competitiveness. Therefore, various creative strategies should be implemented to promote the city as well as escalate tourist visits without ignoring the pandemic's risks.*

Keywords COVID-19 perceived risk, Revisit intention, Brand satisfaction, Brand experience, City brand personality, Indonesia

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

All cities in the world, both small and large ones, rival each other to attract more tourists, new residents and investors who will contribute to the city's growth and create a positive development spiral (Dinnie, 2010). In such circumstances, city governments should seek marketing strategies for their cities in order to stay ahead in terms of development and to promote the city's competitiveness level (Zali *et al*., 2014). A city's branding strategy offers a representative image of city to the world, enabling the city to enjoy a competitive advantage both regionally and

internationally (Keller *et al*., 2008; Kavaratzis, 2004; Anttiroiko, 2015). By considering a competitive situation, branding strategy is very important due to its impact on people's visit decision, mobility or investment. In addition, city brand values can significantly affect the welfare and satisfaction of local residents (Riza *et al*., 2012). Therefore, almost every city attempts to be competent enough to attract and accommodate their targets through an effective branding (Yang *et al*., 2019). The city branding strategy will be more appropriate if it is developed based on goals and vision of city development. Developing a city branding strategy can include a construction of large-scale urban projects, a development of architecture which becomes a city's identity (city icon), a development through events and various promotional measures through media. Further marketing efforts in a city branding strategy must consider a development of city branding personality (Sahin and Baloglu, 2014). Some literature show that city branding personality is an important element of city, as higher city branding personality creates an attractive brand. The branding personality is very important for brand image since it reflects the emotional side of brand image (Biel, 1997; Kaplan *et al*., 2010). Furthermore, city branding personality has an essential meaning to build marketing communications, which can be achieved in various ways (Amatyakul and Polyorat, 2016). As a result, branding personality can be a differentiating point for a brand and make it more competitive in their respective industries, especially the limited diversification applied among similar products in that market particularly (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000).

Today, the concept of city branding changes rapidly, and challenges are firmer. Many studies conducted in branding strategies on brand personality, brand experience and brand satisfaction have borrowed the concept of existing branding research. In the field of marketing, consumer experience has emerged as the most important issue for companies, and to cope with an intense competition, an experience has replaced product quality (Klaus and Maklan, 2013). Brand experience focuses on customer service and experience. It applies to all types of products and services since it allows people to engage and interact with brands. In comparison, a traditional marketing concept visualizes customers as rational decision makers who only think about benefits and functional features, whereas brand experience considers humans as rational and emotional decision makers (Khan and Rahman, 2015). Research conducted by Li (2018) showed that brand experience (sensory, affective, behavioral and intellectual) can positively and effectively motivate people's intentions to revisit (revisit intentions) and make repeat purchases at tourist sites/cities. On the other hand, in recent years, the concept of satisfaction has also attracted the attention of many researchers, as there has been a shift in the operating paradigm from a transactional marketing to a relational marketing involving all activities in the business which maintains successful relational exchanges (Ojo, 2010; Roustasekehravani *et al*., 2014). Nadeem (2007) found that brand satisfaction refers to the overall pleasure or satisfaction associated with customers with the brand, fulfillment of needs, desires and expectations. Another study conducted by Chin *et al*. (2018) said that the existence of tourists' revisit intentions to tourism destinations is due to high satisfaction.

Topics regarding the decision to revisit (revisit intentions) are also often associated with perceived risk by many researchers. When tourists make decisions, especially for high-risk products, they will use search and information processing strategies for risk reduction (Jun *et al*., 2010; Fuchs and Reichel, 2011). The case-based vacation planning theory introduced by Stewart and Vogt (1999) showed that activities acquired through learning experiences are accumulated in memory; retrieved, modified, reused in the same context; and returned to memory for future use. Through this iterative process, tourists understand which sources and attributes of information are useful in similar decision-making situations (Jun *et al*., 2010). In making decisions regarding accommodation, people tend to rate brands on various performance attributes to maximize the ease of justifying the information (Jun *et al*., 2010). Recent tourism developments suggest a decline in the number of international tourists in 2020 as the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) caused losses ranging from $300 to $500bn, with the Asia-Pacific region experiencing the most significant difficulties (UNWTO, 2020). Transmission of COVID-19 can pose a perceived risk to travelers, and even manifest as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In addition, the risk of COVID-19 experienced by tourists can cause psychological stress, even leading to mental disorders. Ultimately, it may mean the city cannot retain tourists or encourage revisit intentions (Matiza, 2020; Yu *et al*., 2021). Therefore, the

study focused on the determinants of COVID-19 perceived risk and revisit intentions by considering roles of brand satisfaction, brand experience and city brand personality variables on tourists in Malang Regency. Malang Regency is one of the cities with a branding strategy, so-called a tagline, "The Heart of East Java." Its vision becomes the center of ecotourism in East Java, so that the study related to tourist behavior is very essential in order to build the city competitiveness. This study has a contribution to explain the determinants of city brand personality after the COVID-19 pandemic based on brand experience and satisfaction with perceived risk and revisit intention of tourist visitors. In addition, the findings of this study also contribute to academics by providing new knowledge about the perceived risk of post-COVID-19 tourist visits and strategic plans for stakeholders in restoring the tourism sector related to perceived risk in order to attract tourist visits.

2. Literature review

2.1 City branding personality

Branding personality has been defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 1). It represents all personality traits associated with tourism destinations when applying the concept to a particular destination (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006). Some literature showed that city branding personality is a key element of a city, and higher city branding personality creates an attractive brand. Analogous to humans, brands can show specific and diverse "personality characteristics" (Plummer, 2000). Aaker (1997) defined brand personality as a set of human characteristics associated with a brand. His study also described a total of forty-two traits and five dimensions in city branding personality, namely the dimensions of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Brand personification is considered as a powerful activity and worthy for brand success in terms of consumer-brand relationships, brand associations, preferences and choices (Brakus et al., 2009; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Clemenz et al., 2012). Branding personality is very prominent for brand image since it reflects the emotional side of brand image (Biel, 1997; Kaplan et al., 2010). Furthermore, city branding personality has a weighty meaning to encourage marketing communications, which can be achieved in various ways (Amatyakul and Polyorat, 2016). As a result, branding personality can be a differentiating point for a brand and make it more competitive in their respective industries, especially the limited diversification applied among similar products in the market specifically (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000).

