UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI

FAKULTETA ZA DRUŽBENE VEDE

Tina Šegota

# Vpliv oglaševanja in skladnosti samopodobe na izbiro turistične destinacije

# The influence of advertising and self-congruity on the tourism destination choice

Doktorska disertacija

Ljubljana, 2017

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*Tenacity is my main quality.*

*Impossible is not in my vocabulary.*

*Never will I give up on my dreams.*

*Always will I dream big.*

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# Povzetek

## Vpliv oglaševanja in skladnosti samopodobe na izbiro turistične destinacije

Doktorska disertacija obravnava relevantno in aktualno problematiko vloge oglaševanja turistične destinacije v procesu nakupnega odločanja turista, saj je ta kljub prepoznani pomembnosti pomanjkljivo raziskana. Mnogokrat je bila izražena potreba po raziskavah, ki bi bile zmožne teoretično in empirično povezati znanja iz področij marketinga in turizma za celovitejše razumevanje nakupnega odločanja turista in dejavnikov, ki nanj vplivajo in cilj te doktorske disertacije je zapolniti to vrzel. V ta namen disertacija medsebojno povezuje več teoretičnih konceptov iz področij marketinga in turizma, kar omogoča odgovore na nekatera ključna vprašanja, ki se zastavljajo v povezavi s procesom oblikovanja imidža turistične destinacije, s skladnostjo samopodobe potrošnika s turistično destinacijo ter z izbiro turistične destinacije. Natančneje, namen te študije je podati nova spoznanja o vplivu oglaševanja turistične destinacije na ustvarjanje imidža tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije in o vplivu le-tega na izbiro turistične destinacije ter na iskanje informacij o tej destinaciji.

V teoretičnem delu doktorske disertacije je določen teoretski okvir, ki pojasnjuje pomembnost raziskovanja vedenja turistov, ali širše, vedenja potrošnikov, s stališča potrošnika. Ker je proces nakupnega odločanja kompleksen pojav, lahko raziskovalno osredotočanje zgolj na preučevanje dejavnikov, ki nanj vplivajo, pripelje do zavajajočih rezultatov. Izjemno pomembno je, da se razlage reakcij potrošnika na zunanje in notranje vplivne dejavnike uskladijo s perspektivo potrošnika, ki je ključen element v procesu nakupnega odločanja. Teorija, ki omogoča takšno razlago, je teorija delovanja Maxa Webra. Skozi Webrovo lečo je potrošnikovo stališče tisto, ki je ključnega pomena za razumevanje potrošništva, saj se proces nakupnega odločanja razvije okoli načina, kako potrošniki pripisujejo subjektivni pomen objektu potrošnje (kako si potrošnik želi videti samega sebe v povezavi z objektom potrošnje) in kako potrošniki pripisujejo subjektivni pomen objektu potrošnje v navezavi na pomembne druge (kako si potrošnik želi, da ga drugi vidijo v povezavi z objektom potrošnje). Zavoljo strukturiranosti razlage o načinu in pogojih, pod katerimi se ljudje odločajo o izbiri turistične destinacije, so najprej obravnavana vprašanja o tem, kako si posamezniki želijo videti sami sebe v povezavi s turistično destinacijo ter, kako si posamezniki želijo, da bi jih drugi videli v povezavi s turistično destinacijo, na podlagi česar je nadalje operacionaliziran koncept vpletenosti v turizmu. Poglavje pregleda literature je nato razvito okoli štirih načinov vpletenosti in zato razdeljeno na štiri sklope. V prvem sklopu je poudarek na pojasnitvi pojma vpletenosti v turistični produkt, a se definicija opira na pomen dojemanja tržne znamke turistične destinacije pri potrošnikih, medtem ko je v drugem sklopu pojasnjen pojem vpletenosti v oglaševanje z vidika, kjer je več pozornosti namenjene značilnostim oglaševanja turistične destinacije in ustvarjanja imidža tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije. Tretji sklop je usmerjen na pojem vpletenosti ega, ki je pojasnjen skozi koncept skladnosti potrošnikove samopodobe z imidžem uporabnika turističnega produkta; tu je skladnost opredeljena kot ujemanje idealne samopodobe in idealne družbene samopodobe z imidžem tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije, kot ta izhaja iz oglaševanja. Na koncu, v četrtem sklopu, je vpletenost v nakupno odločitev opredeljena skozi potrošnikovo vedenje pri iskanju informacij o turistični destinaciji.

Na podlagi ugotovitev iz teorije je predpostavljena povezava med spremenljivkami, na osnovi katere je razvit tudi teoretičen model, ki stremi k pojasnjevanju vpliva medsebojne povezanosti treh pojmov vpletenosti (vpletenosti v turistični produkt, vpletenosti v

oglaševanje in vpletenosti ega), na izbiro turistične destinacije ter na vpletenost v nakupno odločitev. Na podlagi pregleda literature je oblikovana hipoteza, da bo oglaševanje turistične destinacije vplivalo na ujemanje samopodobe posameznika z imidžem turistične destinacije. Prejšnje študije so pokazale, da na razvoj skladnosti med posameznikom in turistično destinacijo vplivajo tako funkcionalni atributi destinacije, kot tudi stereotip tipičnega predstavnika obiskovalcev destinacije. Prva skladnost je v teoriji znana kot funkcionalna skladnost, druga pa kot skladnost jaza. Na podlagi ugotovitev teorije je postavljena hipoteza, da se imidž tipičnega obiskovalca oblikuje na dva načina: prvič, skozi t. i. funkcionalni oglas, oziroma oglas, ki prikazuje pokrajino turistične destinacije in, kjer se posledično zahteva od posameznika, da si sam ustvari predstavo o obiskovalcu destinacije ter drugič, skozi t. i. imidž oglas, oziroma oglas, v katerem je prikazan tipičen obiskovalec turistične destinacije. Naslednja je postavljena hipoteza, da bolj kot oglas prikazuje tipičnega obiskovalca turistične destinacije, večja bo skladnost med idealno in idealno družbeno samopodobo posameznika ter turistično destinacijo. Pregled literature je pokazal, da skladnost med posameznikom in tržno znamko turistične destinacije vpliva na nakupno vedenje turistov, zato je v teoretičnem modelu predpostavljeno, da tako funkcionalna skladnost kot tudi skladnost jaza, pozitivno vplivata na izbiro turistične destinacije. Sledi hipoteza, da funkcionalna skladnost veča potrebo po iskanju informacij o turistični destinaciji, medtem ko skladnost jaza zmanjšuje potrebo po iskanju informacij. Pregled literature kaže, da si znanstveni raziskovalci niso povsem enotni glede pristopa k merjenju funkcionalne skladnosti in skladnosti jaza; v literaturi se uporabljata dva različna pristopa, zato je v teoretičnem modelu predpostavljeno, da bosta pristopa k merjenju skladnosti jaza vodila do statistično različnih ugotovitev o vplivu skladnosti jaza na izbiro turistične destinacije v navezavi na oglaševanje destinacije. Veljavnost teoretičnega modela je bila testirana z empirično študijo.

Preizkus predpostavljenih povezav med spremenljivkami je razdeljen na kvalitativni in kvantitativni del. V tej študiji, eni prvih, ki poskuša oceniti vpliv oglaševanja na vedenje potrošnikov v turizmu z navezavo na skladnost jaza, je področje empirične študije omejeno in osredotočeno na določeno turistično ponudbo. Tako je v empirični raziskavi študije primera obravnavan hrvaški otok Pag in ciljna javnost so polnoletni Slovenci do 35. leta starosti. Turistična ponudba otoka Pag je zelo specifična, predvsem se navezuje na poletni turizem, ki vključuje veliko zabave za mlade, zato je izjemno priljubljen med mladimi Slovenci. Paško turistično ponudbo oglašuje mladinska turistična agencija Collegium Mondial Travel, zato je bil prvi korak v empirični raziskavi analiza vsebine oglaševalskih sporočil te agencije o otoku Pag. Rezultati so pokazali, da agencija Collegium oglašuje otok Pag skozi njegove funkcionalne lastnosti (npr. plažo, morje, kraje za zabavo, ipd.) in skozi tipične obiskovalce destinacije (npr. mlade, ki se zabavajo s prijatelji), zato je bilo mogoče kvantitativni del empirične študije razviti okoli dveh različnih oglasov turistične destinacije Pag. Podatki za kvantitativni del so bili pridobljeni s spletno anketo izvedeno v juniju in juliju leta 2015 ter v maju 2016 in končni realizirani vzorec vključuje 496 posameznikov starih med 18 in 35 let, živečih na območju Republike Slovenije. Analize so bile opravljene s programskim paketom za statistične analize, SPSS 20.0. Rezultati empirične raziskave so pokazali, da se idealna in družbena idealna samopodoba z ustvarjenim imidžem tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije iz oglasov statistično značilno ujemata pri skoraj 60 odstotkih anketirancev. Na drugi strani je ena tretjina anketirancev neposredno izrazila, da se njihova idealna in družbena idealna samopodoba ujema z imidžem tipičnega obiskovalca, kot je ta prikazan v oglasu. Navedeni rezultati prej omenjenih predpostavk o razvoju večje skladnosti idealne in družbene idealne samopodobe med potrošnikom in turistično destinacijo v primeru, ko oglas prikazuje tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije, niso potrdili. Rezultati regresijske analize so pokazali, da na izbiro turistične destinacije vpliva to, kako si posamezniki želijo videti sami sebe in, kako

želijo, da jih vidijo drugi, ne glede na to, ali oglas prikazuje tipičnega obiskovalca ali ne. Izsledki raziskave so potrdili, da se tveganje za napačno izbiro turistične destinacije zmanjša, če se tipičen obiskovalec destinacije ujema z idealno in družbeno idealno samopodobo posameznika, na drugi strani pa je analiza pokazala, da ni mogoče z gotovostjo trditi, da medsebojna povezava oglaševanja turistične destinacije in skladnosti jaza vpliva na iskanje informacij o destinaciji. Hipoteze o vplivu spremenljivk so bile potrjene za en meritveni pristop skladnosti jaza, a ne tudi za drugega, kljub temu pa je regresijska analiza pokazala, da se bodo posamezniki podali v iskanje dodatnih informacij o turistični destinaciji, če menijo, da funkcionalni atributi turistične destinacije ustrezajo načinu, kako si želijo videti same sebe v preživljanju počitnic ali temu, kako si želijo, da jih vidijo drugi. Zadnja hipoteza te študije se nanaša na veljavnost dveh meritvenih pristopov skladnosti jaza v povezavi z oglaševanjem turistične destinacije in rezultati so pokazali obstoj statistično značilnih razlik v dveh meritvenih pristopih. Natančneje, izkazalo se je, da ima neposredno merjenje skladnosti jaza večjo napovedno moč v izbiri turistične destinacije kot posredno merjenje, ki sloni na matematičnih izračunih skladnosti.

V teoretičnem in empiričnem delu doktorske disertacije je obravnavanih nekaj zelo pomembnih vprašanj, ki so bila zaznana kot vrzeli v literaturi vedenja potrošnikov v turizmu. Prvič, ta raziskava poudarja, da je proces nakupnega odločanja nujno potrebno razumeti z vidika potrošnika, predvsem na način, kako potrošnik pripisuje subjektivne pomene procesu odločanja ter njegovim notranjim in zunanjim dejavnikom vpliva. V doktorski disertaciji je Webrova teorija delovanja predlagana kot primerna za poglobljeno raziskovanje vpliva notranjih in zunanjih dejavnikov na vedenje potrošnikov, tako v marketingu kot v turizmu. Drugič, v disertaciji je operacionaliziran koncept vpletenosti v kontekstu turizma in v ta namen je teoretski okvir za vsakega izmed štirih načinov vpletenosti ponujen ter testiran v povezavi z vedenjem potrošnika v turizmu. Tretjič, empirično testiranje predpostavljenih povezav je pokazalo, da oglaševanje turistične destinacije vpliva na način, kako ljudje oblikujejo mnenje o tipičnem obiskovalcu destinacije. Skoraj 60 odstotkov skladnosti idealne in družbene idealne samopodobe posameznika s turistično destinacijo govori o pomembnosti prenosa znanja med raziskovalnimi področji oglaševanja in skladnosti jaza v marketing in turizem. Oglaševanje je v večini sodobnih študij skladnosti jaza zanemarjeno, tako na področju marketinga kot turizma, hkrati pa te iste študije zanemarjajo tudi vlogo oglaševanja v nakupnem odločanju turistov. Raziskava doktorske disertacije pomembno prispeva k razsvetlitvi vloge oglaševanja turistične destinacije v nakupnem odločanju turistov in ugotovitve disertacije so pomembne za prakso, saj pokažejo, da je z vidika uspešnega oglaševanja turistične destinacije vitalnega pomena, da se skladnost samopodobe jaza in turistične destinacije jemlje kot ključen element odločanja potrošnika. Disertacija ponuja odgovore na to, kako se lahko z ustreznim prikazom funkcionalnih atributov turistične destinacije in podob tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije v vizualnih elementih oglasov okrepi vključitev potrošnikov v obljubo oglasnega sporočila.

**Ključne besede**: proces nakupnega odločanja, vpletenost potrošnika, oglaševanje turistične destinacije, izbira turistične destinacije, iskanje informacij, skladnost jaza.

# Abstract

**The influence of advertising and self-congruity on the tourism destination choice**

This dissertation deals with the relevant and current topic of the role of destination advertising in the decision-making process in tourism. Although previous studies recognize that the advertising has a significant role in a tourist's decision making, the phenomenon is insufficiently explored. Numerous scholars have expressed the need for studies capable of bridging, theoretically and empirically, the knowledge in marketing and tourism in order to provide a more holistic understanding of tourist behaviour and the factors that influence it. The goal of this doctoral dissertation is to fill this gap by interrelating several theoretical frameworks formed by tourism and marketing scholars to answer some significant questions concerning destination image forming processes, self-congruity, and destination choice. More specifically, this study intends to give new insights into how destination advertising influences the development of user imagery, and explain how that user imagery influences tourism destination choice and information search.

The theoretical part of this doctoral dissertation sets the frame in which it is defined why it is important to study tourism-related behaviour, or any consumer behaviour, from the standpoint of the consumer. As the decision-making process is a complex phenomenon, over-focusing on examining which factors influence decision-making can be deceiving. To explain consumer's reactions to the external and internal factors, this study suggests a realignment of the perspectives regarding the role of the consumer in the decision-making process in the context of Weber's theory of action. Through the Weberian lens, the actor's viewpoint is what is crucial in staying unique to the consumption – the decision-making process evolves around how one attaches meaning to the object of consumption (how I would like to see myself in reference to the object of consumption), and how one attaches subjective meaning to the object of consumption with regard to others (how I would like for others to see me in reference to the object of consumption). To explain in what ways and under which conditions people decide on a tourism destination, we further build upon the questions of how individuals would like to see themselves, and how individuals would like for the others to see them in reference to the object of tourist consumption. With this in mind, we operationalise the concept of involvement in the context of tourism. The chapter further evolves around four types of involvement. Firstly, product involvement is defined with reference to the perceptions of a tourism destination brand in the mind of a consumer. Second, advertising involvement was operationalised through destination advertising, more particularly with the reference to user imagery. Thirdly, ego involvement was operationalised through the concept of self-congruity – a degree of matching how one would like to see himself and would like to be seen by others in reference to destination advertising user imagery. Lastly, purchase-decision involvement was conceptualised as the information search behaviour.

Drawing from this evidence, we proposed a theoretical model that explains how tourism destination choice and purchase-decision involvement are influenced by the interrelatedness of product involvement, advertising involvement, and ego involvement. Based on the literature review, we proposed that destination advertising will significantly influence how individuals construct congruity with the tourism destination. Previous studies have established that both functional destination attributes and a typical representative of destination visitor influence the construing of congruity. The former is known as functional congruity, whilst the latter is known as self-congruity. Drawing from the relevant theoretical background, we

propose that user imagery is formed through a functional ad which portrays a tourism destination landscape and requests an individual to envision a typical destination visitor based on the functional destination attributes, and through an image ad, which portrays the ideal destination visitor. Moreover, we hypothesised that the more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater the congruity is between a tourist's ideal and social ideal self-image and the destination. A literature review of the tourist-destination congruity shows that congruity influences a tourist's destination choice and information search. Therefore, we hypothesise that both functional congruity and self-congruity will positively influence destination choice. In contrast, we hypothesise that functional congruity will increase the information search, whilst self-congruity will decrease the information search. The literature review also showed that researchers are now unanimous in their approach to the measurement of congruity. The literature review suggested two measurement approaches that are very distinct in how they operationalise congruity between the object of consumption and an individual. Therefore, we hypothesise that there would be significant differences in how self-congruity measurements, in relation to destination advertising, predict destination choice. This model was tested with empirical research.

We conducted both qualitative and quantitative research. It was recognised that this study is the first to evaluate the effect of advertising on tourism-related behaviour with reference to self-congruity, which is why we decided to narrow the research scope and focus on a specific tourism product. Therefore, it was decided to focus on the Croatian island of Pag, and its target audience comprising of Slovenians aged 18 to 35. The tourism product of Pag island is very specific – sun and beach tourism accompanied with the entertainment for young people. The island is very popular among young Slovenians and its tourism product is being advertised by the youth tourism agency Collegium Mondial Travel. With this in mind, a first step in the study was to content analyse Collegium's advertising messages about Pag. The results revealed that the Collegium is advertising Pag predominately through its functional attributes (e.g. beach, blue sea, entertainment places, etc.), and the ideal tourists (e.g. young people having fun with friends). These results enabled us to further incorporate two distinctive ads into quantitative research. The data was gathered with an online survey in June and July 2015, and in May 2016. The final realised sample contains 496 Slovenians aged from 18 to 35. Data analyses were executed using statistical software programme SPSS 20.0. The results of the study indicate that almost 60% of all respondents developed a match between how they would like to see themselves and how they would like others to see them based on the user imagery from the ads when congruency was computed using mathematical indices. Conversely, the results showed that only one third of respondents developed congruency with the ads when study participants had to evaluate user imagery directly from the ad. Results of the significance tests did not support our hypotheses that congruency with the destination advertising would be greater if the ad portrays ideal destination visitors, as compared to when respondents have to envision a typical destination visitor based on functional destination attributes. The results of the regression analysis from this study suggest that tourism destination choice is influenced by how individuals would like to see themselves or how they would like to be seen by others in relation to how they evaluate a typical destination visitor when one is included in the advertising and when one is not. It was demonstrated that the risk of one making the wrong destination choice diminishes when an ideal destination visitor portrayed in the ad matches one's ideal and social ideal self. Yet, research on how an informational search is influenced by the interrelatedness of destination advertising and self-congruity provided ambiguous results. The hypotheses on the examined relationship were supported for one measurement approach to self-congruity, but were not supported for the other approach. Nonetheless, regression analysis showed that if people feel that functional

destination attributes represent the way they would like to see themselves as spending their summer vacations or the way they would like others to see them, the more likely it is that they would search for more information about that tourism destination. Lastly, in this study we were interested in the predictive validity of two congruity measurements in relation to destination advertising. This study also confirmed significant differences in the congruity measurement approaches with reference to destination advertising. Specifically, it was suggested that the direct measurement of self-congruity has greater predictive power of tourism destination choice over the gap-scoring formula.

The findings of the theoretical and empirical parts of this paper address some very relevant gaps in the literature on consumer behaviour in tourism. Firstly, this study emphasises that the decision-making process needs to be understood from the standpoint of the consumer him/herself. In that way, the decision-making process and its internal and external factors need to be understood in relation to how one ascribes subjective meanings to them. The study suggests that by applying Weber's theory of action, both tourism and marketing researchers will be able to dwell deeper into analysing why and when intrinsic or extrinsic influencers can be successful in affecting consumer behaviour. Secondly, this study operationalised the concept of involvement in the context of tourism. It provided a theoretical framework for each of the four types of involvement and tested them in relation to tourism-related behaviour. Thirdly, the study showed that destination advertising influences how people create tourism destination user imagery. Results of up to a 60% match between destination advertising and how individuals would like to see themselves, or how they would like to be seen by others are perceived as very important for inclusion of the theory of advertising in future studies on self-congruity. Up to this point, advertising was predominately neglected within the theory of self-congruity, in both marketing and tourism literature. Moreover, the existing research has not placed much attention on the role of advertising in tourism-related behaviour. The study contributes to the latter by exploring the role of destination advertising in tourism destination choice and information search. In addition to the theoretical contributions, this study also has practical implications. The doctoral dissertation shows that tourist-destination congruity should be considered very seriously for successful destination advertising. This dissertation suggests that marketing managers include functional destination attributes, as well as a typical representative of destination visitors in visual advertising messages to further engage viewers in the promise of an advertising message.

**Key words**: decision-making process, consumer involvement, destination advertising, destination choice, information search, self-congruity.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

11

# LIST OF FIGURES

# LIST OF TABLES

14

15

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Decision-making in tourism is a complex process that evolves around experiences and emotions, and is psychological in nature. Research on the process of decision-making in tourism has its origins in consumer behaviour studies from 1950s (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005), and has traditionally been linked to the perception of tourists being rational decision-makers who collect and analyse information in order to maximise the utility of their actions prior to making decisions. Although research on decision-making has been predominately interested in understanding an individual's choices in relation to *who-what-when-where-why* (Hsu *et al.* 2009, 288), the consumers, and consequently the tourists, were treated as a sort of a black box, influenced by numerous internal and external factors (Smallman and Moore 2010). With this in mind, many authors focused on examining these factors, and hence were alienated from the consumer's point of view on whether these factors are of any significance to a consumer. The consumer was perceived as a *persona non grata*, instead of being at the core of the decision-making process. At this moment, there is a general consensus that decision making is a non-linear (Middleton 1994; Engel *et al.* 1995), multi-phase process, which extends to a minimum of five phases: need recognition, information search, an evaluation of alternatives, a purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour (Ule and Kline 1996; Solomon *et al.* 1999; Kotler and Keller 2006). However, tourist purchasing behaviour "differs from that of the rational and ordinary purchasing behaviour," since it happens at an unordinary time, under different conditions, and because destinations represent "a unique environment and stimulation apart from those ordinary shopping settings" (Oh *et al.* 2004, 309). The place itself is a very important element of the decision-making process (Mathieson and Wall 1982) because it does not only represent a place where the tourist consumption happens, but it is the object of consumption *per se* (Jančič 1999; Urry and Larsen 2001; Urry 2002; Bærenholdt *et al.* 2004; Oh *et al.* 2004). Even though the literature provided a better understanding of tourist behaviour over recent decades, numerous researchers still acknowledge that there are certain gaps that need to be addressed (Sirgy and Su 2000; Zaltman 2003; Wang and Wallendorf 2006; Blichfeldt 2007; Zhang and Bloemer 2008; Hsu and Li 2010).

