SELF-CONGRUITY THEORY IN TOURISM RESEARCH SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS USING HISTCITE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study explores the knowledge infrastructure, hotspot and development trends of tourism self-congruity research based on a systematic literature review using HistCite.

Design/methodology/approach: This study is based on 171 articles published from 1981 to 2023 that were retrieved from the Web of Science database. This study utilizes bibliometric analysis and network analysis to investigate the structure and connections of knowledge related to tourism self-congruity.

Findings: The results demonstrate the progression and trends of tourism self-congruity research. This is the first study to overcome the limitations of previous systematic literature reviews in tourism self-congruity research by employing network analysis techniques of HistCite to uncover the interconnected structures, focal areas, and advancements within the domain of tourism self-congruity research.

Research & Practical implications: The study can provide tourism self-congruity researchers with a reference guide to the focus of previous studies and directions for future research. Through this study, practitioners can also identify overarching themes that may be incorporated with current tourist self-congruity research.

Originality/value: As a summary of essential characteristics, this paper provides researchers with a useful reference guide to previous studies. This study presents a comprehensive overview of tourism self-congruity field and highlights the hotspot and development trends within tourism self-congruity research. Based on the results, the potential avenues for future investigation are provided.

Keywords: self-congruity, tourism research, systematic literature review, HistCite.

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TEORIA DA AUTOCONGRUÊNCIA EM PESQUISA TURÍSTICA ANÁLISE SISTEMÁTICA USANDO HISTCITE

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo explora a infraestrutura de conhecimento, hotspot e as tendências de desenvolvimento da pesquisa de autocongruência do turismo com base em uma revisão sistemática da literatura usando HistCite.

Projeto/metodologia/abordagem: Este estudo é baseado em 171 artigos publicados de 1981 a 2023 que foram recuperados da base de dados Web of Science. Este estudo utiliza análise bibliométrica e análise de rede para investigar a estrutura e as conexões de conhecimento relacionadas à autocongruência do turismo.

Resultados: Os resultados demonstram a progressão e as tendências da pesquisa de autocongruência do turismo. Este é o primeiro estudo a superar as limitações de revisões de literatura sistemática anteriores em pesquisa de autocongruência turística, empregando técnicas de análise de rede de HistCite para descobrir as estruturas interconectadas, áreas focais e avanços no domínio da pesquisa de autocongruência turística.

Pesquisa & implicações práticas: O estudo pode fornecer aos pesquisadores de autocongruência turística um guia de referência para o foco de estudos anteriores e orientações para pesquisas futuras. Através deste estudo, os profissionais também podem identificar temas abrangentes que podem ser incorporados com a pesquisa atual de autocongruência turística.

Originalidade/valor: como um resumo das características essenciais, este artigo fornece aos pesquisadores um guia de referência útil para estudos anteriores. Este estudo apresenta uma visão geral abrangente do campo de autocongruência turística e destaca as tendências de hotspot e desenvolvimento dentro da pesquisa de autocongruência turística. Com base nos resultados, são fornecidas as possíveis vias para investigações futuras.

Palavras-chave: autocongruência, pesquisa turística, revisão sistemática da literatura, HistCite.

1 INTRODUCTION

The theory of self-congruity posits that customers exhibit a tendency to acquire things or brands based on their symbolic significance, driven by the need to align the product or brand image with their own self-image (Sirgy, 1982). The phenomenon in which there is alignment between the self-perception of customers and the self-concept of another individual or entity is referred to as self-congruity. This alignment has the potential to establish a robust association with the brand (Tran et al., 2022). Self-congruity encompasses various dimensions, including actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, social self-congruity, and ideal social self-congruity (Sirgy et al., 1997). According to Ahn et al. (2013), self-congruity is a crucial factor in the prediction of various consumer behaviour aspects, including but not limited to advertising effectiveness, product attitude, brand choice, brand preference, brand loyalty, and satisfaction. A significant congruence...
arises when there is alignment between a brand's image and consumers' self-image, leading to positive attitudes and actions among consumers (Huaman-Ramirez, 2020).

