Postvisit Destination Loyalty Judgments: Developing and Testing a Comprehensive Congruity Model

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Abstract

Previous research has established the effect of self-congruity on both pre- and postvisit constructs, but its predictive power has appeared minimal. Departing from both classical and contemporary approaches to human needs and values, this study proposes a comprehensive model explaining more variance in postvisit destination loyalty judgments. The model comprises six explanatory variables, in addition to self-congruity: functional, hedonic, leisure, economic, safety, and moral congruity. Based on a large-scale web survey among tourists ($N = 973$), the results provide good support for the proposed model (64% explained variance). Each of the seven congruity components exerts a significant influence on postvisit loyalty, but their relative contributions differ considerably. Other than self-congruity, functional, hedonic, leisure, and safety congruity exert the greatest influence on postvisit loyalty judgments; in contrast, economic and moral congruity have lesser influences. The authors discuss the results in light of their theoretical and practical implications for destination marketing.

Keywords

self-congruity, overall congruity, destination image, personal values

Introduction and Research Goals

The motivation to express one's self is often a driving force that prompts consumers to evaluate goods and services, make purchase decisions, and then assess performance after purchase. Widespread research is available on self-image congruence (for general literature reviews, as well as reviews in relation to specific industries, see Sirgy 1982, 1985; Claiborne and Sirgy 1990; Johar and Sirgy 1991; Sirgy, Grewal, and Mangleburg 2000; Sirgy and Su 2000, 2001; Sirgy, Grzeskowiak, and Su 2005). Self-image congruence, or self-congruity, refers to the match between consumers' self-concept and the image of users of a given brand of consumer goods, services, store, organization, or destination.

Applied to tourism, the match between a tourist's self-concept and a destination's image influences both previsit (e.g., destination interest and choice, Litvin and Goh 2002; Beerli, Meneses, and Gil 2007) and postvisit (e.g., satisfaction, revisit intentions, willingness to recommend, Chon and Olsen 1991; Chon 1992; Kastenholz 2004; Beerli, Meneses, and Gil 2007) constructs. However, the overall predictive power of self-congruity is limited, rarely exceeding 10% of the explained variance in these pre- or postvisit constructs.

Moreover, previous research indicates systematic differences across studies that address pre- versus postvisit constructs. For example, Beerli, Meneses, and Gil (2007) find that the predictive power of self-congruity for destination choice intentions gets substantially attenuated if the tourist already has visited the place. Kastenholz (2004) reveals that destination congruity among visitors has a significant but small impact on willingness to revisit the place but no substantial correlation with willingness to recommend the destination to others.

In an attempt to improve this predictive validity, Chon and Olsen (1991) use self-congruity together with functional congruity to predict postvisit satisfaction. Functional congruity refers to the match between tourists' ideal of the utilitarian benefits they might receive from the destination site (e.g., travel and lodging amenities of high quality) and their perceptions of the actual benefits. Therefore, it represents the extent to which utilitarian attributes, such as quality and reliability, of destination-related services actually meet tourists' expectations.

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By including functional congruity, these authors explain approximately 37% of the variance in postvisit overall satisfaction. Thus, self-congruity alone does not appear sufficient to explain postvisit destination evaluations for tourism.

The question thus arises: Do self-congruity and functional congruity cover all key evaluative criteria in postvisit evaluations? We argue that tourists may consider at least seven conceptually distinct criteria when forming their postvisit evaluative judgments. Beyond its functional and symbolic features, tourists likely evaluate the destination site using hedonic criteria (e.g., beauty, sense of aesthetics, extent to which the experience pleases various senses), leisure criteria (e.g., entertainment value, extent to which tourists engage in active or passive leisure), economic criteria (e.g., affordability), safety criteria (e.g., to oneself, to others), and moral criteria (e.g., reputation of the local tourist industry as socially responsible). We relate these additional evaluative criteria to three interrelated postvisit destination loyalty judgments (Oom do Valle et al. 2006): overall satisfaction with a stay, revisit intentions, and positive word-of-mouth communications.

Thus, our overall goal is to develop a comprehensive model that captures much of the variance in postvisit destination loyalty judgments among tourists using seven conceptually distinct forms of image congruity. From the perspective of self-image congruence theory, we address a persistent gap by extending the theory's scope and increasing its explanatory power to tourism postvisit phenomena. For tourism research, we offer an examination of the effect of (congruity-based) image facets on postvisit constructs, which according to Tasci and Gartner (2007, p. 421) is "one of the most overlooked aspects of destination image theory." Furthermore, we seek to estimate empirically the importance of seven congruity facets (self, functional, hedonic, leisure, economic, safety, moral) on postvisit loyalty. In turn, we can offer more specific and fine-grained recommendations for how to foster loyalty in tourism marketing.

Conceptual Development

As we mentioned, our ultimate goal is to develop a comprehensive congruity model that can capture most variance in postvisit destination loyalty judgments. To achieve this goal, we have developed our own theoretical framework, based on concepts borrowed from Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, Rokeach's (1973) personal values, Kahle's (1983) list of values, Sheth, Newman, and Gross's (1991) consumption value theory, Schwartz's (1994) value taxonomy, and Inglehart's (2003, 2008) value system.

Our hybrid framework starts by classifying tourists' motives into instrumental and terminal motives. We borrow these concepts from Rokeach (1973), who defined personal values as enduring beliefs about specific modes of conduct or end states of existence that are preferred to other specific modes or end states. Specific modes of conduct, or instrumental values, might include ambition, broad-mindedness, capability, cheerfulness, cleanliness, or helpfulness. If enacted over time, these behaviors lead to desirable end states or terminal values, such as a comfortable life, a sense of accomplishment, a world at peace, and racial equality.

