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Article:	**Self-Congruity A Myth or Reality in Shaping Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty**
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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to conceptualize the role of self-congruity and satisfaction from the perspective of tourists, especially in the context of destination loyalty. By collaborating with tourism organizations to enhance and bridging the gap between symbolic image of destination among tourist, and tourism policy makers would become aware of the self-congruity as well as its role in developing post purchase behaviour. The study determines that self-congruity has influence tourist satisfaction, and the relationships between self-congruity and loyalty for tourist destinations. In this study, respondents are chosen from a population of domestic tourists visiting to the nature-based destination in Gilgit Baltistan randomly. The proposed model takes into account self-congruity, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty. Factorial validity would be conducted and structural equation modelling through AMOS version 24 will be used to analyzed the model fitness. A study such as this one may provide useful and appropriate information to the stake holders for developing tourism strategies that can be implemented by tourism organizations.

Keywords: Self-Congruity; Myth; Tourist Satisfaction; Destination Loyalty

Introduction:

The study focuses on whether self-congruity myth or reality shapes tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. The tourism market has different levels of competition and several researchers focus on tourist destinations' attractions. Despite the diversity in the global tourism marketplace, they always strive to differentiate themselves from their competitors by showcasing the uniqueness of their destinations using various strategies. Pakistan's economy growth and revenue are generated from tourism, which is one of the key sectors. A strategic marketing strategy based on Pakistan's popularity as a tourist destination is needed considering the competition in the industry worldwide. Previous literature review suggested that self-congruity would be beneficial components for tourists to evaluate their travel experiences based on symbolic and physical attributes of a destination. It is inevitable that the tourism industry faces rapid development and change as well as continuously evolving preferences of tourist. Such as, Butowski (2019) suggested that many tourist destinations are the main sources of income generation which is genuinely tourism-based (Butowski, 2019). On the other hand, Beerli et al. (2007) described that understanding tourists' choices becomes an increasingly important factor in a competitive tourism market (Beerli et al., 2007).

Due to the increased number of tourist destinations and ease of access, economies benefited greatly from tourism. Global tourism growth has helped job creation, transportation development, income growth, and heritage preservation (Shahzad et al., 2017). Tourism's influence on the economy is evident. Tourism has a multiplier effect on the economy, and there is no doubt about that. In recent years, destination competition has been so intense that destination competitiveness frameworks have been developed to uncover business opportunities (Mariani et al., 2021), and novel strategic thinking for attracting tourists and increasing income through income stimulation. According to Lukin et al. (2018), tourism activities enhance economic activity by bringing in more investment and increasing tax revenue. It has been observed that tourism activities positively influence numerous industries. The role of domestic tourists is beneficial to generate income for the country. For instance, domestic tourists are more important than international tourists for generating economic activity in the tourism industry. In a similar vein, Li et al. (2016) quoted that domestic tourists contribute more to the economy than international tourists. In addition, domestic tourism development can help reduce wealth inequality in the economy by creating jobs, increasing employment, and significantly impacting the economy Lukin et al. (2018). Diverse research settings, including emerging and underdeveloped countries, have validated the economic impact of domestic tourism (Yip & Pratt, 2018). Economic as well as socio-cultural benefits are cited as benefits. Morupisi and Mokgalo (2017) pointed out that domestic tourism has a significant economic contribution because it helps re-distribute wealth from developed regions to areas with natural resources. Tourism was among the fastest-growing sectors before COVID-19, contributing more than 10 percent to the global GDP and creating more than 320 million jobs. The pandemic, however, negatively impacts the tourism industry and harms the global economy. The UNWTO Covid-19 response report stated that domestic tourism has thrived in crisis situations and is expected to continue to do so. The UNWTO (2020) report indicates that travellers prefer to travel short distances until the situation normalizes.

In addition, this pandemic is disproportionately damaging the Pakistani tourism industry. Pakistan's hospitality industry employs approximately 1.17 million people, and the transport industry employs around 3.49 million people. Overall, Pakistan's tourism industry's disruption affects 3.49 million people directly and indirectly (Ahmad, 2020). Hence, countries worldwide, including Pakistan, have prioritized domestic tourism for economic recovery, which provides a logical rationale for examining the loyalty of domestic tourists in this study.