Destinations are currently facing heightened levels of competitiveness that surpass any previous encounters. Due to the increasing resemblance and escalating substitutability of tourism offerings, the mere emphasis on the utilitarian aspects of destinations is no longer sufficient to effectively allure travellers. The significance of a destination's symbolic worth is becoming more prominent as tourists increasingly prioritize the symbolic advantages within the process of tourism consumption (M. J. Zhou et al., 2022). Symbolic advantages pertain to the value-expressive characteristics of the destination (Beerli et al., 2007). These benefits are derived from the signal effect that visiting a site has, which conveys information about the tourist's self-perception and how they are perceived by others (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). According to Usakli & Baloglu (2011), Hosany (2006) suggests that the concept of destination personality, which encompasses symbolic traits, can serve as a suitable metaphor for the development of destination brands, examination of visitors’ perceptions of destinations, and establishment of a unique identity for tourism areas. Within the realm of tourism, the concept of self-congruity pertains to the alignment between the symbolic indicators of a particular place and the self-perception of the visitor (Ahn et al., 2013; Usakli et al., 2022). The alignment between visitors' self-perception and the destination they visit establishes a significant connection with the destination, which in turn affects their behavioural intentions (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; X. Wu & I. K. W. Lai, 2022). Self-congruity is useful for analysing the behaviours of tourists in tourism destinations (Sop, 2020). The utilization of the congruity theory has demonstrated its worth in supporting several facets of tourist behaviour during the process of selecting a destination (Segota, 2023). Numerous scholars have utilized the self-congruity theory to gain a more profound understanding of the positive behaviours exhibited by travelers. They have advocated for further research to corroborate this theory by exploring additional psychological associations that contribute to the enhancement of traveller satisfaction and positive behaviours within destinations (Cifci, 2022).

In general, it is observed that a significant number of literature reviews do not adhere to a replicable system. The utilization of bibliometric mapping, such as HistCite, in a systematic literature review effectively addresses the aforementioned shortcomings (Buchanan & Shen, 2020). This research presents a systematic literature review utilizing HistCite™Pro2.1 in the context of tourism self-congruity. This is also the first study to
conduct a systematic literature review by means of HistCite on the research since the self-congruity theory in tourism research has developed for more than 30 years, and to address the limitations of prior systematic literature reviews by applying network analysis to reveal the interrelated structures, hotspot, and development of the tourism self-congruity research domain. The subsequent sections of the paper are organized as follows. Section 2 presents the research methodology, as well as citation map that was constructed. This section also includes the identification of six distinct themes that have emerged from the tourism self-congruity literature. Section 3 provides an analysis of the six themes, while Section 4 elaborates on the directions for future research. The paper is concluded in Section 5.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
2.1 HistCite™

HistCite™ is a software package for bibliometric analysis and visualization that was created by Eugene Garfield who is renowned for his development of citation indexes for science and his establishment of the Web of Science (WoS) database (Buchanan & Shen, 2020; Wu & Tsai, 2022). The subsequent iterations, Histcite™ pro 2.0 and 2.1, introduced alterations in the software’s launch process and implemented an automated mechanism for extracting the unprocessed data from the Web of Science (Wu & Tsai, 2022).

The primary objective of HistCite™ is to support scholarly investigations in bibliometrics and offer a systematic approach to identifying significant and recent publications in a given field (Bornmann & Marx, 2012). Additionally, HistCite™ enables users to generate visual representations, known as historiography, by converting bibliographies from the Web of Science (WoS) into relational diagrams. The developers utilized data derived from the Science Citation Index (SCI). The local citation score (LCS) is determined by the number of citations inside the basic collection, whereas the global citation score (GCS) represents the frequency at which each paper is cited in the entire SCI, as described by (Garfield et al., 2005). The utilization of HistCite™ facilitates the identification of emerging themes throughout pertinent literature (Oliveira & Mendes, 2014).
2.2 KEYWORDS SEARCH

Due to the existing body of literature indicating that certain researchers employ alternative terminology in lieu of self-congruity, such as self-image congruency, self-image congruity, self-image congruence or self-congruence (Sop, 2020), and the words “tourism, tourist, visitor or traveller” often appearing in tourism research literature, specifically referring to tourism context, therefore we begin with a Web of Science (WoS) search for tourism self-congruity publications using the search terms (tourism or tourist or visitor or traveller) and (“self-image congruency” or “self-image congruence” or “self-image congruity” or self-congruence or self-congruity). The search is limited to articles in English in the Web of Science Core Collection in the following citation indexes: Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI), Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Science (CPCI-S), Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI). The search time is at 11:00 on June 24, 2023. This resulted in a total of 166 articles.