We borrow this distinction between instrumental and terminal values to distinguish between sources of motivation that are instrumental and those that are terminal. Functional motives that guide functional congruity in tourists' postvisit judgments likely are instrumental, whereas we classify all other sources of motivation as terminal. We further assert that terminal values have been only partially addressed in the self-image congruity literature; therefore, we attempt to broaden the scope of this concept and develop a more fine-grained picture of how consumers evaluate the suitability (i.e., congruity) of a destination in relation to the full set of terminal values that might have relevance for their postvisit evaluative judgments. In turn, we further develop the category of evaluative criteria related to terminal values.

Within the category of evaluative criteria related to terminal motives, we categorize lower-order and high-order needs a la Maslow (1970). Within the lower-order need category, we identify two major sources of evaluative criteria for destinations, namely, safety and economic motives. In the higher-order need category, we similarly note four major sources of motives, namely, self-concept, hedonic, leisure, and moral needs. An overview of the different motives that drive tourists, according to our overall proposed congruity concept, along with their relations to the aforementioned value taxonomies, appears in Table 1.

With respect to the lower-order need category, we construe these evaluative criteria as related directly to basic human needs, such as safety and health (i.e., *safety congruity*) and economic needs (i.e., *economic congruity*). Because of their relevance in various behavioral domains, values related to safety and security needs appear in almost all the theoretical frameworks summarized in Table 1 (i.e., Maslow 1970; Rokeach 1973; Kahle 1983, Kahle, Beatty, and Homer 1986; Schwartz 1994; Inglehart 2003, 2008). Despite ample evidence related to security and safety concerns associated with an array of consumption situations, security/safety values are not explicitly conceptualized in consumption value theory (Sheth, Newman, and Gross 1991). Furthermore, destination image research suggests that these concerns may be viewed as a distinct construct, such that evaluations of vacation destinations consider the extent to which travel to the site may adversely affect the physical and mental health of the traveler and accompanying persons, such as family members (Madrigal and Kahle 1994; Sönmez and Graefe 1998; Dolnicar 2005; Watkins and Gnoth 2005; Cho and Jang 2008).

Destinations are also evaluated in terms of their perceived affordability and value for the money (e.g., Pitts and Woodside 1986; Stevens 1992; Tapachai and Waryszak 2000; Williams and Soutar 2009), a concept related to "conditional value" (Sheth, Newman, and Gross 1991).

Table 1. Components of the Overall Congruity Model, Along with Their Relation to Classical and Contemporary (Consumption) Value Models

Proposed Congruity Component (over and above functional congruity)	Value Model						Previous Research Addressing Congruity and Value Aspects for Tourism
	Maslow (1970) Hierarchy of Needs	Rokeach (1973) Terminal Values (selection)	Kahle (1983) List of Values	Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991) Consumption Values	Schwartz (1994) Motivational Types	Inglehart (2003, 2008) Values (selection)	
Safety and health congruity	Low-order needs	Peaceful world Security of family National security Protection	Security		Security	Physical security	Cho and Jang (2008); Madrigal and Kahle (1994); Sirakaya, Sheppard, and McLellan (1997); Sönmez and Graefe (1998); Watkins and Gnoth (2005)
Economic congruity	Low-order needs			Conditional value	Achievement	Material security	Tapachai and Waryzak (2000); Stevens (1992); Williams and Soutar (2009)
Self-congruity	High-order needs	Self-esteem Social approval	Self-respect Warm relations Self-fulfillment Being respected Belonging	Social value	Power Conformity Self-direction	Self-presentation Affiliation	Beerli, Meneses, and Gil (2007); Chon (1992); Chon and Olsen (1991); Kastenholz (2004)
Hedonic congruity	High-order needs	Pleasure Enjoyment	Fun and enjoyment Sense of accomplishment	Emotional value	Hedonism	Aesthetics	Cho and Jang (2008); Madrigal and Kahle (1994); Tapachai and Waryszak (2000); Watkins and Gnoth (2005); Williams and Soutar (2009)
Leisure congruity	High-order needs	Comfortable life Freedom Satisfaction Balance Enjoyment Friendship	Excitement Sense of accomplishment	Epistemic value	Stimulation Self-direction	Intellectual stimulation Subjective well-being Self-direction Individual success	Madrigal and Kahle (1994); Tapachai and Waryzak (2000); Watkins and Gnoth (2005); Williams and Soutar (2009)
Moral congruity	High-order needs	Equality Wisdom			Universalism Benevolence Tradition	Environmental protection Tolerance Trust	Goodwin and Francis (2003); Wurzinger and Johansson (2006)

With respect to the higher-order need category, we make a similar argument: tourists make judgments about a destination on the basis of the extent to which their experience enables them to attain specific goals related to their social, esteem, self-actualization, aesthetic, and intellectual needs. We capture these evaluative criteria in terms of four major dimensions: self, moral, hedonic, and leisure.

