



Exploring the Roles of Destination Brand Personality, Self-Congruity, Satisfaction, and Loyalty in a Cross-Cultural Context

Explorando os papéis da personalidade da marca do destino, da congruidade pessoal, da satisfação e da lealdade em um contexto transcultural

Gozde Seval Ergun 

Akdeniz University, Manavgat Tourism Faculty, Tourism Management, Türkiye, gates@akdeniz.edu.tr

Huseyin Keles* 

Akdeniz University, Manavgat Tourism Faculty, Tourism Guidance, Türkiye, hkeles@akdeniz.edu.tr

Ozgur Yayla 

Akdeniz University, Manavgat Tourism Faculty, Recreation Management, Türkiye, ozguryayla@akdeniz.edu.tr

Received: 14.12.2025; Revisions required: 02.04.2026; 18.05.2026; Accepted: 01.07.2026

*Corresponding Author

Abstract

This study examines the relationships between Asian and European tourists' perceptions of destination brand personality and self-congruity in the Side destination. The research was conducted in July-August 2024, with data collected through face-to-face interviews with foreign visitors. SPSS package program and PLS-SEM were preferred to analyse the data, and the effects of destination brand personality elements of sincerity and ruggedness on self-congruity were examined in detail. The results show that an increase in tourists' self-congruity significantly increases their satisfaction and loyalty towards the destination. Furthermore, cultural differences have been found to play a moderating role in the relationships between self-congruity and satisfaction, as well as satisfaction and loyalty. As a consequence, it has been emphasised that creating a brand personality and enhancing self-congruity have a significant effect on tourists' satisfaction and loyalty, which can be critical elements for ensuring sustainable success in a competitive tourism market. These findings suggest that destination managers should shape their marketing strategies by taking cultural differences into account.

Keywords: Destination Brand Personality, Self-Congruity, Destination Satisfaction, Loyalty, Cultural Differences, Tourism.

Resumo

Este estudo analisa as relações entre as percepções dos turistas asiáticos e europeus relativamente à personalidade da marca do destino e à congruência pessoal no destino de Side. A investigação foi realizada entre julho e agosto de 2024, tendo os dados sido recolhidos através de entrevistas presenciais a visitantes estrangeiros. Para a análise dos dados, optou-se pelo SPSS e PLS-SEM, tendo-se examinado em pormenor os efeitos dos elementos de personalidade da marca do destino — sinceridade e robustez — na congruência pessoal. Os resultados mostram que um aumento da congruência pessoal dos turistas aumenta significativamente a sua satisfação e lealdade em relação ao destino. Além disso, verificou-se que as diferenças culturais desempenham um papel moderador nas relações entre a congruência pessoal e a satisfação, bem como entre a satisfação e a lealdade. Consequentemente, tem-se salientado que a criação de uma personalidade de marca e o reforço da congruência pessoal têm um efeito significativo na satisfação e na lealdade dos turistas, o que pode constituir elementos fundamentais para garantir o sucesso sustentável num mercado turístico competitivo. Tal sugere que os gestores de destinos devem definir as suas estratégias de marketing tendo em conta as diferenças culturais.

Palavras-chave: Personalidade da Marca do Destino; Congruência Pessoal; Satisfação com o Destino; Lealdade; Diferenças Culturais; Turismo.

1. Introduction

Tourist destinations have become much more important as a result of the continuous rise in global tourist numbers. Tourists often prefer destinations that have similar qualities, such as stunning scenery, clean beaches, and high-quality accommodation (Hosany, Ekinci & Uysal, 2006; Hildebrandt & Isaac, 2015). On the other hand, with the newly introduced destinations in the tourism sector, it has become difficult for tourists to make decisions (Karl, Muskat & Ritchie, 2020), and destinations positioned differently in travellers' minds have become more advantageous (Kumar & Nayak, 2014). In this context, one of the effective ways to gain a sustainable advantage by positioning destinations in the minds of travellers is to create a strong destination brand personality (DBP) (Hosany et al., 2006; Pereira, Correia & Schutz, 2015; Chen & Phou, 2013; Kim & Stepchenkova, 2016; Kumar, 2016). Perceptions of a destination's personality, including those regarding the destination selection process, are among the critical factors that affect travellers' decision-making (Chi, Pan & Chiappa, 2018; Esen, 2024).

Today, Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) compete with other destinations to leave a positive impression in tourists' minds (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Around the world, many destinations have adopted brand strategies similar to those of major firms such as Coca-Cola, Nike, and Sony to differentiate their identities and create their own unique branding (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2004). Upon recognizing the importance of branding's role in tourism marketing, there has been an increase in studies on various brand concepts such as brand image, brand loyalty, and brand personality that address destination and accommodation businesses



in the literature (Kovačić, Jovanović & Dinić, 2020; Wang et al., 2022; Tse & Tung, 2022; Kovačić et al., 2022; Lee & Park, 2023; Chen et al., 2024).

The current research demonstrates that the emotional bonds formed between consumers and brands can also be established between tourists and destinations (Usakli & Baloğlu, 2011; Hultman et al., 2015). Self-congruity theory, which is often used in destination branding research (Ekinci & Riley, 2003; Boksberger et al., 2011; Kim & Malek, 2016; Segota, Chen & Golja, 2021), refers to the motive of people to buy services and products that are in line with their personalities (Aaker, 1995). Accordingly, it is possible to state that, when applied to the tourism sector, tourists are more likely to develop a positive attitude toward a destination the more similar its nature is to their self-concepts (Kumar, 2016). It is alleged that destinations with strong brand personalities create strong emotional bonds in tourists' minds (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006). The destinations with strong brand personality also positively affect concepts such as destination satisfaction (DS) (Chen & Phou, 2013) and destination loyalty (DL) (Chi et al., 2018).

The study was conducted in Side, one of Turkey's most valuable tourist destinations it aimed to determine the effects of DBP perception on self-congruity, DS, and DL. Although DBP and self-congruity are considered two important basic elements in destination branding, research on their relationship remains limited (Uşaklı & Baloğlu, 2011; Kumar, 2016). Even though there are studies on DBP (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Xie & Lee, 2013; Bekk, Sporrle & Kruse, 2016; Souiden, Ladhari & Chiadmi, 2017), researchers argue that results from different cases are important for determining DBP outputs. The research, in the meantime, has aimed to contribute to the literature by filling the gap by determining the moderating role of culture in influencing the relationship between DS and DL. In addition to these purposes, culture is recognised as a significant variable in marketing research, as it is considered a vital indicator of consumer behaviour (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2011; Wan, 2013). Similarly, in recent years, studies examining the effects of cultural differences on tourist behaviour have also been a focus of tourism research (Wang et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2021). What's more, the effects of cultural differences across countries or nationalities on the relationships among DBP, self-congruity, DS, and DL remain unclear. Based on these explanations, the results of the study could help develop an effective DBP in Side, which hosts a considerable number of tourists from Europe and Asia.

The research problem arises when there is a need for further research on a particular topic (Uma, 2009) and aims to improve the current state of the relevant subject area. Considering the explanation above about destination brand personality, which is the main topic of this research, looking into how this concept relates to self-congruity, satisfaction, and loyalty shows that this study is an exploratory one. Exploratory research is used when limited information is available on the subject under analysis (Sirakaya-Turk and Uysal, 2011). In this regard, the research was conducted using quantitative data collected in Side, Turkey. This destination hosts more than 5 million tourists annually, and was analysed using SPSS and Smart PLS. Although this study is exploratory, in that it examines a research model that has not previously been tested in a Mediterranean coastal destination with a cross-cultural moderator, it is not atheoretical. The hypothesised relationships are derived from established theoretical frameworks: Self-Congruity (Mehrabian & Russel, 1974; Sirgy & Su, 2000), brand personality theory (Aaker, 1997), and Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework (Hofstede, 1984). The causal directions proposed in the model are therefore theoretically motivated rather than data-driven post hoc rationalisations.

Building on the above, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do the sincerity and ruggedness dimensions of DBP influence tourists' self-congruity in a coastal Mediterranean destination?

RQ2: To what extent does self-congruity influence destination satisfaction and destination loyalty?

RQ3: Does culture (Asian vs European) moderate the relationships between self-congruity, destination satisfaction, and destination loyalty?

This study addresses a specific theoretical gap in the destination branding literature: while the antecedents and outcomes of DBP have been examined in various contexts, the simultaneous integration of DBP, self-congruity, destination satisfaction (DS), and destination loyalty (DL) within a single structural model remains underexplored. Moreover, the moderating role of culture (operationalised through nationality) in these relationships has not been empirically tested in the context of a Mediterranean coastal destination. The existing literature on cross-cultural comparisons in tourism (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2016; Wang et al., 2021) largely treats culture as a background variable rather than a formal moderator. By positioning culture as a moderating variable within the DBP–self-congruity–DS–DL chain, this study extends Self-Congruity Theory (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy & Su, 2000) into a cross-cultural framework, thereby responding to calls for more theoretically grounded comparative research (Reisinger & Crofts, 2009; Xie & Lee, 2013).



2. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model of this study is grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) and widely applied to consumer behaviour research (Jani & Han, 2015). Within this framework, destination brand personality serves as the environmental *stimulus* that activates cognitive and affective processes in the tourist (the *organism*). Self-congruity — defined as the degree of match between a tourist's self-concept and the perceived personality of a destination (Sirgy & Su, 2000) — constitutes the key internal state that mediates between the stimulus and behavioural responses, such as satisfaction and loyalty. Culture, in this framework, acts as a boundary condition modifying how the organism processes and responds to the stimulus.

Self-Congruity Theory (Sirgy, 1982) posits that consumers prefer brands and destinations whose perceived personality aligns with their own self-concept, whether actual, ideal, social, or ideal-social. The theory has been extensively applied in destination branding (Boksberger et al., 2011; Wu & Lai, 2023; Li & Lai, 2024), consistently demonstrating that higher self-congruity predicts more positive destination attitudes, satisfaction, and loyalty. This study adopts Self-Congruity Theory as its primary theoretical lens, embedded within the SOR framework, to explain how DBP perceptions translate into tourist behaviours through the mediating role of self-congruity.

2.1. DBP and self-congruity

DBP, adapted to tourism from studies on brand personality (Aaker, 1997), uses a set of human-like features associated with a destination (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006). It is observed that the destination personality is handled in different dimensions in the studies. For instance, Ekinci & Hosany (2006) examined the destination personality in three dimensions: sincerity, fun, and excitement. Usakli & Baloglu (2011) examined the destination personality of Las Vegas across five dimensions in a study of 368 visitors to Las Vegas. These dimensions are stated as competence, sophistication, vibrancy, sincerity, and contemporary. Papadimitrou et al. (2015) identified two dimensions of Athens' destination personality: excitement and sincerity. The brand personality scale by Aaker (1997) was used by Xie & Lee (2013) to ascertain Beijing's destination personality, and they identified four dimensions: excitement, sophistication, ruggedness, and competence. Although there are studies on destination personality in the literature, those examining its relationship with self-congruity are relatively few (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Ajanovic & Cizel, 2016). However, since self-congruity indicates the extent to which tourists' self-concept aligns with the destination image, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between destination personality and self-congruity. This is because DBP and destination image are closely related concepts (Chi et al., 2018).