2.3 DATA SUPPLEMENTING

After importing the 166 articles into HistCite, we click Cited References and examine the literature with a high citation but not in the 166 articles because of keywords search to make sure that all important publications are included. Five important articles were supplemented, and the final dataset comprised 171 articles. What is worth mentioning is that a highly cited paper by Sirgy and Su (2000) is not included in WoS, so this paper cannot appear in the citation map below, but the author still uses it as a reference.

2.4 YEARLY OUTPUT

171 articles were imported into HistCite again. Figure 1 shows a snapshot of these 171 articles. Using the “Yearly output” function of HistCite to calculate the annual publication volume of these 171 articles, an overall upward trend of articles published in the past decade is showed in Figure 2, indicating that the importance of self-congruity has gained increasing attention within tourism research.
Figure 1 A snapshot of 171 articles

2.5 CITATION MAP

The citation map generated by HistCiteTM software is provided in Figure 3. Corresponding citation details and citation counts for each paper can be found in Table 1. Based on LCS, the count of the top ranked literature is limited to 50, resulting in a total of 50 highly cited articles. Each node represents a publication. Different nodes are connected by rays, which indicate citation relationships between publications. Larger nodes represent a higher number of citations. Four key themes are identified: Theme 1 focusing on the relationships among destination personality, self-congruity, and tourist’s travel behaviour; Theme 2 cantering on the interrelationship between self-congruity and functional congruity; Theme 3 pertaining to moderators that affects the effect of self-congruity; Theme 4 addressing measurement methods of self-congruity. Due to the comprehensiveness of the article content and the interweaving and mixing of content between the article of the four themes and for us to gain a complete and specific understanding of the research hotspots and latest developments in tourism self-congruity, we further expanded the four themes into six themes with mediators and other research
themes added by conducting a deep textual analysis of these 50 articles and supplementary reading of latest and important articles in 2021-2023 years in the final dataset.

Figure 2 Yearly output

Source: Authors

Figure 3 HistCite citation map

<table>
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<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>Theme 3</th>
<th>Theme 4</th>
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<td>self-congruity and functional congruity</td>
<td>moderators</td>
<td>Measurement methods</td>
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Table 1 Highly cited publications

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<td>2960</td>
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<td>Litvin and Goh (2002)</td>
<td>Tourism Management</td>
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<td>Journal of Travel Research</td>
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</table>
2.6 DEVELOPMENTS IN TOURISM SELF-CONGRUITY RESEARCH

Chon (1992) was the first to apply the self-congruity theory to the travel and tourism study. Sirgy and Su (2000) formally proposed that travel behaviour is positively influenced by self-congruity. Many subsequent empirical studies support this proposition. As research progresses, the application of self-congruity is more specific. The theory of self-congruity is widely applied in the study of tourist destinations, including not only ordinary tourist destinations but also various special tourist destinations, such as timeshare resort sector (Sparks et al., 2011), cruise tourism (Holland, 2023; Hung & Petrick, 2011; Hung & Petrick, 2012), wine tourism (Pratt & Sparks, 2014), craft breweries and wineries (Bachman et al., 2021), theme park (Fu et al., 2020; X. X. Fu et al., 2017), gambling tourism (Li et al., 2021), film tourists' destination (X. H. Wu & I. K. W. Lai, 2022), golf tourism (Zhang et al., 2022), red tourism (M. J. Zhou et al., 2022), creative destination (Shahabi et al., 2022), faith destinations (Cifci, 2022), dark tourism destinations (Cifci et al., 2023). The theory of self-congruity is also applied in studies regarding airport lounge (Lee et al., 2017), hotel brand (Sop & Kozak, 2019; Su, 2017), guest houses (Wang et al., 2021), green service (Olk, 2021), tourist shopping place (Han et al., 2019), lodging (B. Bynum Boley et al., 2022), online travel agencies (Chen et al., 2022), destination food (Gomez-Rico et al., 2022), intangible cultural heritage products (Guo et al., 2022), cultural events (Meeprom & Fakfare, 2021), esport events (Thompson et al., 2022), Blue Flag logo (Can et al., 2023). The following section examines the six research themes as mentioned earlier in more detail.