The evaluative criteria used in postvisit destination loyalty judgments captured by *self-congruity* relate directly to social and esteem needs. For example, the need for social approval pertains to how tourists evaluate their stay with regard to the extent to which the vacation symbolizes their ideal social self-image (e.g., Chon and Olsen1991; Chon 1992; Kastenholz 2004; Beerli, Meneses, and Gil 2007). Tourists may attempt to answer questions such as, "Did the destination bestow status and prestige?" or "Were people impressed when they heard about my trip?". Similarly, the needs for self-esteem and self-consistency, which relate to the extent to which tourists adopt services symbolic of their ideal and actual self-images, reflect an essential element of esteem needs (see Table 1). Tourists therefore may ask themselves, "Did visiting a specific destination help me become the kind of person I want to be?" or "Was visiting a specific destination consistent with the kind of person I am?".

We also introduce the concept of *moral congruity*, which is partly based on Maslow's (1970) original concept of the need for self-actualization and developed further by Rokeach (1973), Schwartz (1994), and Inglehart (2003, 2008). Maslow described a self-actualized person as integrated socially, emotionally, cognitively, and morally. That is, this person engages in moral reasoning and evaluates courses of action on the basis of established moral criteria. According to Goodwin and Francis (2003), ethical considerations play an increasing role in both destination selection and the willingness to pay for vacations (see also Wurzinger and Johansson 2006). Thus, tourists may evaluate their vacation destinations on criteria such as "Is the local tourist industry socially and/or environmentally responsible?".

Maslow (1970) also described the need for beauty or aesthetics as part of the set of higher-order needs. Our concept of *hedonic congruity* is conceptualized and based on this motive. For example, tourists might consider, "Was the landscape visually appealing?", "Was the destination peacefully quiet?" and "Was the taste and aroma of the food enjoyable?". Accordingly, hedonic congruity captures the extent to which a vacation destination satisfies tourists' sense of aesthetics. It also relates to the notion of the hedonic value of a vacation destination (Cho and Jang 2008), the fun and enjoyment needs pursued by tourists (Madrigal and Kahle 1994; Watkins and Gnoth 2005), and the emotional value assigned to a destination (Tapachai and Waryszak 2000; Williams and Soutar 2009)

A closely related concept is the idea of leisure. With an acute awareness of the different epistemological streams used to study leisure, including behaviorist, cognitivist, individual constructivist, and social constructivist approaches (for an overview, see Watkins 2000), our version of *leisure congruity*

is based largely on Unger and Kernan (1983). Their model is most compatible with our image congruity concept and encompasses evaluative criteria that contribute to the experience of leisure, such as the extent to which the stay provides the tourist with freedom from work and freedom from controls, increased involvement with significant others, heightened arousal and excitement, enhanced mastery of certain skills, and spontaneity.

As we show in Figure 1, the core constructs of our congruity model are self-, functional, hedonic, economic, safety, moral, and leisure congruity. These constructs effectively should predict and explain postvisit destination loyalty judgments, such as overall satisfaction with the stay, revisit intentions, and positive word-of-mouth communications. Accordingly, we subject the following hypothesis to an empirical test:

> *Hypothesis:* Tourists' postvisit destination loyalty judgments (i.e., satisfaction with stay, revisit intentions, and positive word-of-mouth communications) are a positive function of the formative measures of (1) self-congruity, (2) functional congruity, (3) hedonic congruity, (4) economic congruity, (5) safety congruity, (6) moral congruity, and (7) leisure congruity.

We expect these seven predictors, within the overall congruity model, to explain most of the variance in postvisit loyalty judgments among tourists. We will consider this hypothesis supported if the predictive validity of the model meets the threshold of a large effect ($f^2 = R^2/[1 - R^2] > .35$), as defined by Cohen (1988, 1992). Finally, in addition to testing the overall model's predictive power, we seek to estimate the relative importance of the seven congruity constructs in predicting postvisit loyalty.

Method

Sampling and Data Collection

The sample consisted of 973 German tourists, randomly drawn from a consumer panel of 50,000 members, who participated in a web-based survey designed to evaluate their most recent vacation. Panel members were initially recruited with the aid of nonprobability methods, as typically used in consumer panels (Couper 2000). The survey was administered online in November 2008. Forty-eight percent of the participants were women, with a mean age of 38.8 years ($SD = 14.7$). The top five destinations they had recently visited were Germany (26.9%), Spain (16.6%), Italy (10.5%), Turkey (5.5%), and Austria (4.5%).