The emergence of only two dimensions (sincerity and ruggedness) in Side — as opposed to the three to five dimensions identified in other destinations (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Uşaklı & Baloglu, 2011; Chi et al., 2018) — carries conceptual significance beyond mere taxonomic variation. It reflects the destination-specific and culturally embedded nature of DBP: Side's dominant tourism product (sun–sea–sand) and its multi-cultural visitor profile appear to distil personality perception to two core dimensions. This finding supports arguments that DBP dimensions are not universal constructs but are shaped by the interaction between destination characteristics and visitors' cultural lenses (Aaker et al., 2001; Kim & Stepchenkova, 2016). Accordingly, the sincerity and ruggedness dimensions identified here should not be read as a simplified version of Aaker's (1997) framework, but as a context-sensitive manifestation of it — one that advances understanding of how mass-tourism coastal destinations are perceived across culturally distinct visitor groups.

The concept of destination personality has been the subject of significant studies in the literature, particularly in recent years. Table 1 presents the recently published studies and their characteristics concerning destination personality.


Table 1 Destination research in recent years

Author(s) and Year	Title	Source	Sample	Type of Research	Purpose
Baloglu, Henthorne & Sahin, 2014	Destination Image and Brand Personality of Jamaica: A Model of Tourist Behavior	Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing	Actual tourists in Jamaica.	Qualitative and Quantitative Research	Jamaica's destination image and brand personality, and how they relate to future tourist behaviour.
Kumar & Nayak, 2014	The measurement & conceptualization of destination personality	Tourism Management Perspectives	-	Literature Review	To explore the measurement and conceptualisation techniques of destination personality, an extended review of destination personality studies has been summarised.
Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou & Kaplanidou, 2015	Destination Personality, Affective Image, and Behavioral Intentions in Domestic Urban Tourism	Journal of Travel Research	361 urban tourists	Quantitative Research	The collective influence of destination personality and affective image on the overall image formation of a domestic urban destination, and subsequently on tourists' behavioural intentions.
Pereira, Correia & Schutz, 2015	Golf destinations' brand personality: the case of the Algarve	International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research	Individual interviews with experts in tourism and golf in the Algarve/ 600 golf players in the Algarve	Qualitative and Quantitative Research	Develop and validate a measurement scale for brand personality in golf destinations, and simultaneously assess the Algarve's destination personality as a golf destination.
Huang, Zhang & Hu (2017)	Destination brand personality and destination brand attachment – the involvement of self-congruence	Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing	Chinese independent tourists in Yangshuo	Quantitative Research	Examines the roles of destination brand personality and self-congruence in the development of destination brand attachment from the tourists' perspective.
Pan, Zhang, Gursoy & Lu (2017)	Development and validation of a destination personality scale for mainland Chinese travelers	Tourism Management	319 online reviews/ 515 Chinese travellers	Content Analysis/ Quantitative Research	A destination personality scale was developed from a sample of Mainland Chinese travellers, and the impact of this new scale on tourists' travel attitudes and behaviours was examined using a two-step mixed-methods approach.
Chi, Pan & Chiappa (2018)	Examining destination personality: Its antecedents and outcomes	Journal of Destination Marketing & Management	1266 tourists (both international and domestic)	Quantitative Research	It is investigated how destination personality affects destination satisfaction and self-congruity, and how self-congruity affects destination satisfaction and destination loyalty.
Kumar & Nayak, (2018)	Destination Personality: scale Development and validation	Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research	152/ 177 foreigners	Qualitative and Quantitative Research	A 23-item reduced scale was proposed to measure India's destination personality.
Vinyals-Mirabenta, Kavaratzis & Fernández-Cavia (2019)	The role of functional associations in building destination brand personality: When official websites do the talking	Tourism Management	The official website of the 12 most popular cities in Europe	Content Analysis	It aims to determine the potential of certain functional types as sociation-attraction in strengthening the projected personality through discourse.
Kovačić, Jovanović & Dinić (2020)	Development and validation of a new measure of travel destination personality	Psihologija	Students of tourism and hospitality from the University of Novi Sad who have travel experience	Quantitative Research	It aimed to develop a new scale (the Destination Personality Scale) to measure travel destination personality.
Wang et al. (2022)	Revisit the formation of destination brand personality	Annals of Tourism Research	18 potential visitors and 16 actual visitors	Quantitative Research/ Neuroscience experimental programming system	An event-related potential technique and the S1(cue)-S2(target) paradigm were developed to explore the effect of the onsite experience on tourists' formation and extension of destination brand personality.



Kovačić et al. (2022)	What Shapes Activity Preferences? The Role of Tourist Personality, Destination Personality and Destination Image: Evidence from Serbia	Sustainability	502 visitors to The Trail of Roman Emperors in Serbia	Quantitative Research	A structural model consisting of individual characteristics, destination image, destination personality, and activity preferences is proposed and tested.
Cruz-Milan & Castillo-Ortiz (2023)	Destination brand personality self-congruity, and crime perceptions: Effects on travel intentions	Journal of Destination Marketing & Management	450 consumers in the United States (US)	Quantitative Research	Tourists' travel intentions are examined in terms of two key constructs: destination brand personality self-congruence (DBPSC) and perceived risks of criminal activity at destinations.
Wu & Lai (2023)	How destination personality dimensions influence film tourists' destination loyalty: an application of self-congruity theory	Current Issues in Tourism	334 Mainland Chinese film tourists	Quantitative Research	Based on the theory of self-congruence, this study aims to investigate the effects of four dimensions of destination personality on symbolic and functional fit, and to examine how symbolic and functional fit, in turn, affect destination loyalty in the context of film tourism.
Chen et al. (2024)	Does linguistic diversity make destinations more sophisticated? Exploring the effects on destination personality	Journal of Destination Marketing & Management	392 Chinese tourists	Quantitative Research	Applying destination personality theory, this research examines the impact of linguistic diversity on destination personality, as well as tourists' attitudes and behaviour across five studies.
Li & Lai (2024)	Exploring the formation of destination loyalty from destination personality and self-congruity: A mediating role of destination relationship quality	International Journal of Tourism Research	424 Chinese tourists in Guangzhou, China.	Quantitative Research	The study investigates how destination personality and self-congruity influence tourists' destination loyalty through destination relationship quality.
Scuotto, Karagöz, Farronato & Alon (2024)	A destination's personality as a factor in tourists' environmental knowledge management	Journal of Knowledge Management	2222 young Chinese tourists	Quantitative Research	From a knowledge management perspective, research aims to investigate environmental knowledge management to understand how it leverages tourists' and destination personality.
Güzel, Ö., Ünal, C. & Şahin, İ. (2024)	How does the cross-cultural view shape the destination brand personality and brand image? Evidence from the travelers	Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism	1,688 British, Russian, German, and Turkish tourists visiting Antalya	Quantitative Research	To examine the relationships between destination brand personality, destination brand image, satisfaction, and post-experience behaviours, and to analyse the mediating role of satisfaction and the moderating effect of nationality.
Pérez-Tapia, Cabrera-Sánchez & Hernández Correa (2025)	Innovative framework for the analysis of the effects of destination personality on behavioral results: The mediating role of self-congruity	Journal of Vacation Marketing	480 Chinese respondents (snowball sampling)	Quantitative empirical study (PLS-SEM, NCA, IPMA)	To examine the effect of destination personality on behavioural outcomes (visit intention) and the mediating role of self-congruity
Dewi, N. G. A. S. & Wulandani, N. L. K. L. (2025)	The Effect of Self-Congruity on the Loyalty of Young Domestic Tourists in Bali Through Destination Personality	International Journal of Tourism Business Research	Young domestic tourists visiting Bali	Explanatory Research (Mixed Method)	To investigate how self-congruity and destination personality influence young tourists' destination loyalty
Cavalcante, W. Q. F., Coelho, A. & Bairrada, C. M. (2025)	Unforgettable Destinations: How Perceived Sustainability Impacts Image, Memory, and the Intention to Revisit Through Mediating Role of Destination Brand Personality	International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration	390 North American respondents (MTurk)	Quantitative Research (SEM)	To examine how perceived destination sustainability influences destination brand personality, and how DBP mediates the effects on destination image, memory, and revisit intention.
Kang et al. (2026)	Destination Personality, Experience, and Loyalty: Insight into Perceived Destination Resilience in Osaka Kansai, Case of Korean Travelers in Osaka Expo Context	Sustainability	198 Korean travellers who previously visited Osaka-Kansai	Quantitative Research (Online Survey, Structural Analysis)	To examine how destination personality, experience, and loyalty contribute to perceived destination resilience in a sustainability and mega-event context



Shi, G., Shen, H. & Liu, H. (2026)	The effect of destination personality dimensions on park visitors' pro-environmental behavior: an application of stimulus-organism-response model	Frontiers in Psychology	785 visitors at Banshan National Forest Park (China)	Mixed Method Research (PLS-SEM)	To examine how destination personality dimensions influence visitors' pro-environmental behaviour through self-congruity and place attachment within the SOR framework
Yu et al. (2026)	"A place I like or a place like me?": exploring destination personality and tourist loyalty among young adventure tourists on social media	Young Consumers	634 post-trip reviews from scuba diving tourists shared on a social media platform	Quantitative Research (Content Analysis)	To investigate how destination personality traits reflected in user-generated content influence young tourists' loyalty (revisit and recommendation intentions)

While the above studies collectively confirm a positive association between DBP and self-congruity, several limitations persist in the existing literature. First, the majority of studies have been conducted in East Asian urban destinations (e.g., Beijing, Las Vegas, Athens), leaving Mediterranean mass-tourism coastal destinations largely unexamined. Second, the dimensions of DBP identified across studies vary considerably — from three (Ekinici & Hosany, 2006) to five (Uşaklı & Baloglu, 2011) — suggesting that DBP is destination-specific and that further empirical work in different contexts is warranted (Wu & Lai, 2023; Li & Lai, 2024). Third, while recent studies have begun to examine the DBP–self-congruity relationship (Cruz-Milan & Castillo-Ortiz, 2023; Li & Lai, 2024), none have done so in a cross-cultural Mediterranean setting with a formal moderator. By directly addressing these gaps, the present study proposes that DBP positively influences the self-congruity of tourists visiting Side for a sea, sand, and sun holiday. With respect to this context, the research hypothesis was developed as follows:

H1: DBP positively affects self-congruity.