2.7 THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG DESTINATION PERSONALITY, SELF-CONGRUITY, AND TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR

This theme demonstrates the relationships among destination personality, self-congruity, and tourist’s travel behaviour. Destination personality is the application of brand personality to tourism destinations (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Brand personality...
can be defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Aaker (1997) developed a theoretical brand personality framework that consists of five personality dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness and the Brand Personality Scale (BPS) to measure the dimensions. Self-congruity is a partial mediator on the relationship between destination personality and tourist’s behavioural intentions (Huaman-Ramirez et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2017; Matzler et al., 2016; Nguyen et al., 2023; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Yang, Mohd Isa, et al., 2020). The distinct dimensions of destination personality may function differently towards different dimensions of self-congruity and behavioural intentions (Huang et al., 2017; Pan et al., 2017; Su & Reynolds, 2017; Yang, Isa, et al., 2020).

By utilizing Aaker’s (1997) BPS to hotels, the study indicates that consumers tend to express their self-images through Excitement and Sincerity, while relying on Sincerity and Competence to evaluate functional congruity (Su & Reynolds, 2017). Yang, Isa, et al. (2020) finds Aaker’s (1997) BPS failed to perform an actual self-congruity to mediate all five dimensions of destination brand personality and revisit intention. The results revealed that the ideal self-congruity is a mediating effect between destination brand personality (i.e., sincerity and excitement) and revisit intention (Yang, Isa, et al., 2020).

The five dimensions of Aaker’s (1997) BPS could not be replicated in all tourism contexts. Some scholars developed personality dimensions according to the special tourism context. By developing Aaker’s (1997) BPS, Huang et al. (2017) finds that congruence between the actual self and the destination brand personality (DBP) dimensions of Excitement and Charming plays a positive role in the development of destination brand attachment (DBA), while the ideal self-congruence does not. Pan et al.’s (2017) research reveals that Chinese tourists associate destinations with five different personality dimensions: “competence”, “sacredness”, “vibrancy”, “femineity”, and “excitement”. Except for “vibrancy,” the other four dimensions are discovered to be important predictors of travellers’ actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, and destination loyalty. The findings also indicate that “competence” and “femineity” are the most critical factors explaining how the destination personality affects self-congruity perceptions and tourists’ behavioural intentions (Pan et al., 2017). Specifically for the island of Sardinia, Chi et al. (2018) identifies three underlying dimensions of destination personality: conviviality, sophistication, and vibrancy, which have a strong impact on self-congruity.
There are also moderating factors between destination personality and self-congruity. Such as, Aaker suggests cultures (individualist cultures, collectivist cultures) may influence the perceptions of brand personality. Yang et al.’s (2022) findings indicate a highly significant difference in the effects of New Zealand’s destination personality on ideal self-congruity across male and female Chinese tourists.

2.8 THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONGRUITY AND FUNCTIONAL CONGRUITY

Tourists will evaluate a destination based on not only its utilitarian or functional attributes (e.g., infrastructure, accommodation) that may be reflected in functional congruity, but also its symbolic attributes that may be reflected in destination image and/or image congruity (Chon, 1992). According to Sirgy (2014), both self-congruity and functional congruity have been suggested to influence travel behaviour. The relative importance assigned to each may vary depending on several contextual and tourist-related factors. Self-congruity influences or biases functional congruity and the predictions of self-congruity vs functional congruity are moderated by “tourists’ knowledge, prior experience, involvement with site selection and time pressure.” Regarding the self-congruity bias, travel and tourism research has produced evidence suggesting that functional congruity explains consumer satisfaction in a tourism environment better than self-congruity (Sirgy, 2014). The research does, however, also point to a correlation between self-congruity and functional congruity.