Regarding the structure of the survey questionnaire, the first section contained items that captured basic information about the most recent vacation: destination, year and month, duration, frequency of previous visits to the same destination, and the number of persons accompanying the respondent and their relationship (e.g., family member, friend). In the second section, 15 items assessed the three postvisit loyalty constructs:
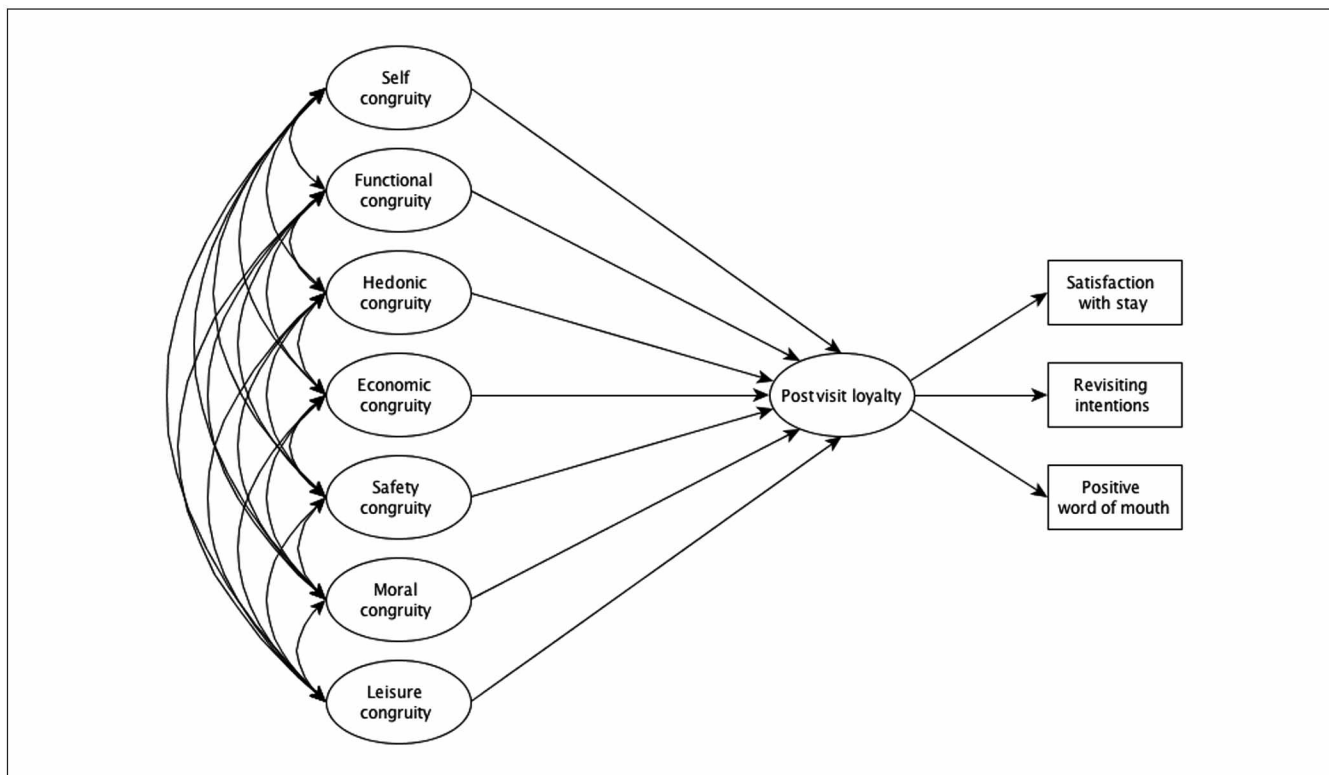
Figure 1. Integrated congruity model to explain and predict postvisit destination loyalty judgments

satisfaction with the vacation, revisit intentions, and positive word-of-mouth communication. The responses to these items used 6-point Likert-type (agreement–disagreement) scales. The third section measured the seven congruity constructs (see appendix). To minimize bias related to order effects, the item sets pertaining to each congruity facet appeared in random order across the separate webpages. Finally, the last section of the survey contained demographic items.

Formative Measures

Oom do Valle and colleagues (2006) have demonstrated that satisfaction, revisit intentions, and willingness to recommend a destination are conceptually and empirically interrelated. Therefore, we developed three formative sets of items (see appendix) to measure the following facets of postvisit destination loyalty: satisfaction with the vacation (eight items; Cronbach's alpha = .80), revisit intentions (five items, Cronbach's alpha = .87), and positive word-of-mouth communication (two items; Cronbach's alpha = .65). The mean scores for each set of items represented the composites of the formative latent construct. Furthermore, the three composite measures correlated in the r = .55 to .60 range, in support of the theoretically anticipated convergence.

The *self-congruity* measure comprised actual, ideal, social, and ideal social self-congruity. The formative measures were

adapted from Helgeson and Supphellen (2004), Kamp and MacInnis (1995), Kim, Han, and Park (2001), Nysveen, Pedersen, and Thorbjornsen (2005), and Sirgy and colleagues (1997). Two items captured each subfacet, yielding eight items in total (see items in the appendix). Internal consistency among the formative self-congruity measures was reasonably high (Cronbach's alpha = .68).

The concept of *functional congruity* originated in self-image congruence research as a means to distinguish between the use of self-expressive (or value expressive) criteria and utilitarian criteria in attitude formation and change (e.g., Sirgy et al. 1991). Functional congruity are conceptualized as a variation of a multiattribute attitude model in which the evaluative criteria are utilitarian. Utilitarian attributes reflect perceived characteristics related to performance or quality, reliability, convenience, and customer service (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986; Johar and Sirgy 1991; Aaker and Jacobson 1994; Mangleburg et al. 1998). Accordingly, we argue that the conceptual domain of functional congruity involves five formative facets: (1) the extent to which the sum of all services related to the tourist destination enabled the tourist to accomplish his or her major goal, function, or performance (Steenkamp 1989; Narasimhan and Sen 1992; Devlin, Dong, and Brown 1993); (2) the extent to which tourist services were convenient (e.g., Nysveen, Pedersen, and Thorbjornsen 2005); (3) the extent to which tourist services perform consistently well over time

(Steenkamp 1989; Narasimhan and Sen 1992; Devlin, Dong, and Brown 1993); (4) the extent to which tourists found the services easy to use (Nysveen, Pedersen, and Thorbjornsen 2005); and (5) the extent to which the tourist services were customer friendly (Steenkamp 1989; Narasimhan and Sen 1992; Devlin, Dong, and Brown 1993). Eleven formative measures of these five facets of functional congruity (performance, convenience, reliability, ease of use, and customer service) appeared in the survey, as shown in the appendix. The internal consistency of this set of 11 items was high (Cronbach Alpha = .85).