2.2 Relationship between self-congruity, DS, and DL

According to Sirgy and Su (2000), self-congruity is defined as the similarity between a person and their desired destination. Self-congruity is examined in four dimensions as actual self-congruity, social self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, and ideal social self-congruity (Chi et al., 2018). In this framework, actual self-congruity is defined as the image the tourist perceives of himself. Ideal self-congruity is the image that the individual desires to have. Social self-congruity is the image that others perceive of the tourist. Ideal social self-congruity is the image that the tourist desires to have others perceive of him (Armutlu & Üner, 2009). The literature contains findings about the effect of self-congruity on how individuals perceive a destination and form travel motivation (Sirgy & Su, 2000; Pratt & Sparks, 2013). According to self-congruity theory, an individual feels a greater sense of belonging to a destination that aligns with his/her personality characteristics (Ekinici & Hosany, 2006). As for the sense of belonging, it is a vital antecedent of satisfaction and loyalty behaviour (Morais & Lin, 2010; Kim, Lee & Lee, 2017; Patwardhan et al., 2020). Within this context, the effect of self-congruity on DS and DL is possible. Considering these aspects, the research hypotheses were developed as follows.

H2: Self-congruity positively affects DS.

H3: Self-congruity positively affects DL.

Loyalty behaviour has become one of the most effective indicators in the evaluation stages of destinations' marketing strategies (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 2000). Previous studies indicate that the most important factor in the formation of DL is DS (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010; Su, Hsu & Swanson, 2017; Kim et al., 2017; Chi et al., 2018) as satisfied tourists are more likely to revisit the same destination or make positive comments regarding the destination to others (Chi & Qu, 2008). Conversely, tourists who are not satisfied with the destination harm the environment by making negative comments about it (Richins, 1983). In a recent study, Cong (2021) found that satisfaction has a very strong effect on DL. Similarly, Li, Liu & Soutar (2021) found that satisfaction is an essential element in the formation of DL.

Despite the well-established role of self-congruity in predicting DS and DL, two important gaps remain. First, the vast majority of studies examine these relationships in isolation — either testing self-congruity → DS or DS → DL — without incorporating both pathways simultaneously into a single model (Chi et al., 2018). Second, whether the strength of these relationships varies as a function of tourists' cultural background has rarely been examined (Gonzalez-Jimenez et al., 2019). The present study addresses both gaps by testing the full self-congruity → DS → DL chain and introducing culture as a formal moderator.

Based on these findings, the research hypothesis was formed as follows:

H4: DS positively affects DL.



2.3. The moderating role of culture

In their study, Aaker, Benet & Martinez (2001) argue that individuals' perceptions of brand personality may vary across cultures and nationalities. There are distinctive cultural characteristics inherent to each country that differentiate it from other nations. Although nationality is not exactly equivalent to the concept of culture (McSweeney, 2002), it is an important indicator of cultural differences (Prayag & Ryan, 2012). In the study, the cultural variable was examined in relation to tourists' nationalities. Previous empirical studies indicate that nationality plays an important role in tourist behaviour (Pizam & Sussmann, 1995; Vieira et al., 2018; Vieira, Jordan & Santos, 2021). Nevertheless, some scholars assert that the cross-cultural differences in DBP have not yet been adequately explored (Xie & Lee, 2013; Reisinger & Crotts, 2009). Moreover, the studies argue that culture should not be ignored when determining DBP in the context of tourism (Kumar & Nayak, 2014). In parallel with the ideas above, Hofstede (1984) puts forward that there are deep-rooted cultural differences between European and Asian countries. In other words, Asian and European tourists differ in their ways of thinking and attitudes. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the moderating influence of culture on the relationship between DBP and self-congruity. However, while previous research has examined the effects of different cultures on DL (Almeida-Santana & Morena-Gil, 2017) and DS (Vieira et al., 2021), the moderating role of culture in the correlation between DS and DL remains unclear.

The theoretical rationale for positioning culture as a moderator stems from established arguments in cross-cultural consumer behaviour research. Hofstede (1984) demonstrated that collectivist vs individualist cultural orientations produce systematically different patterns of attitude formation and behavioural responses. Applied to the tourism context, self-congruity — as a fundamentally identity-based process — is expected to operate differently across cultural groups: European tourists from more individualistic cultures may exhibit stronger alignment between self-image and destination perception, producing more pronounced satisfaction and loyalty effects (Sung & Choi, 2012). In contrast, Asian tourists from more collectivist backgrounds may subordinate individual self-image congruence to group-level norms, attenuating the self-congruity→satisfaction path (Gonzalez-Jimenez, Fastoso, & Fukukawa, 2019). Prior studies have found that culture moderates the relationship between self-image congruity and behavioural intentions in branding contexts (Suryaningsih, Nugraha, & Anggita, 2020) and between destination brand personality and visitor outcomes (Matzler et al., 2016). Still, none have systematically tested this moderation within the full DBP–self-congruity–DS–DL chain. This study, therefore, does not simply add culture as an exploratory variable; it theoretically derives the direction and mechanism of moderation from self-congruity theory and cultural dimensions theory, thereby refining existing models of tourist behaviour.

Taken together, the existing literature suggests that culture serves as a theoretically significant moderator; however, its role has been examined only to a limited extent. Matzler et al. (2016) examined cultural values and destination brand personality across five nationalities but did not test self-congruity as an intervening variable. Suryaningsih et al. (2020) tested culture as a moderator of the destination personality–self-image congruity relationship but did not extend the model to DS and DL. No study to date has examined culture as a moderator across the full DBP–self-congruity–DS–DL chain in a single empirical model. This study fills that gap.

Considering these explanations, the research hypotheses were developed as follows.

H5: Culture moderates the effect of sincerity on self-congruity.

H6: Culture moderates the effect of ruggedness on self-congruity.

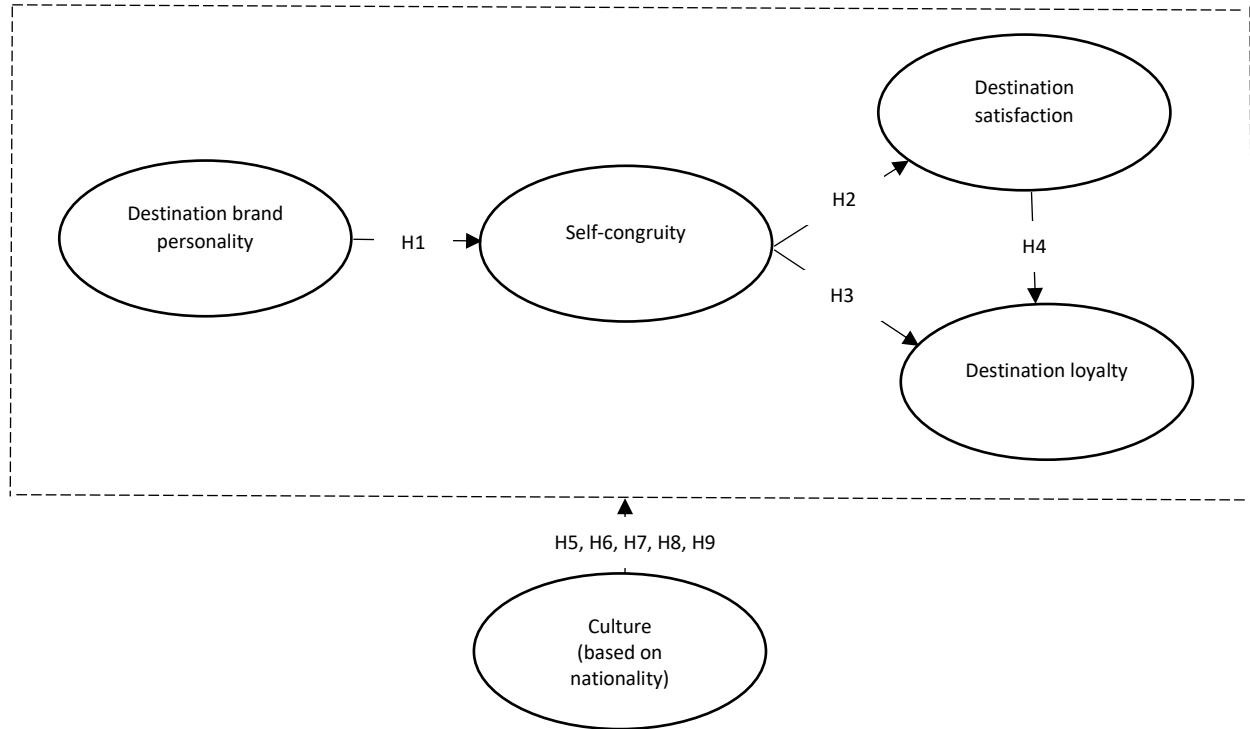
H7: Culture moderates the effect of self-congruity on DS.

H8: Culture moderates the effect of self-congruity on DL.

H9: Culture moderates the effect of DS on DL.

Based on the information provided above, the hypothetical research model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Hypothetical research model



Source: own elaboration.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Area

The study's research field was defined as the Side destination in Turkey, which is considered one of the most valuable destinations in the Mediterranean. In this context, tourists visiting Side were identified as the research population. There are several valid reasons for choosing the Side destination. First, Side, situated within the territory of Manavgat Town of Antalya, hosts millions of tourists every year. As a matter of fact, when the 2024 data has been analysed, it's seen that over 6 million tourists visited the Side destination (Culture and Tourism Ministry, 2025). Tourism statistics indicate that approximately one in three tourists visiting Antalya chooses Side as their destination. Second, Side has significant competitive advantages in the tourism sector thanks to its geo-economic assets. It can be stated that the destination offers multiple types of tourism, including sun-sea-sand tourism as well as attractions associated with ancient Side. From this perspective, the dimensions of destination personality vary across destinations with different cultural characteristics and diverse tourism opportunities (Lam & Ryan, 2020). Third, Side's location along Turkey's southern coast makes it a popular destination for international and domestic tourists, resulting in a multicultural tourist profile. Studying tourism in a destination with a diverse visitor base enables researchers to understand cross-cultural perceptions, preferences, and behaviours (Keles, 2023). Finally, a high level of saturation in the literature regarding research on destination brand personality has not yet been reached (Tetin et al., 2023). However, scholars argue that studies aimed at identifying destination brand personality in different destinations are of considerable importance (Wu & Lai, 2023). Therefore, Side is the most visited region in Antalya. For this reason, the Side destination in Manavgat, which is frequently visited by nations with different cultures, has been chosen as the study population to help destination marketers and policymakers increase its attractiveness and competitiveness.

3.2. Data collection

Data for the study were obtained from international visitors to the Side destination from July through August 2024. These months were chosen because annual data indicate they are the two busiest for the Side destination. The total number of overnight stays in Side exceeded four million in July and August (Manavgat Tourism Hoteliers and Operators Association, 2024). Similarly, recent data indicate that July and August are the two busiest months for Side in terms of foreign tourist arrivals (Culture and Tourism Ministry, 2025). Given the temporal and financial constraints of accessing the entire population, non-probability sampling methods were employed. Convenience sampling is widely used in social sciences and tourism research, particularly when a complete sampling frame is not available and time and resource constraints are present (Etikan et al., 2016; Brandão et al., 2021). Therefore, the convenience sampling method was preferred in this study. Although the use of convenience sampling requires careful



interpretation of the generalizability of the findings, the study provides valuable insights into tourist perceptions in the specific context examined. In this context, three researchers applied questionnaires to tourists voluntarily, considering the pandemic conditions, four days a week, at different points in Side. Accordingly, three locations with the highest tourist density were identified. The first location was the vehicle transfer point at the entrance of Side Ancient City, the second was the Apollo Temple, and the third was the entrance to the Side Museum. The generalizability of findings can be enhanced, according to Oh et al. (2007), by ensuring that the number of participants from the designated areas within the sample is approximately equal. Considering this, the number of participants recruited from each location was capped at 150 to ensure the sample was distributed across the three busiest locations in Side. No strict quotas were specified in terms of nationality or gender. Nevertheless, to reflect a wide range of perspectives, a considerable effort was made to reach tourists from various demographic groups. The data were obtained from individuals aged 18 years and over. In addition, during data collection, only one questionnaire was administered to each family when multiple adult family members were present. Thus, potential prejudices arising from similar answers to the same situation were eliminated. Additionally, within the scope of social desirability bias, the survey form indicated that the data would be used exclusively for academic purposes and that participation was entirely voluntary (Kim & Kim, 2016).