In a study conducted by Hung and Petrick (2011) to test the self-congruity bias directly in relation to cruising intentions, results showed that self-congruity successfully predicted functional congruity (0.156 for actual self-congruity, 0.284 for ideal self-congruity, 0.143 for social self-congruity and 0.250 for ideal social self-congruity). Also, both self-congruity and functional congruity predicted cruising intentions. Hung and Petrick (2011) suggests that integrating both streams of research on self-congruity and functional congruity can enhance the understanding of travel motivation. Within the context of various hotel brands, a tourist considers self-congruity and functional congruity to decide on revisiting and recommending the hotel. Functional congruity has a stronger effect than self-congruity on hotel brand loyalty. The close relationship between self-congruity and functional congruity that the former positively influences the latter has also been determined (Sop & Kozak, 2019). Boley et al.’s (2022) research on lodging choice
also demonstrated that the decision to choose a franchise or independent accommodation is influenced by both self-congruity and functional congruity.

2.9 MODERATORS THAT AFFECT THE EFFECT OF SELF-CONGRUITY

The effect of self-congruity upon travel behaviour is moderated by certain factors.

Prior experience and travel frequency: Beerli et al. (2007) finds that when a person has been to a place before, self-congruity will no longer have the same effect on the decision to visit the place. By sampling visitors to the Yilan Shangrila Recreation Farm, Taiwan, it was discovered that first-time visitors rely more on self-congruity than repeat visitor when developing destination loyalty (Liu et al., 2012). Results derived from a large-scale study of Swiss travellers indicate that self-congruity per trip may decrease if a person's number of trips increases during a certain time period.

Involvement: Beerli et al.’s (2007) findings suggest that the greater the tourist’s involvement in leisure tourism, the greater the power of self-congruity to predict destination choice. According to an empirical research of museum visitors, the influence of self-congruity on revisit intention increases with level of involvement (Wang & Wu, 2011). In the context of wine tourism, when compared to consumers who indicated low wine involvement, those who indicated high wine involvement appeared to be more influenced by self-congruity (Pratt & Sparks, 2014). In a research on French tourists in the city of Aix-en-Provence, Huaman-Ramirez (2021) finds that the positive effect of self-congruity on destination attitude is moderated by tourism involvement.

There are also other moderators, such as individualism (Matzler et al., 2016), uncertainty avoidance (Matzler et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2021), traveling purpose (business or leisure) (Su & Reynolds, 2017), the type of lodging (franchise and independent accommodations) (B. B. Boley et al., 2022), the role of being a tourist and/or traveller (Gazley & Watling, 2015), social contexts (Correia et al., 2016), age (Huaman-Ramirez, 2021), personality propensities (Kim & Cho, 2022).

3 MEASUREMENT METHODS OF SELF-CONGRUITY

According to Sirgy et al. (1997), there are two primary methods to measure self-congruity. The traditional method involves measuring the subject's perceptions of the product-user image and of his or her own self-image along a specified set of image attributes. Subsequently, a mathematical calculation is performed to get the discrepancy
or ratio score for each dimension of the image. Then these individual values are added together to obtain the total discrepancy score across all dimensions. Unlike the traditional method, the new method assumes that self-congruity is processed holistically or globally rather than analytically or piecemeal. Focusing on tapping the psychological experience of self-congruity directly and globally, the new method collects the subject's global perception of degree of match or mismatch between product-user image and his or her own self-image. The new method is a direct method; conversely, the traditional method is an indirect method. There are two facets used in tourism self-congruity research to personify destinations: brand-as-person and brand-as-user (Wassler & Hung, 2015). The traditional method and new method both belong to brand-as-user. In the application of the two methods, structural equation models have been widely used with Fornell & Larcker’s (1981) testing standards.

The new method's predictive validity is superior to that of the traditional method (Sirgy et al., 1997). According to Litvin and Goh (2002), their research results in 2000, based solely upon Chon’s method (the new method), seem to support the proposition that self-congruity affects travel behaviour (Sirgy and Su, 2000). However, the study shows the lack of validation when applying Malhotra’s method (similar to the traditional indirect method) (Litvin & Goh, 2002). Namely, in a study of cruise ship travellers, Hosany & Martin’s (2012) research results do not confirm self-congruity's relationship to satisfaction by the application of Malhotra’s method.