Many studies indicated that brand experience has been positively confirmed to be affected by brand personality (Brakus et al., 2009; Nysveen et al., 2013). The study by Möller and Herm (2013) also revealed that physical experiences in the retail environment shape the retail brand personality. Chang and Chieng (2006) showed that individual experience is positively related to brand personality in the coffee shop industry. Another study also showed that brand experience is influenced by brand personality in three product categories (i.e. consumer products, consumer electronics and fast food services) (Ramaseshan and Stein, 2014). Brand personality is one of the most critical and consistent predictors of brand loyalty behavior and brand loyalty attitudes (Anisimova, 2007). Ouwersloot and Tudorica (2001) argued that companies should consider brand personality as a means to empower them in achieving customer satisfaction. Several previous studies showed that there is a relationship between brand personality and customer satisfaction (Achouri and Bouslama, 2010; Ekinci and Dawes, 2009; Ouwersloot and Tudorica, 2001). The research conducted by Brakus et al. (2009) showed that brand personality has a significant direct influence on brand satisfaction. In line with that, Nelloh et al. (2011) also found a positive influence of congruent brand personality in customer satisfaction among 150 guests at Hotel D'season in Indonesia. Similar findings were reported by Yong-Ki et al. (2009) who examined the effect of restaurant brand personality toward satisfaction. In contrast, Nysveen et al. (2013) revealed an insignificant relationship between brand personality and brand satisfaction in a service context. Based on some literature, the study had the following hypotheses:

H1. City branding personality has a positive and significant influence on brand experience

H2. City branding personality has a positive and significant influence on brand satisfaction

2.2 Brand experience

Experience is defined by Cambridge Dictionary as: "something happening to you and affects how you feel." It means experience is about an emotional reaction to an event. It reflects that experience is a purely emotional conceptualization (Hui and Bateson, 1991). Customers no longer just consume a product, but are more interested in the experience provided by a product or service (Morrison and Crane, 2007). According to Schmitt (1999), there are five types of experiences – feeling, feeling, thinking, acting and relating – which help to evoke customer emotions. Furthermore, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) introduced the concept of experience in the marketing literature and defined new consumption behaviors related to the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of product use. Since then, experience has continued to influence disciplines such as economics (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), consumer behavior (Addis and Holbrook, 2001) and marketing (Brakus et al., 2009). The concept of brand experience is not a new phenomenon, but it has attracted new focus from academics and practitioners lately (Brakus et al., 2009). In addition, Brakus et al. (2009) conceptualized brand experience as subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli which are part of brand design and identity, packaging, communication and the environment. Brand experience, though related, is very different from concepts such as brand attitude, brand personality, brand engagement and brand attachment (Brakus et al., 2009).

Several studies suggest that previous travel experience moderates the effect of perceived risk or brand credibility on purchase intention (Lehto et al., 2004; Huang et al., 2014). A study conducted by Sharifpour et al. (2014) also showed that there is a significant interaction effect of past experiences on perceived risk toward the intention to visit. Regarding the perceived risk, more experienced travelers perceive less risk for certain risk factors. Fuchs and Reichel (2011) revealed differences between first-time visitors and repetitive visitors related to the type of risk they perceive (Sharifpour et al., 2014). For example, first-time visitors are more concerned with human-caused risks, psychological risks, food safety and weather risks, whereas repetitive visitors are more concerned with financial risks, performance risks related to service quality and physical risks. Emotional experiences are found to have a positive effect on purchase intentions (Yang and He, 2011). Abbott (1955) stated that what people actually desire is not a product but a satisfying experience. Personal experiences are helpful for connecting consumers with brands and are the most powerful means for winning customer loyalty. These may lead consumers to make smart purchasing decisions (Smith and Wheeler, 2002). Brand experience has been considered as an important predictor of constructs related to consumer behavior. Brakus et al. (2009) stated that brand experience creates favorable outcomes and will influence future-oriented decision-making: consumers are more prone to make repetitive purchases (revisit intentions) and recommendations to others. Another study conducted by Li (2018) showed that brand experience (sensory, affective, behavioral and intellectual) can positively and effectively motivate people's intentions to revisit (revisit intentions) and make repetitive purchases at tourist sites/cities. Based on some literature, the study had the following hypotheses:

H3. Brand experience has a positive and significant influence on perceived risk

H4. Brand experience has a positive and significant influence on revisit intention

2.3 Brand satisfaction

Satisfaction is defined as a consumer's response to an evaluation of perceived differences between previous expectations and an actual performance of a product as perceived after its consumption (Tse and Wilton, 1988). In addition, this satisfaction is also defined as an emotional response toward an experience provided by or related to a particular purchased product or service, retail outlets or even a pattern of molar behavior such as shopping and buyer behavior, as well as the market as a whole (Westbrook and Reilly, 1983, p. 256). Nam et al. (2011) argued that customer satisfaction is an overall emotional response of customers to an entire brand experience after the last purchase. Satisfaction determines future purchase patterns and increases desire for a

product or service (Bennett and Rundel-Thiele, 2005). Tourist destinations and service providers should pay more attention to customer satisfaction in the modern environment due to the rapidly evolving competitive landscape resulting from recent consumer and technology trends, which make customer satisfaction more important than anything else (Confente, 2015; Oh et al., 2007; Möhlmann, 2015; Sharma and Baoku, 2013; Sparks and Browning, 2010). Satisfaction is often assessed through evaluation of service quality, which is also defined relatively toward expectations as "guests are driven through meeting and exceeding their expectations" (Chacko et al., 2005).