A power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1.9.7 software to determine the sample size (Faul et al., 2009). According to the priori sample size calculation, a minimum of 211 participants was deemed sufficient for this study, considering an anticipated effect size of 0.30, a desired statistical power of 0.80, and a significance level of 0.05. Additionally, Kline (2011) states that structural models are based on the number of observed variables and that approximately ten times the number of variables is needed to achieve the required sample size. Similarly, studies employing Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) indicate that a minimum sample size of 150 is sufficient (Muthén & Muthén, 2002). During the research, 409 questionnaires were collected, and incomplete survey forms were removed, resulting in a total of 401 questionnaires. Accordingly, the sample size obtained in this study was considered sufficient to test the statistical model.

3.3. Research Instrument

Aaker's (1997) five-dimensional brand personality scale was applied to measure DBP. Although Aaker's (1997) scale effectively measures brand personality, it is not suitable for destinations (Hosany et al., 2006). For this reason, an item pool was created from previous tourism-focused studies to determine destination personality traits (Hosany et al., 2006; Uşaklı & Baloğlu, 2011; Papadimitriou et al., 2015; Xie & Lee, 2013). For this purpose, an item pool was created from previous tourism-focused studies to determine destination personality traits (Hosany et al., 2006; Papadimitriou et al., 2015). As a result, a total of 20 items (down-to-earth, family-oriented, sincere, exciting, wholesome, charming, original, cheerful, independent, friendly, real, honest, up-to-date, sentimental, young, masculine, western, trendy, tough, rugged) were included in the research scale. The participants evaluated how well each term characterised the city as a tourism destination, using a scale from 1 (not descriptive at all) to 5 (highly descriptive). Self-congruity was measured with four items in total, adapted from the study of Joo et al. (2020). Two items on destination satisfaction were obtained from Chi et al. (2018). Lastly, four items to measure destination loyalty were taken from the scales used by Chi et al. (2018) and Chen & Chon (2019).

On the other hand, culture was not measured using a psychometric scale. Instead, the tourists who responded to the survey were grouped by nationality. This reflects not a precise measure of culture, but rather an indication of broad regional differences. Since the scales were in English, the survey was prepared in English without any translation. To minimise the risk of common method bias in social science research (Cooper et al., 2020), response-strengthening techniques were employed. In this context, the respondents who took part in the research were not asked any individual questions and were informed that their answers would be kept private and would not be disclosed in detail. Similarly, the participants were informed that the survey was voluntary and that the items did not have true-or-false options. A pilot study was conducted with 42 participants between July 1 and 8, 2024, to assess the clarity and reliability of the scales. Based on the data obtained, it was determined that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each scale was above 0.70 and that the questions were clear; it was then decided to proceed with collecting the main dataset.

3.4. Data analysis

The data collected have been transferred to the SPSS package program. Before proceeding to the data modelling phase, a three-stage data screening process was applied. Firstly, the Mahalanobis distance was calculated to identify extreme values. Following the exclusion of 14 questionnaire forms identified as outliers from the analysis, the research proceeded with the remaining 387 questionnaire responses. In the next section, the multicollinearity problem was analysed. According to the results, the tolerance values in each structure were at least 0.17, and the VIF values were at most 1.754. Finally, the skewness and kurtosis values were analysed, and it was concluded that the data were normally distributed because they fell between -1.5 and +1.5 (Kline, 2011).

Aaker (1997) states brand personality as five dimensions; however, various dimensions have been obtained as a result of the research conducted in tourism literature (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Papadimitrou et al., 2015). For example, Ajanovic & Çizel (2016)



identified four dimensions as competence, contemporary, sophisticated, and excitement in their research to determine destination personality. Therefore, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was first applied to examine the destination personality structure. According to the EFA results, a two-dimensional structure (sincerity and ruggedness) with an eigenvalue greater than 1 was obtained in the destination personality scale, given the uncertainty regarding the dimensions of brand personality. On the other hand, the factor loads of six expressions (exciting, charming, independent, up-to-date, young, trendy) in the destination personality were found to be less than .50. Since the related items did not provide sufficient factor load, they were excluded from the scale (Hair et al., 2005). Also, CA values for the reliability results of these constructs were greater than .70. Moreover, it was found that the maximum correlation between the items was .715, and the corrected item-total correlations were a minimum of .317. These results are considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2005). Therefore, the destination personality has been considered with a two-dimensional structure.

Intercultural studies have become popular, and they can be conducted more easily when nationalities are used as the basis for measuring culture (Uşaklı, 2016). Besides, it is widely accepted that nationality is closely related to culture (Chen, 2000; Özdemir & Yolal, 2016). Although there are different subcultures or individual differences within a nation, national cultural identity has a structure that transcends such subcultures and individual identities (Tipton, 2009). Hoyer & MacInnis (2004) claim that culture is an element that characterises a society or region and enables it to exhibit homogeneous behaviours and norms. In the study conducted by Pizam & Sussmann (1995), the scholars present findings showing that culture moderates tourist behaviour and is important for understanding it. When the literature is examined, there are studies in which culture has been measured based on nationality (Kim, 2013; Uşaklı, 2016; Ooi, 2019). In this study as well, the concept of culture was associated with nationality. Thus, to make more reliable methodological comparisons in the analysis, PLS-MGA was used, which requires balanced groups. When evaluating the distribution of data by nationality, the aim was to ensure statistical robustness across groups by categorising tourists according to broader cultural dimensions. This approach is consistent with previous tourism research. For instance, Woodside & Ahn (2008) conducted a study analysing the impact of culture on perceptions of tourist services. They obtained data from 14 countries and categorised cultures as Asian, European, and American. In parallel with these findings, the research data were coded using SPSS, resulting in two groups: Asia and Europe. Therefore, the research findings should be interpreted as reflecting general cultural trends rather than national-level differences.

The present study is exploratory, examining the moderating role of culture in the relationships among DBP, self-congruity, DS, and DL—an approach that differs from prior literature. According to Hair et al. (2011, p. 144), PLS-SEM is well-suited for exploratory research and is recommended for testing complex models (Sarstedt et al., 2017). Moreover, PLS-SEM maintains high statistical power even with small sample sizes, making it appropriate when sample size limitations exist (Hair et al., 2017). Therefore, the research model was analysed using PLS-SEM, and PLS-multiple group analysis (PLS-MGA) was applied to examine the moderator role of culture.

4. Findings

4.1. Demographic profile

48.8% of the tourists participating in the research were men, and 51.2% were women. It was determined that most participants (39.3%) were between 44 and 55 years old. Additionally, 34.9% of participants in the study were university graduates. The majority of respondents (26.1%) fall into the income range of \$60,000 to \$79,999. 28.9% of the tourists were single, and 71.1% were married. Finally, while 54.9% of the tourists participated in the research were from European countries (Germany 27.4%; England 16.3%; Denmark 6.5%; Belgium 1.3%; Netherlands 1%; Sweden .8%; Finland .8% and Poland .8%; 45.1% were from Asian countries (Russia 16.1%; Azerbaijan 8%; Iranian 4.2%; Macedonia 3.9%; Kyrgyzstan 3.4%; Israel 3.4%; Afghanistan 3.1%; Pakistan %1.8; Egypt 1.2%).

More than half (52.2%) of survey participants reported travelling to Side for the first time. In addition, it is understood that 64.6% of the participants travel with their families and take a vacation lasting 3 to 7 days, which is a very large percentage (75.2%).

4.2. Result of the outer model

Before the analysis of the research model, the outer model was examined, and the results are shown in Table 2. Within the scope of the convergent validity of the study, factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), Cronbach Alpha (CA), rho_A values of each observed variable, and for each structure, explained average variance extracted (AVE) values were analysed.

The outer loadings of the items ranged from .704 to .941. For each structure, CR, CA, and rho_A values were determined to be minimum values of .889, .888, and .889, respectively. These values are at an acceptable level (Hair et al., 1998). Also, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were above .50. In light of these results, the outer model provides convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**Table 2. Outer Model**

Factors	Outer loadings	t-value	CR	Rho_A	CA	AVE
<i>Sincerity</i>			.946	.947	.954	.673
Down to earth	.813	45.067				
Family oriented	.810	41.384				
Sincere	.789	32.260				
Wholesome	.841	53.261				
Original	.844	54.983				
Cheerful	.843	47.566				
Friendly	.843	50.861				
Real	.796	41.486				
Honest	.831	47.622				
Sentimental	.792	35.825				
<i>Ruggedness</i>			.942	.944	.959	.853
Masculine	.935	101.414				
Western	.900	61.243				
Tough	.929	79.713				
Rugged	.929	94.355				
<i>Self-Congruity</i>			.940	.941	.957	.848
SC1	.916	69.948				
SC2	.939	105.840				
SC3	.902	67.423				
SC4	.925	89.011				
<i>Destination Satisfaction</i>			.845	.846	.928	.866
DS1	.929	84.309				
DS2	.932	93.499				
<i>Destination Loyalty</i>			.906	.910	.935	.782
DL1	.916	77.464				
DL2	.922	80.596				
DL3	.904	82.803				
DL4	.789	32.409				

Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) results were evaluated for discriminant validity, and it was determined that all values had scores below the .90 threshold. These results indicate that the outer model provides discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015).

Table 3. HTMT Results

Factor	1	2	3	4	5
1. Destination Loyalty					
2. Ruggedness	.524.				
3. Destination Satisfaction	.690.	.359.			
4. Self-Congruity	.646.	.527.	.502.		
5. Sincerity	.811.	.689.	.553.	.650.	