Besides using brand-as-user like the traditional method and new method, the direct method and indirect method can also be used brand-as-person. For example, P. Boxberger’s study measures self-congruity as the difference between two assessments of personality: the self-assessment of the tourist’s own personality and his or her assessment of the destination’s personality in a Germanspeaking context by Hiernomimus. Results derived from a large-scale study of Swiss travellers indicate that conclusions depend heavily on how strict the threshold (the maximum permissible difference between self-assessment and destination assessment) is set. Setting a relatively strict threshold, more than half the trips under study can be classified as self-congruity (Boksberger et al., 2011). Results from the analysis of a sample of vacationers in a vacation resort demonstrate that the tourist-destination personality similarity (TDPS) was a driver of perceived overall fit (POF), namely self-congruity, which in turn increased tourists' satisfaction and actual recommendations of the destination. People whose personalities matched those of the
holiday destination on the dimensions of sincerity and excitement reported higher levels of POF (Bekk et al., 2016). Brand-as-person may include other factors that are linked to a destination, such as, some study measuring the congruence between endorsers and potential tourists (Xu & Pratt, 2018), some measuring self-congruity with event image (Shin et al., 2018).

Aaker (1997) suggests that “one reason for the weak empirical support for self-congruity effects (both actual and ideal) is the focus on matching the personality between a brand and a consumer at the aggregate level (i.e., across all personality traits).” To improve the measurement effect of brand-as-person facet, the dimensions of destination personality should be prioritized according to their importance in explaining tourists’ perceptions and behavioural intentions (Pan et al., 2017).

In contrast to brand-as-user, brand-as-person considers a broader and more complicated collection of impressions that are connected to a destination in addition to the stereotypic brand tourist or tourist. The study's findings showed that the brand-as-user facet is more closely associated to a potential tourist's self-image (Wassler & Hung, 2015). The brand-as-user facet appears to have a higher level of congruence than brand-as-person, which may indicate that destinations are more complex than traditional products in terms of both tangible and intangible elements, as well as contextual factors, making it easier for their brands to be stereotyped. These stereotypes, however, are very contextual and not required to be related to tourism. Therefore, it is considered that it is difficult for (possible) tourists to identify with and match their self-image with destination’s brand-as-person (Wassler & Hung, 2015).

3.1 MEDIATORS FOR THE EFFECT OF SELF-CONGRUITY

Some scholars have studied the mediators between self-congruity and travel behaviour. Within the context of airline lounges, self-congruity was significantly associated with positive emotion. The mediation tests showed that self-congruity significantly affected customer satisfaction through positive emotion (Lee et al., 2017). In the Korean demilitarized zone (DMZ), self-congruity and perceived value both have a favourable impact on travel satisfaction, while self-congruity has a positive impact on perceived value (Kim & Thapa, 2018). In theme park settings, self-congruity has a positive influence on flow experience which in turn has a positive influence on attitude and brand loyalty (Fu et al., 2020; X. Fu et al., 2017). In an emotional destination like...
Korea's Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), self-congruity can lead to emotional solidarity toward others which in turn give rise to further changes in travel satisfaction or destination loyalty (Joo et al., 2020). Japutra et al.’s (2021) research results show that ideal self-congruity contributes to DBA (destination brand attachment) through DBS (destination brand stereotypes). According to a recent study conducted by Cifci (2022), the findings indicate that the influence of actual and ideal self-congruity on overall satisfaction and revisit intention among travellers to Bektashi faith destinations in Turkey is totally mediated by memorable tourism experiences.

3.2 OTHER RESEARCH THEMES

Other research themes include the influence of self-congruity on ambassadorial behaviour among residents to incoming tourists (Palmer et al., 2013; Segota et al., 2022; Wassler et al., 2019); stakeholder role (Shoukat et al., 2023); the influence of self-congruity on tourists’ environmentally responsible behaviour (Li et al., 2020; Rao et al., 2022); the application of self-congruity in destination positioning (Qu & Qu, 2015); self-congruity effects to personal quality-of-life and well-being (Sirgy, 2019; Song et al., 2022; Z. M. Zhou et al., 2022); social media (Luna-Cortes, 2021; Wang & Yan, 2022); the role of advertising (Segota, 2023); the interpretation of risk (Holland, 2023).