While there are numerous studies on the impact of different external and internal factors on tourist decision-making before travel, some of the most significant focused on assessing the influence of destination image (Beerli and Martín 2004), congruency (Sirgy 1982; Sirgy and Su 2000), motivation (Tapachai and Waryszak 2000; Hsu and Li 2010), and involvement and information search (Fodness and Murray 1999; Cai *et al.* 2004; Kantanen and Tikkanen 2006; Hsu and Li 2010; Carneiro and Crompton 2010). The prevailing theoretical framework of the research on destination choice is the theory of rational consumer choice (Howard and Sheth 1969; Markin and Narayana 1975; Bettman 1979; Engel *et al.* 1995). The framework suggests that tourists will be highly motivated to choose 'the one' destination for which reason they would embark on an extensive information search, and thus become highly involved in the process of decision-making (Clarke and Belk 1978; Belk 1982; Zaichowsky 1986; Mittal 1989). During their information search, tourists are very likely to be influenced by advertising. Destination advertising, especially if its message is delivered visually, has greater power in addressing consumers and raising awareness about a tourism destination (Meenaghan 1995). Moreover, destination advertising has the ability to provide information to consumers about the type of person who visits the destination, and the way a tourism destination is supposed to be consumed (Siegel and Ziff-Levine 1990; Sirgy and Su 2000; Keller 2003). Percy and Elliot (2009, 296) explained that visual advertising messages have the ability to establish a relationship between a viewer and an image by enabling a viewer to imagine himself or herself "as either part of what is shown in the picture, or outside observing what is there." Many authors (Bilim and Yüksel 2008; Park and John 2012) accept the suggestion that using appealing images help in making a tourism destination more appealing to the viewer, but they also agree that there is more to be discovered about the influence of visual elements of destination advertising messages on the destination selection process (Jenkins 2003; Bilim and Yüksel 2008). Yet, the role of advertising in tourist consumption has not gained much attention among academic researchers. Even more so, researchers very often drew marketing implications from their research, but very rarely have provided empirical evidence on the topic (Hung and Petrick 2011).

The existing research on decision-making in tourism showed that destination choice is also influenced by individual's motivation and personal traits, which impact the way he or she processes information received by external sources (Sirgy and Su 2000; Percy and Elliott 2009; Ule 2011). Self-congruity was suggested to be among the intrinsic factors that evolve

from personality traits. The concept of self-congruity suggests that consumer behaviour is influenced by the degree of matching various dimensions of one's self to a typical user of the object of consumption (Sirgy 1985). In the context of tourism, self-congruity relies upon the elicitation of assessments of how congruent one's self is with the image of a typical destination visitor (Sirgy *et al.* 1997; Hung and Petrick 2011; Sirgy 2014). The studies on self-congruity provided evidence on tourism-related behaviour based on how study participants envisioned a typical destination visitor (Hung and Petrick 2011; Sirgy 2014). However, a typical destination visitor as envisioned by study participants is only part of user imagery (Kamin 2013). Phau and Lau (2000) acknowledge that user imagery includes the typical user, which represents consumers who use the brand, and the idealised user, who is portrayed in advertising. With this in mind, it is suggested that the studies have deviated from the research on destination advertising, since how destination advertising messages affected the user imagery development was fairly neglected. Moreover, it's as if research on the relationship between one's self-image and the image of a typical destination visitor has been isolated from the influence of advertising and other marketing communication tools (Sirgy and Su 2000; Hung and Petrick 2011). Yet, the role of advertising in creating user imagery, and consequently influencing destination choice and information search, has gained little attention in tourism and marketing research fields (Sirgy and Su 2000, Bilim and Yüksel 2008).

Although the idea that advertising influences self-congruity is not new (Johar and Sirgy 1991; Sirgy and Su 2000; Bilim and Yüksel 2008; Hung and Petrick 2011), this dissertation explores the understanding of how the interrelatedness of tourism product, destination advertising, and self-user imagery congruity influences tourism-related behaviour. In the context of examining destination choice and information search, we understand that the decision-makers are influenced by advertising, and that they match their self to the tourism destinations based on visual advertising messages. Moreover, decision-makers have the ability to envision a typical destination visitor based on destination attributes, or they simply evaluate the typical destination visitor portrayed in the advertising. Also, it is based on these two user imagery types that they match their self to the tourism destination, and they either choose it or search for more information. We understand congruity as a psychological process, which is influenced by destination advertising, and not isolated from it (Sirgy and Su 2000; Hung and Petrick 2011). Existing self-congruity studies do not provide any reference to

the role of destination advertising in self-user imagery congruence, nor is there an understanding of how advertising of destination attributes helps to develop user imagery. In this paper, we will try to address these questions. Moreover, we will be guided by the following research questions: **1) How do individuals construct congruity with the tourism destination in relation to the destination advertising; 2) How does this congruity influence tourism destination choice and information search; and 3) Will these results be different for the two congruity measurement approaches?**

## 1.2    SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

The significance of this study is in expanding the literature on decision-making in tourism, as well as adding theoretical and practical implications for the research on self-congruity and destination advertising. The literature suggests that decision-making in tourism is influenced by numerous factors, among which some of the most important are destination image and destination brand personality (Batra *et al.* 1993; Plummer 2000), and user imagery and destination advertising (Johar and Sirgy 1991; McWilliams and Crompton 1997; Brezovec 2007; Percy and Elliott 2009; Ule 2011). Ekinci and Hosany (2006) observe that most research on the topic has been carried out in the post-consumption behaviour stage, when the consumer was already acquainted with the tourism destination that was of study interest. On the other hand, Hung and Petrick (2012) observe that the effect of destination advertising was fairly neglected. This dissertation aims at providing a theoretical/empirical framework for understanding tourism destination choice through the interrelatedness of some of the key factors that influence decision-making in tourism – tourism product, destination advertising, and self-congruity. Furthermore, it aims at complementing the self-congruity research by emphasising that the influence of destination advertising or other marketing communication tools are important for understanding tourism destination choice. Existing research has been mostly concerned with the influence of destination brand personality and destination image on the intention to recommend or visit a tourism destination. However, tourism destination choice was rarely examined with the reference to destination image as rendered through advertising messages (Jenkins 2003; Bilim and Yüksel 2008). The goal of this research is to complement previous research on self-congruity by not only looking at differences in establishing a match between a tourism destination and a tourist when the latter is exposed to the visual advertising messages, but also by evaluating which of the two congruity measurement approaches (i.e., the gap-scoring formula or the direct measurement) had greater

power in predicting tourism destination choice. The development and consequential testing of predictive validity of the visual advertising messages could provide researchers with better understanding of the role of advertising within the relationship between a tourism destination and a tourist.

This dissertation also aims at providing practical implications for destination marketing managers, more particularly to advertisers. The empirical results could be used as a framework to guide destination marketing strategies. In today's competitive tourism market, effective positioning and differentiation of destinations is much needed and appreciated. Understanding the role of visual advertising messages in the decision-making process in tourism could guide tourism managers towards more effective marketing communication with their target audience. Moreover, further research on the understanding of how tourists perceive that the advertised tourism destination resembles their next vacation opens the door to more effective advertising.

## 1.3    OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

In the first part of the doctoral dissertation, we set the theoretical frame in which we define the importance of studying tourism-related behaviour from the standpoint of consumers. Firstly, we provide the literature review on decision-making models in tourism to highlight the general gaps of the models. We suggest realigning the perspective from the influencing factors to the role of the consumer by introducing Weber's theory of action. To explain in which ways and under which conditions people decide on tourism destinations, we further build upon the questions of how individuals would like to see themselves and how individuals would like for others to see them in reference to the object of tourist consumption. With this in mind, we operationalised the concept of involvement in the context of tourism. The chapter further focuses on four types of involvement: (1) product involvement, defined with reference to the perceptions of a tourism destination brand in the mind of a consumer; (2) advertising involvement, operationalised through destination advertising, more particularly with the reference to the user imagery; (3) ego involvement, operationalised through the concept of self-congruity; and (4) purchase-decision involvement, conceptualised as the information search behaviour. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology in terms of research framework and research design, as well as how we developed the measurement instrument. Hence, we describe the process of content analysis of the study site, since the results helped us in

completing the measurement instrument. Chapter 4 describes the primary data analysis, with the results that follow accordingly. The last chapter discusses the results and concludes with theoretical and practical implications, the limitation of the study, and future research recommendations.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1    INTRODUCTION

The overall purpose of this literature review is to demonstrate the linkages between the research on tourism destination image, advertising, self-congruity, and tourist information search. The concept of involvement was introduced as an umbrella framework linking aforementioned concepts in relation to tourism destination choice. Hence, the existing research gaps will be highlighted, from which research questions and hypotheses will be generated.

The first section starts with a general overview of the tourist decision-making research. It discusses the evolution of decision-making models: it stretches from the perceptions of a tourist as a rational decision-maker to perceptions of a tourist as an unconscious consumer. What follows is a discussion on the theory of (social) action, which introduces the theoretical framework for the subject-centred perspective taken in this study to understand tourism destination choice. Thus, the theory of (social) action prefaces the introduction of the concept of involvement, which is defined as "a state of motivation, arousal, or interest/which/exists in a process. It is driven by current external variables (the situation, the product, and the communications) and past internal variables (enduring ego, central values). Its consequents are types of searching, processing and decision making" (Rothschild 1984). The external and internal variables mentioned by Rothschild (1984) are considered as drivers of different types of involvement: product involvement, advertising involvement, ego involvement, and purchase-decision involvement. These four types of involvement also represent the upcoming literature sections and their focuses.

The second section focuses on product involvement and the role a tourism destination plays. The main purpose of this section is to review the relevant literature surrounding the concepts of destination image and destination band personality, and to highlight the role of various agents in destination image formation process. The third section focuses on the advertising involvement, and aims to describe the advertising communication process and highlight the importance of a picture in a tourist's decision-making process. The fourth section is built around the concept of self-congruity to discuss the influence of ego involvement on a tourism destination choice. The fifth section builds on the concept of purchase-decision involvement.

The latter is described through the information search behaviour of a tourist, and is rather perceived as an outcome of involvement rather than its driver. In the concluding section, the research gaps have been discussed and the conceptual model for addressing these gaps has been introduced. In Figure 2.1 we provide a visual representation of the literature review and research questions that will be addressed in this study.

Figure 2.1: Overview of literature review and research questions
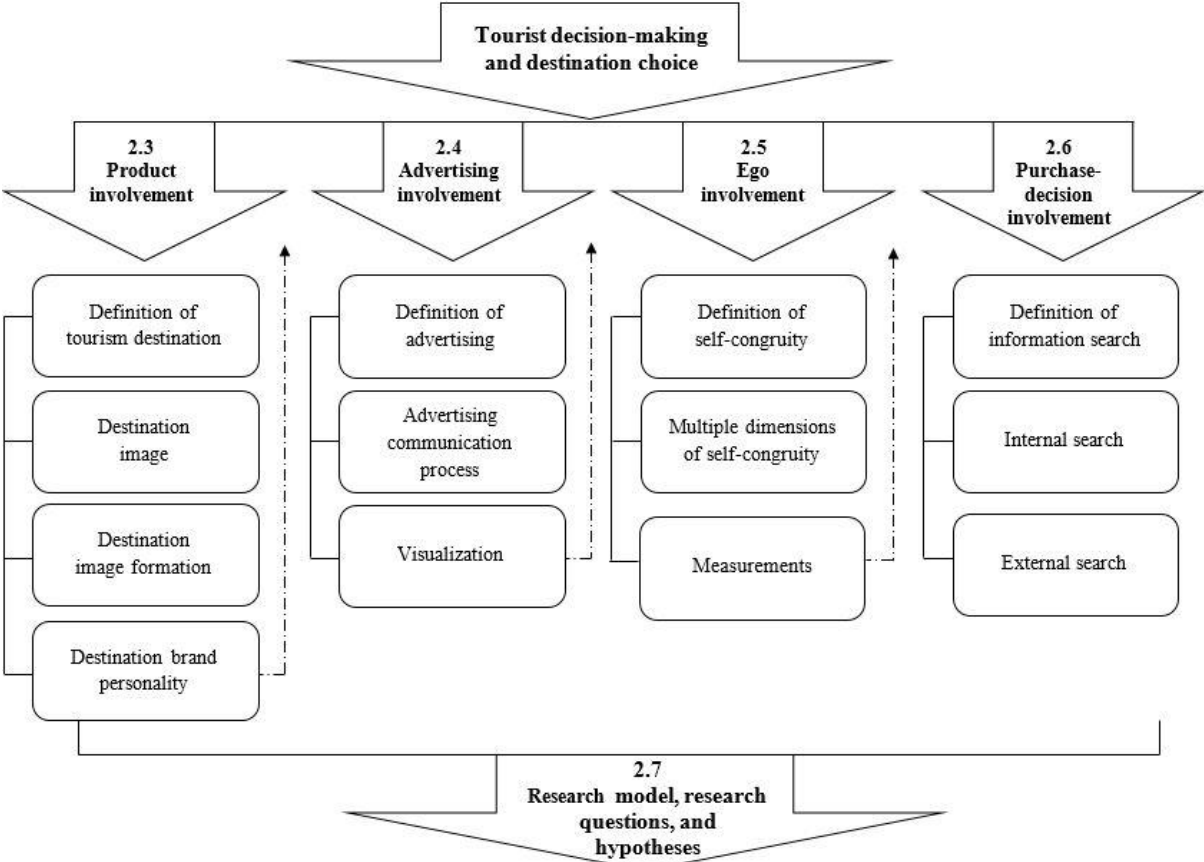


*RQ1: How do individuals construct congruity with the tourism destination in relation to an image ad and a functional ad?*

*RQ2: How is the tourist behaviour (destination choice and information search) affected by the construing of congruity with a tourism destination in relation to the image ad and the functional ad?*

*RQ3: How different are the self-congruity measurements predicting tourist behaviour in relation to the image ad and the functional ad?*

## 2.2 TOURIST DECISION-MAKING AND DESTINATION CHOICE

Research on tourist decision-making is fundamental to tourism and marketing literature (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005). The importance of understanding one's decision-making is evidenced in Olshavsky and Granbois's (1979, 93) notion that "virtually every text on consumer behaviour includes a verbal or flow chart model of the consumer decision process." Sirakaya and Woodside (2005, 830) note that "decision-making is complex and recognised only recently as often being an unconscious process, /and thus/ decision-making researchers face the difficult task of measuring and understanding a process that is unobservable and for which consumers are only partially aware." This has been further exemplified by Carroll and Johnson (1990, 19), who added that "if decision-making was easy to understand (or easy to do), there would be no need for such elaborate research efforts."

Research on tourist decision-making also holds an important place within the literature on destination image and advertising, since Sirakaya and Woodside (2005, 815) believe that "understanding the complexities and interrelationships among these variables /tourist decision-making, destination image, and advertising/ is an important research agenda." That is, in tourism, a consumer is the most involved in the information search for choices around his/her purchase compared to other industries (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005; Decrop 2010), since "no-one knows how good their holiday is going to be until they experience it" (Smallman and Moore 2010, 399). Moreover, Smallman and Moore (2010, 399) believe that tourist decision-making is "occurring continuously from prior to deciding where to go, through to what are we going to do now we're here and beyond." And here is the key moment for advertising: its main role is to communicate destination image as efficiently as possible in order to reduce high risks tourists often attach to the intangibility, variability, and perishability of tourism destinations (Kotler and Gertner 2002).

### 2.2.1  An overview of tourist decision-making research

The early academic research on tourist decision-making can be traced back to the 1970s and Wahab *et al.*'s (1976) comprehensive model of decision-making in tourism. Wahab *et al.*'s (1976) model considers tourists as rational decision-makers, aiming of maximising the utility of the decision. This pioneering research initiated a line of thought that tourism products and services are different from other products and that tourist decision-making is related to extensive problem-solving and planning in order to reduce the high risks associated with

tourism products and services (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005; Decrop 2006). Subsequently, tourist decision-making gained popularity in 1980s and 1990s with many studies examining tourist decision-making process and the influence of numerous external and internal factors leading to a destination choice. In Table 2.1, we present with the key prepositions of tourist decision-making models.

Table 2.1: Summary of key propositions of decision-making models in tourism

| Study | Key preposition(s) on a consumer | Key proposition(s) on a decision-making process | Major contribution(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wahab *et al.* (1976) | Tourist is a *Homo Economicus*: a rational decision-maker. One's aim is to maximise the utility by assessing the costs and benefits of one's actions before committing oneself to a purchase. | Tourism products and services are different from other products. They have some unique elements, such as destination image, spontaneity of purchase decision, influence of risk and uncertainty, and influences family and friends. Tourism purchase decisions are risky, they require an extensive problem-solving and advanced planning. | Unique aspects of tourism products and services are recognised. Theories from psychology and economy are integrated into one comprehensive model. |
| Schmoll (1977) | Tourist is a rational decision-maker. But decisions are made within his/her capabilities and with limited information. | Tourism purchase decisions are affected by travel stimuli, personal determinants, social determinants, and exogenous variables. The decision-making process involves several successive steps. | Influence of constraints in tourism decisions is recognised. The model explicitly specifies the relationships between various components, more particularly it demonstrates which factors influence destination choice. |
| Mayo and Jarvis (1981) | Tourist has different decision-making styles: a routine, an impulsive decision making, or an extensive elaboration of choices. Social groups and family have a major influence in destination choice. | Tourism purchase decisions are dynamic and are prone to change according to circumstances. The decision-making process is a function of travel opportunities, communication effort, customer goals, and intervening variables. The process can be mapped and traced through successive stages. | Attention was brought to the role of constraints in tourism purchase decisions. The latter is influenced by numerous social and psychological factors. |
| Mathieson and Wall (1982) | Tourists are rational decision-makers, who | The tourist decision-making process consists of various | The model recognises unique features of a |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | wishe to maximise their utility.<br>A tourist does not consider travel distance as a cost, because one might enjoy the travel part. | stages: need or desire formation/recognition, information search, travel and tourism related decisions, travel preparations, tourism experience, and evaluation of the whole trip. | tourism product and the importance of destination characteristics on image formation and the subsequent decision-making process. |
| van Raaij and Francken (1984) | Tourists are influenced by social groups: the focus is on joint decision processes and the influence of household-related variables (such as lifestyle, power structure, role, decision-making style) on individual-related factors (attitude, aspirations, etc.). | Decision-making is a sequential activity, which is influenced by involvement and memories. Post-purchase evaluations play an important role in subsequent decisions.<br>A tourist's decision-making process is based on joint decision-making. | The model proposes a reflexive loop: the importance of post-purchase evaluation on decision-making styles later. It also recognises the outcome's role in influencing the personality of the consumer for the next decision.<br>The model places an explicit attention on the interaction of household-related variables. |
| Moutinho (1987) | Tourist is under the influence of different social groups, such as family, reference groups, social classes, culture, and subculture. He/she buys tourism products and services in sequences, and not always as a tour package. | Tourism purchase decisions are far more affected by external forces.<br>Destination choice is a compulsory subdecision among other tourism-related decisions.<br>Post-purchase evaluations have an impact on subsequent purchase behaviours. | The model identifies temporal order of variables that affect the purchase behaviour and includes cognitive distance as an important factor in the decision-making process. The model proposes a reflexive loop (similar to van Raaij and Francken 1984): the role of an outcome in consumer behaviour for the next decision. |
| Woodside and Lysonski (1989) | Tourists are influenced by cognitive and emotional factors, such as affective associations, traveller destination preferences, situational variables, and their place of impact. A choice set consists of three to five choices.<br>A tourist's choice is affected by the interaction of intention to visit and situational variables. | Destination choice is a result of a categorisation process.<br>Awareness of a tourism product will transfer the same from long-term memory to working memory causing that product to be chosen over other possible products. | The model focused on how cognitive and emotional factors influence the final destination choice. The model included the variables that were overlooked by previous models. |

| Um and Crompton (1990) | A tourist's attitudes play an important role in destination decision processes. | Interaction between constraints and image are integral for destination choice decisions. Potential tourist's awareness sets and evoked sets were identified longitudinally. | The model is very simplistic and it operationalises the dependent variable. The model proposes a funnelling effect, where destination choice sets narrow down over time (similar to Woodside and Lysonski 1989). |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ajzen and Driver (1992) | Tourist behaviour is the function of intentions and perceived behavioural control over the behaviour. Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence the behaviour and are formed with the influence of attitude toward behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. | Tourism purchase decisions are considered a part of a general human behaviour theory that involves both cognitive and affective components. | The model successfully applied the theory of planned behaviour to leisure situations. The model expanded the theory of planned behaviour and added to specific factors in leisure situations: (1) the role of involvement, and (2) the role of mood and affect. |
| Woodside and MacDonald (1994) | Tourists are not always rational in their decisions. They may be under the influence of other members of travel. | Destination choice is one of many travel-related decisions one has to make. | The model recognises individual decision-making styles. The role of the travel party is important in understanding the tourist decision-making process. |

Source: Modified from Sirakaya and Woodside (2005, 818–821).

The above table indicates two research stages of tourist decision-making process. The models from the early stage of research on tourist decision-making originate from the so-called 'Grand Models' of consumer behaviour proposed by Nicosia (1966), Engel *et al.* (1968), and Howard and Sheth (1969) (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005; Decrop 2006, 2010; Smallman and Moore 2010). Moreover, they rely on what is known as the classical concept of everyday decision-making: an individual makes an optimal solution for his/her desired objective by collecting and analysing information which help him/her to evaluate advantages and disadvantages of each possible decision outcome (Smallman and Moore 2010). In this sense, a tourist is a *Homo Economicus* that strives to maximise the utility of his/her actions prior to making a decision. Therefore, the rationality of tourist's decisions has been derived from the

models of consumer behaviour, which have been initially developed to explain decisions related to tangible and manufactured objects and products, but were not developed to explain tourism-related purchase decisions (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005).

