

THE IMPACT OF SELF-CONGRUITY TO DESTINATION BRAND LOVE IN TOURISTS IN HO CHI MINH CITY

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Abstract: *Through the survey of 468 residents and tourists in Ho Chi Minh City from April 4, 2023, to May 4, 2023, the article shows that ideal self-congruity, and ideal social self-congruity significantly affect the destination brand love. Furthermore, immersion mediates additionally the impact of actual self-congruity, and social self-congruity on the destination brand love.*

• Keywords: *self-congruity, destination brand love, tourists.*

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Introduction

Aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the domestic tourism of Vietnam sector has emerged as an essential component in the overall recovery and expansion of the industry. The present study concerns the development of the Thieng Lieng community tourism product, which is the first tourism product in Ho Chi Minh City that leverages the Can Gio mangrove forest. Therefore, it is necessary to study the impact of self-congruity to destination brand love in tourists in Ho Chi Minh City and contribute to improving the Vietnamese national values.

Review of literature and research methodology

Review of Literature

Research of Blumenthal and Jensen (2019) focuses on the involvement of consumers and investigates the emotional interactions that can occur with the experience space of a destination, both of which can impact the level of immersion of travelers in the destination. A data analysis reveals that the immersion process can be divided into three distinct stages: “involvement triggers”, “involvement words” and “state of immersion”. Each successive phase is associated with a participation rate that is substantially higher than the preceding one. According to the findings, there are three distinct levels of tourist involvement that must be met before one can fully immerse themselves in a destination’s experience and develop feelings of affection for that location. This article provides novel insights into the nature of the immersion process that have both theoretical and practical implications for the

management of tourist destinations and the design of the tourist experience at those destinations. The study found that factors such as sensory stimulation, social interaction, and cultural authenticity all contribute to the level of immersion that tourists experience. By understanding these factors, destination managers can better tailor their offerings to create more immersive experiences for visitors, leading to increased satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, these findings can inform the development of marketing strategies that highlights the unique and immersive aspects of a destination to attract more visitors.

Using the theory of conservation of resources (COR), research of Jiang and Tu (2022) investigates how and when social interactions influence tourist immersion in a destination. The proposed research model, in which emotional attachment mediates the relationship between social interaction and tourists’ immersive experiences, and extraversion moderates the association between social interaction and tourists’ immersion. community service and emotional solidarity. The results indicate that social interaction has a direct effect on tourists’ immersive experiences, and that emotional solidarity mediates this relationship. Moreover, extroversion significantly reduced the effect of sincere social interaction on solidarity, and this effect was more pronounced for travelers with high extroversion scores. Additionally, extroversion strengthens the indirect relationship between social interactions and travelers’ immersive experiences, and again, this relationship is stronger for highly extroverted travelers.

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In the context of tourism destinations, research of Usakli et al. (2022) aims at clarifying the relationship between self-congruity, functional congruity, and the destination's attachment. For the purpose of analyzing the study model, the partial least squares structural equation modeling was developed. According to the findings, both destination private self-congruity and destination social self-congruity, as well as destination functional congruity, positively influenced destination attachment. Private self-congruity and social self-congruity have comparable effects on tourist attachment. That is, none has a greater or lesser effect on attachment to the destination than the others. This indicates that both private self-congruity and social self-congruity play an equal role in predicting traveler behavior. The results indicate that tourists who visit a destination that mirrors their own image are more likely to form an initial favorable opinion of the location. Moreover, they are also more likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth communication about the destination.

The research of Morando and Platania (2022) aims to investigate the determinants of luxury hotel selection while also analyzing the ability of hotels to promote their relevant destinations. The results of this study are in contrast with previous literature and indicate that potential tourists have formed a strong association with destination brands, proving that destination brand love is not only a bonding experience after the trip. These findings have provided important implications regarding symbolic consumption and emotional aspects of the luxury hotel experience. The predictors (Desire, Attitude toward Action, Subjective Norms and Customer Brand Identity) are confirmed as good antecedents for behavioral intention. Besides, destination brand love mediates the relationship between predictors, behavioral intentions, and loyalty. This study contributes to the limited literature on Destination Brand Love and provides a new perspective on the luxury hotel sector in Italy.