According to some experts, it was revealed that brand satisfaction is one of the factors influencing brand loyalty (Bennett and Bove, 2002; Giese and Cote, 2000; Jonathan et al., 2001; Jones and Suh, 2000; Hong-Youl and John, 2010). When customers are satisfied with a brand, they are willing to use the same brand in the future (revisit intention). Other research conducted by Sheth (2001) and Singh and Mehraj (2018) also showed that satisfaction offers financial competitiveness in several ways, one of the most important of which is the revisit intention. Meanwhile, Hasan et al. (2020) added the quality-value-satisfaction-loyalty paradigm in the context of beach tourism integrates destination image and satisfaction, demonstrating that satisfaction has a major impact on revisit intention. There are still a number of extra characteristics that destinations must meet, so even after tourists have acquired a certain level of satisfaction, it is not certain that they will develop a dedication to visit these destinations. On the other hand, a study related to the concept of satisfaction was also conducted by Alcántara-Pilar et al. (2018), which found that in situations of high perceived risk, tourists are more likely to analyze in detail the information on results, and high satisfaction during a visit can help them to overcome fear, as well as to form a better opinion about the destination itself. Based on some literature, the study had the following hypotheses:

H5. Brand satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on perceived risk

H6. Brand satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on revisit intention

2.4 Perceived risk

Perceived risk refers to an individual's perception of uncertainties and negative consequences when buying a product or service (George, 2010). Quintal and Polczynski (2010) stated that the perceived risk also includes financial and social losses as well as psychological and physical risks for tourists. Chew and Jahari (2014) found that tourists' perceptions of danger and safety are one of the most important determinants in their choice to visit a certain location. Due to differences in location, culture, psychology and travel experiences, tourists may interpret risk problems differently, which may influence their behavioral intention (Hasan et al., 2017; Sánchez-Cañizares et al., 2021). Based on this definition, risk perception is a consumer's perception of loss. According to Fuchs and Reichel (2011), there were six dimensions of perceived risk, namely, human-caused risk, financial risk, service quality risk, socio-psychological risk, car accident risk, and food and weather safety issues. In recent decades, the risk construct has been widely used (Quintal and Polczynski, 2010; Tavitiyaman and Qu, 2013) and conceptualized as a potential loss due to uncertainty, where multiple possible incidents can be allocated. In particular, perceived risk in tourism related to crime, natural disasters, hygiene problems, transportation, time and communication (Emami and Ranjbarian, 2019; Matiza, 2020; Reisinger and Mavondo, 2005) have emerged as a key factor in tourists' decision-making (Kozak et al., 2007). Many academics believe that one's perception of danger has an impact on their behavior (Chen et al., 2017; Nguyen Viet et al., 2020; Sohn et al., 2016). Poor safety and security, according to Kozak et al. (2007), has an influence on nations' tourism and travel businesses. Hence, in the context of tourism, a perceived risk characterizes a situation in which it predicts a decision to avoid visiting (traveling) to some destination, such as due to health risks, political insecurity or terrorism (Bae and Chang, 2020; Neuburger and Egger, 2021; Sönmez and Graefe, 1998). In this study, perceived risk is defined as the level of possible loss felt by a person, as a result of an unfavorable travel outcome due to the global COVID-19 outbreak situation, while perceived risk is often cited as a precursor to tourism media engagement, attitudes or behavioral intentions (Bae and Chang, 2020; Bhati et al., 2020).

For example, Tavitiyaman and Qu (2013) showed that a perceived risk moderates a relationship between destination image/overall satisfaction, and overall satisfaction/behavioral intentions of tourists traveling to Thailand after the SARS incident. Thus, it is clear that the perception of risk acts as an important factor in the decision-making process of tourists or tourists (Kozak et al., 2007; Quintal and Polczynski, 2010), and may even alter rational decisions in travel or destination choice (Bae and Chang, 2020; Karl et al., 2020; Neuburger and Egger, 2021). This study should investigate whether the fear of COVID-19 can change the behavior and attitudes of visitors to revisit tourist destinations in the future. In consideration of Hassan and Soliman (2021), they revealed that COVID-19 will moderate the relationship between a destination's reputation and tourists' revisit intention. Because consumers are more likely to avoid risk than maximize utility, the perceived risk is important in explaining consumer buying behavior. In particular, consumers perceive a higher risk when there is an outbreak of new infectious disease with no clear treatment, such as COVID-19. In turn, a higher level of risk perception can result in a stronger intention to avoid that risk (Addo et al., 2020). Based on some literature, the study had the following hypothesis:

H7. Perceived risk has a positive and significant influence on revisit intention

2.5 Revisit intention

Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) assumed that intention is the only most important predictor of human behaviors, and that humans have rationality in using available information systematically. This has been investigated as in research from Hasan et al. (2020), which explains that tourist revisit intention is the intention to revisit beach destinations using a conceptual model developed by adding two additional predictors, service quality and perceived value, with the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Furthermore, the study states that tourists' intention to revisit is a consequence of their attitudes (psychology), subjective norms (social influences) and perceived behavioral control (PBC, personal abilities and constraints). Therefore, retaining customers is a key concept for a company's survival and a long-term success because it is directly related to its profitability (Chua et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2017). Especially in today's highly competitive environment, retaining customers or encouraging customer revisit intentions becomes more important. Jones et al. (2000) argued that retaining existing customers or increasing the level of customer revisit intention is more effective than finding new customers in terms of cost and time spent. Therefore, revisit intention by customers is an important factor for company profits (Scarpi et al., 2019). Given this positive effect, methods of encouraging customer revisit intention have been studied in various fields (Han and Hyun, 2017; Kim et al., 2017). Revisit intention refers to a possibility of revisiting or revisiting destinations which have been visited (Baker and Crompton, 2000). Meleddu et al. (2015) in their research focused on the antecedents of revisit intention to find out reasons why tourists would prefer to make repeat visits to the same destination. Several studies have stated that previous experiences can influence tourists to revisit (Kim et al., 2010). However, Lee et al. (2014) have different findings, namely, by identifying three motivational factors influencing revisit intention: "ego-defensive function," "utilitarian function-self-development" and "utilitarian function-reward." Also, Hassan and Soliman (2021) argued that a socially responsible behavior related to COVID-19 can positively influence tourists' intention to revisit hotels. Therefore, under the recent and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to probe ways in order to increase guest return (revisit intention).