4.3. Result of the inner model

Regarding the inner sample model, PLS analyses were conducted to estimate collinearity, path factors, R², and effect size (f²), and a Blindfolding analysis was performed to assess predictive power (Q²). The significance of the PLS path coefficients was evaluated by bootstrapping 5000 sub-samples from the sample, and t-values were estimated. In this sense, the study's findings are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Inner model**

Relations	Path coef.	t-value	p	R ²	f ²	Q ²	VIF	Result
DP-S → SC	.510	9.196	.000	.395	.249	.332	1.737	Accepted
DP-R → SC	.166	3.196	.001		.026		1.737	Accepted
SC → DS	.448	9.841	.000	.199	.251	.170	1.000	Accepted
SC → DL	.407	8.363	.000	.496	.263	.385	1.251	Accepted
DS → DL	.423	8.590	.000		.285		1.251	Accepted

DP-S: destination personality-sincerity; DP-R: destination personality-ruggedness; SC: self-congruity;

DS: destination satisfaction; DL: destination loyalty

When the values in the table are checked, it has been found that, within the context of destination personality, the dimensions of sincerity ($\beta=.510$; $p<.001$) and ruggedness ($\beta=.166$; $p=.001$) positively affect self-congruity. Self-congruity, on the other hand, positively affects DS ($\beta=.448$; $p<.001$) and DL ($\beta=.407$; $p<.001$). Similarly, it is observed that as DS increases, DL also increases ($\beta = .423$; $p < .001$). As a result, all the hypotheses have been accepted.

4.4. The moderating effect of culture

The participants were separated into two groups to examine the moderating effect of culture: European ($n=212$) and Asian ($n=175$). In this context, measurement invariance was first examined across cultural groups. Therefore, the three-step MICOM procedure was applied as recommended by Henseler et al. (2015). The results of the MICOM method show that Steps 1 and 2 were met, but Step 3 was not (see Appendix A). Therefore, partial measurement invariance was achieved. Following these results, PLS-MGA was conducted, as partial measurement invariance is sufficient for applying PLS-MGA (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 5. Multi-Group Analysis for culture groups

Relation	Culture	Path coefficients	t	Parametric	Welch-Satterthwait	Supported
DP-S → SC	Europe	.517	7.188	$\Delta\beta=-.015$ $p=.899$	$\Delta\beta=-.015$ $p=.887$	No
	Asia	.533	6.715			
DP-R → SC	Europe	.107	1.556 ^{NS}	$\Delta\beta=-.148$ $p=.189$	$\Delta\beta=-.148$ $p=.129$	No
	Asia	.255	3.713			
Sat → Loyalty	Europe	.509	8.312	$\Delta\beta=.249$ $p=.019$	$\Delta\beta=.249$ $p=.014$	Yes
	Asia	.260	3.273			
Self → Loyalty	Europe	.360	6.320	$\Delta\beta=-.098$ $p=.341$	$\Delta\beta=-.098$ $p=.346$	No
	Asia	.458	5.268			
Self → Sat	Europe	.533	10.953	$\Delta\beta=.242$ $p=.010$	$\Delta\beta=.242$ $p=.017$	Yes
	Asia	.291	3.306			

Notes: DP-S: destination personality-sincerity; DP-R: destination personality-ruggedness; SC: self-congruity;

DS: destination satisfaction; DL: destination loyalty

Table 5 shows that culture plays a moderating role in the relationships between (1) DS and DL; (2) self-congruity and DS. The effect of DS on DL and the effect of self-congruity on DS are more determinative for European tourists.

5. Conclusion

In this study, conducted in Side, on Türkiye's southern coast, the effects of destination personality perceptions on self-congruity were examined, and it was concluded that the self-congruity dimension significantly affects destination satisfaction and loyalty. The study found that destination satisfaction has a strong effect on destination loyalty. It has also been found that culture has a moderator role in the effect of self-congruity on destination satisfaction. Moreover, culture has moderated the effect of destination satisfaction on loyalty. According to the study's findings, the effects of the research variables have been less determinative for Asian tourists than for Europeans.

In light of the findings, this research aims to provide theoretical and practical implications by aligning with existing studies in the literature (Aaker et al., 2001; Chen & Phou, 2013). It integrates the concepts of destination brand personality, self-congruity, destination satisfaction, and destination loyalty into a theoretical framework concerning the coastal destination of Side. As a result, it has been revealed that culture plays a significant role in tourists' destination perceptions from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, this study emphasises the need for further research to understand better how cultural differences affect the relationship between



destination brand personality and self-congruity. A deeper investigation into the effects of cultural context on the tourism experience could make significant contributions to destination marketing and strategic planning.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The research presents theoretical implications based on the results obtained. One of the most important theoretical contributions of the study is the identification of two key dimensions of destination brand personality: sincerity and ruggedness. However, the fact that items excluded from the analysis due to low factor loadings were predominantly concentrated in the dimensions of “excitation,” “sophistication,” and “competence” meant these dimensions were not adequately represented in the research context. This situation limited the inclusion of these dimensions in the measurement model, and they were excluded from the analyses. Contextual differences between traditional product brands and tourism destinations can theoretically explain the exclusion of these dimensions. In other words, certain personality traits may not be equally prominent in the context of a tourism destination. This situation may weaken the dimensions’ performance. For example, in the study conducted by Papadimitriou et al. (2015) on the destination brand personality of Athens, two dimensions were identified: excitement and sincerity. In a similar study conducted in China, Li and Kaplanidou (2013) identified three dimensions: sincerity, excitement, and conviviality. Chi et al. (2018) identified three different dimensions of DBP—conviviality, sophistication, and vibrancy—in a study conducted on the island of Sardinia. The research findings differ from the dimensions found in previous literature (Aaker, 1997; Chi et al., 2018; Uşaklı & Baloglu, 2011). For example, in a previous study, Chi et al. (2018) defined destination brand personality in terms of the dimensions of conviviality, sophistication, and liveliness. Uşaklı and Baloglu (2011), on the other hand, identified five distinct dimensions under it.

The dimensions addressed in a broader context in previous studies (e.g., refinement, excitement, sociability) are reduced to two dimensions for the Side destination. This situation indicates that the destination possesses a distinct personality structure and aligns with its unique socio-cultural and geographical characteristics. From the perspective of symbolic consumption theory, tourists do not merely experience the functional aspects of a destination; they also seek symbolic meanings compatible with their identities (Ekinci, Sirakaya-Turk & Preciado, 2013). In this regard, sincerity represents a connection to an “authentic self,” enabling visitors to experience emotional closeness with the destination (Chen et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the ruggedness dimension may be linked to the combination of Side’s natural landscapes, coastal environment, and cultural heritage (e.g., ancient ruins and the long coastline). It can be concluded that Side, as a destination where nature and culture are closely integrated, evokes perceptions of adventure, ruggedness, and exploration. The coexistence of sincerity and ruggedness suggests that tourists perceive Side as a destination that offers both emotional closeness and openness to experience.

Another theoretical implication of the study is that it reveals the effect of destination brand personality on self-congruity. Self-congruity is defined as the bond that individuals establish with destinations that represent them and has been addressed in a limited number of studies in the tourism literature (Sirgy, 1982; Uşaklı & Baloglu, 2011). This study found that sincerity and ruggedness positively affect self-congruity, making an important contribution to the literature on the relationship between self-congruity and destination brand personality. In fact, the findings support the fundamental proposition of self-congruity theory (Wu & Lai, 2023). When a tourist possesses personality traits associated with a destination, it is reasonable to expect they will perceive greater congruence between their self-image and the destination. In this respect, while the sincerity dimension can be associated with tourists seeking authenticity and emotional connection, the ruggedness dimension may appeal to tourists with an adventurous spirit and a motivation to explore. This finding reinforces that DBP is a critical precursor to self-congruity in the tourism context. The study also demonstrates that self-congruity significantly affects destination satisfaction and loyalty, and reveals the effect of satisfaction on loyalty. The results of the study indicate that the higher the destination brand personality and self-congruity, the higher the tourists’ satisfaction and loyalty to the destination. In particular, the effect of destination brand personality dimensions on tourists’ identification with the destination has emerged as a significant factor in increasing satisfaction and loyalty. These outcomes are in line with studies such as Chi et al. (2018) and Rather (2020) and strengthen the role of the relationship between self-congruity and destination brand personality on tourist behaviour. It is observed that the research findings align with the studies in tourism literature that examine the relationships between destination personality, loyalty, satisfaction, and self-congruity (Tran et al., 2022; Kumar, 2016; Kilic & Sop, 2012; Wu & Lai, 2023; Huaman-Ramirez, Merunka & Maaninou, 2023; Li & Lai, 2024). In this respect, determining the factors that increase tourists’ self-congruity is thought to contribute to destination satisfaction and loyalty. Recent studies likewise identify satisfaction as a central mechanism shaping destination loyalty and behavioural intentions (Onat & Güneren, 2024; Aguilar-Rivero et al., 2025).

Another theoretical contribution of the study is its analysis of how tourists’ cultural backgrounds affect destination satisfaction and loyalty. While the effect of cultural differences on tourist behaviour is often emphasised in tourism literature (Papadimitriou et al., 2015; Uşaklı & Baloglu, 2011; Ergün & Kitapçı, 2018; Jeaheng et al., 2023; Jafarov & Isazada, 2024), the moderator role of culture has been explicitly revealed in this study. The findings indicate that European tourists are more likely to translate their satisfaction with the destination into loyalty than Asian tourists. This difference can be interpreted as a result of the distinction between



individualistic and collectivist cultures. European tourists, who are generally considered to belong to individualistic cultures, tend to place importance on the self and personal identity (Pizam, 2012). According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 2001), tourists from individualistic cultures are more satisfied with their destinations when they experience greater self-congruity (Sung & Choi, 2012). Therefore, self-congruity plays a more pivotal role in shaping their satisfaction and loyalty. Conversely, Asian tourists, who are more likely to come from collectivist cultures, prioritise social conformity and group norms in their decision-making processes (Meng, 2010). Thus, factors such as group interests and preferences may have a greater influence than the congruence between personal identity and destination identity. Moreover, this finding may stem from differences in travel behaviour patterns. For instance, considering that Asian tourists generally prefer package tours or group travel, the role of individual-level psychological constructs such as self-congruity may be minimised. This outcome implies that destinations' marketing strategies should be adapted according to tourists' cultural backgrounds (Papadimitriou et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2017) and contributes to the literature in this field. Recent evidence also indicates that nationality and cultural context shape tourists' satisfaction and service evaluations (Carvalho, Ramos, & Fortes, 2024; Loo, Tham, & Vance, 2025).

Another important aspect to discuss is that some of the relationships expected to differ across cultural groups did not show statistically significant differences. This finding can be explained in several ways. The first of these may be that increasing globalisation in tourism has led to a convergence of preferences among cultural groups. The fact that Side possesses various attractions that appeal to tourists from every culture may cause this effect to fail to yield a meaningful distinction. Another point is that reducing culture to a national context and using it as an indicator may not fully reflect cultural values.

This research shows that destination personality may represent a destination-specific structure rather than a universal, single framework, thereby contributing to the literature on destination branding. Furthermore, integrating self-congruity theory from a cross-cultural perspective offers insights into tourists' satisfaction and loyalty levels. The findings also emphasise that cultural differences do not affect all relationships among the variables in the same way, highlighting the complexity of tourist behaviour in global contexts.