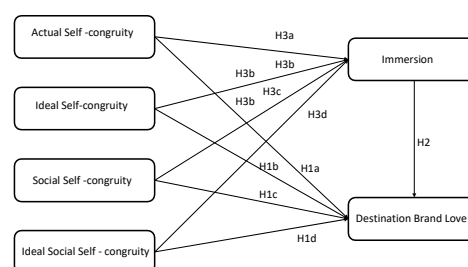
Research of Aro et al. (2018) is intended to conceptualize the antecedents and consequences of destination brand love. This study builds upon the academic articles on brand love, destination brands, and emotional relationships. The primary contribution of this study is the development of a premise-and-result framework for destination brand preference research. This framework offers researchers and experts new insights into the conceptualization of antecedents associated with brand experience, tourist dependence, and dependence on brands and systems. Effective system of emotions and behaviors for brand love as a destination. The results of the study provide an

important insight into the extreme emotions associated with destinations and encourage further research in the field of novelty as it is currently studied. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for destinations to create unique and authentic experiences that foster emotional connections with tourists.

Proposed research model

The proposed research model is based on the theoretical foundation and concepts of self-congruity, immersion experience, and destination brand love synthesized from previous related studies.

Figure 1: Proposed research model and hypotheses



Source: Self-devised by authors, 2023

Hypothesis

H1a: Actual self-congruity positively influences destination brand love.

H1b: Ideal self-congruity positively influences destination brand love.

H1c: Social self-congruity positively influences destination brand love.

H1d: Ideal social self-congruity positively influences destination brand love.

H2: Tourist' immersions positively influences destination brand love.

H3a: Actual self-congruity positively influences tourists' immersions.

H3b: Ideal self-congruity positively influences tourists' immersions.

H3c: Social self-congruity positively influences tourists' immersions.

H3d: Ideal social self-congruity positively influences tourists' immersions

Research methodology

During the period spanning from April 4, 2023 to May 4, 2023, a total of 500 questionnaires were distributed. Upon the completion of one month of data collection, a total of 468 responses were obtained, out of which 421 responses were deemed valid.

Result and discussion

Construct reliability

The research analysis of table 1 findings reveals

the value of Cronbach's alpha between 0.8 and 1 is acceptable, 0.7 to 0.8 is relatively high. Convergence is measured using an indicator called AVE (Average Variance Extracted). The average deviation for each underlying construct in the model is represented by AVE. A level of 0.5 (50%) denotes an average independent variable that accounts for at least half of each observed sub variable's variability. Every AVE indicator is greater than 0.5. This outcome demonstrates that the scales have values of convergence for research concepts.

Table 1. Scale accuracy analysis

Scale development	Studied constructs	No of scale item	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Actual self-congruity	ASC	3	0.856	0.913	0.777
Ideal social self-congruity	ISC	3	0.899	0.937	0.832
Social self-congruity	SSC	3	0.920	0.923	0.799
Ideal social self-congruity	ISSC	3	0.875	0.949	0.862
Immersion	IMMER	3	0.863	0.916	0.785
Destination Brand love	DL	6	0.872	0.900	0.603

Source: Data from SmartPLS 3.0 software

Discriminant validity

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that the bolded values along the diagonal of the table correspond to the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each variable (0.881; 0.777; 0.886; 0.912; 0.928; 0.894). Additionally, the values located below the diagonal represent the correlation coefficients between the independent variables. Thus, it can be concluded that the scale fulfils the discriminance.

Table 2. Result of the Fornell-Larcker criterion

Studied constructs	ASC	DL	IMMER	ISC	ISSC	SSC
ASC	0.881					
DL	0.372	0.777				
IMMER	0.579	0.430	0.886			
ISC	0.574	0.466	0.613	0.912		
ISSC	0.582	0.484	0.676	0.670	0.928	
SSC	0.568	0.426	0.600	0.675	0.643	0.894

Source: Data from SmartPLS 3.0 software

Evaluate the model-fit

Based on the original sample coefficients table 3, ideal social self-congruity (ISSC) has the most positive and significant impact on immersion (IMMER) with $\beta = 0.359$ (H3c), meaning the higher the ideal social self-congruity, the more immersion increases. Actual self-congruity (ASC) has a positive impact on immersion (IMMER) with $\beta = 0.192$ (H3a). Next is the ideal self-congruity (ISC) impact on immersion (IMMER) with $\beta = 0.159$ (H3b). Social self-congruity (SSC) has an impact on immersion (IMMER) with $\beta = 0.153$ (H3d).

Moreover, ideal social self-congruity (ISSC) has the most positive and significant impact on

destination brand love (DL) with $\beta = 0.224$ (H1c). Ideal self-congruity (ISC) has the same direct effect on destination brand love (DL) with $\beta = 0.182$ (H1b). Finally, the results showed at 90% reliability there was a relationship between immersion (IMMER) and destination brand love (DL) with $\beta = 0.100$ (H2).

On the other hand, at the 95% confidence interval, there are 2 rejected hypotheses: hypothesis H1a: actual self-congruity (ASC) (with $p = 0.547 > 0.05$) and hypothesis H1d: social self-congruity (SSC) (with $p = 0.547 > 0.05$). with $p = 0.172 > 0.05$ for destination DL.