A destination's success and longevity depend on tourist loyalty (Getz & Page, 2016). Numerous studies in tourism marketing have investigated consumer loyalty antecedents in various environments (Lu et al., 2020). As for destination development, studies by Foroudi et al. (2018) show that customer loyalty significantly contributes to tourist destination success. To compete in a rapidly growing industry, studying the factors influencing consumer loyalty toward tourist destinations is imperative. The success and survival of a business do not always depend on tourist satisfaction in a competitive and challenging tourism environment (Calvo-Porral & Levy-Mangin, 2016). A wrong first impression or unsatisfactory visit may prevent tourists from returning to the destination. Calvo-Porral and Levy-Mangin (2016) concluded that customer retention and loyalty are essential for businesses. It takes time, though, to build customer loyalty. As a result, it can be challenging to convert tourists into loyal visitors. Destination management organization's need to identify consumer needs and customize their offerings to meet those needs.

To meet customers' standards, tourist destinations should not only focus on service attractions but also on the destination's symbolic values and physical attraction. Besides being an indicator of a business's success, loyalty also plays a crucial role in the course of tourism. Since visitor loyalty is a vital indicator for the success of tourist destinations and its relationship with tourism loyalty, it should be the increasing focus of marketing managers for tourist destinations (Wu, 2016). Every industry relies greatly on customer loyalty and its success, which is one of the most critical success factors for any business (Suanmali, 2014). Such as Kim et al. (2013) signify the importance of destination loyalty in tourism businesses which is used widely as the subject of many researchers.

According to Shamah et al. (2018), loyalty strongly correlates with repeat purchases, Word-of-mouth recommendations, as well as a willingness to pay. Thus, improving destination management strategies has become increasingly important (Lehto et al., 2004), and academic researchers have given considerable attention to exploring the influence mechanisms of destination management and the ways to improve loyalty (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Lv & McCabe, 2020). Several studies suggested that loyalty is vital when selecting a tourist destination. According to Sangpikul (2018) and Triantafillidou and Petala (2016), destination loyalty may be strongly influenced by many factors, including self-congruity and satisfaction. Tourists are increasingly focusing on a destination's symbolic value when choosing a vacation destination, so its symbolic value is becoming increasingly important. Despite this, the role of symbolic attributes influencing satisfaction and loyalty to a destination, particularly to a nature-based tourist destination, has been neglected in previous literature. Thus, this article uses self-congruity to measure the role of symbolic value in creating tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty within a nature-based tourist destination context.

Literature Review
Destination Loyalty

Based on the result and nature of the study, several authors provided different definitions of loyalty based on their perspectives in the literature on tourism marketing (Quoquab et al., 2020). In destination marketing, some researchers used attitudinal loyalty to evaluate tourist loyalty (Han, Lee, et al., 2019; Parra-Lopez et al., 2018). Several studies examined loyalty in terms of behavior and considered it an accurate measure and definition (Dodds & Holmes, 2019; Han, Al-Ansi, et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2020). Bose et al. (2022) proposed a holistic approach to destination loyalty by identifying that a tourist's positive behavior stems from a positive attitude and that positive word-of-mouth leads to tourism engagement through repeated visits. Research on destination loyalty appears to use and develop definitions according to the requirements and objectives of each study. Several researchers have used a composite loyalty approach (Wang et al., 2019; Wu, 2016). The researcher proposed a composite loyalty measurement incorporating all dimensions of loyalty to overcome over-dependence on behavioral and attitude measurement (Rauyruen & Miller, 2007). The undertaken study used several items to construct a composite uni-dimension to measure destination loyalty. In tourism studies, behavioral and attitudinal aspects are integrated, providing essential information for understanding loyalty more deeply (So et al., 2016). A unique feature of this method is its ability to provide the best explanatory power of the construct (Zhang et al., 2014).

It is crucial to develop a strategy that ensures customer satisfaction and loyalty in a highly competitive industry like tourism (Pato & Kastenholz, 2017). Cheunkamon et al. (2022) emphasize the economic impact of loyal customers, indicating that customers who are satisfied with their destination/service will spread the word to three others. If the customer dislikes the service, he will communicate his disliking to eleven others, resulting in negative impacts. That suggests that creating loyalty is a cost-effective strategy for organizations than attracting new customers (Song et al., 2012). The research by Canalejo and del Río (2018) confirms that tourists' loyalty determines tourism success through their intention to return and recommendations to friends and family. In addition to benefiting tourists, loyalty strategies also have a positive multiplier effect on destinations and organizations, such as serving as a steady source of revenue and informal connections between friends and family. The cost of serving loyal customers is much lower than for new ones. Hence, loyal customers are less price sensitive, so they are more likely to be willing to pay. In addition, Kong et al. (2022) demonstrated that firms' profits would increase by 28-85 percent if only five percent of their customers stayed loyal. As well as the profitability aspect of having loyal customers Carvache-Franco et al. (2022) suggests that having loyal customers for a destination can also provide a competitive edge.