3.3 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study identifies four directions for future research. Firstly, destination personality measurements that are tailored to specific types of tourism destinations remain to be developed further. Because of the uniqueness of destination product consumption, dimensions of destination personality scale of one type could not be replicated in another. Development of context-specific destination personality scale is needed in order to better understand the destination personality perceptions of travellers. The development of destination personality measurements should consider not only tourists-related factors, but also tourism attraction-related factors. Because socio-demographic variables related to tourists such as race, ethnicity, or culture of specific regions might play critical roles in the formation of destination personality characteristic (Pan et al., 2017), and different type of tourism attraction may have some distinct dimensions of destination personality that count much in influencing tourists’ self-congruity and travel behaviour.
Secondly, the direct measurement method and indirect measurement method of self-congruity can be combined or compared in the research. Irrespective of its easy application, the theoretical and practical use of the direct method is limited, because it is a global perception of fit, which cannot be used directly to design marketing communication. Marketers do not know on what specific (personality) characteristics or image dimensions this overall perception of fit is based. Thus, when assessing POF or self-congruity, practitioners do not know what personality characteristics or image dimensions (and in what direction— increase vs. decrease) they need to change, in order to increase the fit perceptions of potential tourists. It would be useful for managers to get to know the dimension-specific drivers of POF or self-congruity, which they can alter through marketing. The indirect method can meet the requirements by measuring different dimension’s effect and importance. So, the combination or comparison of research methods is useful theoretically and practically.

Thirdly, the role of self-congruity and functional congruity in different tourism contexts with different moderators need to be studied further. As far as the applicability of self-congruity theory is concerned, although the applicability of self-congruity theory in the tourism field has been accepted by scholars, and the effect of self-congruity on tourist’s behaviour has also been basically confirmed by empirical research, there still exist a few research results being contradictory (Ahn et al., 2013). There also exist a few research results being inconsistent about the strength of self-congruity and functional congruity. In contrast to the literature that argues functional congruity more strongly influences consumer behaviour than self-congruity (Sirgy, 2014; Sop & Kozak, 2019), some research results showed that self-congruity exerts equal effect as functional congruity does or shows greater influence than functional congruity (B. B. Boley et al., 2022; Usakli et al., 2022; X. H. Wu & I. K. W. Lai, 2022; M. J. Zhou et al., 2022), some results indicated that the effect of functional congruity and self-congruity varies by traveling purpose (Su, 2017). About the biasing effect of self-congruity on functional congruity, there are also some research results at odds, such as, Hung & Petrick’s (2011) research showed the low percentage of variance in functional congruity explained by self-congruity (2.4%) in the context of cruise tourism, but Z. M. Zhou et al.’s (2022) study results demonstrated that self-congruity explains 21.6% variation of functional congruity in the context of red destination. The reason may lie in the different tourism context and moderators. So, the research into the role of self-congruity and functional congruity in
different tourism contexts with special moderators should be intensified in order to support and strengthen the positive effects of self-congruity on travel behaviour.

Fourthly, the theory of self-congruity continues to be applied more extensively, deepened, and improved. The research content has already presented a trend of continuous refinement, deepening, and diversification. Future research can expand into any aspect related to tourism destinations and tourism industry that is symbolic and can be associated with the four dimensions of self-congruity (actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, social self-congruity, and ideal social self-congruity). The subjects involved can be tourism stakeholders, such as local people, visitors, and entrepreneurs (Shoukat et al., 2023). More potential moderators and mediators and other related variables can be explored to deepen and improve the theory.

4 CONCLUSION

In this paper, a systematic literature review of tourism self-congruity studies was performed by using Histcite, based on 171 articles published from 1981 to 2023 that were retrieved from the Web of Science database. This study presents the core content of tourism self-congruity research and identifies the hotspot and development trends within tourism self-congruity research. Based on the results, further research directions are also identified in order to provide reference and inspiration for subsequent research in the future.

REFERENCES