3. Method

Domestic tourists who visited Malang Regency between July and December 2021 were the focus of this quantitative investigation. Since it was difficult to obtain a sample frame for all domestic visitors who had visited Malang Regency throughout the study period, a convenient sampling technique was used. In addition, the sample for this study was chosen based on visitors that came from outside Malang Regency, so they give an objective opinion regarding the city branding of Malang Regency. The survey questionnaires were delivered electronically, which can maximize the

scalability and speed of data collection while reducing costs (Saunders and Kulchitsky, 2021). A total of 263 questionnaire sets were discovered to be correctly completed and were used in the analysis. For example, the online questionnaire is designed by asking questions, such as "Have you ever visited a tourist destination in Malang Regency in the past year?" and "Are you from outside the area of Malang Regency?," so that respondents who meet the specified criteria will be able to continue the stages on the online questionnaire.

PLS-SEM analysis statistical was applied with a causal modeling approach and was aimed at maximizing the clarified variance of dependent latent constructs. The research type was explanatory, where the use of PLS-SEM was based on the main objective to explain the variance in the construct of structural equation modeling. PLS-SEM is a potent statistical device as it can be applied to all data scales. It does not require many assumptions, and confirms relationships which have not yet developed a strong theoretical foundation (Hair *et al*., 2014, 2017). Besides, PLS is applied to develop or construct hypotheses, and predict complex situations and features which facilitate multivariate data analysis; it differs with previous SEM based on proofs of theory with parametric assumptions which must be met (Hair *et al*., 2019). The measurement of reliability in PLS-SEM used Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability with the standardized indicator loading 0.70, while the validity used average variance extracted (AVE) with the value of acceptable more than 0.50, as recommended by Hair *et al*. (2014). The designed questionnaires referred to previous research in similar contexts and adopted the measures of construct. The questionnaire referred to the previous research in the same context and adopted construct measures. For example, city brand personality referred to seven items developed by Glińska and Rudolf (2019). Brand experience (eight items) and brand satisfaction (three items) referred to Yu and Kim (2020). Finally, risk perception (eight items) referred to Bae and Chang (2020), while revisit intention referred to four items developed by Hasan *et al*. (2019). All of the adapted items were measured on a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

4. Result and analysis

Malang Regency is an area known as a tourist attraction in East Java that relies on natural attractions so that it is dubbed "The Heart of East Java." The number of tourists visiting Malang Regency continues to increase, but the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the tourism sector. Therefore, this study wanted to investigate tourist perceptions of risk in city branding from Malang Regency. This study has distributed questionnaires to Malang Regency tourists, which have been presented in Table 1 regarding their demographic characteristics. The overall sample consisted of 147 males (55.89%) and 116 females (44.11%). Most respondents (30.04%; $n = 79$) were 20–25 years old, 16.73% ($n = 44$) were 26–30 years old, 25.10% ($n = 66$) were 31–35 years old, 20.91% ($n = 55$) 36–40 years old and 7.22% ($n = 19$) were 41 years old which is the least number. Regarding travel costs, 40.68% ($n = 107$) of IDR. 250,000, about 49.81% ($n = 131$) range of IDR. 250,001–IDR.500,000, about 7.61% ($n = 20$) around IDR. 500,001–IDR. 750,000, and 1.90% ($n = 5$) in the range of IDR. 750,001–IDR. 1,000,000.

Before testing the designed hypothesis, it was necessary to ensure that all items and variable constructs in this study had met the reliability and validity standards as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2014). To measure the data validity, all variable items had to have a value of average variance extracted (AVE) greater than 0.5. The generally accepted limit for composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha for each construct was more than 0.7. Furthermore, Table 2 showed that all items had been analyzed and confirmed that all AVE values were above 0.5, while the value of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability of all constructs exceeded 0.7. Therefore, this study could be declared valid and reliable.

The study explained the designed hypotheses by testing path coefficients and their significance with a bootstrapping technique; the structural model is shown in Table 3 and Figure 1.

The hypothesis' testing results indicated that from all hypotheses with a direct influence, there were only two insignificant hypotheses, namely brand experience on revisit intention ($\beta = 0.030$,

Table 1	Demographic characteristics of respondent		
Demographic		*Frequency* (n)	*Percentage (%)*
Gender	Male	147	55.89
	Female	116	44.11
Age	20–25	79	30.04
	26–30	44	16.73
	31–35	66	25.10
	36–40	55	20.91
	≥41	19	7.22
Travel expenses	≤ IDR. 250,000	107	40.68
	IDR. 250,001 – IDR. 500,000	131	49.81
	IDR. 500,001 – IDR. 750,000	20	7.61
	IDR. 750,001 – IDR. 1,000,000	5	1.90
	> IDR. 1,000,000	–	–
Source(s): Authors' own elaboration			

$p > 0.05$) and brand satisfaction on perceived risk ($\beta = 0.123$, $p > 0.05$); therefore, H4 and H5 were rejected. Meanwhile, the direct effect between city branding personality on brand experience ($\beta = 0.916$, $p < 0.05$) and brand satisfaction ($\beta = 0.825$, $p < 0.05$) showed positive and significant results, so H1 and H2 were accepted. Furthermore, the influence of brand experience on perceived risk ($\beta = 0.530$, $p < 0.05$) was positive and significant, H3 was accepted. Also, brand satisfaction on revisit intention ($\beta = 0.332$, $p < 0.05$) and perceived risk on revisit intention ($\beta = 0.465$, $p < 0.05$) showed a positive and significant effect; thus, H6 and H7 were accepted. The indirect effect in this study was also presented in Table 3.