Tourist Satisfaction

In Oliver and Linda (1981) definition of marketing satisfaction, the difference between the expected and actual results follows product consumption. A positive evaluation of a destination visit is considered satisfactory in travel and tourism (Purwanto et al., 2022). Zhou et al. (2022) defined satisfaction as customers' emotional responses based on their expectations and actual product performance. A key measure of a destination's performance is satisfaction (Schofield, 2000). Several travel and tourism industry researchers have used satisfaction as an

assessment tool (Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991). A key research area in travel and tourism studies over the past few decades were satisfaction because it plays an essential role in sustaining a destination's competitiveness (Meng et al., 2008). Gursoy et al. (2007) also state that understanding satisfaction is an ever-growing importance due to the fact that it is an indicator of a business' success and provides a solid foundation to continue and thrive in the tourism industry. According to McDowall (2010), the concept of satisfaction is crucial for understanding the destination's performance, as it identifies what leads to tourists' satisfaction, and, thus, more loyal tourists.

A number of studies have addressed the concept of service satisfaction in the context of service performance. According to Orel and Kara (2014), satisfaction refers to evaluating service performance in light of the expected and actual performance. Tourist satisfaction was defined here using Chen and Tsai (2007) definition of determining whether a destination meets tourists' stated or unstated needs based on evaluations of its ability to meet these needs. In a study conducted by Gidey and Sharma (2017), it was demonstrated that tourist satisfaction with a destination is an essential factor in understanding how successful a destination is and how successful it will be in the long term. According to Asmelash and Kumar (2019), tourism marketing contributes to tourist satisfaction by promoting tourist destinations' products and services.

Moreover, Asmelash and Kumar (2020) noted that long-term sustainable tourism growth relies on tourist satisfaction. A tourist's satisfaction indicates that the capacity and management of the attraction have been successful. It is a positive reflection of loyalty to travel. Understanding tourism satisfaction is key to positioning tourist attractions well. Satisfaction is one of the most important factors in achieving loyalty (Kurnia Harahap et al., 2019). Thus, based on the above justification, the following hypothesis was developed.

Self-Congruity

According to Usakli and Baloglu (2011), consumers will purchase products that are congruent with their self-concept, so when the idea is more harmonious, it is more likely that they will purchase the item. A consumer's self-concept is considered one of the most relevant constructs in predicting and understanding behavior. The consumer always prefers products that look the same as how they want to be perceived (Sirgy, 1982). Consequently, self-congruity is regarded as a psychological comparison between self-concept and brand-user image. Additionally, studies in consumer behavior have shown that self-congruity impacts post-purchase behaviors such as satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth (Sirgy, 2018). In Sirgy et al. (2016) work, he stated that self-congruity is when the potential buyer can find similarities between him/herself and the typical product user. When there is a high level of involvement in the purchase or consumption process, self-congruity becomes critical, as it could influence the behavior of consumers (Sirgy, 2018).

Furthermore, the author asserts that self-congruity is essential to behavioral, social, and administrative science. Consumer research has also long used self-concept to evaluate symbolic cues of a marketing offering (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Many symbolic cues are associated with a market offering (e.g., stylish, young, classy). Tourism also implies that tourists perceive every destination differently and follow the typical tourist, visitor, or clientele. It is known that tourists' self-concepts follow their stereotypical image of themselves when they visit a particular destination. These symbolic cues/stereotypic images are called self-congruity (Sirgy

& Su, 2000). An example of this symbolic meaning is the consumer internalization of a product or service symbol (Luna-Cortés et al., 2019).

Self-congruity is assumed since consumers' beliefs and behavior is essential to who they are (Sung & Choi, 2012). In accordance with Sirgy (1982), consumers tend to choose products or brands that share the same qualities as their self-concepts. Further, Sirgy (2018) showed that tourist behaviors are significantly influenced by self-congruity before and after purchases. Accordingly, Krishen and Sirgy (2016) have empirically demonstrated a link between self-congruity and consumer attitude and loyalty. In other words, consumers' attitudes and behavior predictability are highly reliable through self-congruity (Sop & Kozak, 2019). A consumer's self-congruity is generally considered a significant predictor of their response to marketing (Lee & Back, 2009). Additionally, Kim and Thapa (2018) hypothesized a relationship between self-congruity and satisfaction in the Korean DMZ context, concluding that the constructs are significantly associated.