Hedonic congruity involved the evaluation of experiential or aesthetic attributes relative to the ideal. The hedonic features of consumer goods, services, stores, and malls affect consumer attitudes in general (e.g., Donovan and Rossiter 1982; Holbrook 1987; Bitner 1992; Yamamoto and Lambert 1994; Bloch 1995; Babin and Attaway 2000; Laroche et al. 2005). The measures used for this study reflect the notion that hedonic congruity involves destination image facets that correspond directly to the different senses, that is, (1) visual aesthetics, (2) auditory aesthetics, (3) olfactory and taste aesthetics, and (4) aesthetics related to kinetics. We developed 11 formative measures of hedonic congruity involving these four dimensions (see appendix). The internal consistency for these formative measures again was high (Cronbach's alpha = .80).

Economic congruity refers to how consumers evaluate consumer goods and services in relation to their ideal price. Significant research demonstrates the obvious use of price-related evaluative criteria in consumer decision making, and marketing researchers typically rely on a few economic-related attributes to capture functional brand image (e.g., Aaker and Jacobson 1994). We argue that economic aspects should be considered distinctively and independently of functional criteria. With respect to the economic brand image, we surmise two important economic attributes: (1) affordability and (2) good value for the money. Eight formative measure of economic congruity involving these two facets appeared in the survey (see appendix; Cronbach's alpha = .83).

Safety congruity often is incorporated into measures based on multiattribute attitude models that capture consumer evaluations of goods and services (e.g., Sheth and Talarzyk 1972; Bass and Talarzyk 1972; Sheth 1973; Wilkie and Pessemier 1973; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; James, Durand, and Dreves 1976; Lutz and Bettman 1977; Meyer 1981). We argue that safety features can be captured in terms of two key dimensions: (1) the extent to which the vacation affects one's own safety and health in a positive or negative sense and (2) the extent to which it affects the safety and health of significant others (e.g., family members). Seven highly reliable formative items (Cronbach's alpha = .84) were developed to measure safety congruity (see appendix).

With respect to *moral congruity*, recent research suggests a positive relationship between a company's corporate social responsibility and consumers' attitudes toward that company and its products (e.g., Carroll 1991, 1999, 2000; Brown and Dacin 1997; Creyer and Ross 1997; Maignan and Ferrell 1999, 2000; Ellen, Mohr, and Webb 2000; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). We surmise that moral congruity may best be captured using five dimensions reflecting the reputation of the local service providers at the destination site: (1) making a significant contribution to the local community (e.g., Carroll 1991, 1999, 2000), (2) treating employees fairly and well (e.g., Carroll 1991, 1999, 2000; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001), (3) being good environmental stewards (e.g., Carroll 1991, 1999, 2000; Drumwright 1994; Menon and Menon 1997), (4) contributing to worthwhile charities, and (5) treating customers with care and concern for their well-being (e.g., Carroll 1991, 1999, 2000; Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997). However, we also acknowledge that research on attitudes and knowledge related to the moral dimensions of tourism (e.g., ecotourism, Wurzinger and Johansson 2006) suggests that most tourists are not knowledgeable about whether a local service provider makes a significant contribution to the local community, treats its employees fairly, and so on. Instead, they form an overall impression of the extent to which the service providers are generally socially responsible based on limited personal experience. Using this piecemeal information, they shape a generalized moral impression. Capturing such an image using a composite of these five indicators seems somewhat futile. Therefore, we propose that moral congruity might best be represented holistically by items pertaining to two key dimensions, namely, (1) an overall belief that the businesses and government agencies that run the destination are more concerned about the welfare of the visitors than about making money, and (2) an overall impression of businesses and government agencies as law abiding and socially responsible (see appendix). We achieved satisfactory internal consistency among these measurement items (Cronbach's alpha = .68).