Table 3. Result of structural model's hypotheses testing

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	T-values	P-values	Result
H1a ASC → DL	0.034	0.627	0.547	Reject
H1b ISC → DL	0.182	2,862	0.005	Support
H1c ISSC → DL	0.224	3,611	0.000	Support
H1d SSC → DL	0.079	1,380	0.172	Reject
H2 IMMER → DL	0.1	4,737	0.000	Support
H3a ASC → IMMER	0.192	3,941	0.003	Support
H3b ISC → IMMER	0.159	3,103	0.000	Support
H3c ISSC → IMMER	0.359	6,715	0.003	Support
H3d SSC → IMMER	0.153	3,228	0.072	Support

Source: Data from SmartPLS 3.0 software

Conclusion and implications

Conclusion of the research

After completing 1 month of data collection, 468 responses were received, with 421 valid responses, and data analysis was conducted. The study used SPSS and SmartPLS software to analyze data and test scales and hypotheses. The research has successfully accomplished its objective of examining the influence of self-congruity factors on tourists' immersion and brand love towards the destination in Ho Chi Minh City. The second objective is to ascertain the degree to which immersion influences tourists' affinity towards the destination brand in Ho Chi Minh City.

The findings indicate that the four types of self-congruity have a significant impact on immersion at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the ideal social self-congruity (ISSC) is the most influential predictor with a strong positive effect on immersive experience (IMMER) indicated by a β value of 0.359 (p -values = $0.000 < 0.05$). The actual self-congruity (ASC) also has a positive impact on immersive experience (IMMER) with a β value of 0.192 (p -values = $0.000 < 0.05$). The third factor that influences the immersion experience is the degree of congruence between the individual's ideal self and their actual self, also known as ideal self-congruity (ISC). The statistical analysis yielded a significant positive correlation between ISC and immersion experience, with a β coefficient of 0.159 and a p -value of 0.003, indicating that the relationship

is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The study findings indicate that the construct of social self-congruity (SSC) has a significantly weak positive impact on immersive experience (IMMER), as evidenced by the β coefficient of 0.153 and a p-value of 0.003, which is below the accepted threshold of 0.05.

The findings indicate that two self-congruity factors have a distinct influence on the level of “destination brand love (DL)”. Specifically, “ideal social self-congruity (ISSC)” exhibits a highly significant and positive impact on destination brand love (DL), with a β coefficient of 0.224 (p-values = $0.000 < 0.05$). At a confidence interval of 95%, it can be concluded that the variable “ideal self-congruity (ISC)” has a significant positive impact on the level of affection towards the brand of the destination (DL), with a β coefficient of 0.182 and a p-value of 0.005, which is less than the significance level of 0.05.

The findings indicate a statistically significant association between immersion and destination brand love (DL) at a 90% confidence interval, as evidenced by a β coefficient of 0.100 for hypothesis H2 (p-values = $0.072 < 0.1$).

Implications

The following author proposes some general management implications of resort designs at the destination to create a distinct image of the destination in the minds of tourists, in order to create compatibility between the destination and the guests. tourism as well as the immersive experience, the tourist's preference for the destination brand.

With respect to external factors, it is imperative for designers to create designs that align with the contextual features of the construction site as well as the economic and social entities involved. The contextual factors that are based on the type of housing, ideology, and materials utilised frequently serve as a reflection of the customs and traditions of the given location. The process of designing and planning a resort can involve the integration of various aspects, such as the characteristics of the location, the selection of materials, and the incorporation of design elements that align with the desired style and amenities of the resort. Furthermore, in the case of destinations that possess distinct regional cultural attributes, it is imperative for designers to consider how to effectively design such that visitors can experience the cultural nuances within a limited timeframe. Due to the distinguishing features of ethnic minority groups, tourism planning ought to be based on the preferences of the visitors, which entails conducting market research to ascertain the

demographics of the guests, their requirements, and other pertinent factors. It is only through this process that products can possess distinct regional attributes while also catering to the demands of tourists.

With respect to environmental factors, environmental consideration is an essential component of resort development because of its impact on the site and the environment. Design should aim to conserve flora and fauna as much as possible and build with consideration, as there is a current trend of green consumption and wildlife protection. This is also a target aimed at tourists with characteristics such as vegetarianism, and animal protection. Furthermore, incorporating sustainable materials and renewable energy sources into the design can also attract environmentally conscious tourists and contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of the site. Additionally, creating educational opportunities for visitors to learn about the local ecosystem and ways to protect it can further promote eco-tourism and conservation efforts.