5. Discussion

Mkhize (2011) confirmed that pursuing a pleasant experience is an ultimate goal of both locals and tourists when visiting a city. As tourists visit a destination brand, they often attach an emotional meaning to a place. Accordingly, they feel themselves as a part of that place (Lindstedt, 2011). Occurred positive brand experiences lead to repeated interactions with the same place and positive word-of-mouth about it (Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2011). It is also a desired outcome that a destination marketer wants to achieve. Therefore, the development of city branding currently considers the experience offered to tourists, and not merely as a city identity. This study used the city brand personality variable to test its effect on brand experience. The results showed that brand personality was positively confirmed to affect the brand experience of tourists who visit Malang Regency. Brand personality in Malang Regency has the tagline "The heart of East Java" with visuals which better describe the city atmosphere and give a positive impression on consumers' minds. The highlighted city's personality is the one beautiful in nature, outdoor activities and rural life. These are also experiences offered to tourists when visiting Malang Regency. This study's results also support the results of research conducted by Brakus *et al*. (2009) and Nysveen *et al*. (2013). They succeeded in testing similar variables and found that brand experience could be positively influenced by brand personality. Brand experience from destination/ place can be conveyed through sensory pleasures based on smells, sights, tastes and sounds (Balakrishnan *et al.*, 2011). The experience of destination brand also includes intellectual experiences which challenge individuals to freely learn or think about the branded place. This brand experience can be generated from behavioral experiences involving visitors' actions such as walking in the park, getting tattoos and dancing (Brakus *et al*., 2009; Schmitt, 1999). Research with similar variables was also conducted in business companies. It was revealed by Möller and Herm (2013) that physical experiences in the retail environment shape retail brand personality. Chang and Chieng (2006) revealed that individual experience is positively related to brand personality in the coffee shop industry. Another study also pointed out that brand experience is influenced by

Table 2 Reliability and validity analysis

Variable	Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Outer loading	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
City branding personality	CBP1	4.407	0.974	0.819			
	CBP2	4.019	0.895	0.815			
	CBP3	3.848	0.686	0.828			
	CBP4	3.844	0.683	0.776			
	CBP5	4.186	0.863	0.815			
	CBP6	3.814	0.729	0.647			
	CBP7	3.821	0.762	0.798			
	CBP8	4.179	0.916	0.832			
	CBP9	3.939	0.820	0.817			
	CBP10	4.289	0.872	0.812			
	CBP11	4.114	0.819	0.831			
	CBP12	3.886	0.699	0.821			
	CBP13	4.388	0.837	0.836			
	CBP14	4.331	0.868	0.843			
	CBP15	4.361	0.869	0.824			
					0.962	0.966	0.654
Brand experience	BE1	4.285	0.947	0.840			
	BE2	4.099	0.821	0.831			
	BE3	4.373	0.875	0.890			
	BE4	4.125	0.815	0.893			
	BE5	4.061	0.806	0.859			
	BE6	4.228	0.855	0.871			
	BE7	4.122	0.809	0.882			
	BE8	4.118	0.812	0.869			
					0.953	0.960	0.752
Brand satisfaction	BS1	4.202	0.894	0.888			
	BS2	4.156	0.865	0.925			
	BS3	4.129	0.812	0.914			
					0.895	0.935	0.827
Perceived risk	PR1	4.163	0.881	0.816			
	PR2	4.152	0.804	0.858			
	PR3	4.167	0.895	0.872			
	PR4	3.970	0.750	0.873			
	PR5	3.954	0.769	0.829			
	PR6	4.053	0.930	0.786			
	PR7	3.939	0.782	0.857			
	PR8	4.156	0.895	0.804			
					0.939	0.949	0.701
Revisit intention	RI1	3.958	0.624	0.869			
	RI2	3.981	0.672	0.848			
	RI3	4.053	0.875	0.649			
	RI4	4.011	0.732	0.747			
					0.787	0.862	0.613

Source(s): Authors' own elaboration

brand personality in three product categories (i.e. consumer products, consumer electronics and fast-food services) (Ramaseshan and Stein, 2014). These results have major implications since branding personality in the tourism sector also involves various business actors. Thus, with efforts to improve the performance of city brand personality, it is expected that there will be a positive brand experience considered by tourists. The brand experience of a destination or place can also be effective by traveling together to share time with loved ones and by participating in activities which have personal meaning in the tourist destination such as eating, bathing and mountain climbing (Brakus et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2010).

Table 3	Hypothesis testing				
Relationships	Direct effect	Indirect effect	t-Score	Probability	Conclusion
CBP→BE	0.916		48.187	0.000	Accepted
CBP→BS	0.825		28.625	0.000	Accepted
BE→PR	0.503		4.262	0.000	Accepted
BE→RI	0.030		0.243	0.808	Rejected
BS→PR	0.123		1.201	0.230	Rejected
BS→RI	0.332		3.507	0.000	Accepted
PR→RI	0.465		5.995	0.000	Accepted
CBP→BE→ PR		0.461	4.201	0.000	Accepted
CBP→BE→RI		0.027	0.243	0.808	Rejected
CBP→BS→PR		0.102	1.201	0.230	Rejected
CBP→BS→RI		0.274	3.522	0.000	Accepted
BE→PR→RI		0.234	2.971	0.003	Accepted
BS→PR→RI		0.057	1.091	0.276	Rejected

Note(s): $N = 263$
R^2 = BE (0.839); BS (0.681); PR (0.163); RI (449)
*Sig. p-value < 0.10; **Sig. p-value < 0.05; ***Sig. p-value < 0.01
Source(s): Authors' own elaboration

City brand personality is also associated with brand satisfaction factors. The test results in this study indicated that city brand personality had a positive effect on brand satisfaction variables. It is supported by Anisimova (2007) who said that brand personality is one of the most critical and consistent predictors of brand loyalty behavior and brand loyalty attitudes. Ouwersloot and Tudorica (2001) argued that companies should consider brand personality as a means of empowerment to achieve customer satisfaction. City brand personality describes services provided by the city for tourists who visit, with various facilities and infrastructure available. The ultimate goal is to provide satisfying services for them. Many other studies also showed a positive influence between the city brand personality variable and brand satisfaction. Several previous studies had shown that there was a relationship between brand personality and customer satisfaction (Achouri and Bouslama, 2010; Brakus et al., 2009; Ekinci and Dawes, 2009; Ouwersloot and Tudorica, 2001). Furthermore, a study conducted by Nelloh et al. (2011) also found a positive influence of congruent brand personality in customer satisfaction among 150 guests at the D'season Hotel in Indonesia. It was also added by similar findings reported by Yong-Ki et al. (2009) when he examined the effect of brand personality on customer satisfaction who came to restaurants. However, the results of his study do not support those conducted by Nysveen et al. (2013) who revealed an insignificant relationship between brand personality and brand satisfaction in the context of services. The main reason was that services were often not associated with brand personality by visitors. Even so, the brand development performed in Malang Regency is still focused on improving tourism services.