The second stage of research evolved around tourist decision-making models that were influenced by the bounded rationality theory proposed by Simon, and Simon and March in the mid-1950s. The proposed theory introduced a perspective of individuals as non-optimal decision-makers, but rather satisfactory decision-makers due to time constraints, cognitive capacity, and incomplete information. This initiated a discussion among numerous researchers (Mayo and Jarvis 1981; Mathieson and Wall 1982; Woodside and Lysonski 1989; Um and Crompton 1990) about the constraints of an individual in his or her purchase decisions. This gradually led towards recent acknowledgement of decision-making process as a complex and, very often, an unconscious process, where conscious and unconscious cognitive processes intersect in a line of thought or decision (Woodside and MacDonald 1994; Zaltman 2003).

In addition to discussing the nature of tourist decision-making, the authors also focused on examining and defining the stages of the process itself, and decision-making styles. There is a general consensus that decision-making is a multi-phase process (Ule and Kline 1996; Solomon *et al.* 1999; Kotler and Keller 2006), and that consumers differ in their approaches to making choices (Sprotles 1985; Sprotles and Kendall 1986; Sharma and Levy 1995; Walsh *et al.* 2001; Gursoy and Gavcar 2003; Wang *et al.* 2004; Huang *et al.* 2014). Firstly, as a multi-phase process, decision-making encompasses: (a) recognition to make a decision, (b) formulation of goals and objectives, (c) information search, (d) evaluation of alternatives, (e) acting upon the decision, and (f) providing feedback for the next decision (Engel *et al.* 1986; Carroll and Johnson 1990; Ule and Kline 1996; Solomon *et al.* 1999; Sirakaya and Woodside 2005; Kotler and Keller 2006). Secondly, decision-making is not considered to be linear, but it's a rather complex process comprising multiple evaluations of an alternative set of objects and an information search for the properties of these alternatives prior to making the ultimate decision (Ule and Kline 1996; Solomon *et al.* 1999; Sirakaya and Woodside 2005). In tourism, this non-linearity of decision-making is even more highlighted due to tourism experiences being intangible and constructed *in situ* (Smallman and Moore 2010). Therefore, a tourist is required to think about risk reduction strategies to choose among alternatives. On the other hand, these strategies include extensive information search and formation of choice

sets (Mathieson and Wall 1982; Woodside and Lysonski 1989; Sirakaya and Woodside 2005). Thirdly, information search and evaluation of alternatives include combining prior destination knowledge (Gursoy 2003; Gursoy and McCleary 2004; Kerstetter and Cho 2004; Sharifpour *et al.* 2013; Huand *et al.* 2014), involvement (Havitz and Dimache 1999; Gursoy and Gavcar 2003), perceived risk (Wong and Yeh 2009; Karamustafa *et al.* 2013), and personality traits (Yoo and Gretzel 2010; Gursoy 2011), which are all shown to differ extensively from person to person. Hence, the destination selection process depends on the specific decision-making style of a consumer. The latter is defined as "a mental orientation characterising a consumer's approach to making choices" (Sprotles and Kendall 1986). Studies that have proliferated over the years on decision-making styles focused on examining: (a) the existence of styles in various buying situations, (b) its antecedents and outcomes, and (c) characteristics of consumer decision-making styles (Westbrook and Black 1985; Hiu *et al.* 2001). These studies originated in the marketing literature and are perceived as very helpful for segmenting consumers into meaningful groups by their decision-making style inventories in order to aid marketing and management practices. However, tourism literature has provided very scarce empirical evidence on how decision-making styles influence one's decisions to go on holiday.

From the review of tourism literature, it is evident that the majority of studies conceptualised the decision-making process as the input-output model (Decrop 2006; Smallman and Moore 2010). The decision-making is perceived as a "black box between independent and dependent variables" (Smallman and Moore 2010, 399). The majority of studies focused on: (1) identifying independent and dependent variables, (2) exploring their interrelations, and (3) providing theoretical justifications of the latter. The research further distinguished between external and internal variables (namely, external and internal factors), which encompass psychological, economic, and/or social characteristics (Gartner 1993, Beerli and Martín 2004; Sirakaya and Woodside 2005; Wong and Yeh 2009; Kline 2013). Internal factors represent an individual's personal characteristics that comprise motivation, personality, learning, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and emotions. External factors or non-psychological variables, on the other hand, originate from an individual's environment and comprise time, pull factors, marketing mix, the culture, social status, reference groups, family, etc. (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005; Kline 2013). These factors not only influence one's decision-making, but also influence the processing of messages communicated through advertising.

### 2.2.2 Limitations of tourist decision-making research

Despite the large body of research contributing empirical evidence to the understanding of tourist decision-making process, there still remain gaps in the literature on how to simultaneously address both personal and non-personal factors that influence one's tourism destination choice. Sirakaya and Woodside (2005) observe that the models have accepted that an individual is influenced by numerous factors during the decision-making process, but do not address their active interaction within that process. The authors further conclude that the literature has been treating an individual "as if /he was/ in a vacuum" (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005, 829).

Recently, four different approaches to the study of the decision-making process have evolved from Sirakaya and Woodside's (2005) observation. These can be categorised into the following categories: subject-centred (for example, Sirgy and Su 2000; Gardiner *et al.* 2013; Sharifpour *et al.* 2013; Decrop and Kozak 2014), product-centred (for example, Ahmed 1991; Andsager and Drzewiecka 2002; Ekinci *et al.* 2007; Xie *et al.* 2012), process-centred (for example, Cai *et al.* 2004; Carneiro and Crompton 2010; Karimi *et al.* 2015), and situation-centred (for example, Graeff 1997; Liu *et al.* 2010; Law *et al.* 2012). There also exist studies that conjoin subject-centred and product-centred approaches. These studies are based on the congruity theory and are focused on explaining how the destination selection process is influenced by destination image and one's self-perception (Sirgy and Su 2000; Beerli *et al.* 2007; Usakli and Baloglu 2011; Hung and Petrick 2012). However, the literature is still in need of an in-depth understanding of the decision-making process, since these approaches integrate only one or two of its elements, while failing to integrate others.

Hence, the literature is in need of a theoretical framework capable of explaining the interrelation of non-personal and personal factors influencing one's destination choice while still embracing the up-to-date empirical evidence. For the theoretical framework, it is required to acknowledge the complexity associated with the level of significance of various factors in a tourist's decision-making process: that is, how tourists attribute importance and derive meanings from various factors in their tourism destination choice. The latter is a result of a complex and evolving process, but by no means does it result from a black box. Therefore, an individual has to be placed in the centre of the decision-making process, and his/her actions have to be understood through the meaning he/she derives from different internal and external

decision-making factors. In this sense, the literature is in need of a theory that is capable of demonstrating the interrelatedness of person-product-advertising-act-of-purchase under one study, rather than examining the influence of various elements separately or partially.

### 2.2.3   Weber's theory of action

A theory that holds such promise to realign the perspectives on the interrelatedness of various decision-making factors is Weber's theory to action. The appropriateness of the theory is derived from Max Weber's (1964) conceptualisation of several important terms such as action, meaning, and understanding, which make a consumer the centre of the decision-making process.

The author defines 'action' as "all human behaviour when and in so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it" (Weber 1964, 88). Weber (1964) distinguishes between an action that is either overt, purely inward, or subjective. As such, the action can consist of three outcomes in a situation – positive intentions, deliberate refraining, or passive acquiescing. Weber (1964, 89–90) further defines the meaning as "... the actual existing meaning in the given concrete case of a particular actor, /…/ or to the theoretically conceived pure type of subjective meaning attributed to the hypothetical actor or actors in a given type of action. In no case does it refer to an objectively correct meaning or one which is true in some metaphysical sense."

For Weber (1964), meaningful, or subjectively understandable, action is not to be found at all, since it is a psychological process that is internal to an individual. It is only manifested in one's behaviour or in relation to processes and phenomena which are devoid of subjective meaning. In the case of processes and phenomenon that are devoid of meaning, they represent "artefacts that can be understood only in terms of the meaning which its production and use have had or will have for human action; or a meaning which may derive from a relation to exceeding various purposes" (Weber 1964, 93). These artefacts are intelligible or understandable, or in other words, have a meaning to a human action in the role of either of means (i.e., an actor is aware of them) or of end (i.e., an actor's action has been oriented towards them) (Weber, 1964). Weber (1964, 93) further concludes that "only in terms of such categories is it possible to understand objects of this kind."

When Weber (1964) talks about understanding of the subjective meaning, he distinguishes between the direct observational understanding and explanatory understanding. The direct observational understanding results from a direct observation of one's behaviour. Simply put, seeing is believing. For example, a case of direct rational understanding of actions would be to understand the action of somebody who reaches for the phone to answer the call. On the other hand, explanatory understanding relates to understanding 'in terms of motive', that is the meaning an actor attaches to the particular act, which "has been placed in an understandable sequence of motivation, the understanding of which can be treated as explanation of the actual course of behaviour" (Weber 1964, 95). In the case of the phone call, when he or she hears a ringtone, it is understandable what makes him or her do this at precisely this moment and in these circumstances.

According to the theory of action, the explanation of tourists' destination choice is possible through an "understanding of the meanings which their actions have for them" (Campbell 1996, 30). Weber's theory of action addresses Smallman and Moore's (2010) and Sirakaya and Woodside's (2005) critique of decision-making models as only threating the relationship between various personal and non-personal factors as non-interactive enough. In that sense, Weber's theory of action brings back a consumer to the centre of decision-making where personal and non-personal factors are influencing the decision-making process if, and only if, they are understandable or intelligible for the process. By amplifying the importance of understating subjective meanings of one's actions, Weber's theory provides space for both personal and non-personal influencers on the decision-making process to be studied. That is, destination advertising or destination image will have no significance in one's destination choice if they are not meaningful to a person. So, unless a person attaches a meaning to his or her processing of advertising messages while deciding for a tourism destination, the advertised destination will go unnoticed, and so the advertising will have no direct effect on the person whatsoever.

Weber's theory of action is yet to be operationalised within the consumer behaviour literature. The explanation behind the almost non-existent operationalisation of the theory in various research disciplines lies in "the original Weberian emphasis on subjective meaning /being/ displaced by one on inter-subjective and communal meaning, thus breaking the intimate connection between action and an actor's viewpoint" (Campbell 1996, 30). The inter-

subjective and communal meanings are known to be heavily shared between traditional interpretivists and prevalent social action theorists (for example, Mead, Mills, Shutz, Levine), who not only substituted the connection between and an actor's viewpoint with 'the actors' viewpoint with the orientation to others,' but additionally claimed that all human action is of social kind (Campbell 1996). However, Weber's theory of action is applicable to consumer behaviour studies, especially to decision-making studies, since tourists' decision-making process is influenced by numerous inter-related action factors, which gain importance only if they are meaningful for one's behaviour.

### History of Weber's theory of action

The theory of action was developed by Max Weber, who is considered to be one of the most profound and enduring social theorists of sociology's classical period (Sica 2004), and one of the founding fathers of sociology (Kalberg 1980; Jagd 2002). His theory aims to explain action from the actor's point of view, since action is perceived as a conduct which happens only if the actor attaches meaning to it (Weber 1964; Campbell 1996). Therefore, the discovering of the actor's definition of the situation is equally important than cognitive processes, knowledge, or resources through which an actor's experiences are rendered as meaningful or intelligible.

### The concept of action

Human conduct that Weber defines as action is motivated by the provision of the meaning, which is "a basic concept of the theory of action" (Habermas 1984, 279). Human behaviour, regardless of being an activity, external or internal behaviour, acquiescence or omission, is "action if and insofar as the actor attaches a subjective meaning to it" (Habermas 1984, 279). Additionally, Habermas (1984, 279) refers to it as being related to "the beliefs and intentions of an acting subject, taken to begin with in isolation." To advance the point, Habermas (1984, 279) writes that "the purposive activity of a solitary acting subject" is the fundamental explanation of the action. Weber (1964, 111–112) acknowledges that the majority of action is delivered in "a state of inarticulate half-consciousness or actual unconsciousness of its subjective meaning." That is, an actor is aware of the action only vaguely than being explicitly self-conscious about it. The author states that "the ideal type of meaningful action where the meaning is fully conscious and explicit is a marginal case" (Weber 1964, 112). In

that sense, an individual is very often not conscious about his action, but that does not mean that the subjective meaning has not been attached to it.

Habermas (1984) adds that Weber's starting point on the meaning derives from the theory of consciousness that specifies the meaning as a (precommunicative) action intention. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the subjective meaning is defined as relating to, or proceeding from an individual's thoughts, views, whereas a subjectively meaningful action can be therefore defined as an action that is influenced by, or based on personal beliefs, thoughts, views, and feelings. So, by perceiving consumption through the Weberian lens, it is an action that happens if an actor attaches subjective meaning to it, therefore it is influenced by one's beliefs, thoughts, interests and views. Moreover, if consumption has to be necessarily subjectively meaningful to those who perform it, so have to be its stimuli. Therefore, it is important to notice that key feature of Weberian action theory is in its attempt to explain one's behaviour through understanding of the meaning their behaviour has for them, and it is an actor's viewpoint that serves in defining the phenomenon of behaviour and the factors that influence it.

### *The concept of social action*

For Weber, the concept of social action is considered to be a sub-theme of the theory of action (Habermas 1984; Campbell 1996). That is emphasised by his writing that "action is social in so far as, by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual (or individuals), it takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (Weber 1964, 88). In other words, the action is considered social "if in relation to the actor's own consumption the future wants of others are taken into account and this becomes one consideration affecting the actor's own behaviour" (Weber 1964, 113). Therefore, for Weber, taking others into account when attaching subjective meaning to the behaviour is what constitutes the social action. Giving an example of two colliding cyclists, Weber (1964) distinguishes what is action with social character and what is not. For example, if two cyclists collide, this might be compared to a natural event. But, as he further explains, the cyclists' attempt to avoid the collision or whatever action following from the collision itself (i.e., insults, friendly discussion, or blows), would constitute as social action.

Again, by perceiving consumption through the Weberian lens, it becomes a social action that happens if an actor attaches subjective meaning to it by taking into account the behaviour of others, therefore it is influenced by one's beliefs, thoughts, interests, and views upon others' behaviour. Therefore, the stimuli of consumption that come from external sources could be considered as drivers of consumption. However, an actor's viewpoint is what is crucial in staying unique to the consumption – it is the actor's definition of the situation that is important with regards to others (Campbell 1996).

As previously seen, an action is a general construct, whereas a social action is its complementary sub-construct. However, within the contemporary sociology, one cannot but notice a decline of Weberian action theory and the absence of its operationalisation in any of the academic disciplines. The reasoning lies in it being inimical to the risen prominence of the social action theory, which is (wrongly) perceived to be a concept independent of a more general concept of action (Campbell 1996). To advance the point, Campbell (1996, 29) writes that "contemporary sociologists are able to employ the concept of social action without reference to the more general concept of action because the adjective 'social' tends to qualify the noun 'meaning' rather than the noun 'action,' that is to say social action is the term typically used to refer to action which is regarded as possessing a social meaning rather than to action, which is itself social."

Additionally, Campbell (1996) furthers the point by stating that both perspectives on action, the Weberian and the modern sociological, are incompatible to a point where the two concepts seem incommensurate. According to Campbell (1996), the reason for this lies in Weber's standpoint on social action to necessarily consider only those acts that have been subjectively meaningful to those who perform them, whereas modern sociologists have treated social actions as not necessarily embodying subjective meanings, but instead embodying intersubjective, communal, or conventional meanings. These meanings are presumed to be a sub-category of inter-subjective meanings that derive from the social character of an action that necessarily involves an actor and other members of a situation (Campbell 1996).

### 2.2.4  Involvement and Weber's theory of action

These two Weberian concepts – the action and the social action, are precisely why Weber's theory of action is applicable to explaining a tourist's decision-making process. During the

decision-making process, tourists are influenced by numerous intrinsic factors, such as their beliefs, values, motives, and interests, but are not immune to the influence of external factors, such as advertising, tourism destination image, friends and family, etc. Moreover, only a small percentage of tourists perceive destination image as it has been communicated by destination image formation agents. By having said that, there must exist a reason as to why some tourist choices are being affected by destination image, despite the discrepancies between induced (communicated) and perceived (received) destination image evident from the tourism literature. Resultantly, Weber's theory of action is suggested as a useful tool for explaining tourist destination choice because of its ability to explain the multitude of influences of internal and external factors on tourists' choices from the standpoint of the tourists themselves. It is they who process the information and attach the meaning to the influencing factors. This is precisely why their viewpoint upon the decision-making process and its influencers is necessary to examine.

Weber's theory of action and its concept of subjective meaning coincides with the concept of involvement. The latter has been widely used in the consumer literature to explain one's purchase decisions. Havitz and Dimanche (1999, 123) write that involvement represents "a state of motivation, arousal, or interest," which triggers the need to perform the act of consumption. Additionally, the concept of involvement, similarly to Weber's (1964) suggestion, focuses on the actor's viewpoint on the situation. Previous decision-making theories, as insightful as they are, did focus on explaining factors that influence one's decision making, however they were unsuccessful in capturing the behaviour in full (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005). This is due to the research alienation from the standpoint of consumer, and over-focusing on explaining the decision-making process and its influencers (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005; Smallman and Moore 2010). Hence, the concept of involvement, fundamental to consumer behaviour, holds a significant potential as an embodiment of tourists' standpoint on an action such as destination choice. In the following section, involvement is positioned as representing an actor's standpoint on the factors (e.g. tourism destination, advertising, and the self) that influence tourist behaviour.

### 2.2.5  *The concept of involvement*

Since its emergence in 1962, the concept of involvement has been a philosophical core of the consumer behaviour literature (Zaichkowsky 1986; Havitz and Dimanche 1990). Cai, Feng,

and Breiter (2004, 140) observe that "social psychological and consumer behaviour studies have established involvement as a useful tool to explain a wide range of behavioural and decision processes." As many authors observe (Mitchell 1979; Zaichkowsky 1986; Mittal 1989; Cai *et al.* 2004; Carneiro and Crompton 2010), involvement is an elusive, vaguely defined concept. This is evidenced in Kapferer and Laurent's (1985) note on involvement as perceived as a hypothetical construct, which cannot be directly measured and "it can only be inferred from the presence or absence and intensity of its alleged determinants or antecedents" (Kapferer and Laurent 1985, 49). Laurent and Kapferer (1985, 43) further suggest that "involvement may stem from different types of antecedents." Moreover, it is its sources that are to be understood since they provide with "a dynamic picture of the consumer's subjective situation and give clues as to what appeals should be used in communicating with consumers" (Laurent and Kapferer 1985, 43). Similarly, Zaichkowsky (1986) suggests that understanding of antecedents is a prerequisite for understanding involvement and, consequently, consumer behaviour.

In addition to these difficulties, Zaichkowsky (1986) observes that there are three main research perspectives on the concept: the advertising perspective, the product class perspective, and the purchase decision perspective. Within these three research streams, involvement is related to (1) the 'relevancy' of the ad to the receiver in terms of how is the receiver personally affected by it and consequently motivated to respond to the message, (2) the 'relevancy' of the product to consumer's needs and values in terms of how important is the product to the consumer, and consequently how interested is a person in product information, and (3) the 'relevancy' of the decision to a consumer in terms of how motivated a person is to make a careful purchase decision.

Despite the aforementioned issues, researchers provided their definitions of involvement. An early definition of involvement was that of Day (1970, in Mittal 1989, 148), who defined it as "the general level of interest in the object or the centrality of the object to the person's ego-structure." Mitchell (1979, 194) defines it as "an internal state variable that indicates the amount of arousal, interest, or drive evoked by a particular stimulus or situation." Similarly, Cohen (1983) sees it as one's activation level in a particular moment. What is common to these definitions is that the concept of involvement requires a goal-object (Mittal 1989). However, Zaichkowsky (1985, 342) provided with a definition of the concept of involvement

as "a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests." Based on the argument that the term 'relevance' stands for whether an object serves some function (needs, value, or interest), and is thus not equal to 'importance,' which represents just how important the object is to a consumer, Mittal (1989, 666) suggested for the definition to be corrected into "a person's perceived importance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests." Based on Mittal's (1989) and Zaichkowsky's (1985) suggestions, the concept of involvement places a consumer at the forefront of the decision-making process, by making it equal, or even superior, to a goal-object for understanding one's purchase behaviour. Therefore, the value of involvement is seen in its focus on personal relevance to the stimulus or situation (Zaichkowsky 1986; Cai *et al.* 2004).

While involvement has been widely used in consumer behaviour research (Cai *et al.* 2004), it has also gained a significant interest among leisure and tourism studies (Havitz and Dimanche 1999). Furthermore, in their review of 52 involvement studies in leisure and tourism context published in the period from 1988 to 1997, Havitz and Dimanche (1999) observed that the research found strong evidence for the support of the positive relationship between involvement and information search. This finding was corroborated by several studies, such as Cai *et al.* (2004), Gursoy and Gavcar (2003), Gursoy and McCleary (2004), Carneiro and Crompton (2010), and Huang *et al.* (2014). Therefore, it is not surprising to see that tourism studies which emerged in the last two decades were mainly interested in the relationship between involvement and information search, especially with the new emerging technologies such as internet and social media.

### 2.2.6   *Multiple dimensions of involvement*

Since 'involvement' in its broader sense refers to personal importance of the stimulus, the literature suggests that consumers are likely to differ in just 'how' important 'a particular' stimulus is to a person (Zaichkowsky 1985; Hawkins *et al.* 1995; Havitz and Dimanche 1999; Cai *et al.* 2004). Therefore, intensity and direction are two broader dimensions of involvement (Mitchell 1979). According to Mitchell (1979), intensity reflects the level of importance. The object or situation might be of low, medium or high importance to a person, and so is the involvement could be low, medium or high (Zaichkowsky 1985; Cai *et al.* 2004).

The direction of involvement is connected to the evoking stimulus object or situation and it can take multiple forms (Mitchell 1979; Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Zaichkowsky 1986; Beatty *et al.* 1988; Havitz and Dimanche 1990). According to Zaichkowsky (1986), there are three types of involvement – product involvement, advertising involvement, and purchase-decision involvement. The author offered a comprehensive framework of involvement that includes: (1) its antecedents, (2) activation that is directed towards a stimulus (i.e., different types of involvement), and (3) involvement-induced responses of possibly overt behaviour (see Figure 2.2) (Zaichkowsky 1986). Laurent and Kapferer (1985) suggest that consumer behaviour is predicted by perceived importance of the product, perceived sign value, perceived pleasure value, and perceived risk, whilst Beatty *et al.* (1988) distinguish between ego involvement and purchase involvement.