With respect to factors belonging to space, the configuration of the resort is a crucial factor in the comprehensive operation and triumph of the destination's blueprint. The proposed design ought to incorporate a spatial hierarchy that effectively differentiates between public, semi-public, and private spaces. The seamless transition from indoor to outdoor spaces is a crucial aspect that warrants attention. Spaces intended for public use must be designed to accommodate individuals of all ages, including those with disabilities who require specialised facilities. Besides, it is imperative for the design to take into account the cultural and social milieu of the region to guarantee that the constructed areas are pertinent and suitable for the populace. In addition, the integration of sustainable materials and practises within the design can effectively mitigate the ecological footprint of the area and foster a more salubrious milieu for its occupants.

With respect to aesthetic factors, the design of both the external destination and internal destination, the aesthetic appeal holds significant importance. The development of tourist destinations or resorts should prioritise the provision of opportunities for visitors to engage with natural environments and optimise their recreational experiences. In order to augment the inherent aesthetic appeal of the location, it is imperative that the edifice integrates harmoniously with its environment. The reduction of environmental impact can be achieved by utilising sustainable materials and implementing eco-friendly practises. The inclusion of outdoor pursuits such as hiking and water-based recreational activities can augment the

allure of a particular location for tourists in search of both excitement and repose.

With respect to designed landscape factors, tourist destination design depends on the landscape in large part because it is effective in creating an environment in and around the area. It also helps to develop the surrounding space and add greenery, which is often missing from the cityscape. The green areas in and around the building help to connect the indoor and outdoor spaces. Moreover, incorporating green spaces in urban areas has been shown to have numerous benefits such as improving air quality, reducing the urban heat island effect, and promoting physical and mental health. Therefore, it is important for architects and urban planners to prioritize the inclusion of green spaces in their designs.

With respect to hygiene - health safety factors, Following the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a notable increase in public concern regarding the safety and hygiene of various tourist attractions, entertainment venues, modes of transportation, and everyday commodities. Consequently, it is imperative to uphold and enhance the calibre of sanitation and security amenities in destinations frequented by tourists, particularly during times of intense rivalry within the tourism sector. In addition, it is imperative to enhance the amenities and technical infrastructure to guarantee a consistently pristine environment, thereby engendering a feeling of contentment among visiting tourists. It is imperative to disseminate and display cautionary notices at every tourist site, with the aim of sensitising visitors to uphold hygiene and safety standards. This includes observing proper dietary practises to prevent respiratory and foodborne illnesses, among other potential health hazards. It is imperative for the management departments of tourist destinations to exercise stringent control over the sourcing of ingredients for the preparation of dishes in restaurants and hotels and to ensure adherence to processing standards. In the event of a suspected infection, it is imperative to promptly address the situation while also upholding the confidentiality of clients. As per the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), it is projected that by 2030, the proportion of tourists travelling for the purposes of visiting, health, and religion will constitute 31% of the overall tourist population. Meanwhile, those travelling for sightseeing, convalescence, entertainment, and other leisurely pursuits will account for 54%, and those travelling for work and professional reasons will make up 15% of the total tourist population. However, in light of the recent pandemic, prospective travellers are expected to place

greater emphasis on health-related criteria, potentially impacting the aforementioned 31% figure. Hence, it is recommended that travel companies integrate health care programmes or “body purification” services, such as skin care spas and hot spring chains for exfoliation, into their travel offerings. Providing adequate nourishment and consulting services for individuals can greatly enhance customer satisfaction and influence their travel decisions when engaging with the company. Furthermore, it is recommended that enterprises endorse the adoption of marketing tactics aimed at enticing visitors. The present scenario presents a favourable prospect for travel enterprises to advertise and augment the perception of the locale among vacationers. It is imperative for destinations located in epidemic areas to implement more robust and stringent measures, not only to accommodate domestic tourists but also to brace themselves for potential influxes of international tourists. Currently, amidst the global battle against the pandemic, Vietnam is widely regarded as a nation boasting some of the safest travel destinations worldwide. It is recommended that enterprises capitalise on the current situation to achieve significant advancements, thereby facilitating the swift recuperation of Vietnam’s tourism sector. Overall, based on the examination and evaluation of various samples, the findings have demonstrated a widespread trend whereby contemporary tourists exhibit a heightened concern for matters pertaining to hygiene and safety. This phenomenon can be attributed to a shared rationale. The primary determinant is the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, to revive the domestic tourism sector in Vietnam, it is imperative for enterprises to prioritise hygiene and safety concerns, curtail the spread of infections, and mitigate the associated risks. The aforementioned text pertains to the quality of service. For example, hotels and resorts in Vietnam can implement more frequent and rigorous cleaning procedures, provide hand sanitizers in public areas, and enforce social distancing measures to reassure guests of their safety. Additionally, tour operators can modify their itineraries to include outdoor activities that allow for more natural ventilation and space for physical distancing.

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