Finally, we operationalized *leisure congruity* using Unger and Kernan's (1983) six dimensions: freedom from control, freedom from work, involvement, arousal, mastery, and spontaneity. Freedom from control refers to "something one perceives as voluntary, without coercion or obligation" (Unger and Kernan 1983, p. 383); freedom from work refers to the ability to rest, relax, and not be obligated to perform tasks. These two types of freedom contribute to satisfaction in different ways: some people golf to avoid their work; others do it because no one can tell them what to do on the course. Involvement is absorption in an activity, such that the higher the level of absorption, the higher the level of involvement. Arousal refers to the experience of excitement, stimulation, or exhilaration from the use of the consumer good or service. Mastery results when the person feels as though he or she has achieved great things by conquering circumstances in the environment. Spontaneity, according to Unger and Kernan (1983, p. 383), pertains to "not routine, planned, or anticipated" events, which lead to feelings of satisfaction with the product.
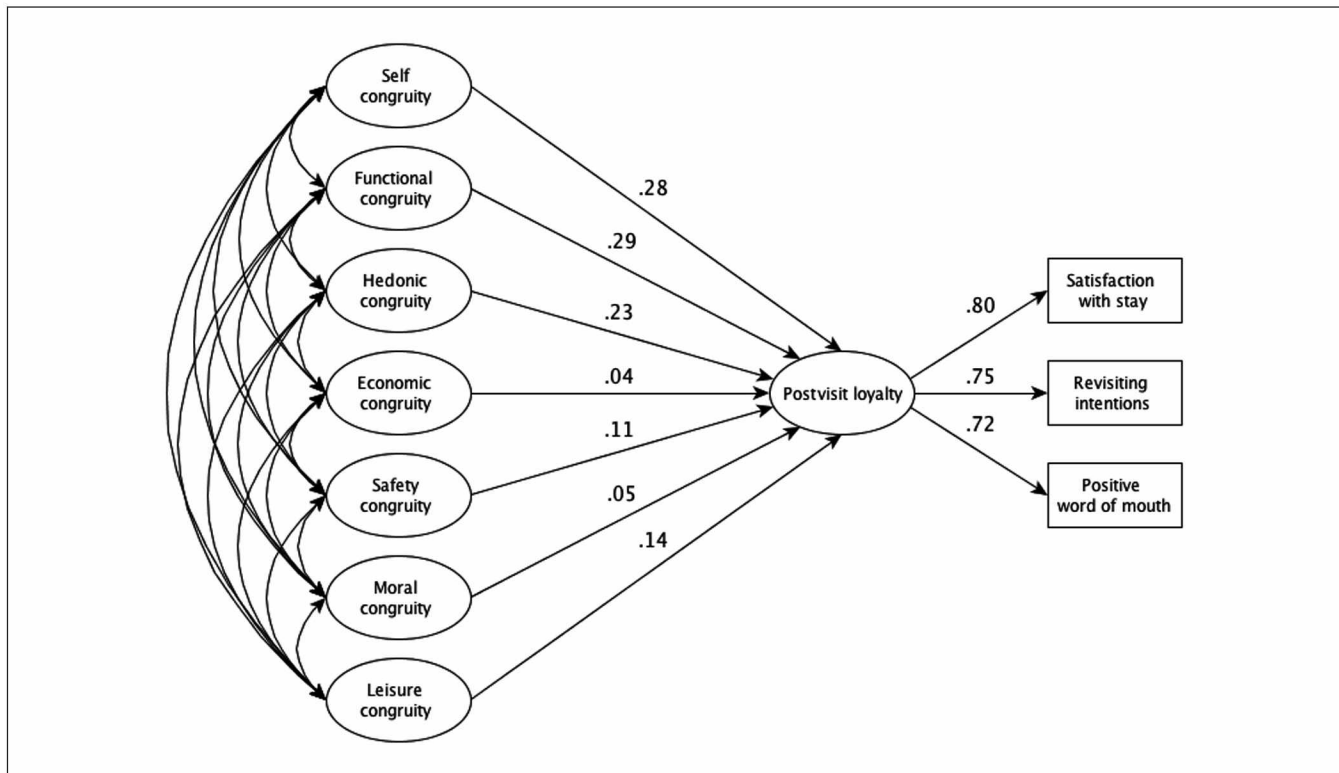
Figure 2. Congruity model predicting postvisit destination loyalty judgments with standardized path coefficients
Notes: *N* = 973. All path coefficients are significant at alpha = .05. Cross-correlation values of exogenous variables and all error/disturbance terms are omitted for the sake of clarity.

We developed 12 items to capture these six dimensions of leisure congruity (freedom from control, freedom from work, involvement, arousal, mastery, and spontaneity; see appendix). The overall measure's internal consistency was high (Cronbach's alpha = .88).

Regarding the seven sets of formative measures, we computed composite indices by averaging the responses for the respective item sets (mean scores). The bivariate correlations among the formatively defined composite indices were all well below *r* = .50 (i.e., no single intercorrelation is conspicuously high enough to indicate redundancies or insufficient discrimination).

Results

To test the overall model and specific hypotheses, we developed a structural model and subjected it to an empirical test. Seven exogenous variables belonging to the seven formatively generated congruity constructs related to one endogenous latent variable, namely, postvisit destination loyalty. We constructed the latent endogenous variable as a reflective indicator of three formatively defined constructs: (1) satisfaction with the vacation, (2) revisit intentions, and (3) positive word of mouth.

To estimate the structural model, we used EQS 6.1b91 (Bentler 2006) with the maximum likelihood robust estimation

method (Satorra and Bentler 1994) and raw data as input. We report the fit results for the model next (Figure 2), followed by information related to the predictive power and structural characteristics (path weights) of this model.

The structural model in Figure 2 fit the data well. The Satorra-Bentler chi-square value is significant (χ^2 = 41.17, df = 14, *p* < .01; Satorra-Bentler scaled χ^2 = 127.11, *p* < .05), yet ^{2}/df = 2.94, and the other goodness-of-fit statistics are all indicative of a good fit (Confirmatory Fit Index [CFI] = .99; nonnormed fit index [NNFI] = .97; root mean squared error of approximation [RMSEA] = .05, 90%; confidence interval [CI] = .03, .06).

With regard to predictions of postvisit loyalty, the coefficient of determination (R^2) equals .64. This extraordinary share of explained variance translates into an f^2 of 1.78, which according to Cohen (1988, 1992) is a very large effect.

For the individual congruity types, all the relationships are significant and point in the expected direction, providing support for the hypothesis (see Figure 2). The standardized path coefficients are .28 for self-congruity, .29 for functional congruity, .24 for hedonic congruity, .14 for leisure congruity, and .11 for safety congruity. Small but still significant predictive effects on postvisit loyalty judgments emerge for economic (.04) and moral (.05) congruity.

Discussion

We have pursued one overarching goal with this research: to expand self-congruity theory to incorporate other sources of values and motivation that may account for much of the variance in postvisit loyalty judgments. By doing so, we can achieve an additional objective of contributing to the literature on first-hand, experience-based image formation processes in postvisit contexts--a crucial research stream (Tasci and Gartner 2007). In this study, we address the evaluation (i.e., congruity) mechanism, connect expectations and values on the one side with image on the other, and relate these congruities to a broad set of loyalty aspects. Thus, we have expanded our understanding of tourist postvisit loyalty judgments (e.g., Gnoth 1997).