Figure 2. 2: Conceptual framework of involvement
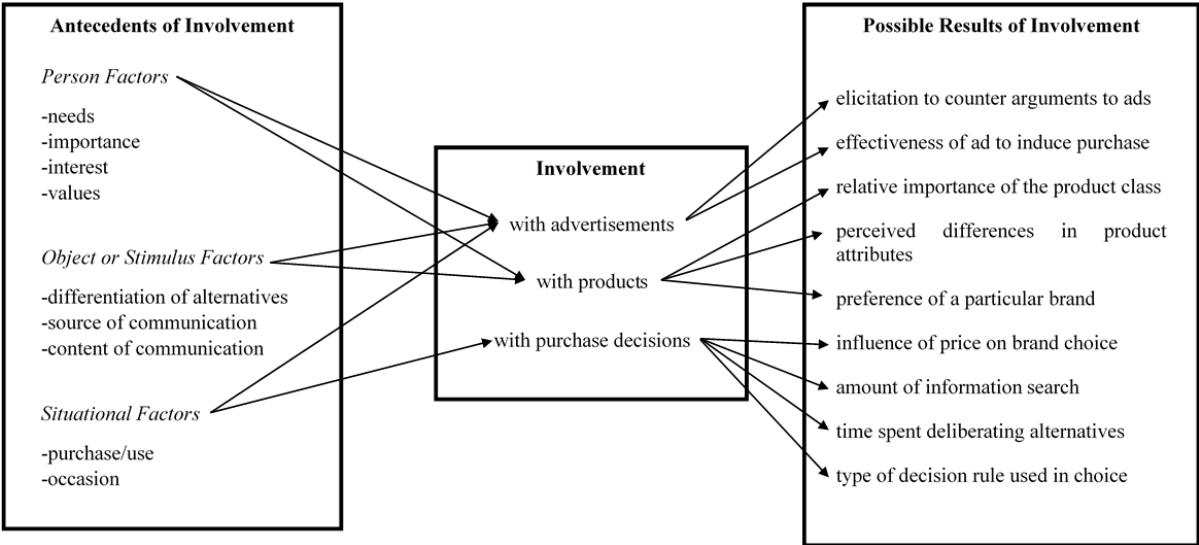


Source: Zaichkowsky (1986, 6).

Numerous authors (Zaichkowsky 1986; Laurent and Kapferer 1985): Carneiro and Crompton 2010) suggest to first become familiar with the antecedents of involvement in order to better understand its various directions. According to Zaichkowsky (1986), factors that proceed the level of involvement can be divided into three categories. The first category relates to individual's characteristics that motivate one towards the object and is named 'person factors'. That is, one's needs, importance, interest, and values determine whether an individual is interested or concerned with a particular advertisement, product, or service. The second category, named 'object or stimulus factors', relates to physical characteristics of a

stimulus. These might pertain to the differences in type of media (e.g. communication sources), content (e.g. advertising message), or variations found in product classes. The third category is named 'situational factors', and it relates to a situation which temporarily increases one's motivation or interest towards an object of interest. Zaichkowsky (1986, 6) further suggests that "the level of involvement may be influenced by one or more of these three factors, /and that/ interactions among persons, situation, and object factors are likely to occur." Hawkins *et al.* (1995, 425) similarly conclude that purchase decision involvement "is influenced by the interaction of individual, product, and situational characteristics."

### *Variety of involvement directions*

According to Zaichkowsky (1986), product involvement relates to the importance of (1) a product category, and (2) differentiation of alternatives within a product category. For the latter, the author reveals that it refers to "the degree of cognitive overlap a person perceives in the stimulus" (Zaichkowsky 1986, 8). That is, the more similar the alternatives are to each other in functional characteristics, the more substitutable they are. Consequently, a person would be involved into evaluation of alternatives in order to make 'the right' choice. However, the intensity of involvement will depend on the product category (Zaichkowsky 1986; Mittal 1989; 1995). Drawing from the analogy of low- and high-involvement product categories, Mittal (1985, 148) explained the difference in the following words: "bread, coffee, and salt are as important to consumers as are cars, diamonds, and houses, but he or she might be indifferent in the choices of a brand" of bread, coffee, and salt. In this sense, differentiation between the alternatives within the same product category might be of high or low involvement, depending on the importance of the product category to a consumer at a given moment or across categories. Mittal (1989) also suggests that product involvement is a precursor to other types of involvement. That is, an individual firstly has to be involved in a product in order to be involved in advertising and any purchase related to that particular product.

Another important type of involvement is advertising involvement. An advertisement represents the core of advertising involvement (Mitchell 1981; Cohen 1983; Zaichkowsky 1986; Buchholz and Smith 1991). Cohen (1983, 326) stresses that in assessing one's involvement with advertising "it is somehow natural to consider the message and aspects of its presentation as important factors," but this division on the message and its aspects is what

he considers "an arbitrary division of the stimulus field." Cohen (1983, 326) further suggests that "specific predictions regarding the impact of involvement on the amount of effort, thought, learning, and ultimately belief and attitude change can be made and studied by including involvement as a treatment manipulation." In contrast, Zaichkowsky (1986) built her explanation of advertising involvement around differentiation of communication source, level of information provided, and advertising appeals used in the message. In tourism, experiences happen *in situ* and in many cases, it is a visual message that attracts lots of attention when individuals are making tourism-related choices. Therefore, it is destination advertising that has been identified as one of the most important external sources of information in tourist decision-making process (Meenaghan 1995).

The third type of involvement is ego involvement. For the ego involvement to develop, "the state of identification" between an individual and an object of consumption needs to be established (Selin and Howard 1988, 237). Therefore, ego involvement is characterised by "self-expression being achieved through the activity" (Selin and Howard 1988, 237). Similarly, Beatty *et al.* (1988, 150) define it as "the importance of the product to the individual's self-concept, values, and ego." Moreover, it is shown to be a precursor of purchase-decision involvement (Mitchell 1979; Traylor 1981; Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Beatty *et al.* 1988; Selin and Howard 1988). In more recent consumer behaviour and marketing literature, ego involvement is intertwined with the concept of self-congruity. Sirgy (2014, 64) defines the self-congruity as "a process of matching (some dimensions of) a tourist's self-concept and the destination image." He also adds that the concept is linked to tourist's destination attitude, satisfaction, destination choice, and post-visit behaviour (for example, word-of-mouth, revisit, loyalty, etc.) (Sirgy 2014).

The fourth type is purchase-decision involvement. According to Sirakaya and Woodside (2005, 817), it represents "the level of concern for or interest in the purchase process, triggered by the need to consider a particular purchase", and is related to person's decision-making style. For Zaichkowsky (1986), purchase-decision involvement is tied to behavioural change in decision strategy, which occurs only if a purchase or a situation of consumption represents an important task to an individual. However, for Mittal (1989), it is all about the mind-set. He writes that a response behaviour that is manifested in the decision-making process is not what he or she thinks of purchase-decision involvement, but it is about "what

the right or wrong choice of the brand would mean /to an individual/, and correspondingly whether or not /an individual/ would be indifferent as to which of the several available alternatives is bought" (Mittal 1989, 150). Further, the author explains that an individual might not indulge in extensive information processing if he or she is confident that either expert recommendations, or a repeat purchase, or previous knowledge is sufficient for making a purchase decision (Mittal 1989). Moreover, it is suggested that people differ in information search, information processing, and decision-making based on the intensity and direction of involvement (Zaichkowsky 1985; Foxall and Bhate 1993; Hawkins *et al.* 1995; Broderick and Mueller 1999). For example, highly involved individuals are likely to search for more external information (Beatty and Smith 1987; Beatty *et al.* 1988; Carneiro and Crompton 2010), prefer the internet as a source of tourism information (Cai *et al.* 2004), analyse information in more detail, and pay more attention to incoming information (Gursoy and McCleary 2004). Conversely, for those low-involved individuals, it is expected that they will be less attentive to incoming information, will not perform an extensive information search, and are likely to be more impulsive in their purchase decisions (Engel *et al.* 1995; Hawkins *et al.* 1995). Decision-making in tourism is considered to represent "high-involvement, extensive decision-making purchases, because of the relatively high costs, both monetary and non-monetary, involved in these decisions" (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005, 817). However, for low-involved individuals it is more likely that they will have prior experience with the product or service (Teare 1993; Sirakaya and Woodside 2005).

### 2.2.7   Summary

In summary, a significant gap within decision-making models has been identified. That is, the existing tourist decision-making models evolved around a perception that a decision-maker is a black box influenced by numerous external and internal factors. The models extensively elaborated, in their own right, on decision-making processes, but still failed to provide an in-depth understanding as to why some of the consumer behaviour is not as predicted. This is important for managers and marketers of products and services, since many of these models serve as foundations for their decisions. From the review of tourist decision-making models, the need to provide different theoretical framework capable of bringing decision-making back to its original foundation was highlighted. That is, there is a need to refocus the decision-making process to a consumer perspective, instead of treating a consumer as *persona non grata*. Hence, Weber's theory of action was introduced as a theoretical framework capable of

addressing this gap. It is Weber's theory of action and its conceptualisation of an action, meaning, and understanding that place an individual into the core of the decision-making process. In that sense, Weber's theory of action postulates that an individual, attaches a subjective meaning to artefacts that are either a means to, or an end of an action. And for every action there is a subjective meaning, whether consciously or unconsciously attached. Further, the theory of action provided support to the concept of involvement, by helping to theoretically intertwine the two concepts. That is, the theory of action posits that an actor or actors attach subjective meaning to every action, whilst the concept of involvement relates to a relevance of an object of consumption in an individual's behaviour.

The multiple intensities and directions (i.e. types) of involvement suggest that each of these is important in understanding consumer's decision-making (Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Zaichkowsky 1986; Beatty *et al.* 1988; Sirgy and Su 2000; Cai *et al.* 2004). Moreover, different types of involvement, each in its own significance, are shown to influence consumer behaviour (Laurent and Kapferer 1985). There is extensive research that demonstrates the directions and intensity of involvement across different product categories and situations. However, there is a lack of research that focuses on examining directions and the intensity of involvement in one product category (such as for a tourism destination). With this in mind, Cohen (1983), Laurent and Kapferer (1985), and Zaichkowsky (1986) were among the first to call for a comprehensive framework of involvement that is in its own right specific for one product category. The authors call for a framework that would empirically outline structural relationships among different types of involvement, which would help in the development of theoretical underpinnings of consumer behaviour for a specific product category.

In the following sections, we present all four types of involvement. We will demonstrate how each type of involvement has a significant implication for advancing decision-making in the context of tourism. More specifically, we aim to demonstrate how placing a tourist into the core of decision-making process advances the research on destination choice.

## 2.3    PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT

The term 'product involvement' originates from research focused on determining the directions and intensity of involvement for products as objects of consumption. The characteristics of these objects are tangibility, endurance, and reproductivity. In contrast, the outcome of tourism consumption is concentrated around a variety of experiences and is mostly of psychological nature (Frochot and Batat 2013). This is why the outcomes of tourist consumption are characterised as intangible, perishable, and variable. Moreover, the majority of tourist experiences are consumed *in situ*, making a destination choice an *objet d'art*, especially when tourists have no prior experience with a tourism destination. This is why tourism is considered a high-involvement decision-making context, because it involves high-risk decisions and purchases (Gursoy and Gavcar 2003; Sirakaya and Woodside 2005).

Tourism products are "services rather than goods" (UNWTO and ETC 2011, 7). This is why product involvement is a rather obsolete term in the context of tourism. This is also why there is a need to shift from product dominant logic to service dominant logic, since tourism as an economic sector is dominated by services and experiences. Because of the nature of tourist consumption, tourism products are an amalgam of many individual experiences, products, and services in a tourism destination (Ekinci and Hosany 2006; UNWTO and ETC 2011). These comprise experiential factors (e.g. activities, events and entertainment, host community, shopping, safety, etc.), emotional factors (e.g. hospitality, the built environment–cultural and historical resources), and physical factors (e.g. general infrastructure, tourism infrastructure, natural resources, etc.) (UNWTO and ETC 2011). These factors are necessary in the provision of leisure recreational, and other, services that benefit visitors in a tourism destination. In this sense, tourist experiences, tourism services, and related product amenities together form tourism products to be consumed by tourists.

Product involvement hereafter will be used in reference to tourism products; that is, in reference to a collection of tourist experiences, tourism services, and related product amenities that are to be consumed by tourists during their visit to a tourism destination. With this in mind, product involvement represents the personal significance of tourism products to an individual during his or her decision-making process. In general, for product involvement we distinguish between product category and the differentiation of alternatives (Zaichkowsky

1986; 1994; Mittal 1989). In the case of a destination choice, a tourism destination represents the product category, but it also represents one of the alternatives, whose functional characteristics are evaluated and compared by individuals during their decision-making process. These functional characteristics are what make a tourism destination an object of consumption, and thus an object of personal significance to decision-makers.

### 2.3.1 Definition of tourism destination

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (2002),

> "*A local tourism destination is a physical space in which a visitor spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services and attractions, and tourism resources within one day's return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, images, and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. Local tourism destinations incorporate various stakeholders often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations.*"

From the above, it is evident that a tourism destination is a very complex concept. Firstly, it could be defined as a geographical place (e.g. village, city, island, region, or state), where tourists spend their free time away from their usual place of living (Jafari 2003). Mundt (2002) stated that this definition is very imprecise, because the term 'tourism destination' could be simultaneously applied to all these places at the same time. That is, a tourism destination is a town that is situated at a larger tourism destination – an island, which is a part of a larger politically formed region, also considered to be a tourism destination. Secondly, in order for a place to become a tourism destination, it has to correspond to certain demands. It has to feature tourist attractions, i.e. elements of primary tourism supply. These include natural, cultural, social, or built attractions in order to meet the needs of potential and real demand (Mihalič 2008). A tourism destination also has to include elements of secondary supply, i.e. general and tourism infra- and super-structure (Mihalič 2008) to accommodate tourists and offer various forms of recreation. Thirdly, it has to be accessible; transportation networks, traffic connections, roads, and other transportation services have to be well-developed. Fourth, its various stakeholders, their interests, and the impact of tourism on the host community's quality of life have to be considered when tourism development is planned and managed (Šegota *et al.* 2017). Lastly, a tourism destination is an exchange value (Jančič

1999). In that sense, it is a place towards which a person forms images, perceptions, attachment, that on the other hand influence a person's intentions and actions. With the latter in mind, it is the destination image that is important for understanding a tourism destination choice, regardless of one's previous experience with a particular destination. It is its image that will either 'make or break it' in a consumer's decision-making process.

### 2.3.2 Destination image

A tourism destination and its determinants, such as image and personality, have gained much attention in multidisciplinary research over recent decades. Moreover, LaPage and Cormier (1977, 21) very early emphasised the importance of the role of destination image in one's vacationing decisions by noting that "information available to tourists before they visit a tourist region is usually supplemented by their own mental image of that region. In many cases, it is probably the image more than the factual information that produces a tourist's decision on where to travel."

The research focus on a destination image as an important element in the destination selection process has its origins in the work of Hunt published in 1971 (Driscoll *et al.* 1994; Gallarza *et al.* 2002; Echtner and Ritchie 2003; Tasci *et al.* 2007). There are many approaches towards the research of destination image, with most of them focused on its conceptualisation and dimensions, measurement and assessment, and management policies (Gallarza *et al.* 2002; Pike 2002). Early research on destination image was focused on its conceptualisation (for example, Hunt 1971; Gunn 1972; Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Santos Arrebola 1994). Some of the early definitions are provided in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Selected pioneering definitions of product, place, and destination image

| Study | Proposed definition |
|---|---|
| Hunt (1971) | Impressions that a person or persons hold about a state in which they do not reside. |
| Markin (1974) | Our own personalised, internalised and conceptualising understanding of what we know. |
| Lawson and Bond-Bovy (1977) | An expression of knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imagination, and emotional thoughts an individual has of a specific object or place. |
| Crompton (1979) | An image may be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination. |
| Dichter (1985) | The concept of image can be applied to a political candidate, a product, and a country. It describes not individual traits or qualities, but the total impression |

| | and entity makes on the minds of others. |
|---|---|
| Reynolds (1985) | An image is the mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions. It comes into being through a creative process in which selected impressions are elaborated, embellished, and ordered. |
| Embacher and Buttle (1989) | Image is comprised of the ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively of the destination under investigation. Image may comprise both cognitive and evaluative components. |
| Fakeye and Crompton (1991) | Image is the mental construct developed by a potential tourist on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions. |
| Gartner (1993; 1996) | Destination images are developed by three hierarchically interrelated components: cognitive, affective, and conative. |
| Kotler *et al.* (1999) | The image of a place is the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person holds of it. |

Source: Gallarza *et al.* (2002, 60).

From the above pioneering definitions, it is evident that the concept of an image is closely tied to person's perceptions, beliefs, impressions and knowledge of a particular destination. As such, it is one of the mostly researched topics in the tourism literature (Pike 2002), since it encompasses multiple attributes that serve as elements (i.e., cognitive, affective, and conative) of the final composite image (Ahmed 1991; 1996; Gallarza *et al.* 2002).

Moreover, there is an increasing number of studies (Stern and Krakover 1993; Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Mackay and Fesenmaier 2000; Uysal *et al.* 2000; Baloglu and Mangaloglu 2001; Hosany *et al.* 2007) that support Lawson and Band-Bovy's (1977) suggestion that a destination image comprises both cognitive and affective dimensions. Its cognitive component is interpreted as beliefs and knowledge about the physical attributes of a destination, whilst the affective component represents feelings about destination attributes and the surrounding environments (Gartner 1993; Baloglu and McCleary 1999). Only recently, Pike and Ryan (2004) acknowledged that there is a third component of destination image, that of conation, which represents stated intentions of actions (e.g. willingness to visit a destination). Early research on destination image was focused on examining only one of its components, with cognitive component dominating the literature (Gartner 1989; Reilley 1990; Echtner and Ritchie 1993; Oppermann 1996; Schroeder 1996; Choi *et al.* 1999; Chen and Uysal 2002; Echtner and Ritchie 2003). Only a few authors focused on researching its affective component (for example, Baloglu and Brinberg 1997; Walmsley and Young 1998). More recently, researchers have become aware of the role of both dimensions and are providing insight into

47

the overall destination image by taking into account the cognitive, as well as the affective dimension (Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Uysal *et al.* 2000; Ekinci *et al.* 2007; Hosany *et al.* 2007; Usakli and Baloglu 2011). Mazanec (2009) argued that such a conceptualisation of destination image as a collective of cognitive, affective, and conative components might 'dilute' the construct to the extent that it fits every type of semantic content. Mazanec (2009) does have a point in his own right, however if we are to research destination image, it is imperative to be aware of the proportion each dimension 'brings to the table' in terms of stimulating tourists to visit a tourism destination.

Beerli and Martín (2004) classified multiple elements that serve in the formation process of destination's overall image in nine dimensions, as following:

- Natural resources; which include weather, wealth of countryside, beaches, and variety and uniqueness of flora and fauna;
- Natural environment; which encompasses beauty of the scenery, city or town attractiveness, cleanliness, overcrowding, air and noise pollution, and traffic congestion;
- Social environment; which includes hospitality and friendliness of local residents, quality of life, language barriers, and poverty;
- Political and economic environment; which relates to political stability and tendencies, safety, economic development, and prices of tourism products and services;
- General infrastructure; which extends to the development and quality of roads, airports and ports; private and public transport facilities, development of health services, telecommunications, commercial infrastructure and to the extent of building development;
- Tourist infrastructure; which includes hotel and other accommodation facilities, restaurants and bars, destination accessibility, tourist centres and information provide, and excursions offered;
- Tourist leisure and recreation; which relates to themed parks, and entertainment and sports activities;
- Cultural environment; which extends to museums, historical buildings, and monuments, festivals, gastronomy, religion, traditional customs, and way of life;
- and atmosphere of the place; or otherwise how individuals perceive the destination to be luxurious, fashionable, exotic, pleasant, fun, attractive, family-oriented, etc.

These nine dimensions represent destination attributes that largely constitute the attractiveness of a tourism destination (Beerli and Martín 2004). Some of these dimensions relate to its functional characteristics (i.e., natural resources, environments, infrastructures) and tourist activities (i.e., tourist leisure and recreation). These attributes represent the content for the destination image formation process (Beerli and Martín 2004; Ahn *et al.* 2013). The image formation process results in a very complex product that is either a perceived image (i.e., 'receiver' perspective) or a projected image (i.e., 'sender' perspective). Thus, the content providers or, as Beerli and Martín (2004) refer to them, the influencers, are personal factors and information sources. The former refers to an individual's personal characteristics or internal factors, which, among others, include an individual's needs, prior knowledge, motivations, preferences, and other personal characteristics (Beerli and Martín 2004). Linked to previous discussion on involvement, it is one's ego involvement that, among others, influences how destination image is perceived. What Beerli and Martín (2004) refer to as information sources are in tourism literature known as 'destination forming agents', whose primary purpose is to influence tourists' behaviours through a projected destination image.

### 2.3.3   *Destination image forming agents*

Influencers that participate in the destination image formation process are stimulus factors (Baloglu and McCleary 1999) or else known as the image forming agents (Gartner 1993). They could be classified into three groups, as organic, autonomous, or induced, and consequently they form an organic, autonomous, and induced destination image, respectively (Gunn 1972; Gartner 1993). These various agents might either act independently or collaborate together in forming a destination image, but nonetheless their relationships are in a way interrelated since one agent's change also affects other agents within the overall destination image (Gartner 1993; Tasci and Gartner 2007; Tasci *et al.* 2007).

#### *Organic agents*

Organic image formation agents represent non-commercial information sources, such as actual visit, electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM), and face-to-face word-of-mouth (WOM) from family and friends. Information that is acquired through personal experience (i.e., an actual visit to a destination) is considered to form realistic, more complex image, which is in many cases different from the image that is influenced by information acquired through secondary information sources (Pearce 1982; Phelps 1986; Gartner and Hunt 1987; Beerli and

Martín 2004). An actual visit, otherwise known as personal experience, is considered to be primary source of information, and thus its image is called the primary destination image (Gartner 1993). A tourist's own perceptions of, and experiences at a tourism destination take part in face-to-face interactions with friends and family. As such, they become secondary information sources for others and effect other's destination image formation process (Bramwell and Rawding 1996). With the expansion of new technologies and the World Wide Web, tourists influence others unknown to them by sharing their opinions, experiences, and perceptions in virtual space, at discussion forums and by writing personal blogs (Stepchenkova and Mills 2010). As such, tourists are placed in both a position of information receivers and in a position of information senders. As such, they are given a more active role in the destination image formation process to the extent of having a leading role in projecting destination image through various social media networks and other online communication platforms (Camprubí *et al.* 2013; Hunter 2016).