Next, this study also tried to analyze the brand experience variable as a moderator variable between city branding personality and perceived risk. The results showed that brand experience had an effect on perceived risk. The perceived risk studied was a variable related to the risk due to COVID-19 pandemic (Sánchez-Cañizares et al., 2021). It implied that the brand experience considered by previous tourists is a meaningful depiction to see the current state of tourism, so that it directly affects the perceived risk. The current COVID-19 pandemic has made tourism conditions in various places, including Malang Regency, change drastically. There are various restrictions and policies adapted to health protocols. Hence, supervision and service are the main aspects considered by current visitors regarding risk acceptance. As a result, this study supports results of previous studies which found that brand experience has a significant influence on perceived risk. These studies include research conducted by Lehto et al. (2004) and Huang et al. (2014). They revealed that the experience gained by tourists through previous trips has moderated the effect of perceived risk or brand credibility on purchase intention. Meanwhile, the research conducted by

Figure 1 The structural model of the research
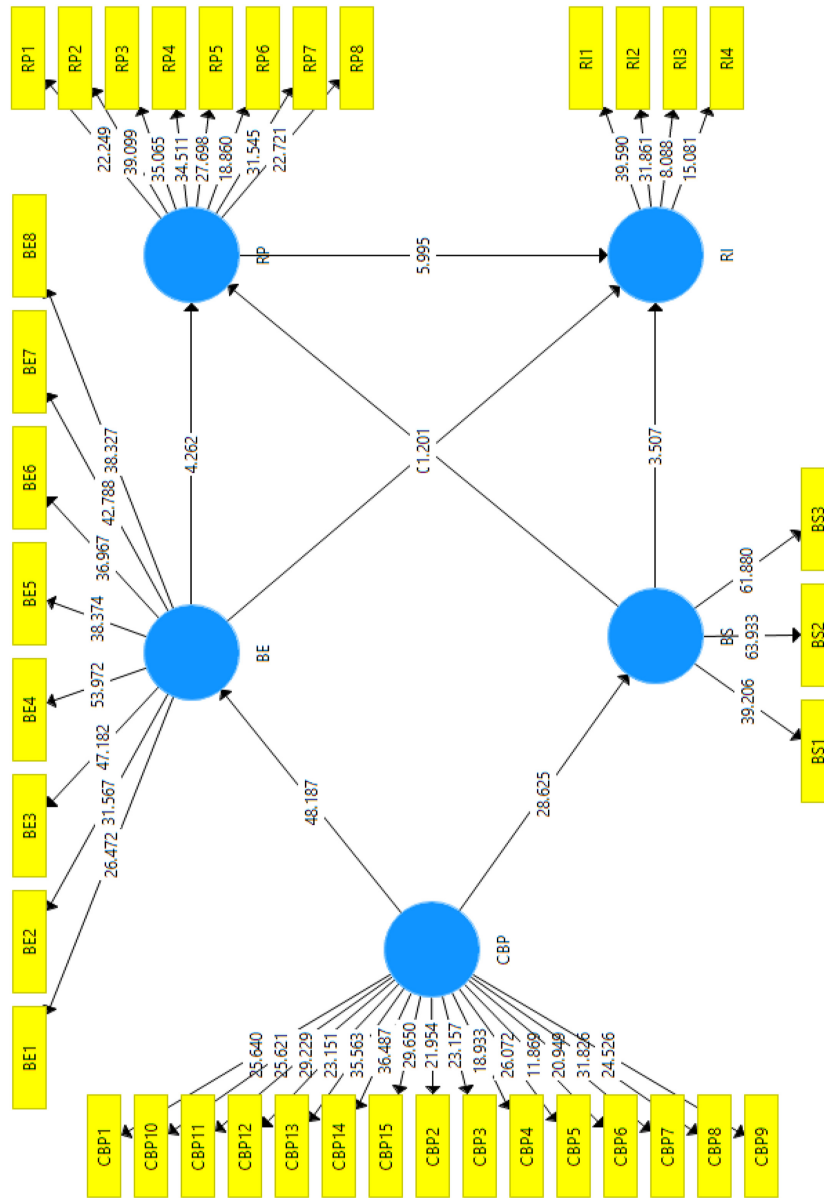
Source(s): Author's own elaboration