The study findings support the predictive effects of self-, functional, hedonic, economic, safety, moral, and leisure congruity on postpurchase behavioral responses. In view of the amount of explained variance—64% for postvisit loyalty judgments—we have established a very large effect that significantly exceeds the predictive validity of congruity models previously applied to tourism (e.g., Chon and Olsen1991; Kastenholz 2004; Beerli, Meneses, and Gil 2007).

The model articulates seven predictors, and all of them receive support from the data. However, their relative contributions vary considerably. Other than self-congruity, functional, hedonic, leisure, and safety congruity seem to exert the greatest influence on postvisit loyalty judgments. In contrast, the influence of economic and moral congruity seems relatively minor. One may argue that economic and moral criteria related to a destination seem more important for previsit evaluations (e.g., destination search and choice) compared with postvisit evaluations, a suggestion that could be tested through further research. Research on image modification due to actual visits (e.g., Sussmann and Ünel 1999; Vogt and Andereck 2003) and the differences in behaviors, motives, and images between first-time and repeated visitors (Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Oppermann 1997; Lau and McKercher 2004; Petrick 2004) may provide good starting points.

Additional research should expand our overall congruity model to include tourists in other countries and regions and thereby examine cross-cultural differences. Research on values suggests considerable cross-cultural differences (e.g., Hofstede 2001; Schwartz 2006), such that some cultures place less emphasis on motives and criteria related to high-order needs (i.e., self, hedonic, leisure, and moral congruity). Tourists from these cultures may use more evaluative criteria related to low-order needs, which would render functional, economic, and safety congruity aspects more important than they were for the German tourists in this study. In the modern tourism environment, tourist officials are developing strategies and plans that are global in scope, which means they could benefit from cross-cultural research findings.

What do these findings mean for marketing managers though? Our model is more comprehensive in accounting for variation in postvisit loyalty judgments from an internal, "push-based" perspective. The goal of tourism research (especially practitioner-oriented) is to predict behavior and control such push factors; the seven congruity constructs and their corresponding destination image dimensions are managerially controllable. Because hedonic, leisure, and safety-related congruity judgments proved the most important criteria for destination loyalty in general, we suggest destination managers should find ways to influence these judgments. During visitors' stay, managers should work to optimize the amount, quality, and variety of hedonic and leisure experiences at the destination site and make safety-related aspects of tourist services salient. After their stay, advertising targeted to previous visitors should effectively create and maintain their favorable image of the destination by continuing to address hedonic, leisure, and safety concerns. Depending on the type of destination and target tourists, the relative influences exerted by the seven congruity variables are likely to vary. Therefore, market research of past visitors should determine these relative weights. With such information, destination marketers can emphasize those criteria that play a more predictive role in loyalty judgments, which should increase the share of loyal tourists. Because congruities entail a matching process between values and perceptions, marketers also should understand that to influence loyalty judgments, they need to acknowledge value and perceptual differences among individuals, segments, and cultures.

Our research also includes several limitations that suggest potential avenues for further research. First, by aggregating across a large set of destinations, we have studied congruity effects on postvisit loyalty at a high level of abstraction, divorced from the particular temporal and spatial elements of any specific destination site. This approach is desirable for initial theory building, but context should be introduced concretely in future research (see Crick-Furman and Prentice 2000).

Second, and related to the first limitation, contextualizing our approach would require different modeling, namely, with the aid of hierarchical, multilevel analytic techniques (Hox 2002; Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Luke 2004). Such techniques might capture cross-level influences and interactions that were not evident in our study, perhaps because we aggregated data across several destination sites, travel seasons, and travel contexts.

Third, although the measurement instruments designed to capture loyalty and self-congruity were well grounded in previous research, the measures developed for the remaining six congruity aspects were derived mainly from theory and applied for the first time herein. Some measures may not fit well in every context. Ongoing research should investigate their construct validity and refine the measures accordingly.

Appendix

Formative Measures

Formative item sets for the exogenous construct "postvisit loyalty," modeled as a second-order factor that encompasses satisfaction, revisit intentions, and positive word-of-mouth communication.

For each item, 6-point agree–disagree scales were used and verbally anchored as follows: (1) *I strongly disagree*, (2) *I moderately disagree*, (3) *I slightly disagree*, (4) *I slightly agree*, (5) *I moderately agree*, (6) *I strongly agree*. "(*r*)" denotes reverse-coded items.

Satisfaction: "Please tell us how you liked your last vacation. Were you satisfied or not satisfied?"

1. I enjoyed my last vacation.
2. I have had bad feelings about my last trip. (r)
3. Overall, I feel unhappy with my decision on my last destination. (r)
4. My vacation met all my expectations.
5. My vacation has enhanced the quality of my life.
6. I think that my quality of life would have been amiss without the vacation.
7. I see myself as a fan of the visited destination.
8. My last visit was excellent overall.

Revisit intentions: "Now, we would like to know whether you are planning to come back to your visited destination."

1. In planning future vacations, I feel that I don't want to visit the destination again. (r)
2. I think that the destination is a travel destination to return to spend a quality vacation.
3. I would consider returning to the destination for a vacation even if the cost to this travel destination is a little higher than my alternative vacation spots.
4. It is likely that I will not return to the destination on any near future vacation. (r)
5. It is likely that I will return to the destination on any near future vacation.