### *Autonomous agents*

Autonomous image formation agents refer to mass-media broadcasting news, documentaries, educational materials, movies, films, and programs from popular culture (Gartner 1993). They provide information and general knowledge about a destination, which helps an individual to form the organic image of a destination prior to experiencing it (Gartner 1993; Tasci and Gartner 2007). Individuals consider autonomous agents as highly credible due to their un-controllability by destination managers (Tasci and Gartner 2007). Consequently, autonomous agents are one of the most important influencers of the destination image formation process (Gartner 1993; Gartner and Shen 1992). More recent studies (Wang *et al.* 2015; Lee and Bai 2016) have shown that mass media and popular culture has gained power over influencing the destination image formation process, which is contrary to how they were recognised previously. This is mainly due to commercialisation of places, which image has been strengthened through a plethora of media representations in popular books, films, and TV series (O'Connor *et al.* 2008; Beeton 2010; Croy 2010; Reijnders 2011). For example, Croatia has become a synonym for King's Landing, the most crucial scenery of the popular TV series *The Game of Thrones*. The majority of the filming took place in Dubrovnik and at nearby tourist attractions, giving Dubrovnik an additional reference to its unique attractiveness. The city of Dubrovnik was already an established tourism destination in Croatia, however soon after 2012 it became a sort of the pilgrimage destination for fans of *The Game of Thrones*

(Šegota 2018). Even though autonomous agents are considered to be uncontrollable by destination managers, Wang and his colleagues (2015) think that they provide a foundation for induced images.

*Induced agents*

Induced image formation agents refer to all communication tools within a destination's integrated marketing communication mix, which serve in transferring a projected destination image (Stepchenkova and Morrison 2006). Destination management organisations (hereinafter DMOs), tourism promoters and businesses, and tour operators represent the induced agents (Gartner 1993). DMOs are traditionally perceived as official authorities that dominate destination image formation process. DMOs use advertising to influence tourists' decision-making process by creating unified and stable destination image (Hughes 1998). But, DMOs have little or no control over destination formation activities of other induced agents (Morgan *et al.* 2003). There is a diverse group of induced agents involved in destination image for due to destination being a complex composite of products and services, such as accommodation, attractions, tourist activities, etc. (Hankison 2004; Williams *et al.* 2004; Marzano and Scott 2009). Fesenmaier and MacKay (1996, 37) outline DMOs power by saying that "what is depicted or not in destination image advertising, and on whose authority it is selected, involves a more complex question of what comprises the destination and who has the power to define its identity." But, regardless of what power an induced agent has over another agent, the tourism literature provided empirical evidence on significant influence of induced image on tourist perception by a tourism destination (Hall 1999; Baloglu and Mangaloglu 2001; Stepchenkova and Morrison 2006; García *et al.* 2012).

### 2.3.4   *From brand personality to destination brand personality*

In Beerli and Martin's (2004) classification of destination attributes, there is also the dimension of atmosphere of the place, which includes some of destination personality characteristics. In consumer behaviour research, numerous researchers strive to provide answers to how different dimensions of one's self is associated with the use of brands (Belk 1988; Malhotra 1988; Kleine *et al.* 1993; Govers and Schoormans 2005; Kressmann *et al.* 2006; Fennis and Pruyn 2007; Das 2014) or the visit to a tourism destination (Ekinci and Hosany 2006; Beerli *et al.* 2007; Usakli and Baloglu 2011; Hung and Petrick 2012; Ahn *et al.* 2013; Bekk *et al.* 2016). The studies often argue that consumers perceive brands and

51

destinations as having human characteristics, regardless of them being inanimate objects of consumption (Aaker 1997; Aaker 1999; Plummer 2000; Maehle and Shneor 2010; Usakli and Baloglu 2011). This imbuing of objects with human characteristics is operationalised within the theory of anthropomorphism (Epley *et al.* 2007, 865), which posits that it "involves more than simply attributing life to the non-living (i.e., animism)" but it rather "entails attributing humanlike properties, characteristics, or mental states to real or imagined non-human agents and objects." In psychology, anthropomorphism is considered "an invariant and automatic psychological process that is simply a chronic feature of human judgement" (Epley *et al.* 2007, 865). It enables to people to think of objects as being humans, and thus easily relate their own self to the ascribed personal characteristics. In that sense, it aids one's identification with the objects due to his or her tendencies for organising thoughts and search for meaning (Gurthrie 1993; Luthar and Luthar 2007).

However, it is not only consumers that ascribe personal characteristics to objects in order to identify with them, but marketing practitioners also undertake the same practices when striving to differentiate their product, services, and tourism destinations from competitors. In order to emphasise their uniqueness, marketing practitioners had to 'move away' from promoting tourism destination functional attributes (i.e., beaches, beautiful scenery, and friendly places) (Morgan *et al.* 2004; Ekincy *et al.* 2007; Murphy *et al.* 2007). They started creating unique personalities through metaphors that would craft a unique identity between places and tourists (Ekinci and Hosany 2006). Thus, practitioners used techniques such as anthropomorphisation, personification, and the cration of user imagery to imbue tourism destinations with enduring and distinct personality characteristics to differentiate them from competitiors, influence consumer preferences and usage, and market a destination across cultures (Aaker 1997; Ekinci and Hosany 2006). In short, marketing and advertising activities are centered around a destination's brand personality.

The concept of brand personality is the precursor of the concept of destination brand personality. The latter was developed by Ekincy and Hosany when the authors operationalised Aaker's (1997) brand personality construct in the context of tourism. In a sense, all these authors are pioneers in examining personality scales across two important areas of consumer behaviour research: Aaker (1997) developed and validated brand personality dimensions, whereas Ekincy and Hosany (2006) examined the validity and applicability of Aaker's brand

personality framework within tourism. Since these two are interrelated, we will briefly focus on highlighting Aaker's (1997) work in order to better understand the foundations of the construct of destination brand personality.

### *The concept of brand personality*

Brands, unlike humans, cannot think, act, or feel, and have no objective existence at all. Brands represent a collection of perceptions in the mind of a consumer (Phau and Lau 2000). This collection of perceptions is based on the symbolism and meanings that constitute brand personality, which are usually intentionally added to products, services, and events through marketing communications and reactions of customers (Wee 2004). Phau and Lau (2000, 53–54) define brand personality as "the set of human characteristics associated with a given brand and it tends to serve a symbolic or self-expressive function rather than a utilitarian function."

Brand personality is created directly and indirectly (Maehle and Supphellen 2011). The direct way of creating brand personality is about transferring personality traits of the people associated with the brand directly to the brand (McCracken 1989; Phau and Lau 2000; Maehle and Supphellen 2011). The people associated with the brand are usually the ones who represent it, such as the typical user of a brand, the employees of the company or the endorsers of the brand (i.e., a celebrity) (Maehle and Supphellen 2011). The indirect way of creating brand personality is based in the processes "by which people attribute personality characteristics to other people" (Maehle and Supphellen 2011, 97). Brands appear in marketing communication mediums and people observe them. Based on these observations, cognitive, affective, and/or behavioural responses are triggered in the observers and it is these that create brand personality. Batra *et al.* (1993) simply put it, when they say that personality of the brand is created over time by the entire marketing mix of the brand.

Aaker (1997) drew her brand personality research inspiration from the limitations of using the 'Big Five' human personality facets in developing frameworks for brand personality dimensions. She described research gaps as originating from: (1) atheoretical *ad hoc* brand personality scales often developed solely for the purpose of research, or from (2) theoretical scales based on human personality traits which have not been validated in the context of brans. Therefore, the validity and reliability of brand personality scales were in Aaker's specific focus. The author questioned whether some important traits were omitted by

arbitrarily selecting traits from the practice (1) above, or whether human and brand personality scales were compatibly mirrored and to what extent from the practice (2) above. In her pioneering study, Aaker (1997) took a series of developed and refined 'Big Five' scales: that is, the original work of Norman (1963) and Tupes, and Christal (1958); the NEO model by McCrae and Costa (1989), the Big Five Prototypes by John (1990), the ACL Model by Piedmont *et al.* (1991), the Inter-Circumplex Model by McCrae and Costa (1989), and other scales used by academics and practitioners (for example, Plummer 1985; Malhotra 1981). These scales combined resulted in a total of 309 unique personality traits. Aaker (1997) converged the latter to testing and statistical analysis which resulted in a five-factor solution of brand personality dimensions. These dimensions were sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. A final set of brand personality dimensions, facets and traits is shown in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Brand personality framework
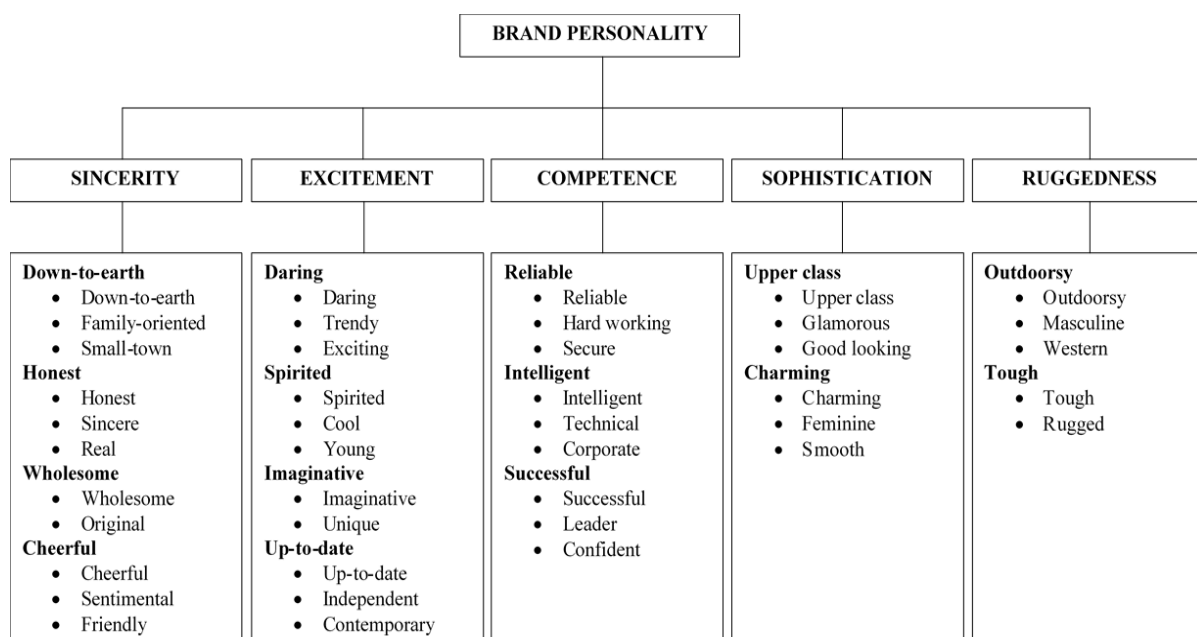


Source: Aaker (1997, 354).

Aaker (1997) suggested that the brand personality framework is generic and applicable across various product categories, but not across different cultures. Since then, we have observed a flourish of research and literature on brand personality (Azoulay and Kapferer 2003), with Aaker's brand personality framework as the most adopted framework, but also most criticised. According to Azoulay and Kapferer (2003), Aaker's (1997) scale merges different

dimensions of brand identity, of which brand personality is one of the dimensions. Similarly, Austin *et al.* (2003) suggested that Aaker (1997) tested the validity and reliability of the scale by aggregating data across diverse product categories, instead of aggregating the data within a specific product category or focusing on measuring the personality of individual brands. However, despite the criticism, Ekinci and Hosany (2006) and other tourism researchers (Hosany *et al.* 2006; Bilim and Yüksel 2008; Usakli and Baloglu 2011; Hosany and Martin 2012) perceived it to be "the most stable, reliable, and comprehensive scale developed for measuring brand personality" (Usakli and Baloglu 2011, 115).

### *The concept of destination brand personality*

Ekinci and Hosany (2006) are the two pioneers in the research field of destination brand personality. The authors took upon Austin *et al.'s* (2003) suggestions to assess the personality of a brand from only one product category. Hence, they examined the applicability of Aaker's (1997) scale in the context of tourism and tested the validity of brand personality scale for tourism destinations. Therefore, Ekinci and Hosany's (2006) seminal work proposed the generalisable destination brand personality scale, whereas in the literature there have been prior attempts to identify personality characteristics of Australia (Crockett and Wood 2004), Singapore (Henderson 2000), and Portugal (Santos 2000), but these were left unnoticed.

Ekinci and Hosany (2006) proposed the definition of the concept of destination brand personality drawing directly from the work of Phau and Lau's (2000). They defined it as "the set of human characteristics associated with a destination" (Ekinci and Hosany 2006, 127). However, a destination is in the first place a geographic location (UNWTO 2002; Hanna and Rowley 2010). As such, it already comes with a given name, making the traditional branding practices of assigning a name or a symbol to a place inapplicable (Novčić Korać and Šegota 2017). In contrast, tourist consumption sets the stage where geographic locations are consumed when associated with tourism products offered in these locations (Oh *et al.* 2004). Hence, a tourism destination with its given name becomes "a unique environment and stimulation apart from those ordinary shopping settings" (Oh *et al*. 2004, 309). As such, it is the object of tourist consumption *per se* (Jančič 1999; Oh *et al*. 2004; Ekinci and Hosany 2006). Having said that, the process of branding a tourism destination – destination branding – is a process of selecting a consistent mix of brand elements to identify and differentiate a tourism destination from its competitors through developing a unique destination brand

identity, destination brand personality, and destination image (Mathieson and Wall 1982; Cai 2002; Echtner and Ritchie 2003; Anholt 2007; Amujo and Otubanjo 2012). With this in mind, we would suggest for Ekinci and Hosany's (2006) definition of destination brand personality to be rephrased into "the set of human characteristics associated with a destination brand."

Ekinci and Hosany's (2006) work was found to be well accepted among tourism researchers, since the authors showed that tourists do ascribe personality characteristics to tourism destinations. In their study, the authors concluded that destination brand personality consisted of three salient dimensions – sincerity, excitement, and conviviality, with the latter being unique to tourism destinations (Ekinci and Hosany 2006). The destination brand personality scale has only three dimensions, whereas in the original work of Aaker (1997) there are five dimensions. By concluding that "the tourism experience is considered to be unique, emotionally charged, and of high personal relevance and value" (Ekinci and Hosany 2006, 136), the authors justified why some items were redundant to tourism destinations, and that these three dimensions were closely related to the hedonic character of tourism destinations. In Figure 2.4, we present with the final set of destination brand personality dimensions and traits.

Figure 2.4: Destination brand personality framework
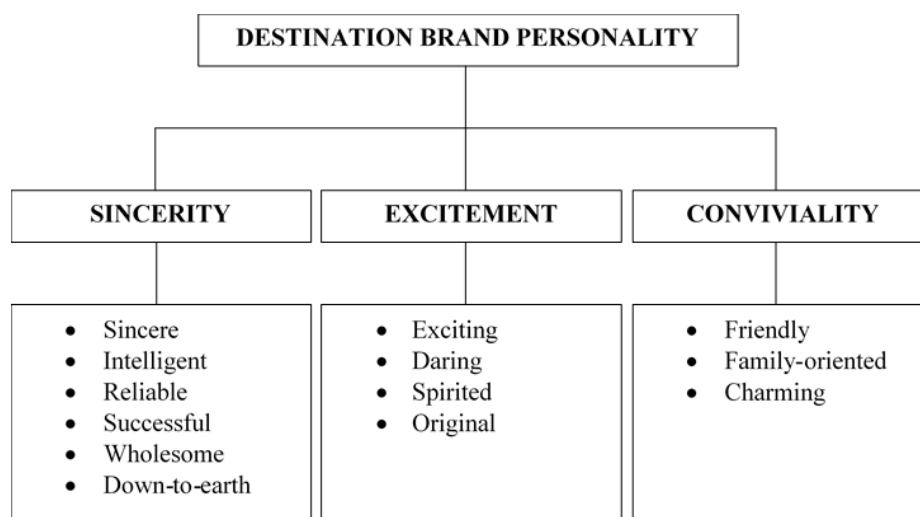


Source: modified from Ekinci and Hosany (2006, 133).

When compared to the scale proposed by Aaker (1997), the destination brand personality framework extends to its dimensions and traits, but it excludes its facets, such as in Figure 2.3. The scale proposed by Ekinci and Hosany (2006) appears to be very obstructed, and has

only 13 traits and 3 dimensions, as compared to 43 traits and 5 dimensions from the brand personality scale. This bring into question the saliency of personality traits for tourism destinations. In this way, tourism researchers are left to 'an open judgement' over which scale to use – that of Aaker (1997) or that of Ekinci and Hosany (2006). This is also why the studies on destination brand personality rapidly expanded over the last decade, with both the brand personality scale and the destination brand personality scale being used in assessing the impact on consumer behaviour in tourism. In Table 2.3 we present the summary of studies on destination brand personality and their major findings.

Table 2.3: Summary of studies on destination personality

| Study | Research design and method | Major findings |
|-------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Ekinci and Hosany (2006) | Validation of Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. British travellers (250) were asked to recall the last destination visited and evaluate it using 5-point Likert type scale. | Sincerity, excitement, and conviviality were the three validated dimensions. It was found that tourists do attribute personality characteristics to tourism destinations, and that destination brand personality has a positive impact on intention to recommend. |
| Hosany *et al.* (2006) | Used Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. British travellers (148) were asked to recall the last destination visited and evaluate it using 5-point Likert type scale. | Reported on sincerity, excitement, and conviviality as three validated dimensions. Destination image and destination brand personality were perceived as different, yet inter-related concepts. Destination brand personality was said to be related to affective components of destination image. |
| D'Astous and Boujbel (2007) | Used previously published personality scales. French speaking Canadians were asked to evaluate a number of countries representing five continents on a 5-point bipolar scales. | Developed a country personality scale, which was found to be less useful for predicting an individual's perceptions of countries as tourism destinations. The country personality scale has six dimensions: agreeableness, wickedness, snobbism, assiduousness, conformity, and unobtrusiveness. |
| Beerli *et al.* (2007) | Used Malhotra's (1981) scale. Asked international visitors to Gran Canaries, Spain (551) to evaluate tourist who visit Paris, Kenya, and the Dominican Republic on a 7-point differential scale. | Did not report on the dimensions of destination brand personality. Found that self-congruity loses its power when an individual has already visited a tourism destination. |
| Hosany *et al.* (2007) | Used Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. British travellers (148) were asked to recall the last destination visited and evaluate it using 5-point Likert type scale. | Reported on sincerity, excitement, and conviviality as three validated dimensions. Found that destination image and destination brand personality are related, and that affective destination image dimension captures the majority of variance on destination brand personality. |
| Ekinci *et al.* (2007) | Used 20 adjectives of destination personality as recommended by Ekinci and Hosany (2006). Asked German travellers (365) to evaluate Turkey on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Reported on three dimensions of destination brand personality: sincerity, excitement, and conviviality. Found that destination brand personality has a positive impact on intention to return and word-of-mouth. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Murphy, Moscardo, *et al.* (2007) | Used 20 items from Aaker's (1997) brand personalityscale. Surveyed visitors to Queensland, Australia (480) about two Queensland destinations on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Reported on three dimensions for Cairns (sincere, sophisticated, and outdoorsy) and four dimensions for Whitsunday Islands (upper class, honest, exciting, and tough). Found that brand personality can be used to differentiate between tourism destinations. |
| Murphy, Benckendorff, *et al.* (2007a) | Used 20 items from Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. Surveyed visitors to Whitsunday Islands in Queensland (227) on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Reported on four dimensions: sophistication and competence, sincerity, excitement, and ruggedness. Provided evidences on a link between destination brand personality and (1) travel motivations, and (2) self-congruity. Found no relationship between destination brand personality and actual and intended visitation. |
| Murphy, Benckendorff, *et al.* (2007b) | Used 20 items from Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. Surveyed visitors to Whitsunday Islands in Queensland (227) on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Reported on four dimensions: sophistication and competence, sincerity, excitement, and ruggedness. Reported on tourist needs and destination brand personality perceptions to be associated with higher levels of self-congruity. The latter were reported to be related to satisfaction with a tourism destination, but not related to intention to visit. |
| Pitt *et al.* (2007) | Content analysis of official tourism websites of 10 African countries. A list of 922 synonyms to Aaker's (1997) 42 personality traits were collected. These were categorised according to Aaker's (1997) brand personality dimensions. | Demonstrated how destination brands communicate their personality online. Found that some tourism destinations focused on specific dimensions of Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework, while other failed to communicate any personality dimension. |
| Prayag (2007) | Used projective techniques and in-depth interviews on international visitors to Cape Town (85) about South Africa and Cape Town. | Did not report on brand personality dimensions. Projective techniques were found effective to elicit destination-specific personality traits. |
| Lee and Suh (2011) | Used Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. Surveyed South Korean residents (100) to evaluate host cities on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Developed the city personality scale with a total of five dimensions: sincerity, excitements, technology, high-class, and femininity. |
| Usakli and Baloglu (2011) | Used Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. Surveyed visitors to Las Vegas (368) about the city on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Reported on five brand personality dimensions: vibrancy, sophistication, competence, contemporary, sincerity. The study demonstrated that destination brand personality has a positive impact on intention to return to recommend, and that self-congruity has a positive impact on tourist behavioural intentions (intention to return and word-of-mouth). |
| Rojas-Méndez and Papadopoulos (2012) | Used an unstructured open-ended questionnaire to survey residents of Buenos Aires, Argentina (223) about the United States. | Reported on four destination brand personality dimensions: amicableness, resourcefulness, neuroticism, and spirited. Found that U.S. destination brand personality is bipolar and it is a significant predictor of tourist behavioural intentions. |
| Kim and Lehto (2013) | Used Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. Surveyed travellers in United States (480) about South Korea on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Reported on seven brand personality dimensions: excitement, competence, sincerity, sophistication, ruggedness, uniqueness, and family. Findings of the study supported discrepancies between projected and perceived destination brand personality. |

| Rojas-Méndez *et al.* (2013) | Used an unstructured open-ended questionnaire to survey residents of Shanghai and Beijing, China (477) about the United States. | Reported on three destination brand personality dimensions: amicableness, resourcefulness, and self-centeredness. Findings are similar to those of Rojas-Méndez and Papadopoulos (2012). |
|---|---|---|
| Baloglu *et al.* (2014) | Combined Aaker's (1997) and Hosany *et al.*'s (2006) brand personality scale – a total of 29 items. Content analysed brochures and the Internet sites of Jamaica. Surveyed international visitors to Jamaica (312) on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Did not report on brand personality dimensions. The study found varying influences of cognitive image, affective image, and destination brand personality on global image and tourists' behavioural intentions. The study criticizes Aaker's (1997) scale as not directly applicable in the tourism context. |
| Glinska and Kilon (2014) | Content analysed slogans of Polish towns and cities (156). Used Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. Surveyed managers responsible for the promotion of Polish towns/cities (220) about the slogans. | Proposed a city brand personality scale with a total of nine dimensions, of which five 'universal' (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness), and four 'specific' (peace, neatness, conservatism, and others). |
| Kumar and Nayak (2014) | Combined Aaker's (1997) and D'Astous and Boujbel's (2007) brand personality scale. Surveyed international visitors to India (329) about India on a 5-point bipolar scale. | The study showed that destination brand personality scale can have both positive and negative traits. Findings showed six dimensions: courteousness, vibrancy, conformity, liveliness, viciousness, and tranquillity. |
| Pereira *et al.* (2014) | Content analysed golf-related websites (144 websites). Used a combination of Goldberg's (1992) 'Big Five' model and Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale to evaluate the results. | The findings showed that out of 10 destination personality attributes, only two belonged to Aaker's (1997) scale. Findings revealed that there is not a strong presence of destination brand personality attributes when promoting golf destinations online. |
| Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou (2015) | Combined several destination brand personality scales: Hosany *et al.* (2006), Lee and Xie (2011), and Usakli and Baloglu (2011). Surveyed Greeks (568) about Patras, Greece on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Findings supported the significant role of destination brand personality in influencing overall destination image and predicting tourist behavioural intentions (i.e., revisit and recommendation). Reported on six dimensions: sophistication, excitement, beauty, competence, negative trait, and miscellaneous. |
| Papadimitriou *et al.* (2015) | Combined several destination brand personality scales: Hosany *et al.* (2006), Lee and Xie (2011), and Usakli and Baloglu (2011). Surveyed residents of Athens (361) about Patras, Greece on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Reported on two dimensions: excitement and sincerity. Results confirmed the influential role of destination brand personality and affective destination image in the formation of overall destination image. In turn, overall image was a mediator of the relationships of destination brand personality and affective destination with tourists' behavioural intentions (i.e., revisit and recommend). |
| Bekk *et al.* (2016) | Used Aaker *et al.*'s (2001) brand personality scale. Surveyed international vacationers at holiday resort in Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, Spain (308) about different holiday resorts on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Reported on three dimensions: sincerity, excitement, and sophistication. Introduced tourist-destination personality similarity concept, which was found to increase tourist satisfaction and actual recommendations of a tourism destination. |

| Glińska and Gorbaniuk (2016) | Used Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. Surveyed managers responsible for the promotion of Polish towns/cities (220) about different Polish towns and cities. | They criticised Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale as non-adequate to describe the personality of a city brand as desired by city marketing managers. Other findings are similar to those of Glinska and Kilon (2014). |
|---|---|---|

Source: Modified and extended from Usakli and Baloglu (2011).