Sharifpour *et al*. (2014) also showed that there is a significant interaction effect of past experiences on perceived risk toward the intention to visit. In terms of perceived risk, more experienced travelers perceived less risk for certain risk factors than those that they have experienced in previous trips. Fuchs and Reichel (2011) revealed differences between first-time visitors and repetitive visitors in relation to the type of risk they perceive (Sharifpour *et al*., 2014). For example, first-time visitors are more concerned with human-caused risks, psychological risks, food safety and weather risks, whereas repetitive visitors are more concerned with financial risks, performance risks related to service quality and physical risks. Emotional experiences are found to have a positive effect on purchase intentions (Yang and He, 2011). Abbott (1955) stated that what people truly desire is not a product but a satisfying experience. Personal experiences are helpful for connecting consumers with brands and are the most powerful tool for winning customer loyalty. It may lead consumers to make smart purchasing decisions (Smith and Wheeler, 2002). However, the condition of COVID-19 pandemic is extraordinarily full of uncertainty. Thus, the brand experience capital from previous trips may not necessarily be able to build risk acceptance by tourists, as the existing conditions have changed a lot. Brand experience has been considered as an important predictor of constructs related to consumer behavior. It was then also tested to mediate the relationship between city brand personality and revisit intention. The results of this study found that brand experience had no significant effect on revisit intention. The main reason was that during the COVID-19 pandemic, various destinations were still experiencing various restrictions. Therefore, the experience due to previous visits did not directly increase tourists' revisit intention. The results of this study do not support the research conducted by Brakus *et al*. (2009), which stated that brand experience created favorable outcomes and would influence future-oriented decision making: consumers were more likely to make repeat purchases (revisit intentions) and recommendations to others. Another study conducted by Li (2018) showed that brand experience (sensory, affective, behavioral and intellectual) can positively and effectively motivate people's intentions to revisit (revisit intentions) and make repeat purchases at tourist sites/cities. Therefore, the implication of this research is that stakeholders must seek to socialize services to potential tourists so that tourists can understand the description of tourism activities which can be enjoyed during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Another tested factor in this study was the brand satisfaction variable as a moderator variable between city branding personality and perceived risk. The results of data test showed that brand experience had no effect on perceived risk. The main reason for the absence of a significant influence was that tourist satisfaction with services received before the pandemic would certainly be different from the current situation. Thus, it was a consideration for tourists regarding perceived risk. These findings are different from previous research conducted by Alcántara-Pilar *et al*. (2018), who also conducted research related to the concept of satisfaction where he managed to report the findings that in situations of high perceived risk, tourists were more likely to analyze in detail the information they had. A high satisfaction during the visit could help them overcome these fears and form a better opinion about the tourist destination itself. Therefore, the acceptance of this risk was different before and during the pandemic. Another tested variable in this study related to brand satisfaction was its effect on revisit intention. The results of this study found that brand satisfaction had a significant effect on revisit intention. These results also strengthen the results of previous studies who revealed that brand satisfaction is one of factors which influence brand loyalty (Bennett and Bove, 2002; Giese and Cote, 2000; Jonathan *et al*., 2001; Jones and Suh, 2000; Yong-Ki *et al*., 2009). When customers are satisfied with a brand, they are willing to use the same brand in the future (revisit intention). These results were also confirmed by other studies conducted by Sheth (2001) and Singh and Mehraj (2018) who also showed that satisfaction offers financial competitiveness in several ways, of which the most important one is revisit intention.

Finally, this study examined the relationship between perceived risk variables and revisit intention, where the test results found that perceived risk has a significant effect on revisit intention. It had implications that tourists during this pandemic had one of the main considerations regarding their repeat visits by looking at risks which arise due to the pandemic. The results of this study reinforce several previous studies such as the results of Tavitiyaman and Qu (2013), who showed that

perceived risk moderated the relationship between destination image/overall satisfaction, and overall satisfaction/behavioral intentions of tourists traveling to Thailand after the SARS incident. Thus, it is clear that the perception of risk acts as an important factor in the decision-making process of tourists (Kozak et al., 2007; Matiza, 2020; Quintal and Polczynski, 2010), and may even alter rational decisions about travel or destination choice (Bae and Chang, 2020; Karl et al., 2020; Neuburger and Egger, 2021). In addition, Rindrasih (2018) stated, based on Maslow's theory, that higher wants such as self-fulfillment via travel cannot be met if safety and security are not met. As a result, risk and satisfaction are important factors in predicting customer behavior intentions in the future (Chen et al., 2017; Sohn et al., 2016). This study should investigate whether the fear of COVID-19 can change the behavior and attitudes of visitors to revisit tourist destinations in the future. Hassan and Soliman (2021) they revealed that COVID-19 would moderate the relationship between a destination's reputation and tourists' revisit intention. Since consumers are more likely to avoid risk than maximize utility, perceived risk is important in explaining consumer buying behavior. Thus, visitors who believe specific places to be "at danger," according to Kozak et al. (2007), are more inclined to avoid them in their future travel plans. Tourists that encounter issues during their excursions or tours develop an instant risk perception about that tourist site. Dissatisfaction will eventually surface (Rindrasih, 2018), resulting in a fall in demand, which will have a substantial impact on the rate of revisit intention. In particular, consumers perceive a higher risk when there is an outbreak of a new infectious disease with no clear treatment, such as COVID-19. In turn, a higher level of risk perception can result in a stronger intention to avoid that risk (Addo et al., 2020). With these results, it can be correlated that the perceived risk of tourists in making tourist visits during the COVID-19 pandemic can be said to have tightened and increased the level of security by implementing health protocols. In fact, it may also affect changes in tourist behavior in different tourist visits than before the COVID-19 pandemic, such as always feeling alert and paying more attention to health and the selection of destinations that have implemented good health protocols. This, of course, must be an important concern for all stakeholders to make full efforts to overcome and respond to the pandemic with various creative strategies, so that the risk of disease transmission will be smaller and the expectation of a gradual increase in tourist visits will be realized.

6. Theoretical implication

City branding in various literature is believed to be strongly related to destination marketing, which has implications for personality branding and city image. Therefore, many studies have linked city branding to destination image, tourist experience and satisfaction, as well as tourist perceptions (Coelho et al., 2022; Hussein, 2020; Nguyen Viet et al., 2020; Priporas et al., 2020; San Martín et al., 2019). In the context of the tourism sector, branding is interpreted as part of a marketing strategy that leads to the success of tourism destination brands. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the behavior of tourists in traveling; it also has an impact on the city branding that has been built, which is the meaning of the city branding tagline. Security related to health (perceived risk) has become a major concern for tourists. Hence, in the post-COVID-19 environment of the Indonesian tourism industry, this research has contributed to new findings with theoretical implications on the topic of city branding, brand experience, brand satisfaction and revisit intention. Since few researchers have focused on visitors' behavior at urban tourism sites, these findings also contribute to the present knowledge of the relationship between tourist-related city brands and visiting behavior in urban tourism contexts.