Hypothesis

Based on literature reviews, the relationships in Figure 1 are derived from a hypothetical model of Self-congruity, Satisfaction, and Destination Loyalty. The following hypotheses are presented.

H1: Self-Congruity has a direct effect on tourist satisfaction

H2: Self-Congruity having a direct impact on destination Loyalty

H3: There is likely to be a direct effect of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty

H4: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between self-congruity and destination loyalty
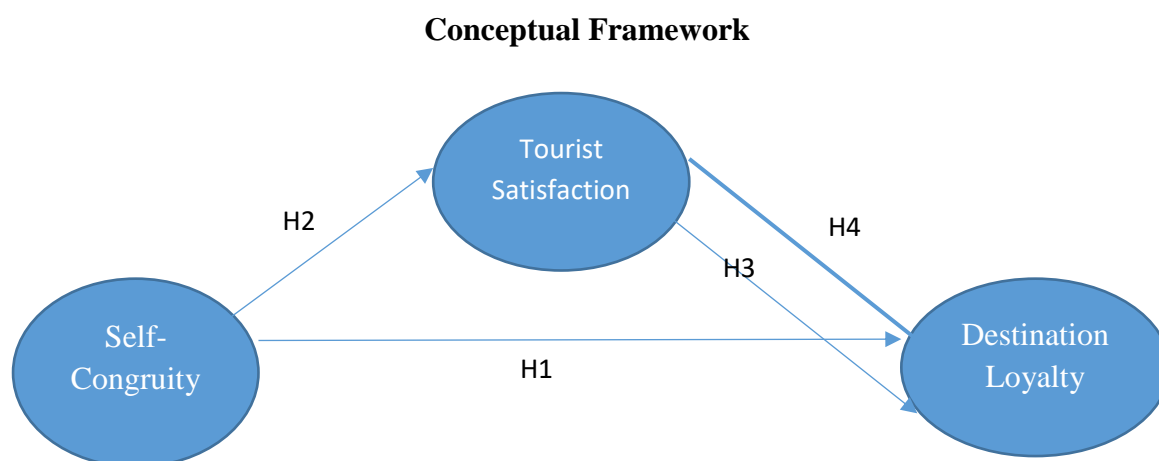
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Model Hypothetical Relationship

Methodology

The research will be conducted at the nature-based tourist destination of Gilgit Baltistan, as domestic tourists from Pakistan come to visit. Domestic tourists who can speak English will be distributed self-administered questionnaires during the month of July and August. Domestic tourists who have visited Gilgit-Baltistan for two main purpose such as, leisure and business. The target population for the study is very important because it identify the specific parameters of the population (Mohamad et al., 2011). It is recommended that the sample size for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) should be larger numbers, because the number of observations are normal (Hair et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2019; Hair Jr et al., 2020). In

the first part of the questionnaire, there are items about self-congruity. The items for self-congruity were adapted from the work of Kim et al. (2017) and Matzler et al. (2016). In the second part of the questionnaire, different items assess tourist satisfaction, as well as adapted from the work (Aliman et al., 2014). The study adapted items from the survey of Ragb et al. (2020) for destination loyalty. All the items will be assessed with 7-Likert scale, such as, 1 is nominated with dissatisfied and 7 number is nominated with satisfied.

In the last part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked questions about their backgrounds and characteristics, which was crucial in providing insights into their backgrounds and characteristics. Data will be analysed in different of ways, including a reliability test, and SEM (AMOS) measurement to determine the predictive association among constructs. Using CFA, the constructs will measure, and then SEM will be used to test for goodness-of-fit. An assessment of the goodness-of-fit for the initial and absolute model will be conducted on the basis of statistical values, including the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI). As part of the assessment of whether the hypothesized model is fit, we will use baseline comparison indexes such as normed fit index (NFI), tucker-lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI). The research study will also identify the reasonable error of approximation for the model based on the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) to determine whether it is acceptable or not (Hair et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2019; Hair Jr et al., 2020).

Conclusion

In order to develop and produce a tourism product, a variety of stakeholders need to be involved. An explanation of the destination concept is provided in this paper, along with an attempt to synthesize a scientific strategic management model for marketing of destinations. A key objective of this study is to provide insights into formulating tourism policies, specifically for the role of self-congruity, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty for tourist destination management organizations (DMOs). Pakistan's tourism development must propose and implement appropriate strategies for improving the symbolic image of the destination and eventually influence tourists to repurchase. To create an integrated marketing mix and delivery system, the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation will act as a guide and coordinator to all stakeholders.

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