As seen from Table 2.3, the majority of studies still relied on the brand personality scale proposed by Aaker (1997), despite the existence of the destination brand personality scale as proposed by Ekinci and Hosany (2006). Studies that have used Aaker's (1997) scale either confirmed its dimensions in the context of tourism or offered alternative dimensions that were either culture-specific or place-specific (Murphy, Benckendorff, *et al.* 2007a; 2007b; Lee and Suh 2011; Usakli and Baloglu 2011; Kim and Lehto 2013; Bekk *et al.* 2016; Glińska and Gorbaniuk 2016). Some studies decided to use alternative personality scales or employ a variety of qualitative techniques to capture brand personalities of studied destinations (Beerli *et al.* 2007; Prayag 2007; Rojas-Méndez and Papadopoulos 2012; Rojas-Méndez *et al.* 2013, Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2015; Papadimitriou *et al.* 2015). However, regardless of the research approach to destination brand personality, it is evident that the literature is still not united in the generalisability of destination brand personality dimensions, facets, and traits.

The existing literature also offered insight into the relationship between destination brand personality and tourist behavioural intentions (e.g. intention to (re)visit, and intention to recommend). Ekinci and Hosany (2006) showed that destination brand personality increases the intention to recommend a tourism destination. In the follow-up studies by Hosany *et al.* (2006) and Hosany *et al.* (2007), destination brand personality and affective component of its image were significant predictors of intention to recommend. Similarly, Ekinci *et al.* (2007) and Usakli and Baloglu (2011) demonstrated that destination brand personality was positively related to intention to return to a destination and willingness to engage in word-of-mouth. On the contrary, Murphy, Benckendorff, *et al.* (2007a) found no significant relationship between destination brand personality and actual or intended visitation. The authors argue that "while brand personality may play an important role in destination image formation, a strong personal connection with the personality of a destination does not directly translate into visitation" (Murphy, Benckendorff, *et al.* 2007a, 430).

The existing literature on destination brand personality offered researchers' insight into what they consider a tourism destination. The majority of them focused on uncovering brand personality of a country (for example, Ekinci *et al.* 2007; Pitt *et al.* 2007; Lee and Suh 2011; Baloglu *et al.* 2014; Kumar and Nayak 2014). Uncovering brand personality of a city or a town was the focus of Usakli and Baloglu (2012), Glinska and co-authors (in 2014 with Kilon and in 2016 with Gorbaniuk) and Papadimitriou and co-authors (2015). Only a handful of studies focused on destinations that were characterised by specific tourist activities; golf courts (Pereira *et al.* 2014) and holiday resorts (Bekk *et al.* 2016). Moreover, researchers wrote about destination personality instead of destination brand personality. The latter brings us to the issue we have previously emphasised – that a tourism destination is primary a geographic location with its name as its brand (Novčić Korać and Šegota 2017). As such, a tourism destination will be consumed through its specific tourism product that is to be branded in order to create its distinct brand personality. It will not, on the other hand, be consumed due to its given name as a geographic location. Its given name is its brand or a symbol, but only in connection to its specific tourism product, and will bring significant meaning to individuals. Therefore, in order to get an in-depth understanding of destination brand personality, researchers have to initially provide insight into what specific tourism product has been associated with a destination, and then try to understand how or to what extent does it influence destination brand personality. Many studies presented in Table 2.3 failed in doing so.

### 2.3.5 *Exploring the link between destination image and destination brand personality*

Very soon after the concept of destination brand personality found its way into the tourism literature, it became inseparable from the concept of destination image. It seemed like marketing literature has already established the link between brand image and brand personality. According to Keller (2003, 86), "brand personality reflects how people feel about a brand as a result of what they think the brand is or does, the manner by which the brand is marketed, and so on." However, there is still much ambiguity surrounding the relationship between brand image and brand personality (Patterson 1999). Consequently, it has extended to the relationship between destination image and destination brand personality.

The first issue originates from a very poor conceptualisation of destination image and destination brand personality. Moreover, the literature lacks empirical studies on

understanding the relationship between the two concepts. That is, the literature provided only with: (1) definitional inconsistencies, and (2) the interchangeable use of the terms 'personality' and 'image'. Patterson (1999) identified 27 different definitions of brand image and 12 different definitions of brand personality. The author also found that not only brand image and brand personality were used interchangeably (e.g. Smothers 1993; Graeff 1997), but also brand image was defined similar to brand personality (for example, Hendon and Williams 1985; Upshaw 1995). Patterson (1999) concluded that researchers failed to distinguish between the concepts of image, personality, identity, and user image.

In tourism literature, there have been several attempts to explain the relationship between destination image and destination brand personality (Hosany *et al.* 2006; Hosany *et al.* 2007; Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2015). The authors conceptualised the image as an encapsulating concept which includes a variety of characteristics and dimensions. The latter extends to destination brand personality and its attributes, user image, and consumer benefits. Furthermore, some studies (Hosany *et al.* 2006; Hosany *et al.* 2007; Prayag 2007; Yuksel and Bilim 2009; Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2015; Papadimitriou *et al.* 2015), by empirically delineating the relationship between destination image and destination brand personality, revealed that the two concepts were related, but different. It was demonstrated that the affective component of destination image captured the majority of variance on destination brand personality dimensions.

### 2.3.6   Summary

In the context of tourism, consumption of products relates to intangible, perishable, and variable experiences, and services and product amenities available to tourists while they visit a tourism destination. This is why the term 'product involvement' is considered to be obsolete if one forgets that tourism products are an amalgam of many individual experiences, products, and services in a tourism destination. In the case of a destination choice, a tourism destination is considered to represent both a product category and a choice alternative, the two elements of product involvement. Through the lens of product involvement, tourism destination is an object of consumption, and thus an object of personal significance to a decision-maker. As such, destination choice represents high-involvement activity, since tourists are left with high risk of being dissatisfied until the actual visit takes place. In order to avoid tourist dissatisfaction, DMOs and other image formation agents are eager to portray a tourism

destination as realistic as possible. Image formation agents do so by developing destination image and brand personality through its specific tourism product.

With the aim of influencing one's destination choice, the image formation agents utilise human characteristics in influencing identification process between a tourism destination and its (potential) tourists. Identification requires development of destination brand personality, which gained much attention over the last few decades among tourism researchers. From the literature review, we conclude that 'there is more work to be done' in order to clarify the relationship between destination image and destination brand personality. Moreover, with tourism destination being primarily a geographic location with its given name as its brand, there is a need to demonstrate what specific tourism product is associated with a destination in order to further explore its brand personality. It is important to stress that tourism destination will not, on the other hand, be consumed due to its given name as a geographic location. Its given name is its brand or a symbol, but only in connection to its specific tourism product, and it will bring significant meaning to individuals.

## 2.4 ADVERTISING INVOLVEMENT

In contemporary destination advertising practice, it is rare to find advertisements (hereinafter 'ads') that lead off with only verbal claims. Even if there is only a verbal claim, such as in radio ads, advertisers use a very picturesque description for a radio listener to easily imagine a tourism destination. As we already pointed out, it is due to the very nature of tourist consumption that destination image is an important element in the destination selection process (Driscoll *et al.* 1994; Gallarza *et al.* 2002; Echtner and Ritchie 2003; Tasci *et al.* 2007). This is why destination advertising, especially that which extends beyond only verbal claims, is considered as one of the most important sources of information about a tourism destination (Meenaghan 1995). Keller (2003) argues that advertising has the ability to provide information to consumers about the type of a person who visits the destination and the way a tourism destination is supposed to be consumed. The latter represents its functional characteristics, such as its attractions, activities, and the overall atmosphere of the place. The author further argues that this is why advertising has a significant impact on the development of destination brand personality (Keller 2003).

In relation to advertising involvement, an advertising message is the object of one's personal significance (Zaichkowsky 1985; 1994). However, individuals are busy and distracted, and have little capacity to process accumulated information (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). It is under these circumstances that marketing managers and advertisers need to get a straightforward message to tourists. The message contains image and brand personality of a tourism destination, which needs to be accompanied by presentation of a tourism product specific to that destination as realistically as possible. What is an advertising message and how it is being presented to a target audience are two important elements of advertising involvement (Cohen 1983; Zaichkowsky 1986).

### 2.4.1 Definition of advertising

If we look up the words 'advertisement' and 'advertise' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, we find the following definitions: (1) "a notice or announcement in a public medium promoting a product, service, or event or publicizing a job vacancy," and (2) "describe or draw attention to (a product, service, or event) in a public medium in order to promote sales or attendance." Immediately after there is an extension of the definition of the word advertise to "publicize

information about," "make (a quality or fact) known," and "notify (someone) of something." These definitional extensions are very important for understanding the role of advertising, since advertising is simply more than 'an announcement in a public medium' when it comes to promoting an object of interest (Percy and Elliot 2009). In fact, the root of the term advertising is found in Latin word *advertere* which translates to 'turn towards.' The original indication was to turn one's attention to, or to bring to someone's attention a seller, product, service, or event. Similarly, Percy and Elliot (2009, 4) conclude that "advertising is an indirect way of turning a potential customer toward the advertised product or service by providing information that is designed to affect a favourable impression." In the twentieth century, there were many definitions of advertising proposed. In the '60s and '70s advertising was defined as aiding brand image, whilst it is nowadays considered to represent the core of social dialog and communication (Richards and Curran 2002; Jančič 2013). In Table 2.4, we present selected definitions of advertising.

Table 2.4: Selected definitions of advertising

| Study | Proposed definition |
|---|---|
| Arens (1996) | The non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products (goods, and services) or ideas by identified sponsors through visual media. |
| Bearden *et al.* (1998) | The element of the marketing communications mix that is non-personal, paid for by an identified sponsor, and disseminated through mass channels of communication to promote the adoption of goods, services, persons, or ideas. |
| Belch and Belch (1998) | Any paid form of non-personal communication about an organisation, product, services, or idea by an identified sponsor. |
| Zikmund and d'Amico (1998) | An informative or persuasive message carried by a non-personal medium and paid for by an identified sponsor whose organisation or product is identified in some way. |
| Wells *et al.* (1998) | Paid non-personal communication form an identified sponsor using mass media to persuade or influence an audience. |
| Perreault and McCarthy (1999) | Any paid form of non-personal presentation of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor. |
| Varden Bergh and Katz (1999) | Non-personal communication for products, services, or ideas that is paid for by an identified sponsor for the purpose of influencing an audience. |
| Armstrong and Kotler (2000) | Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor. |
| Hoffman *et al.* (2000) | Non-personal communication that is paid for by identified sponsor, and involves either mass communication via newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and other media (e.g. billboards, bus stop signage) or direct-to-consumer communication via direct mail. |
| Lamb *et al.* (2000) | Impersonal, one-way mass communication about a product or organisation that is paid for by a marketer. |
| O'Guinn *et al.* (2000) | A paid, mass-mediated attempt to persuade. |

Source: Richards and Curran (2002, 65).

'Paid form of communication', 'non-personal', 'identified sponsor', 'persuasive', and 'mass communication' are the key words highlighted from the definitions in the previous table. These suggest that advertising is "a paid form of non-personal communication of an identified sponsor using mass media to influence or persuade an audience" (Jančič 2013, 26). However, technological development and innovation in communication drove Jeff Richardson and Catherine Curran towards improving the aforementioned definition of advertising. They used a Delphi method to search for a contemporary definition of advertising. As a result, advertising has been defined as "a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future" (Richardson and Curran 2000, 74). According to Jančič (2013), this redefinition constituted advertising as: (a) paid communication, (b) mediated communication, (c) persuasive communication, and (d) identified communication. But Jančič (2013) stressed that the definition neglected the two important elements: the creativity of its design and the exchange process (i.e. the message conveyed with the aim to fulfil promises). Thus, Jančič (2013, 27) offered a new definition stating that advertising is "planned, paid for form of creative (mass) communication from an identifiable source, designed to engage marketers and consumers in an exchange process by conveying fulfilled promises."

In the context of tourism, at the core of the aforementioned exchange process is a tourism destination. Due to the nature of tourist consumption, it is very important for destination advertising to communicate fulfilled promises, yet even more so importantly if a tourist has no prior knowledge or experience with a tourism destination. Destination advertising not only helps in conveying the advertising message from an advertiser to a tourist, but it aims to: "(1) generate advertising awareness among the target audience; (2) generate awareness of the destination as a place to visit; (3) create a positive image of the destination *vis-à-vis* its competitors; (4) motivate consumers to travel to the destination in a near future through (2) and (3) above; and (5) influence travel behaviour, by converting those motivated by advertising to actually visit the destination" (Siegel and Ziff-Levine 1990, 29). In fact, an individual's response to the destination is highly associated with its advertising (Bilim and Yüksel 2008; Yüksel and Bilim 2009; Hsu and Li 2010). With this in mind, we will illustrate how the exchange paves its way through the advertising communication process, taking into account the creation of a projected and perceived image.

### 2.4.2 Advertising communication process

Induced image formation agents strive to understand how advertising creates awareness and attitudes among existing and potential tourists in order to increase the effectiveness of destination advertising. Kamin (2013, 104) says that "communication, in the broadest sense, is a process of exchanging and circulating messages: opinions, ideas, and information among people /…/, which occurs at different interaction levels." In the context of tourism, destination advertising as a non-personal communication occurrs on a mass communication level between a destination image formation agent and the target audience. According to Kamin (2013), the advertising communication process is more complex than a regular communication process, because its elements (i.e. coding, delivery, and decoding) take many forms and dimensions. In fact, the way a message is coded, delivered, and decoded will affect how tourists engage in the exchange process. Hence, understanding of the basic elements of this communication process (i.e. coding, delivery, and decoding) is very important (Kamin 2013).

### Coding of the advertising message

Within the element of coding, Kamin (2013) distinguishes between sources of coding and the code. The author further distinguishes between three different sources involved in coding of the advertising message: the advertiser, the creator, and the messenger (Kamin 2013).

An advertiser is an induced agent that requests and pays for the advertising, and is conferred its legal and moral responsibilities. In most cases, an advertiser does not have enough sources and capabilities to create and design an advertisement, hence it collaborates with an advertising agency and its team of creative directors, graphic designers, photographers, and copywriters, is creatively involved in delivering the design and the content of the message, and is therefore considered to be the creator of the message. The content of the message is usually delivered or communicated by a source of endorsement (e.g. a famous celebrity, a professional, or a typical consumer of a product, service, or event) and hence becomes the messenger (Kamin 2013, 106–108). In the context of tourism, the messenger is considered to be a typical visitor to the tourism destination (Sirgy and Su 2000; Sirgy 2014), since there are little or no celebrity endorsements of such kind.

The second element of coding is the code. According to Kamin (2013, 109), the code is the advertisement, which is "a structured text that includes visual and linguistic elements as

carefully chosen codes and symbols intended to convey the meaning of the message." According to Clow and Baack (2007, 169), "most major forms of advertising have both visual and verbal elements, with the obvious exception of radio." Moreover, it is in the visually-based advertisement where a great emphasis is on the role of the picture for conveying the message. Pollay (1985) observes that there has been an increase in portions of magazine ads occupied by pictures as compared to words. Visual imagery in pictures can range from concrete and realistic to highly abstract and metaphorical (Clow and Baack 2007). Therefore, it is the implicitness and ambiguity of visual messages and the 'openness' of pictures to multiple interpretations why advertisers rely on pictures to convey the messages as opposed to words (Marchand 1985; Messaris 1997; McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). For an effective delivery of the message through pictures and for avoidance of any possible misinterpretations or argumentation, advertisers need to carefully and thoroughly select symbols (i.e., how to code the message). This requires an in-depth understanding of the object of consumption, the target audience, the technological dimensions of a communication medium, and the medium's reach and coverage (Ang and Lim 2006; Kamin 2013).

### *Delivery of the advertising message*

The second element of the advertising communication process is the delivery, which refers to the medium as a channel of communication (Percy and Elliot 2009; Kamin 2013). With regard to the technology used to communicate with the target audience, an advertisement can be communicated through print media (newspapers, billboards, etc.), broadcast media (television, cinema, radio, etc.), and online media (webpages, social media, etc.). However, this is not in the core of this thesis, therefore not much attention is placed on the delivery process.

### *Decoding of the advertising message*

The third element of the advertising communication process is the decoding of the advertising message. Kamin (2013) distinguishes between the receiver of the message and the processing of the message.

There are three different receivers of the message: the typical representative, the gatekeeper, and the consumer (Kamin 2013). The gatekeeper is the one who decides upon the final design of the advertisement. It can be an advertiser or a creative team in the agency. The typical

representative is in most cases portrayed in the message (hence, it becomes the messenger). It helps to establish a quicker match between a message and a consumer (Kamin 2013). Within the context of tourism, the typical representative possesses similar attributes to a typical visitor to a tourism destination or that of an average representative of market segment the advertiser is trying to address. It is an imaginary constructed persona that advertisers and creators perceive as an average receiver of the message, which aids them in designing and coding the message. The latter is considered to be a potential or an existing tourist, who will decide upon visiting a destination and thus 'consume it'.

The processing is what we commonly understand as "all people's reactions when they are actively or passively looking at or listening to an advert, as well as after the exposure if they are still thinking about it" (Percy and Elliot 2009, 252). There are four most common processing responses to advertising:

1. Attention – in order for a person to start processing an advertisement, he/she first has to pay attention to it. Therefore, exposure to an advertisement is necessary in order for a person to start processing the message. Smith and Kosslyn (2007, 144) describe it as "the process whereby we can select from among the many competing stimuli present in our environment, facilitating the processing of some, while inhibiting the processing of others. This selection can be driven endogenously by our goals, or exogenously by a salient or novel stimulus that captures attention away from the task at hand."

2. Learning – once a person pays attention to an advertisement, he or she "is in a position to learn something as a result of what is presented in the execution" (Percy and Elliot 2009, 252). Learning refers to nothing more than to becoming acquainted with the content of an advertisement.

3. Acceptance – once a person pays attention to an advertisement and learns something from its content, he or she is in a position to accept or reject the message. The latter is presented in codes and symbols. Successful decoding of the message would result in a target audience's personal agreement "with something that was learned from one of the components in the advertisement" (Percy and Elliot 2009, 263).

4. Emotion – this forth component of processing is actually a mediator between the learning and acceptance. It represents "a response from the automatic nervous system" (Percy and Elliot 2009, 252). At its simplest, it means that a person would either like or dislike was learned from the advertisement.

Clow and Baack (2007) say that it is pictures that lead towards more favourable attitudes towards the advertising. Therefore, visual elements of advertising have a tendency to make people like something more compared to verbal elements. Clow and Baack (2007) say that it is because visual elements are easy to remember and the transfer of cultural meanings is more likely to transcend cultural differences as compared to verbal descriptions. Given such prevalence, understanding how visual imagery influences destination image and brand personality perceptions can provide marketers with yet another tool to strategically manage destination advertising.

### 2.4.3   *Picture as a visual imagery of brand personality*

Numerous authors demonstrated that consumers prefer pictures over words (Rossiter and Percy 1978; Clow and Baack 2007; Percy and Elliot 2009). This is why a picture is one of the most important elements of the advertising message (Ang and Lim 2006; Clow and Baack 2007; Percy and Elliot 2009). It is the lack of constraints on the imagery interpretation that is considered to be the source of advantage in persuasiveness of pictures, as compared to verbal claims (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). Calkins (1928, 141) simplified the importance of pictures by saying that "a picture . . . can say things that no advertiser could say in words and retain his self-respect."