Positive word of mouth: Are you inclined to recommend your visited destination to other persons?

1. I feel hesitant and reluctant to praise and say good things to others about the destination. (r)
2. I would recommend the destination to friends and relatives.

Formative Items Sets for Endogenous Constructs

For each item, 6-point agree–disagree scales were used and verbally anchored as follows: (1) *No, not at all*, (2) *No*, (3) *Rather not*, (4) *A little*, (5) *Yes*, and (6) *Yes, very much so*.

Self-congruity: "Please tell us more about yourself. All questions refer to your last destination."

1. Do you feel that your vacation reflects the kind of person you are?
2. Do you feel that people who spend their vacation there are very different from you? (r)
3. Do you admire and look up to people who spend their vacation there?
4. Do you feel that the image of the kind of people spending their vacation there is an image you don't aspire to or don't care for? (r)
5. Do people you know think of you as the kind of person who would vacation at a place like this?
6. Do people you know think of you as the kind of person who would never spend his vacation in a place like this? (r)
7. Do people important to you think you should spend your vacation in a place like this?
8. Would the people you look up to think poorly of you if you spend your vacation in a place like this? (r)

Functional congruity: "Please indicate how you value different characteristics of your last vacation. All questions refer to your last destination."

1. Do you believe that the destination has good amenities for tourists?
2. Is the vacation spot a high-quality tourist destination?
3. Is the vacation spot a convenient tourist destination?
4. Do you regard the destination as convenient to travel to from your home?
5. Has the vacation spot been long regarded as a high-quality tourist destination?
6. Does the vacation spot have a long history and good reputation of being a tourist destination?
7. Has it been difficult for you to find selected sites you wanted to visit? (r)
8. Do you think that the municipality of the destination made it easy enough for tourists to navigate through the place?
9. Have you had headaches dealing with services provided by tourism and hospitality organizations during your stay? (r)
10. Have you been satisfied generally with the services provided by the tourism and hospitality organizations?
11. Did you have any language problems during your vacation? (r)

Appendix (continued)

Hedonic congruity: "Did your last visit afford pleasure and enjoyment? All questions refer to your last destination."

1. Did you get to see beautiful landscapes at the places you visited?
2. Did you get to see beautiful architecture and other art work at the places you visited?
3. Is the destination peacefully quiet (at least the places you visited)?
4. Did you get to enjoy music in the places you visited?
5. Is the odor of the landscapes of the destination fresh and naturally inviting (at least the places you visited)?
6. Did you enjoy the taste and aroma of the food and drink you consumed at the places you visited?
7. Did you see interesting plants and/or animals?
8. Did you have to put up with noise nuisance? (r)
9. Were there many obstructed landscapes or pile of concretes? (r)
10. Do you think that there were too many tourists? (r)
11. Do you think that there was too much traffic? (r)

Economic congruity: "Was your last vacation reasonably priced? All questions refer to your last destination."

1. Did spending your vacation put a big cramp on your pocket book? (r)
2. Compared to other vacation destinations, did you consider your vacation a bargain?
3. Regarding travel expenses to and from your destination, were these expenses reasonable and affordable to you?
4. Regarding travel expenses touring to places within your destination, were these expenses reasonable and affordable?
5. Regarding lodging expenses, were these reasonable and affordable to you?
6. Regarding food and drinks expenses at eating establishments, were these reasonable and affordable?
7. Regarding expenses related to entry to museums and other attraction sites, were these reasonable and affordable to you?
8. Regarding expenses related to the purchase of mementos and other gift items, were these reasonable and affordable to you?

Safety congruity: "Did you feel safe? All questions refer to your last destination."

1. Do you believe that your vacation was safe for you, in general?
2. Do you believe that your vacation was good for your physical health?
3. Did you feel concerned about your own personal safety? (r)

4. Did you feel that your physical health was compromised in any way by any aspect of your visit? (r)

"Do you believe that your vacation was safe for those family members or friends who accompanied you, in general?"

1. Do you believe that your vacation was good for the physical health of any of your family members or friends who accompanied you?"
2. Did you have any safety concerns about your family or friends who accompanied you?"
3. Did you feel that the physical health of any of your family members or friends who accompanied you was compromised in any way by any aspect? (r) "

Moral congruity: "Did your destination meet your moral concepts? All questions refer to your last destination."

1. Do you believe that the businesses and government agencies that run the destination are more concerned about making money than the welfare of the visitors? (r)
2. Do you believe that the businesses and government agencies that run the destination are law abiding and socially responsible?

Leisure congruity: "Could you get away from it all? All questions refer to your last destination."

1. Did you feel like you escaped the drudgery of work?
2. Did your vacation help you feel rejuvenated?
3. Did your vacation help you feel freer to do things you couldn't otherwise do at home?
4. Did your vacation help you feel freer from the pressures of life?
5. Did the vacation help you get involved with exciting activities?
6. Did the vacation allow you to do exciting things and experience a lot of thrills?
7. Did the vacation allow you to sharpen your skills related to one or more sports or leisure activity?
8. Did the vacation help you master a certain hobby or skill?
9. Did the vacation allow you to be more relaxed and spontaneous than you are otherwise?
10. Did the vacation help bring out the real you, living and enjoying the moment without worrying about other stresses and strains in your life?

"Could you revive or intensify the relationship to the persons who traveled with you? All questions refer to your last destination."

1. Did your vacation make you more emotionally involved with your family members or friends who accompanied you?"
2. Did the vacation help nurture relationships with family members or friends who accompanied you?"

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