5.2. Practical Implications

A series of practical implications has been presented to tourism policymakers, destination managers, and sector representatives based on the results of this study. Tourism policymakers and destination managers should adopt sustainable, innovative strategies to build a destination's brand personality, recognising that physical attractiveness alone is not enough. As a first step, a marketing strategy that emphasises sustainability and is grounded in the destination's natural and cultural richness should be adopted. This strategy should target not only physical features but also tourists' emotional and authentic experiences. Using modern communication tools such as social media and digital platforms, campaigns should be carried out to promote the destination's brand personality to the target audience. In this context, personalised digital marketing tools (such as social media targeting and AI-based suggestions) should be used to associate the destination's image with visitor profiles. In addition, alternative tourism products, such as ecotourism and cultural tourism, should be developed, and the destination's unique identity should be strengthened by engaging local communities. In this process, regularly researching tourists' perceptions and integrating feedback into brand strategies will enhance the destination's competitiveness and help establish an emotional bond with visitors. Cultural, social, and environmental factors should be taken into consideration when creating a brand personality. In this context, highlighting local stories and cultural elements can help make the destination more meaningful and attractive to tourists (Pike & Page, 2014). Promoting activities such as local festivals, arts, and gastronomy events can facilitate tourists' emotional connection with the destination and create destination loyalty (Morrison, 2023).

The two dimensions of destination brand personality, sincerity and ruggedness, should guide key strategies shaping destination marketing practices. Regarding the sincerity dimension, strategies such as highlighting authentic local experiences, crafting local narratives that emphasise cultural heritage, and encouraging host-guest interactions to strengthen perceptions of hospitality could be supported. As for the strategies to be developed for the ruggedness dimension, developing and promoting nature-based tourism products, and positioning the region as a destination for exploration and adventure in marketing communications could be considered.

Tourists are likely to prefer destinations that best meet and reflect their personalities when making travel decisions (Uşaklı & Baloğlu, 2011; Huang et al., 2017). In fact, a positive relationship between destination brand personality and self-adaptation will ensure that tourists leave the destination satisfied and revisit it. In this respect, destination managers need to personalise services by considering tourists' cultural differences (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). For European tourists, it is believed that strategies focusing on individual experiences that emphasise alignment with the destination's unique identity and lifestyle, while prioritising reliability and consistency in service delivery, will be successful. Meanwhile, for Asian tourists, group-oriented experiences, group activities, and guided tours should be encouraged, and the perception of reputation and trust should be strengthened. In this way, destinations can better meet the cultural expectations of different tourist groups, leading to greater satisfaction and loyalty.



The impact of tourism on the economy is constantly increasing as it is an ever-growing sector (Adnan Hye & Khan, 2013; Brida et al., 2016). Therefore, destination managers must develop sustainable strategies to ensure the long-term success of tourism. The involvement of local people in tourism processes is of great importance for sustainable tourism targets (Gautam & Bhalla, 2024). The integration of local people into these processes may increase tourists' satisfaction and loyalty by providing a more authentic and intimate experience (Lin et al., 2020). In this sense, destination managers should organise training and awareness programs to encourage local people's participation in tourism processes. Furthermore, it is important to invest in staff training programs that emphasise cultural sensitivity and customer experience.

As a consequence, destination managers and tourism sector representatives should focus not only on physical attractiveness but also on destination brand personality, cultural sensitivity, and sustainability principles to increase tourist satisfaction and loyalty. In this respect, training local people and individuals employed in the tourism sector will increase tourists' loyalty to the destination and sustain its economic benefits (Butler, 1999).

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study makes significant contributions to the tourism literature from multiple perspectives. However, the study has several limitations; in this respect, it presents some directions for future research. First, although Side is recognised as an international destination, the study's focus on a single destination may limit the generalizability of the findings. Comparative analyses across destinations, or even across several destinations simultaneously, may provide a more robust basis for the study's results and test the relationship between destination brand personality and self-congruity in different contexts. In particular, the impact of factors such as destination size, tourist diversity, and the destination's level of development on this relationship can be examined (Huang et al., 2017).

A key point that differentiates this study from others is its focus on the moderating role of culture in destination satisfaction and loyalty. However, it includes only European and Asian tourists, indicating that cultural diversity is not fully reflected in this study. In future research, including tourists from different regions may enable a broader analysis of cultural differences. For example, including tourists from different regions, such as North America, Africa, and Latin America, may provide a more holistic examination of the role of cultural influences on tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Papadimitriou et al., 2015).

Future research could extend this study by examining the moderator role of destination type (e.g., urban & coastal), travel motivations, and social identity orientations. Additionally, this study examines destination brand personality, self-congruity, destination satisfaction, and destination loyalty. The inclusion of psychological concepts such as destination attachment and trust in the research may provide a more comprehensive understanding of tourist behaviour. Destination image and trust are critical factors that influence tourists' perceptions and trust in a destination. Specifically, the relationship between trust and destination brand personality can be tested by examining how tourists' trust in a destination influences their loyalty. Besides, the relationship between motivation and personality can be analysed in greater depth by evaluating the effect of destination personality on studies of tourist motivations (Rather, 2020).

In this study, a convenience sampling method was used, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Although this approach is widely used in tourism research for its practicality, it can introduce sampling bias and reduce representativeness. To increase generalizability, future studies are encouraged to use methods such as stratified sampling.

Although the questionnaire was adapted from scales with established validity, the study's cross-cultural nature may have influenced participants' responses due to differences in language interpretation and cultural meaning. Future research may benefit from methods that ensure conceptual reliability, such as back-translation.

Last but not least, the sample used in the study is limited to data collected over a specific period. This may ignore seasonal or temporal variations in tourist behaviour. Future research could examine changes in tourist behaviour using longitudinal designs across different seasons or periods. Furthermore, in-depth interviews using qualitative methods can be used to analyse tourists' perceptions and emotional responses in greater detail (Badarneh & Som, 2011).

Acknowledgements: None.

Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

We hereby declare that no Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools or generative technologies were used in the research, writing, or editing of this work. The entire content of this document is solely the original and independent work of the author(s).

Credit author statement: All authors have contributed equally. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Declaration of competing interest: None.



References

- Aaker, J. L. (1995). *Brand personality: Conceptualization, measurement, and underlying psychological mechanism* (doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 9602828).
- Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34, 347–356. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224379703400304>
- Aaker, J. L., Benet-Martínez, V., & Garolera, J. (2001). Consumption symbols as carriers of culture: A study of Japanese and Spanish brand personality constructs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(3), 492–508. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.81.3.492>
- Adnan Hye, Q. M., & Ali Khan, R. E. (2013). Tourism-led growth hypothesis: A case study of Pakistan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(4), 303–313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2012.658412>
- Aguilar-Rivero, M., Orgaz-Agüera, F., López-Guzmán, T., & Moral-Cuadra, S. (2025). The mediating role of place attachment, attitudes, and satisfaction in loyalty to film tourism destinations. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 21(2), 67–81. <https://doi.org/10.18089/tms.20250205>
- Ajanovic, E. & Çizel, B. (2016). Destination brand personality, self-congruity theory and the intention to visit a destination. *Akdeniz İnsani Bilimler Dergisi*, 6(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.13114/MJH.2016119286>
- Almeida-Santana, A. & Moreno-Gil, S. (2017). New trends in information search and their influence on destination loyalty: Digital destinations and relationship marketing. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 6, 150–161. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.02.003>
- Armutlu, C. & Üner, M. (2009). Benlik imajı uyumu, tüketici tatmini ve marka sadakati ilişkisi üzerine görgül bir araştırma. *Gazi Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 11(3), 1–26.
- Badarneh, M. B., & Som, A. P. M. (2011). Factors influencing tourists' revisit behavioral intentions and loyalty. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(4), 4–26.
- Baloglu, S., Henthorne, T. L., & Sahin, S. (2014). Destination image and brand personality of Jamaica: A model of tourist behavior. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 31(8), 1057–1070. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2014.892468>
- Bekk, M., Spörrle, M., & Kruse, J. (2016). The benefits of similarity between tourist and destination personality. *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(8), 1008–1021. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287515606813>
- Boksberger, P., Dolnicar, S., Laesser, C., & Randle, M. (2011). Self-congruity theory: To what extent does it hold in tourism? *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(4), 454–464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287510368164>
- Brandão, F., Liberato, D., Teixeira, A. S., & Liberato, P. (2021). Motives for Thermal Tourism: An Application to North and Central Portugal. *Sustainability*, 13(22), 12688. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132212688>
- Brida, J. G., Cortes-Jimenez, I., & Pulina, M. (2016). Has the tourism-led growth hypothesis been validated? A literature review. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 19(5), 394–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2013.868414>
- Butler, R. W. (1999). Sustainable tourism: A state-of-the-art review. *Tourism Geographies*, 1(1), 7–25.
- Carvalho, F., Ramos, R. F., & Fortes, N. (2024). Customer satisfaction in mountain hotels within UNESCO Global Geoparks: An empirical study based on sentiment analysis of online consumer reviews. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 20(1), 35–47. <https://doi.org/10.18089/tms.20240103>
- Cavalcante, W. Q. F., Coelho, A., & Maia Bairaada, C. (2025). Unforgettable Destinations: How Perceived Sustainability Impacts Image, Memory and the Intention to Revisit Through Mediating Role of Destination Brand Personality. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15256480.2025.2521777>
- Chen, C. & Myagmarsuren, O. (2010). Exploring Relationships between Mongolian Destination Brand Equity, Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty. *Tourism Economics*, 16(4), 981–994. <https://doi.org/10.5367/te.2010.0004>
- Chen, C. F., & Chon, S. H. (2019). Antecedents and consequences of perceived coolness for Generation Y in the context of creative tourism - A case study of the Pier 2 Art Center in Taiwan. *Tourism Management*, 72, 121–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.11.016>
- Chen, C., & Phou, S. (2013). A closer look at destination: Image, personality, relationship and loyalty. *Tourism Management*, 36, 269–278. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.11.015>
- Chen, H. Y., Wang, L., Zhang, X., Wei, W., & Lyu, J. (2024). Does linguistic diversity make destinations more sophisticated? Exploring the effects on destination personality. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 31, 100828. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2023.100828>
- Chen, J. S. (2000). Cross-cultural differences in travel information acquisition among tourists from three Pacific-rim countries. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 24(2), 239–251. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10963480000240020>
- Chen, R., Zhou, Z., Zhan, G., & Zhou, N. (2020). The impact of destination brand authenticity and destination brand self-congruence on tourist loyalty: The mediating role of destination brand engagement. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 15, 100402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2019.100402>
- Chi, G. C. & Qu, H. (2008). Examining the structural relationships of destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated approach. *Tourism Management*, 29(4), 624–636. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.06.007>
- Chi, G. C., Pan, L., & Chiappa, G. D. (2018). Examining destination personality: Its antecedents and outcomes. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 9, 149–159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.01.001>
- Cong, L. C. (2021). Perceived risk and destination knowledge in the satisfaction-loyalty intention relationship: An empirical study of European tourists in Vietnam. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 33, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2020.100343>
- Cooper, B., Eva, N., Fazlelahi, F.Z., Newman, A., Lee, A., & Obschonka, M. (2020). Addressing Common Method Variance and Endogeneity in Vocational Behaviour Research: A Review of the Literature and Suggestions for Future Research. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 121, 103472. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103472>
- Cruz-Milán, O., & Castillo-Ortiz, I. (2023). Destination brand personality self-congruity and crime perceptions: Effects on travel intentions. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 28, 100781. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2023.100781>
- Culture and Tourism Ministry. (2025). Business (ministry)-certified facility accommodation statistics in 2024. Accessed June 26, 2025.