Pictures and visual imagery are very useful to destination marketing managers and advertisers when they try come up with the answers of '*what* to say' and '*how* to say it'. As Percy and Elliot (2009, 285) write, "this is a much more involved issue than it might appear on the surface, because meaning in communication is dependent upon many things beyond the obvious content of the message." If an advertising message is made easier for its target audience to process and understand it, the more likely is that desired communication effects will be achieved and consequently one's intention to visit a tourism destination will be greater (Percy and Elliott 2009). As we previously discussed, the processing of advertising messages resembles the communication response sequence, and the key to attention and learning is through illustrations and visuals. The latter have to be stimulating in order to draw people's attention and resonate with a target audience (Percy and Elliott 2009). Hence, in order to maximise the results of advertising, special attention has to be paid to what is presented and how is it presented. Even more so in the case of destination advertising, since a destination

image and destination brand personality have the difficulties of being illustrated, and made tangible and intelligible.

When it comes to facilitating attention in general, pictures are more influential than words. This is because the average time spent looking at a magazine advert is 1.65 seconds, of which 70% is directed to a picture (Rossiter 1988). Percy and Elliot (2009) say that, on the other hand, for a picture it is not enough to attract attention, but it has to attain it. That is, if pictures are to be recognised and remembered, they have to hold one's attention for at least two seconds (Avons and Phillips 1980). Moreover, pictures have the ability to automatically engage people, and it is this interaction that gives pictures the superiority over words (Myers 1994). Percy and Elliot (2009, 296) explain that pictures have the ability to establish a relationship between a viewer and an image by enabling a viewer to imagine himself or herself "as either part of what is shown in the picture, or outside observing what is there." For Urry and Larsen (2011), pictures used in advertising have a twofold role. The first role is in creating a desire for bodily travel, whilst the second role is to "script and stage destinations with extraordinary imaginative geographies" (Urry and Larsen 2011, 173). The authors observe that advertising works through mobilising and triggering viewer's desires and fantasies by offering seductive and palpable imageries, which are 'accepted' by viewers as realities (Urry and Larsen 2011).

In the case of the effect pictures could have on the learning process about the content of the advertising, one has to take into account that it is more likely that people will learn something if they are in a position to make familiar associations with the content of advertising (Percy and Elliott 2009). Bower (1970) refers to it as associative learning, which is aided by pictures that show how the product is used, rather than leaving it up to viewers to form their own opinions on how the product should be used (Bower 1970). In the context of tourism, associative learning can be enhanced by using pictures that portray a typical visitor to a tourism destination, experiences, and activities that are to be associated with the tourism product significant for that tourism destination, or tourism product amenities. These could stimulate viewers to associate a destination with positive emotions and tangible experiences. Bilim and Yüksel (2008) and Park and John (2012) agree that using appealing pictures in destination advertising can influence how persuasiveness of the message. That is, pictures associated with a desirable personality of a typical visitor of a tourism destination can be

71

appealing to those exposed to an advertisement. These pictures can signal that those who visit a destination possess similar or equal personality attributes as the destination brand, or it can create a possibility for those who visit a tourism destination to become more like the personality associated with that of a destination brand. However, the role of destination advertising in tourist destination selection process has been under-researched (Jenkins 2003; Bilim and Yüksel 2008).

### 2.4.4 *Linking brands to typical brand representatives in advertising*

Advertising serves as a medium through which a general process of meaning transfer takes place (McCracken 1989; Phau and Lau 2000). The meaning transfer in advertising is possible due to two reasons. Firstly, people are emotional beings that respond to both external and internal influences. Secondly, people act based on meanings they ascribe to objects and situations. McCracken (1989) and Kamin (2013) state that the process of transferring meaning starts at the moment the advertiser identifies what he or she wants to associate the product with. Once this has been set, the creators of the advertising message then survey what would be the most appropriate, culturally-constituted world in which these meanings should be voiced. That is, which selected objects, people, and contexts will most efficiently convey the meaning in a visible, concrete form (McCracken 1989; Percy and Elliot 2009). This concrete and visible form represent the elements of the advertising message. For McCracken (1989, 314), these are of highest concern, since "elements come charged with more meanings than are wanted for the product so the advertiser must evoke some, but not all, of the meanings of the elements. [E]lements and product must be presented in such a way that the similarity between them suggests itself irresistibly to the viewer. This precise combination of elements and product set the stage for the transfer of meaning from the product to the consumer".

One of the elements of the transfer of the meaning is a typical brand representative. The latter is a ubiquitous feature of modern marketing, and it is all about source credibility (McCracken 1989; Kamin 2013). Similarly, Kamen, Azhari and Kragh (1975, 18) say that a typical brand representative is a contemporary tool for marketing strategists who act as a kind of "core around which the substantive messages are positioned." When used in advertising, a typical representative of the brand is very likely portrayed in the advertising message to help establish a quicker match between a message and a consumer (Kamin 2013). Moreover, a typical brand representative is very important in conveying the personality of the brand. For

Phau and Lau (2000), brand personality is created based on user imagery and its two elements: (1) typical user, which represents consumers who use the brand or (2) idealised user, which is portrayed in advertising. These two are different, but related elements. The typical user could be envisioned by a consumer – in this case, it only exists in the minds of people and can be different from person to person. On the other hand, a typical user can to some extent resemble an ideal user featured in advertising. As such, it becomes a symbol that conveys the meaning from a brand to a consumer. More on how the meaning is interpreted by a consumer will be described in the next chapter where we introduce the concept of self-congruity as a synonym for ego involvement.

### 2.4.5 Summary

As we have seen in the previous chapter, tourism destination is a very intangible, perishable, and variable object of consumption. Therefore, marketing manager advertisers have to be very creative when designing advertising messages to catch one's attention, create desires through its imagery, deliver real and honest messages, and persuade people to visit a destination. Hence, by taking into account the processes of coding, delivery, and decoding of the message, advertising has a very difficult task to 'break through' lots of information from a person's internal and external environment in order to turn a person towards an advertisement. Once a person is aware of the advertising, he or she also has to engage in the exchange process in order to communicate its promise.

Through the lens of involvement, an advertising message is the object that stimulates one's attention. As such, it is the object of one's personal significance (Zaichkowsky 1985; 1994). On one side, destination choice depends on a destination image and destination brand personality, and the way they are coded into the advertising message. On the other side, it has to do a lot with how a tourist, as receiver of the message, processes the message and how willing is he or she to personally engage with the message and accept it. Also, its picture has the ability to engage tourists by transforming a destination's reality into a tourist's fantasy and call upon the action to again re-transform this fantasy into reality when the actual visit takes place. In tourism, many authors (Bilim and Yüksel 2008; Park and John 2012) accept the suggestion that using appealing images helps in making a destination more persuasive. But they also call for more research that would bring more insight into the influence of images

rendered through destination advertising in the tourist destination selection process (Jenkins 2003; Bilim and Yüksel 2008).

## 2.5 EGO INVOLVEMENT

For ego involvement to develop, individuals must identify themselves with the object of consumption (Selin and Howard 1988). In the context of tourism, this represents establishing some sort of identification of a person with a destination. In more recent tourism literature, the latter has been researched through the concept of self-congruity, which Sirgy (2014, 64) defines as "a process of matching (some dimensions of) a tourist's self-concept and the destination image." For Sirgy (2014), self-congruity has multiple dimensions, which represent the matching of an actual image, an ideal image, a social image, a socially ideal image, and a functional image of destinations and individuals.

However, this general definition proposed by Sirgy (2014) originated from a plethora of definitions on self-congruity that have evolved from research in the social and behavioural sciences. Much of it stems from psychology and its perception of the concept of the self. Initially, the self was closely tied to a 'unitary self' (in the work of Cooley 1902, Lecky 1945 or Mead 1934, all cited in Sirgy and Su 2000, 343). But more recent psychological literature points to the self as "a collection of masks each tied to a particular set of social circumstances" (Sirgy and Su 2000, 343), which make the self a diverse and multifaceted concept.

### 2.5.1 Definition of self-congruity

Self-congruity is one of the most widely used concepts linked to the study of brand, product, and tourism destination preferences (Mulyanegara and Tsarenko 2009; Aguirre-Rodriguez *et al.* 2012; Sirgy and Su 2000). The theory of self-congruity proposes that consumer and tourist preferences are partially determined by how an individual associates self-image with that of a brand, product, or tourism destination. The latter are mainly reflected in a typical or ideal user of a brand or product, or a typical visitor to a destination (Dolich 1969; Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Sirgy and Su 2000; Mulyanegara and Tsarenko 2009).

Grubb and Grathwohl's (1967) study on the interrelatedness of the self-concept, symbolism, and market behaviour was among the pioneering studies to examine how consumers alienate their decision-making with symbolic values of brands and products, and their multiple selves. The authors distinguished between a consumer personality and a self by noting that "the

concept of self is more restricted than personality, which facilitates measurement and centres on the critical element of how the individual perceives himself" (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967, 23–24). They also note that for the 'self-theory', one's self represents a totality of what one is aware of, his or her attitudes, perceptions, feeling, and evaluations of oneself as an object, which furthermore represents a principal value around which one's life revolves, that is to be safeguarded, maintained or changed, and which ultimately influences one's behaviour (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967). Furthermore, the self-construct evolves through the process of social experience, which places an individual out of a vacuum and makes it succumbed to the environment and personal attires (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967).

Figure 2.5: Interrelatedness of consummation of goods as symbols and self-concept
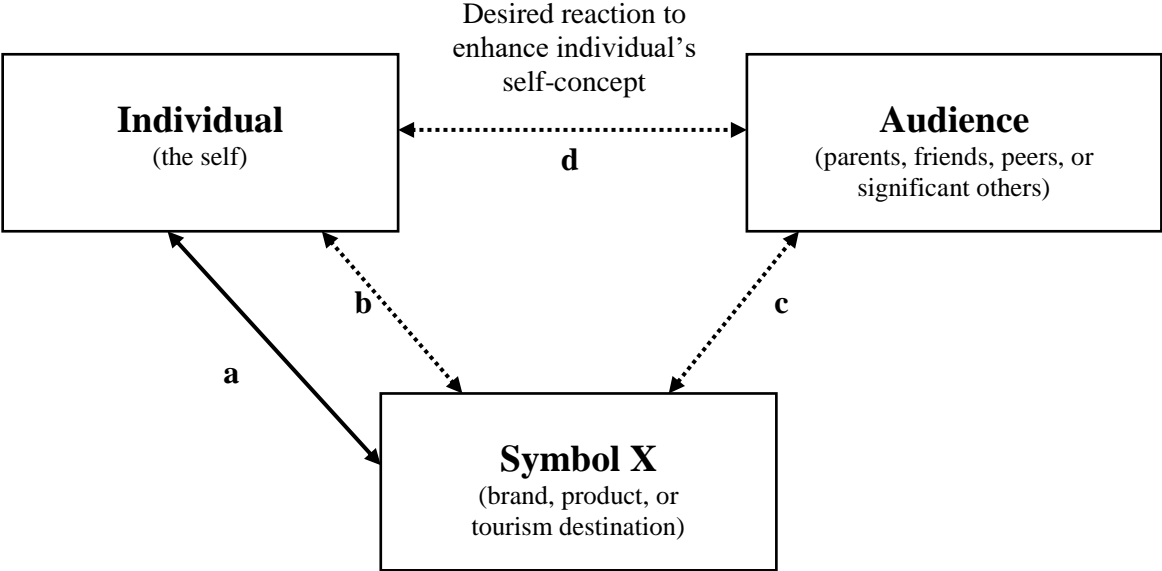


Note: a=intrinsic value; b, c, d = extrinsic values.
Source: Grubb and Grathwohl (1967, 25).

In Figure 2.5, Grubb and Grathwohl (1967) present how they conceptualise one's consumption process. Aiming at enhancing one's self, individuals buy and use objects that they perceive as symbols. The latter are of subjective meaning to individuals. These subjective meanings could have intrinsic and extrinsic value. The intrinsic value of a symbol is indicated by double-headed arrow 'a', while extrinsic value is indicated by arrows 'b', 'c', and 'd.' The intrinsic value reflects one's self-concept to the extent of how one perceives himself/herself or would like to be perceived. In this case, the object of consumption enables enhancement of one's self-concept. In contrast, consumption rarely goes unnoticed by others

(i.e., parents, friends, peers, or significant others). By purchasing and using the object, an individual is attributing meaning to it (arrow 'b'), but so is the audience (arrow 'c'). If both meanings are commonly understood, then an individual will receive the desired reaction from the audience, and self-enhancement will again take place (arrow 'c').

Mulyanegara and Tsarenko (2009) say that it is the brand of the object of consumption that has certain characteristics which help individuals express various dimensions of one's self (Belk 1988; Malhotra 1988; Kleine *et al.* 1993). Not only does the brand help in expressing one's self, but it also changes it. This is because brand image and personality have been developed in order to enable consumers to associate with the object of consumption. Brand image and personality are developed in order to create consistency. Consistency is what the relationship between an individual and a brand relies upon. Mulyanegara and Tsarenko (2009) suggest that the more consumers find their 'selves' to be consistent to that of the brand personality, it is more likely they would create an interaction with the brand as if it were an actual person. Brands reinforce consumer need to behave in ways which help in maintaining internal (how I see myself) and external consistency (how I think others see me). Self-enhancement and self-consistency motivate individuals to reinforce their internal beliefs of who they are or who they want to be, and externalise them based on how they want others to think of them (Sirgy 1985). Once one's self is matched to the personality of a brand, we are talking about self-congruity. Numerous studies have shown that self-congruity has important role in one's purchase decisions, generally indicating on positive attitudes towards brands and products (Graeff 1997) and purchase intentions (Malhotra 1981).

Malhotra's (1981) study is considered pioneering since it operationalised the concept of self-congruity: provided was the self-congruity scale. It comprised of 15 bipolar adjectives (i.e., rugged-delicate, excitable-calm, uncomfortable-comfortable, dominating-submissive, thrifty-indulgent, pleasant-unpleasant, contemporary-non contemporary, organised-disorganised, rational-emotional, youthful-mature, orthodox-liberal, formal-informal, complex-simple, colourless-colourful, modest-vain), which aimed at determining the congruity between one's self and a handful of brands. Respondents were asked to evaluate different dimensions of their 'selves' on a proposed set of attributes. They were also asked to repeat the task for a brand and a generic product. Congruity was computed by comparing the two test scores for each adjective. It was suggested that the closer the scores, the higher the congruity (Malhotra

1981). It was also suggested that the congruity led towards more favourable attitude towards a product and greater likelihood of its purchase (Malhotra 1981).

*Self-congruity in tourism*

Sirgy (2014, 64) defines self-congruity as "a process of matching (some dimensions of) a tourist's self-concept with the destination visitor image." The author explains that "the greater the match between self-concept and the destination visitor image, the greater the likelihood that tourists feel motivated to travel to that destination" (Sirgy 2014, 64). From Sirgy's (2014) definition, one can observe that it is the typical visitor of a destination that is important for establishing the link between one's self and a destination. Also, the typical destination visitor is what we referred to as the typical representative in our discussion on decoding advertising messages. In this study, the typical destination visitor is defined as an element of user-imagery that aids in establishing a quicker match between an object of tourist consumption and a tourist. It can be either a typical user, which represents consumers who use the brand, and/or an idealised user, which is portrayed in advertising (Phau and Lau 2000). Since a tourism destination is an object of tourist consumption if connected to a specific tourism product, the typical destination visitor will convey an image of the tourism product and with it associated experiences, expectations, and emotions.

Chon (1992) was the first to introduce the concept of self-congruity in the context of tourism. Contrary to Malhotra (1981), Chon (1992) proposed to measure self-congruity directly using five-question Likert type scale. His study resulted in 'self-image/destination image congruity,' which was argued to increase tourist satisfaction after a visit to destination (Chon 1992). Litvin and Goh (2002) surveyed self-congruity in pre-trip setting (e.g. visitation interests and purchase proclivity) using both Malhotra's (1981) and Chon's (1992) scales. The authors demonstrated that self-congruity positively influences behavioural intentions (interest to visit and likelihood to visit) regardless of the scale used. Since then, a growing body of research has emerged that explores the relationship between the self-congruity and tourism-related behaviour. In Table 2.5, we present the studies that have emerged since the seminal work of Chon (1992).

Table 2.5: Summary of the self-congruity studies in tourism

| Study | Research design and method | Major findings |
|---|---|---|
| Chon (1992) | Aimed at developing a self-congruity scale in the context of tourism. International visitors to Norfolk, Virginia, USA (225) were asked to imagine a typical visitor of Norfolk and evaluate it on a set of attributes. | Introduced the concept of self-congruity in tourism. Self-image and destination image matched in the case of post-trip satisfaction. |
| Litvin *et al.* (2001) | Used Malhotra (1981) scale. Residents of Singapore (139) were intercepted at several public locations and asked to evaluate visitors to Singapore on a 7-point semantic differentail scale. Congruity was not computed, but mean scores were compared across innovator and follower segments. | The research showed that tourism innovators have a distinctly unique self-image when compared to late adopters. |
| Litvin and Goh (2002) | Used two scales – that of Malhotra (1981) and Chon (1992). Residents of Singapore (139) were intercepted at several public locations and asked to evaluate visitors to New Zealand, India, and Japan. | Compared the scales of Malhotra (1981) and Chon (1992).  It was shown that self-congruity has a positive effect on behavioural intentions (interest to visit and likelyhood to visit). Regardless of the scale. Malhotra's (1981) scale was suggested to show more robust correlations. |
| Ekinci and Riley (2003) | Conducted two studies, and in both of them they asked participants to evaluate random restaurants or hotels, which participants visited in the last six months. In study 1 they used Malhotra's (1981) scale and computed the self-congruity via gap-scoring formula for restaurant visitors (109). In Study 2 they used the direct measurement of self-congruity for restaurant and hotel visitors (90). | The results of both studies showed that self-congruity influences overall satisfaction, overall attitude, overall service quality, and behavioural intentions (revisit and recommend). |
| Kastenholz (2004) | Used Malhotra (1981) scale. International tourists to a rural destination (385) were asked to evaluate visitors of random rural destinations on a 7-point semantic differential scale. Congruity was computed as an absolute discrepancy score. | Self-congruity was not shown to affect the intention to recommend a tourism destination. |
| Litvin and Kar (2004) | Used Chon's (1992) direct self-congruity scale. Surveyed international passengers at Singapore Airport (189). | Self-congruity was shown to be a robust measurement when in conjunction with the cultural moderating variable of individualism/collectivism. |
| Beerli *et al.* (2007) | Used Malhotra (1981) scale. Residents of Gran Canaria, Spain (552) were asked to evaluate visitors of Kenya, Paris, and the Dominican Republic on a 7-point semantic differential scale. Congruity was computed using a factor analysis. | Self-congruity was shown to have a influence intention to visit. However, self-congruity lost its power among re-visiting tourists. |
| Murphy, Benckendorff, *et al.* (2007b) | Used direct measurement of self-congruity. International and domestic visitors to the Whitsunday Islands, Australia (267) were asked to evaluate a typical visitor to the Islands on a 5-point Likert type scale. | Self-congruity was related to satisfaction with a visit to the destination, but not to the intention to travel. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Droseltis and Vignoles (2010) | Used direct measurement of self-congruity. Study participants (141) were asked to evaluate different places relevan to them on a 7-point Likert type scale. | Place-self-congruity was lined to self-esteem (economic, spiritual, and special events symbolic links) and meaning (economic and social symbolic links). |
| Boksberger *et al.* (2011) | Used Hiernomimus (2003) image scale and facilitated scores through scenario directive and statements (imagine the typical visitors). Swiss travellers (1898) were asked to evaluate random trips they took in previous year on a 7-point Likert-type scale. Self-congruity was computed using the gap-scoring formula. | Using a relatively strict measure, the study showed that more than half of the trips can be classified as self-congruent. It was also showed that travel and sociodemographic characteristics are very limited in their ability to explain when self-congruity occurs. |
| Bosnjak *et al.* (2011) | Used a direct measurement of self-congruity. German tourists (973) were asked to evaluate their last vacation on a 6-point Likert type scale. | Self-congruity was shown to significantly influence a post-visit loyalty. Other than self-congruity, functional, hedonic, leisure, and safety congruity exert the greatest influence on post-visit loyalty judgments; in contrast, economic and moral congruity have fewer influences. |
| Hung and Petrick (2011) | Used Malhotra (1981) scale. Members of Cruise Lines International Association were grouped as non-cruisers (333) and cruisers (564). They were asked to evaluate cruises provided by the Association on a 7-point semantic differentail scale. Congruity was computed using arithmetic differences calculations. | Proposed a destination-self-congruity model, where functional congruity was linked to cognitive image, and self-image was linked to affective image. |
| Randle and Dolnicar (2011) | Used Venable *et al.* (2005) non-profit brand personality scale. Asked Australians (1415) to evaluate eight different types of volunteer organisations in Australia. Congruity was computed using the gap-scoring formula. | Self-congruity was perceived as a major influencer on how people who volunteer perceive those organisations as being similar to their self-concept. |
| Usakli and Baloglu (2011) | Used Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. Surveyed visitors to Las Vegas (368) about the city on a 5-point Likert-type scale. | Self-congruity has a positive impact on behavioural intentions (return and recommend). Self-congruity was also a mediator between perception of destination personality and behavioural intentions. |
| Hosany and Martin (2012) | Used scale proposed by Beerli *et al.* (2007). Scores were facilitated through scenario directive and statements (imagine the typical visitors). Surveyed cruise ship travellers at Royal Caribbean Int. Cruise Line (169) to evaluate tourists of the Rhapsody of the Sea cruise ship on a 7-point semantic differential scale. | Results showed that self-congruity affects passenger experiences, but it also indirectly influences satisfaction. |
| Hung and Petrick (2012) | Used scale proposed by Baloglu and Love (2005). Scores were facilitated through scenario directive and statements (imagine the typical visitors). Surveyed US residents from an online panel (564) to evaluate cruises provided by Cruise Lines International Association on a 7-point semantic differential scale. | Self-congruity and functional congruity were shown to influence travel intentions. |

| Klabi (2012) | The study started by generating destination personality traits (a total of 18 traits were retained). Surveyed international tourists (442) about Tunisia. Self-congruity was computed using absolute difference scores as proposed by Kressmann *et al.* (2006). | Introduction of a new concept, namely destination-personality-congruity. It was suggested that the concept influences tourist preference for a destination. The latter is affected by functional congruity, involvement and destination consumption levels. |
|---|---|---|
| Liu *et al.* (2012) | Used direct measurement of self-congruity. International tourists, staying at Yilan Shangrila Recreation Farm in Taiwan (326) were asked to evaluate the Farm on a 5-point Likert scale. | It was shown that self-congruity was positively related to destination loyalty. First-time visitors were found to depend more on self-congruity than repeated visitors in forming destination loyalty. |
| Josiassen and Assaf (2013) | Used the concept of social visibility to directly measure self-congruity. Surveyed Danish residents (334) about Germany on a 7-point Likert-type scale. | The results show that when individuals are concerned with how they are evaluated by others, they are more inclined to have their image of the destination inform their willingness to visit a particular holiday destination. |
| Ahn *et al.* (2013) | Used direct measurement of self-congruity. Scores were facilitated through scenario directive and statements (imagine the typical visitors). Surveyed British residents (367) to evaluate one of the eight destinations most visited by British (Australia, Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Italy, Spain, USA) on a 7-point rating scale. | Results showed that destination choice is strongly influenced by functional congruence, but not by self-congruence. |
| Ekinci *et al.* (2013) | Used direct measurement of self-congruity Scores were facilitated through scenario directive and statements (imagine the typical visitors). Surveyed hotel resort visitors (361) to evaluate Antalya, Turkey on a 7-point Likert scale. | Results showed self-congruity positively influences destination brand loyalty (i.e., intend to revisit a destination). |
| Pratt and Sparks (2014) | Used direct measurement of self-congruity. Scores were facilitated through scenario directive and statements (imagine the typical visitors). Surveyed Australians from the collection of wine consumers' list (696) to evaluate random wine regions relevant to participants on a 7-point Likert scale. | Results showed that functional destination image, affective destination image, and self-congruity predict attitudes toward wine tourism, which in turn predict behavioural intentions. Consumers who were highly involved with wine appeared to be more influenced by affective destination image and self-congruity than those who indicated low wine involvement. |
| Bekk *et al.* (2016) | Introduced tourism-destination personality similarity (TDPS), which reflected sincerity, sophistication and excitement as personality traits. TDPS was calculated using absolute difference scores. Introduced personal overall fit (POF) as a substitute to self-congruity, but it was measured with three direct self-congruity questions on a 7-point scale. Surveyed vacationers at Fuerteventura, Spain (308) about a holiday resort in Fuerteventura. | The study introduces tourist–destination personality similarity (TDPS) as a concept that is distinct from perceived overall fit (POF) between a tourist and a destination. TDPS and POF emerged as two related, but distinct concepts: TDPS was a driver of POF, which in turn increased tourists' satisfaction and actual recommendations of the destination. |

Source: Author's own, based on the literature review.