7. Implication for policymakers

The recovery of the tourism sector after the COVID-19 pandemic is of great concern because it is one of the sectors that has the potential to contribute to the GDP of the economy, especially Indonesia. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia as a policymaker as a determinant in capturing crisis conditions and carrying out strategic policies that are right on target in relation to security, protection and tourist comfort against the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Preventive measures are needed to be able to shape the tourist experience in visiting

tourist destinations. This is in line with Wilopo *et al*.'s (2020) study which states that the government has a responsible role in the development of tourism in Indonesia. Although clean, health, safe and environmental sustainability (CHSE) has become a new regulation in the current COVID-19 condition, it will depend on, and is expected to be able to restore, the current tourism sector so that it is able to achieve performance that is in line with the target. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a transition to a new era that has become a lesson for stakeholders and policy makers to be more responsive and careful in determining policies. Therefore, in the context of Indonesia, Micro, and Small Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the creative economy sector are involved in creating products based on local potential in the tourism sector. COVID-19 pandemic has killed two important sectors that contribute to the micro and macro economy. It should be emphasized that policy makers in the context of tourism often focus on stimulating tourism by providing the essential conditions for tourism growth (Minnaert, 2020), so that tourism often has a significant impact on the economy, the environment, as well as social and cultural structures and dynamics. One of the easiest impacts to measure is the economy. Research from Kurniawan and Fanani (2022) concludes that the economic impact of tourism development is mostly viewed positively by the community. This is because tourism is an economic development tool that provides employment, hence it is considered capable of improving the economy of the surrounding population. Furthermore, the social impact of tourism development can be reflected in the improvement of the quality of life of the population.

8. Managerial implications

The current study offers a significant management relevance for the growth of the Indonesian tourism industry, particularly post-COVID-19. The study's findings, which looked at the outcome components and their relationships, contributed to our current understanding of city branding following the COVID-19 epidemic. The research may be used to better comprehend the significance of brand experience, brand satisfaction and perceived risk issues in urban tourist contexts as well as to develop tactics that will encourage visitors to return. However, resilience is also determined from the absorption capacity of tourist destination managers to responsively understand crisis conditions and determine the right strategy to survive. In fact, it can evaluate the performance of past tourist destinations by improving products, services, attractions and shows, and facilitating future tourists so as to renew the destination's image, experience and tourist satisfaction. The crisis condition is not a failure but a new chapter to compete by presenting innovative products and services. The thing that must be understood for destination managers is that the resources they have (e.g. tangible or intangible) are managed properly and that they mobilize these resources as a competitive force through creativity and innovation. It must be believed that the existence of outside information can be added value to create new products and services through social media as a new means for destination marketing to improve the branding and image of the destination. The determination of this strategy is not only for the success of the destination, but also affects the surrounding environment, especially the social and economic sectors of local communities who participate in the tourism sector, in this case the MSMEs in the creative economy sector. Therefore, the impact of this crisis occurred simultaneously between the tourism sector and the MSME sector in the creative economy.

9. Conclusion and limitation

This study is urged by the topic development related to the decision to revisit (revisit intentions). Many scholars also often associate them with perceived risk. Through this pandemic period, the risk acceptance by tourists is increasingly complex as the impact of the pandemic on the tourist sector is overwhelming. In this regard, various stakeholders try continuously to strengthen branding strategies such as city branding personality as one of the strategies in attracting tourists. This study seeks to explain the influence in the relationship amongst the COVID-19 perceived risk and revisit intention variables by looking at the roles of brand satisfaction, brand experience and city brand personality. The results of this study indicate that there is a significant influence, especially on

the city brand personality variable toward the brand experience variable, city brand personality toward brand satisfaction, brand experience toward perceived risk, brand satisfaction toward revisit intention and perceived risk toward revisit intention. Meanwhile, the variables with significant influences are indicated by the brand experience variable toward revisit intention, and by the brand satisfaction toward perceived risk. Discussing each of these variables has implications for the theory discussed in the data interpretation above. Based on the research results, they provide several suggestions for future research, namely: The number of samples used should be wider and reach more tourists and even foreign tourists. Further research can link the city brand personality variable with brand image and brand equity, while topics related to COVID-19 perceived risk can be studied in depth through a qualitative study.

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Appendix

Table A1	Variable operational definition

City brand personality
CBP1   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has a humble impression
CBP2   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has an honest impression
CBP3   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has a prosperous impression
CBP4   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has a cheerful impression
CBP5   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has a bold impression
CBP6   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has a vibrant impression
CBP7   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has an imaginative impression
CBP8   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has an up-to-date impression
CBP9   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has a reliable impression
CBP10   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has a smart impression
CBP11   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has a successful impression
CBP12   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has a high-class impression
CBP13   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has a charming impression
CBP14   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has an outdoor impression
CBP15   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" has a strong impression

Brand experience
BE1   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" gives a strong impression on the five senses, visually or in other ways
BE2   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" is sensorily appealing
BE3   City brand Malang Regency "The Heart of East Java" creates a sense and sensitivity in me
BE4   This city is an emotional place for me
BE5   I am involved in various activities while in this city
BE6   This city gives me a physical experience
BE7   While in this city, I am thinking a lot about this city
BE8   This city stimulates my curiosity and problem-solving skills

Brand satisfaction
BS1   Overall, I like living in this city
BS2   I feel this city is a nice and liveable city
BS3   I am satisfied with the city where I live

Risk perception
RP1   I feel there is a high possibility to be infected by COVID-19
RP2   I feel there is a higher chance to be infected by COVID-19 compared to other people
RP3   I feel there is a higher chance to be infected by COVID-19 compared to other diseases
RP4   I feel there is a high possibility of dying from COVID-19
RP5   I am worried I will catch COVID-19
RP6   I am worried that my family members will catch COVID-19
RP7   I am worried that COVID-19 will happen in my area
RP8   I am worried that COVID-19 will cause various health problems

Revisit intention
RI1   I intend to revisit this city
RI2   I am willing to revisit this city
RI3   I will try to revisit this city
RI4   I am willing to spend time and money to revisit this city

Source(s): Authors' own elaboration

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