- de Mooij, M., & Hofstede, G. (2011). Cross-cultural consumer behaviour: A review of research findings. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 23, 181–192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08961530.2011.578057>
- Dewi, N. G. A. S., & Wulandani, N. L. K. L. (2025). The Effect of Self-Congruity on The Loyalty of Young Domestic Tourists in Bali Through Destination Personality. *International Journal of Tourism Business Research*, 4(2), 49–62. <https://doi.org/10.29303/intour.v4i2.2660>
- Ekinci, Y., & Hosany, S. (2006). Destination personality: An application of brand personality to tourism destinations. *Journal of Travel Research*, 45(2), 127–139. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287506291603>
- Ekinci, Y., & Riley, M. (2003). An investigation of self-concept: Actual and ideal self-congruence compared in the context of service evaluation. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 10(1), 201–14. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0969-6989\(02\)00008-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0969-6989(02)00008-5)
- Ekinci, Y., Sirakaya-Turk, E., & Preciado, S. (2013). Symbolic consumption of tourism destination brands. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(6), 711–718. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.09.008>
- Engel, J. F., Blackwell, R. D., & Miniard, P. W. (2000). *Consumer behaviour*. Chicago: Dryden Press.
- Ergün, G. S., & Kitapci, O. (2018). The impact of cultural dimensions on customer complaint behaviours: an exploratory study in Antalya/Manavgat tourism region. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 12(1), 59–79. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCTHR-01-2017-0010>
- Esen, O. (2024). Turizm alanında destinasyon imajına ilişkin çalışmaların bibliyometrik analizle incelenmesi: Scopus dergileri üzerine bir araştırma. *Journal of Gastronomy, Hospitality and Travel*, 7(4), 1104–1114. <https://doi.org/10.33083/joghat.2024.457>
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>
- Fan, D. X. F., Tsaur S-H., Lin, J-H., Chang, T-Y, & Tsai, Y. R. (2021). Tourist intercultural competence: A multidimensional measurement and its impact on tourist active participation and memorable cultural experiences. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61(2), 414–429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287520982>
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A.-G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods*, 41, 1149–1160. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BRM.41.4.1149>
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104>
- Gautam, V., & Bhalla, S. (2024). Exploring the relationships among tourism involvement, residents' empowerment, quality of life and their support for sustainable tourism development. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 434, 139770. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2023.139770>
- Gonzalez-Jimenez, H., Fastoso, F., & Fukukawa, K. (2019). How independence and interdependence moderate the self-congruity effect on brand attitude: a study of east and west. *Journal of Business Research*, 103, 293–300. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.01.059>
- Güzel, Ö., Ünal, C., & Şahin, İ. (2024). How does the cross-cultural view shape the destination brand personality and brand image? Evidence from the travelers. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 25(2), 239–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1528008X.2022.2112804>
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (2005). *Multivariate data analysis* (6th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Hair, J. F., Matthews, L. M., Matthews, R. L., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). PLS-SEM or CB-SEM: Updated guidelines on which method to use. *International Journal of Multivariate Data Analysis*, 1(2), 107–123. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMDA.2017.087624>
- Hair, J. F., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2011). PLS-SEM: Indeed a silver bullet. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 19(2), 139–152. <https://doi.org/10.2753/MTP1069-6679190202>
- Hair, J., Anderson, R., Tatham, R., & Black, W. (1998). *Multivariate data analysis* (5th ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Hayes, A. F. (2018). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modelling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43, 115–135. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-014-0403-8>
- Hildebrandt, T., & Isaac, R. (2015). The tourism structures in central Vietnam: Towards destination management organisation. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 12 (4), 463–478. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2015.1038360>
- Hofstede, G. (1984). Cultural dimensions in management and planning. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 1(2), 81–94. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01733682>
- Hofstede, G. (2001). Culture's recent consequences: Using dimension scores in theory and research. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 1(1), 11–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/147059580111002>
- Hosany, S., Ekinci, Y., & Uysal, M. (2006). Destination image and destination personality: An application of branding theories to tourism places. *Journal of Business Research*, 59, 638–642. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2006.01.001>
- Hoyer, W. D., & MacInnis, D. J. (2004). *Consumer behaviour* (3rd ed.). USA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Huaman-Ramirez, R., Merunka, D., & Maaninou, N. (2023). Destination personality effects on tourists' attitude: the role of self-congruity and ambiguity tolerance. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 31(1), 74–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2021.1874488>
- Huang, Z., Zhang, C., & Hu, J. (2017). Destination brand personality and destination brand attachment—the involvement of self-congruence. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 34(9), 1198–1210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2017.1330171>
- Hultman, M., Skarmeas, D., Oghazzi, P., & Beheshti, H. M. (2015). Achieving tourist loyalty through destination personality, satisfaction, and identification. *Journal of Business Research*, 68, 2227–2231. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.06.002>
- Jafarov, S., & Isazada, E. (2024). Cultural differences in tourist behavior: A cross-cultural psychological study. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 7(11), 8647–8656.
- Jani, D., & Han, H. (2015). Influence of environmental stimuli on hotel customer emotional loyalty response: Testing the moderating effect of the big five personality factors. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 44, 48–57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2014.10.006>



- Jeaheng, Y., Al-Ansi, A., Chua, B. L., Ngah, A. H., Ryu, H. B., Ariza-Montes, A., & Han, H. (2023). Influence of Thai street food quality, price, and involvement on traveler behavioral intention: exploring cultural difference (eastern versus western). *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 223–240. <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S371806>
- Joo, D., Woosnam, K. Y., Lee, S., & Lee, C. K. (2020). Destination loyalty as explained through self-congruity, emotional solidarity, and travel satisfaction. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 45, 338–347. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.06.017>
- Kang, E. M., Gutiérrez, J. R., Ahn, Y.-y., & Lee, S. K. (2026). Destination Personality, Experience, and Loyalty: Insight into Perceived Destination Resilience in Osaka Kansai, Case of Korean Travelers in Osaka Expo 2025. *Sustainability*, 18(3), 1597. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su18031597>
- Karl, M., Muskat, B. & Ritchie, B. W. (2020). Which travel risks are more salient for destination choice? An examination of the tourist's decision-making process. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 18, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100487>
- Keleş, H. (2023). Manavgat Destinasyonunda Bulunan Beş Yıldızlı Otellerin Web Sitelerine Yönelik Bir İçerik Analizi (A Content Analysis Regarding the Websites of Five Star Hotels in Manavgat Destination). *Journal of Tourism & Gastronomy Studies*, 11(3), 2512–2534. <https://doi.org/10.21325/jotags.2023.1305>
- Kilic, B., & Sop, S. A. (2012). Destination personality, self-congruity and loyalty. *Journal of Hospitality Management and Tourism*, 3(5), 95–105. <https://doi.org/10.5897/JHMT12.024>
- Kim, H. & Stepchenkova, S. (2016). Understanding destination personality through visitors' experience: A cross-cultural perspective. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 6(4), 416–425. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.06.010>
- Kim, J-H. (2013). A cross-cultural comparison of memorable tourism experiences of American and Taiwanese college students. *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 24(3), 337–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2012.762586>
- Kim, S. H., & Kim, S. (2016). Social Desirability Bias in Measuring Public Service Motivation. *International Public Management Journal*, 19(3), 293–319. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2015.1021497>
- Kim, S., Lee, Y.-K., Lee, C.-K. (2017). The moderating effect of place attachment on the relationship between festival quality and behavioural intentions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 22(1), 49–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2016.1176060>
- Kim, W. & Malek, K. (2016). Effects of self-congruity and destination image on destination loyalty: the role of cultural differences. *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 28(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2016.1239209>
- Kline, R. B. (2011). *Principles and practice of structural equation modelling* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Kovačić, S., Jovanović, T., & Dinić, B. M. (2020). Development and validation of a new measure of travel destination personality. *Psihologija*, 53(1), 65–85. <https://doi.org/10.2298/PSI190423016K>
- Kovačić, S., Jovanović, T., Vujičić, M. D., Morrison, A. M., & Kennell, J. (2022). What shapes activity preferences? The role of tourist personality, destination personality and destination image: evidence from Serbia. *Sustainability*, 14(3), 1803. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14031803>
- Kumar, V. & Nayak, K. J. (2014). The measurement & conceptualization of destination personality. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 12, 88–93. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2014.09.002>
- Kumar, V. (2016). Examining the role of destination personality and self-congruity in predicting tourist behaviour. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 20, 217–227. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2016.09.006>
- Kumar, V., & Nayak, J. K. (2018). Destination personality: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 42(1), 3–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348014561027>
- Lam, I. K. V. & Ryan, C. (2020). Can marketing create destination personality? The case of Macau. *Tourism Critiques: Practice and Theory*, 1(1), 5–20. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TRC-03-2020-0006>
- Lee, J. S., & Park, S. (2023). A cross-cultural anatomy of destination image: An application of mixed-methods of UGC and survey. *Tourism Management*, 98, 104746. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104746>
- Li, M. H., & Lai, I. K. W. (2024). Exploring the formation of destination loyalty from destination personality and self-congruity: a mediating role of destination relationship quality. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 26(4), e2675. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2675>
- Li, T., Liu, F. & Soutar, G. N. (2021). Experiences, post-trip destination image, satisfaction and loyalty: A study in an ecotourism context. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 19, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100547>
- Li, X., & Kaplanidou, K. (2013). The impact of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games on China's destination brand: A US-based examination. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 37(2), 237–261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348011425499>
- Lin, H., Zhang, M., & Gursay, D. (2020). Impact of nonverbal customer-to-customer interactions on customer satisfaction and loyalty intentions. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(5), 1967–1985. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-08-2019-0694>
- Loo, P. T., Tham, A., & Vance, L. (2025). Cross-cultural reviews of Airbnb superhosts. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 21(1), 141–155. <https://doi.org/10.18089/tms.20250109>
- Manavgat Tourism Hoteliers and Operators Association. (2024). Total overnight rate in the Manavgat region. Accessed May 24, 2026.
- Matzler, K., Strobl, A., Stokburger-Sauer, N., Bobovnick, A., & Bauer, F. (2016). Brand personality and culture: The role of cultural differences on the impact of brand personality perceptions on tourists' visit intentions. *Tourism Management*, 52, 507–520. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.07.017>
- McSweeney, B. (2002). Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith—a failure of analysis. *Human Relations*, 55(1), 89–118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267025510>
- Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). *An approach to environmental psychology*. MIT Press.
- Meng, F. (2010). Individualism/collectivism and group travel behavior: a cross-cultural perspective. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 4(4), 340–351. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17506181011081514>



- Morais, D. B. & Lin, C. H. (2010). Why do first-time and repeat visitors patronize a destination?, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 27(2), 193–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548401003590443>
- Morgan, N., Pritchard, A., & Pride, R. (Eds.). (2004). *Destination branding: Creating the unique destination proposition* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Morrison, A.M. (2023). *Marketing and Managing Tourism Destinations* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (2002). How to Use a Monte Carlo Study to Decide on Sample Size and Determine Power. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 9(4), 599–620. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15328007SEM0904_8
- Oh, H., Fiore, A., & Jeoung, M. (2007). Measuring experience economy concepts: Tourism applications. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(2), 119–132. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287507304039>
- Onat, G., & Güneren, E. (2024). The mediator role of customer satisfaction in the effect of gastronomic image on behavioral intention. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 20(2), 39–54. <https://doi.org/10.18089/tms.20240204>
- Ooi, C-S. (2019). Asian tourists and cultural complexity: Implications for practice and the Asianisation of tourism scholarship. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 31, 14–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.TMP.2019.03.007>
- Özdemir, C. & Yolal, M (2016). Cross-cultural tourist behaviour: An examination of tourists' behaviour in guided tours. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 17(3), 314–324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1467358415589658>
- Pan, L., Zhang, M., Gursoy, D., & Lu, L. (2017). Development and validation of a destination personality scale for mainland Chinese travelers. *Tourism Management*, 59, 338–348. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.08.005>
- Papadimitriou, D., Apostolopoulou, A., & Kaplanidou, K. (Kiki). (2015). Destination personality, affective image, and behavioural intentions in domestic urban tourism. *Journal of Travel Research*, 54(3), 302–315. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287513516389>
- Patwardhan, V., Ribeiro, M. A., Woosnam, K. M., Payini, V. & Mallya, J. (2020). Visitors' loyalty to religious tourism destinations: Considering place attachment, emotional experience and religious affiliation. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 36, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2020.100737>
- Pereira, R. L. G., Correia, A. H. & Schutz, R. L. A. (2015). Towards a taxonomy of a golf-destination brand personality: Insights from the Algarve golf industry. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 4(1), 57–67.
- Pérez-Tapia, G., Cabrera-Sánchez, J. P., & Hernández Correa, E. (2025). Innovative framework for the analysis of the effects of destination personality on behavioral results: The mediating role of self-congruity. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 13567667251361151.
- Pike, S., & Page, S. J. (2014). Destination Marketing Organizations and destination marketing: A narrative analysis of the literature. *Tourism Management*, 41, 202–227. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.09.009>
- Pizam, A. & Sussmann, S. (1995). Does nationality affect tourist behaviour. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22(4), 901–917. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(95\)00023-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(95)00023-5)
- Pizam, A. (2012). Cross-cultural tourist behavior. In *Consumer behavior in travel and tourism* (pp. 413–432). Routledge
- Pratt M. A. & Sparks, B. (2014) Predicting wine tourism intention: Destination image and self-congruity. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 31(4), 443–460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2014.883953>
- Prayag, G. & Ryan, C. (2012). Visitor interactions with hotel employees: the role of nationality. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 6(2), 173–185. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17506181211233090>
- Rather, R. A. (2020). Customer experience and engagement in tourism destinations: The experiential marketing perspective. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 37(1), 15–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2019.1686101>
- Reisinger, Y. & Crotts, J.C. (2009). Applying Hofstede's National Culture Measures in Tourism Research: Illuminating issues of divergence and convergence. *Journal of Travel Research*, 49, 153–164.
- Richins, M. L. (1983). Negative word-of-mouth by dissatisfied consumers: a pilot study. *Journal of Marketing*, 47(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224298304700107>
- Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C.M. & Hair, J.F. (2017). Treating Unobserved Heterogeneity in PLS-SEM: A Multi-method Approach. In: Latan, H., Noonan, R. (eds) *Partial Least Squares Path Modeling*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64069-3_9
- Scuotto, V., Karagöz, D., Farronato, N., & Alon, I. (2024). A destination's personality as a factor in tourists' environmental knowledge management. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 28(5), 1185–1203. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-07-2022-0534>
- Segota, T., Chen, N. (Chris), & Golja, T. (2021). The impact of self-congruity and evaluation of the place on WOM: Perspectives of tourism destination residents. *Journal of Travel Research*. 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287521100823>
- Shi, G., Shen, H., & Liu, H. (2026). The effect of destination personality dimensions on park visitors' pro-environmental behavior: An application of the stimulus–organism–response model. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 17, 1734312. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1734312>
- Sirakaya-Turk, E., Uysal, M., Hammitt, W. E., & Vaske, J. J. (Eds.). (2017). *Research methods for leisure, recreation and tourism*. CABl.
- Sirgy, M. J. & Su, C. (2000). Destination image, self-congruity, and travel behaviour: Toward an integrative model. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(4), 340–352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728750003800402>
- Souiden, N., Ladhari, R. & Chiadmi, N. E. (2017). Destination personality and destination image. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 32, 54–70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2017.04.003>
- Su, L., Hsu, M. K., & Swanson, S. (2017). The effect of tourist relationship perception on destination loyalty at a world heritage site in China: the mediating role of overall destination satisfaction and trust. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 41(2), 180–210. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348014525630>
- Sung, Y., & Choi, S. M. (2012). The influence of self-construal on self-brand congruity in the United States and Korea. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 43, 151–166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022110383318>



- Suryaningsih, I. B., Nugraha, K. S. W., & Anggita, R. M. (2020). IS cultural background moderating the destination personality and self image congruity relationship of behavioral intention?. *Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen*, 18(2), 353–362. <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jam.2020.018.02.16>
- Tesin, A., Kovacic, S., & Obradovic, S. (2023). The experience I will remember: The role of tourist personality, motivation, and destination personality. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 0(0), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667231164768>
- Tipton, F. B. (2009). Modelling national identities and cultural change: the Western European, Japanese, and United States experiences compared. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 9(2), 145–168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595809335722>
- Tran, P. K. T., Nguyen, P. D., Le, A. H. N., & Tran, V. T. (2022). Linking self-congruity, perceived quality and satisfaction to brand loyalty in a tourism destination: the moderating role of visit frequency. *Tourism Review*, 77(1), 287–301. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-04-2020-0143>
- Tse, S., & Tung, V. W. S. (2022). Measuring the valence and intensity of residents' behaviors in host–tourist interactions: Implications for destination image and destination competitiveness. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61(3), 565–580. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728752199757>
- Uma, S. (2009). *Research methods for business: a skill building approach* 5th edition.
- Uşaklı, A. (2016). *Turistik tüketici deneyimi: beş yıldızlı resort otellerde bir uygulama*. Doctoral Thesis. Institute of Education Sciences, Gazi University, Ankara.
- Usakli, A. & Baloglu, S. (2011). Brand personality of tourist destinations: An application of self-congruity theory. *Tourism Management*, 32(1), 114–127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.06.006>
- Usakli, A., & Kucukergin, K. G. (2018). Using partial least squares structural equation modelling in hospitality and tourism. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(11), 3462–3512. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-11-2017-0753>
- Vieira, J., Jordan, E. & Santos, C. (2021). The effect of nationality on visitor satisfaction and willingness to recommend a destination: A joint modelling approach. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 39, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2021.100850>
- Vieira, J., Santos, C., Silva, F. & Lopez, F. (2018). When watching replaces hunting: An analysis of customer participation and satisfaction with cetacean-watching in the Azores. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 160, 86–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2018.04.008>
- Vinyals-Mirabent, S., Kavaratzis, M., & Fernández-Cavia, J. (2019). The role of functional associations in building destination brand personality: When official websites do the talking. *Tourism Management*, 75, 148–155. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.04.022>
- Wan, L. C. (2013). Culture's impact on consumer complaining responses to embarrassing service failure. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(3), 298–305. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.08.009>
- Wang, J., Li, M., Li, C., Li, D., & Lin, G. (2022). Revisit the formation of destination brand personality. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 95, 103408. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2022.103408>
- Wang, J., Zheng, M., Huang, Q. & Wu, Z. (2021). How does cultural distance affect tourists? Literature review and research prospects. *Tourism and Hospitality Prospects*, 5(3), 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.12054/lydk.bisu.168>
- Woodside, A. G., & Ahn, I. (2008). *Cultures' consequences on experiencing international tourism services and products*. In A. G. Woodside & D. R. Martin (Eds.), *Tourism Management*. London, England: CABI.
- Wu, X., & Lai, I. K. W. (2023). How destination personality dimensions influence film tourists' destination loyalty: an application of self-congruity theory. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 26(21), 3547–3562. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2022.2140401>
- Xie K. L. & Lee, J-S. (2013) Toward the perspective of cognitive destination image and destination personality: the case of Beijing, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 30(6), 538–556. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2013.810993>
- Yoon, Y., & Uysal, M. (2005). An examination of the effects of motivation and satisfaction on destination loyalty: A structural model. *Tourism Management*, 26, 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2003.08.016>
- Yu, M., Liu, F., Li, Q., & Chan, K. (2026). “A place I like or a place like me?”: Exploring destination personality and tourist loyalty among young adventure tourists on social media. *Young Consumers*, 27(3), 304–322. <https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-05-2025-2545>

Appendix A. MICOM Result

Results of MICOM for culture groups

Constructs	CI (Step 1)	Compositional invariance (Correlation =1) (Step2)		PMI	Equal mean (Step 3a)		Equal variance (Step 3b)		FMI
		C=1	CI		Dif.	CI	Dif.	CI	
DL	Yes	1,000	[.999, 1.000]	Yes	.020	[-.221, .214]	.175	[-.280, .306]	No
DP-R	Yes	1,000	[.999, 1.000]	Yes	.354	[-.210, .211]	.126	[-.267, .296]	No
DS	Yes	1,000	[.998, 1.000]	Yes	.025	[-.218, .224]	-.130	[-.280, .314]	No
SC	Yes	.999	[.999, 1.000]	Yes	.282	[-.212, .223]	-.080	[-.280, .302]	No
DP-S	Yes	.999	[.999, 1.000]	Yes	.232	[-.216, .215]	.098	[-.285, .321]	No

DP-S: destination personality-sincerity; DP-R: destination personality-ruggedness; SC: self-congruity;

DS: destination satisfaction; DL: destination loyalty; CI: Confidence Interval; Dif: Differences; CI: Configural invariance; PMI: Partial measurement invariance; FMI: Full measurement invariance.

Appendix B. Questionnaire

Self-congruity statement

The personality of Side is consistent with how I see myself.

The personality of Side is congruent with how I would like to see myself.



Side is consistent with how I believe others perceive my personality.

Side is consistent with how I would like others perceive my personality

Destination satisfaction statement

I have a favorable impression about Side.
This stay in Side was worth my time and effort.

Destination loyalty statement

I will recommend Side to someone that seeks my advice.
I will encourage friends and relatives to visit Side.
I will say positive things about Side to other people.
I would revisit Side more than I would revisit any other destination.

Destination personality statement

Side is.....

down to earth
family oriented
sincere
honest
sentimental
wholesome
original
cheerful
friendly
exciting
up to date
independent
masculine
western
tough
rugged
real
charming
young
trendy