As seen from the previous table, there are numerous studies examining the effect of self-congruity on a variety of tourist behaviour. Great focus was placed on pre- and post-travel

behaviour. For example, it was found that self-congruity is a significant predictor of destination satisfaction (Chon 1992; Ekinci and Riley 2003; Murphy, Benckendorff, *et al.* 2007b; Bekk *et al.* 2016), intention to visit (Beerli et al. 2007; Hung and Petrick 2011), intention to recommend (Ekinci and Riley 2003; Usakli and Baloglu 2011), and propensity to revisit a tourism destination (Ekinci and Riley 2003; Usakli and Baloglu 2011; Ekinci *et al.* 2013). What is more important is that: (1) the studies were interested in various self-congruity dimensions, (2) the studies were not unanimous in the operationalisation of the self-congruity, (3) they facilitated scores through scenario directive and statements (in majority of studies, respondents were asked to imagine the typical visitors of a destination prior to responding to questions on self-congruity), and (4) provided results are sometimes contradictive.

### 2.5.2   *Multiple dimensions of self-congruity*

In many studies, researchers distinguish between the actual and ideal self-congruity and the social and social ideal self-congruity (Sirgy 1982; Sirgy and Johar 1999; Kressmann *et al.* 2006), with the functional congruity introduced at a later stage in research (Sirgy and Johar 1999; Sirgy and Su 2000; Ahn *et al.* 2013). The actual and ideal self relate to an individual's thoughts, beliefs, and opinions about oneself. Conversely, the social and social ideal self relate to an individual's thoughts, beliefs, and opinions about what others think of him or her. Therefore, the corresponding self-congruities are equivalent: the actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, social self-congruity, and social ideal self-congruity, respectively. Moreover, the first two self-congruities (actual and ideal) relate to what is known as the 'private self,' whilst the latter two (social and social ideal) relate to the public self (Sirgy and Su 2000).

### *Actual self-congruity*

In the context of tourism, actual self-congruity refers to "the degree of match between a tourist's actual self-image and destination visitor image" (Sirgy and Su 2000, 343). For this type of congruity, the fit between how tourists actually see themselves (how one thinks of oneself who he or she is) and the image of a typical visitor to a destination is important. Therefore, 'this is who I am' and 'this is how I see myself' are two important aspects of the actual self that one associates to the image of a typical destination visitor. Actual self-congruity is one of the most studied dimensions of congruity in tourism (Hung and Petrick 2012), and its effect on travel behaviour has been documented in numerous studies (Ekinci and Riley 2003; Beerli *et al.* 2007; Usakli and Baloglu 2011; Hosany and Martin 2012; Ahn

*et al.* 2013). These studies demonstrate that tourists who prefer a destination see themselves in ways consistent with the image of a typical destination visitor.

However, tourists do not always experience actual self-congruity with a typical destination visitor. For example, a CEO of a start-up company might feel that an upscale hotel (four- or five-star hotel) does not reflect who he is, and he thus feels uncomfortable staying at that hotel. Instead, he chooses to stay at a Bed and Breakfast accommodation since it better reflects his down-to-earth and modest personality. Here, it is about protecting one's personal identity (i.e., actual self-image). Thus, Sirgy and Su (2000) suggest that self-consistency is the motivational tendency behind the actual self-congruity. Similarly, Prentice and his colleagues (1998) reveal that tourists visit cultural destinations in order to maintain their cultural identity or actual self. The self-consistency is evident through visits to destinations that reinforce their perception of who they are.

### *Ideal self-congruity*

Ideal self-congruity refers to "the degree of match between a tourist ideal self-image and a destination visitor image" (Sirgy and Su 2000, 344). A fit between how an individual would like to see oneself (how individuals would like to think of who he or she would like to be) and the image of a typical destination visitors is important for this type of self-congruity. Hence, 'this is who I would like to be' and 'this is how I would like to see myself' are two important aspects of ideal self. These perceptions are then associated with the image of a typical destination visitor. Ideal self-congruity is also extensively studied, likewise actual self-congruity. Several studies (Malhotra 1981; 1988; Sirgy 1985) showed that consumers who express a preference towards a particular brand or product, report that they would like to see themselves similar to the image of a typical user of that brand or product. In the context of tourism, ideal self-congruity was demonstrated to motivate people to visit a destination (Beerli *et al.* 2007; Hung and Petrick 2011) and influenced their satisfaction with hotels and restaurants (Ekinci and Riley 2003).

Following the example of a start-up company CEO, one might not like his self-perception as down-to-earth. He might want to perceive himself as sociable and exciting, and in order to boost his self-esteem, he chooses to stay at an upscale hostel, which gives him plenty of opportunities to mingle and socialise with other hostel guests that are in most cases young

people. From this example, we can observe that there is a discrepancy between actual and ideal self-image and that people make tourism-related decisions in order to boost their self-esteem or to improve the image they have about themselves (Sirgy and Su 2000).

### Social self-congruity

Social self-congruity represents a "match between a tourist's social self-image and a destination visitor image" (Sirgy and Su 2000, 344). This dimension of congruity is used whenever a fit between how one believes h e/she is seen by others associates with the image of a typical destination visitor. Therefore, 'this is who other think I am' and 'this is how others see me' are the two important aspects of the social self that one associates with the image of a typical destination visitor. Contrary to previously mentioned types of self-congruity (i.e., actual and ideal), the social self-congruity has not gained as much attention in tourism (Hung and Petrick 2012). Hung and Petrick (2011; 2012) investigated the effect of social self-congruity on tourism-related behaviour. The authors demonstrate that tourists, who wish to reinforce their social image or the way they think people see them, will prefer a destination whose image of a typical visitor is consistent with that image (Hung and Petrick 2012). Similar to the actual self-congruity, the social self-congruity also operates through a self-consistency motive, because people like to maintain the image others have of them (Sirgy and Su 2000; Sirgy 2014). Moreover, Sirgy and Su (2000, 344) observe that social self-congruity "may be consistent or inconsistent with the actual self and the ideal self."

In light of the previous example, a start-up company CEO might feel very uncomfortable visiting a casino, because he might 'bump into' some of his acquaintances for whom he thinks perceive him as modest and reserved. This violation of others' perception of him is likely to make him uncomfortable, and therefore he will avoid casinos in order to maintain his social consistency. Moreover, evidence suggestive of reassuring social consistency come from studies on the influence of tourists' reference groups on one's destination choice (Sirgy 2014). As well, it is the latter that is referred to in Grubb and Grathwohl's (1967) illustration as the reaction from the audience (see Figure 2.5).

### Social ideal self-congruity

Equal to social self-congruity, social ideal self-congruity relates to the public self (Sirgy and Su 2000). It refers to "the degree of match between tourist's social ideal self-image and a

destination visitor image" (Sirgy and Su 2000, 345). Here, the fit between how one would like to be perceived by others and the image of a typical destination visitor is important. Perceptions such as 'this is who I would like others think I am' and 'this is how I want others to see me' are the two important aspects of social self, and subsequently, one's decisions and action will lead towards their realisation. Similar to the social self-congruity, the social ideal self-congruity has not gained much attention in tourism studies (Hung and Petrick 2011).

Referring to the start-up company CEO one last time, with the aim of gaining social approval among his peers, he may ultimately decide to stay at a five-star hotel because he would like to be seen by other as successful and as someone who could afford an upscale service (even if that might financially burden the young company). The latter suggests that the social ideal self congruity operates through the social approval motive (Sirgy and Su 2000; Sirgy 2014), since going on a fashionable trip brings social recognition to a tourist (Crompton 1979; Riley 1995).

### *Functional congruity*

Functional congruity is based on "the perceived utilitarian aspects of the destination in reference to some ideal aspects" (Sirgy 2014, 67). This is contrary to the self-congruity that is based on comparison between one's multiple dimensions of the self and the image of a typical destination visitor. Therefore, functional congruity is defined as a match between a tourist's beliefs about destination utilitarian attributes and a tourist's referent attributes (Sirgy and Johar 1999). The ideal referent attributes represent a tourist's criteria that one uses in order to evaluate the actual characteristics of a tourism destination. The latter are represented by its multiple elements [see Beerli and Martin's (2004) classification on page 48–49] that are utilitarian or functional in nature. For example, a specific summer holiday resort may be evaluated along a set of utilitarian attributes such as a type and quality of the beach, proximity of the resort, variety of sport activities offered, quality of the services at the resort, etc. Or, for example, a country as a tourism destination may be evaluated based on its natural and historical attractions, quality of transportation services, activities offered in its natural or cultural environment, etc. In both cases, tourists have some reference points of standards (e.g. an ideal) that they use to evaluate how good the perceived attributes are. If there is a fit between the ideal and perceived attributes, functional congruity will be established. Moreover, the greater the congruity between a tourist's utilitarian beliefs about a tourism

destination, the more positive attitudes will be towards that tourism destination (Sirgy and Johar 1999; Sirgy and Su 2000; Sirgy 2014).

*Comprehensive self-congruity model in tourism*

Based on the differences and interrelatedness of congruity's multiple dimensions, Sirgy and Su (2000) proposed an integrative congruence model, which makes it the first comprehensive model of congruity in the context of tourism. The model encouraged many researchers to make congruity their main research focus, and this is also one of the reasons why we can observe an 'eruption' of studies in tourism literature after year 2000 (see Table 2.5).

In the model, it is proposed that a tourism destination is evaluated based on various aspects related to a destination visitor image and destination utilitarian attributes. First, the destination visitor image is related to multiple dimensions of one's self – actual, ideal, social, and social ideals, which all correspond to how tourists identify with an image of a typical destination visitor. Second, utilitarian destination attributes match what one perceives to be ideal destination attributes. If matched, the likelihood of functional congruity development is greater. In Figure 2.6 we present the model and its propositions.

The model proposes that: (1) self-congruity influences functional congruity, whilst (2) the functional congruity is better predictor of destination choice (Sirgy *et al.* 1991; Sirgy and Johar 1999; Sirgy 2014). Hence, for those tourists who experience a match between their self and a destination image, their evaluation of utilitarian destination attributes will be biased by that match. Indeed, the functional congruity was shown to better explain tourist satisfaction then the self-congruity (Chon and Olsen 1991). Conversely, Hung and Petrick (2011) suggested that the predictive power of functional congruity for cruising intentions is lower (range between 0.254 and 0.158) than that of self-congruity (range between 0.448 and 0.215). The authors also demonstrated that the self-congruity successfully predicts functional congruity, which indicates towards self-congruity having biased functional congruity (Hung and Petrick 2011). In that sense, those who experience a greater match between their self-image and a typical destination visitor are more likely to form a favourable attitude towards destination utilitarian attributes (Sirgy and Su 2000; Hung and Petrick 2011; Sirgy 2014). In contrast, those tourists who initially do not experience self-congruity are likely to form

unfavourable attitudes towards utilitarian destination attributes and thus evaluate a destination in a negative way (Sirgy *et al*. 1991).

Figure 2.6: Comprehensive model on congruity in tourism
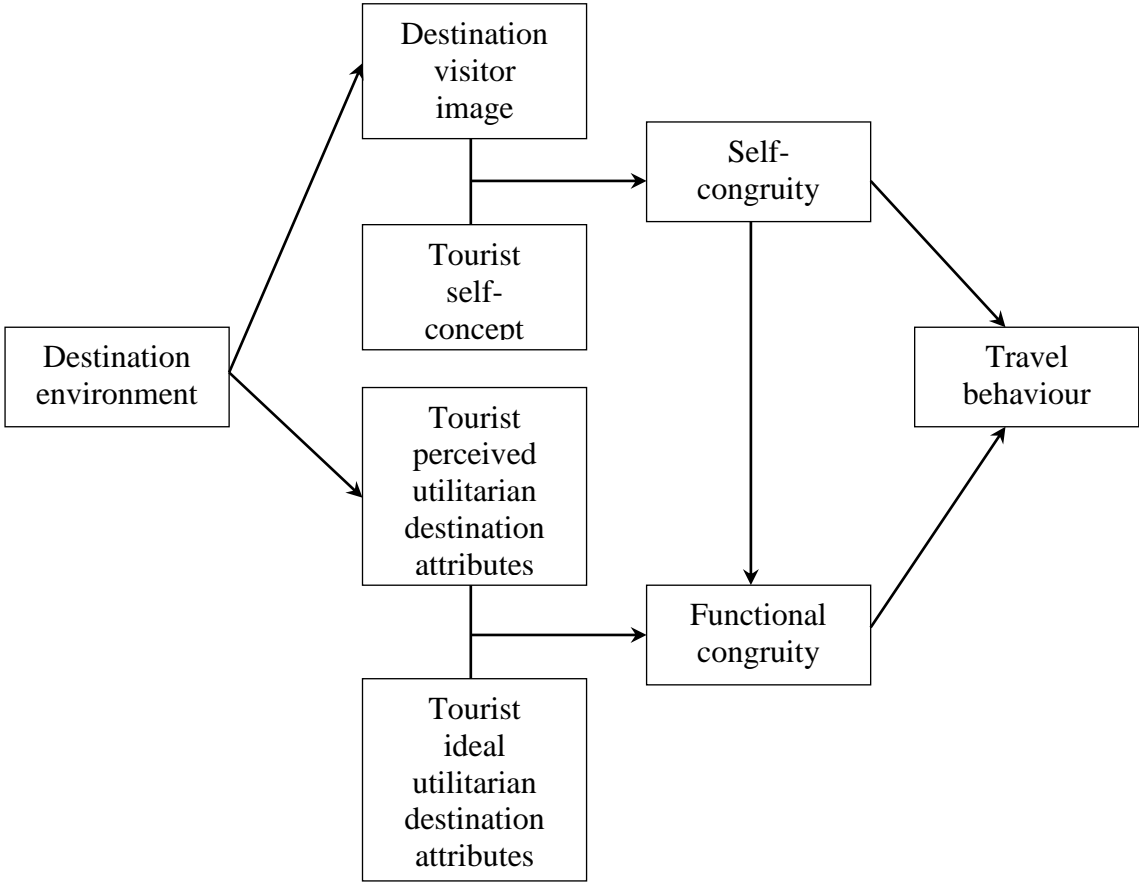


Source: Sirgy and Su (2000, 341).

It was suggested that functional congruity operates at a more conscious level, whilst self-congruity operates at a less conscious level (Sirgy and Johar 1999). This is because of the motives that drive self-congruity and the evaluation objects of functional congruity. As previously discussed, self-congruity is driven by self-esteem, self-consistency, and social approval motives. In contrast, functional congruity demands that a tourist compares or rates destination attributes, which are utilitarian or functional in nature. Functional congruity relates to the cognitive dimension of destination image, whilst self-congruity relates to its affective dimension (Hung and Petrick 2011).

### 2.5.3   Self-congruity measurement

The non-systematic operationalisation of the concept of self-congruity is one the many drawbacks of the tourism literature. We suggest that it originates from unanimous self-congruity measurement. In Table 2.5. we presented how researchers measured and computed self-congruity, which is either by a gap-scoring formula or that of a direct measurement.

***Gap-scoring formula (i.e., measurement via the traditional method)***

The gap-scoring formula is based on "tapping the subject's perception on his or her self-image in relation to the product-user image, mathematically computing a discrepancy or ratio score with each image dimension, and then summing the discrepancy scores across all dimensions" (Sirgy *et al.* 1997, 230). It is considered a pioneering formula for assessing one's congruency with a brand or product. Hence, Sirgy and co-authors (1997) named it the 'traditional method'.

In most cases, the mathematical index for summing of absolute discrepancies is expressed as presented in Formulae 2.1.

Formulae 2.1: Mathematical index of self-congruity

$$D_k = \sum_{i=1}^{n} |P_{ik} - S_{ik}|$$

Legend:
$D_k$ = self-congruity score for each respondent $k$
$P_i$ = rating of product-user image along image dimension $i$ for respondent $k$
$S_i$ = rating of self-image along image dimension $i$ for respondent $k$
Source: Sirgy *et al.* (1997, 230–231).

The gap-scoring formula captures the congruity indirectly through a mathematical index that combines two psychological constructs (Sirgy *et al.* 1997). Mostly, people are offered a predetermined set of personality attributes (i.e. personality traits) based on which respondents are asked to evaluate various dimensions of their self and a typical product-user or destination-visitor. In tourism studies, destination attributes are either derived from its personality or image dimensions or from a set of those conjured up by subjects at the time of response (Sirgy *et al.* 1997). In the case of the former, studies rely on Aaker's (1997) brand

personality scale (Murphy, Benckendorff, *et al.* 2007b; Usakli and Baloglu 2011; Rojas-Méndez, Papadopoulos, *et al.* 2013), Malhotra's (1981) image scale (Litvin and Goh 2002; Ekinci and Riley 2003; Beerli *et al.* 2007; Hung and Petrick 2012) or attributes connected to destination cognitive or affective image (Boksberger *et al.* 2011). In the case of the latter, subjects are asked to describe a typical destination visitor in a few words by using personal adjectives. Then they are asked to rate the adjectives for a typical destination visitor followed by different dimensions of their self.

The gap-scoring formula has been widely employed in numerous tourism studies (Litvin *et al.* 2001; Litvin and Goh 2002; Ekinci and Riley 2003; Kastenholz 2004; Beerli *et al.* 2007; Boksberger *et al.* 2011; Hung and Petrick 2011; Randle and Dolnicar 2011; Hosany and Martin 2012; Hung and Petrick 2012; Klabi 2012). It allows brand and destination managers to plot a profile of a typical destination visitor and that of a tourist along different dimensions of destination image. This aids marketing managers to design communication messages that will aim at reinforcing destination image and brand personality and to more efficiently target the audience. Still, it also enables for a tourism destination to be compared to its competitors on the same set of attributes. This could be of help when marketing managers wish to increase their communication efforts by highlighting the unique selling proposition of a tourism destination, while addressing the target audience of its closest competitors.

However, as much as the gap-scoring formula is seen as beneficial to marketing managers, academics recognise that it can also be troublesome. The most significant study proposed based on problems related to the gap-scoring formula is that of Sirgy and co-authors (1997). Sirgy *et al.* (1997) said that researchers have to acknowledge the following three problems of the gap-scoring formula: the use of discrepancy scores, the possible use of irrelevant images, and the use of a compensatory decision rule. The first problem is related to "the fact that the method does not incorporate any reference to the psychological congruity experience" (Sirgy *et al.* 1997, 231). That is, when respondents are asked to evaluate themselves based on the given attributes, there is no reference to the rationale of their evaluation (why is this of any relevance to the study). As we previously mentioned, the congruity is only captured through mathematical indices. The second problem is related to the predetermined set of image attributes, which in some case may not be relevant or even important to a respondent. For example, if a tourist sees himself as young, fun, and of high spirits, he might experience a

high level of congruity with a tourism destination such as Ibiza, because he sees it as being visited by those tourists that are young, fun, and of high spirits. But, the gap-scoring formula might also involve other image dimensions (for example, adventurous, modern, successful, playful, etc.) which might not be of any relevance for a respondent. The scores from these 'excessive' dimensions then constitute random error in measurement, since the subjects still need to rate them regardless of them being meaningful (Sirgy *et al.* 1997). The third problem is related to "subjects experiencing self-congruity with a variety of image dimensions and then integrate the information across all image dimensions additively" (Sirgy *et al.* 1997, 232).

Sirgy and co-authors (1997, 232) suggested to avoid these three problems by evaluating the "self-congruity experience holistically and globally." Hence, they proposed a new, direct measurement of self-congruity.

### *Direct measurement (i.e., measurement via the new method)*

Direct measurement of self-congruity, also known as the new method, involves direct assessment of to what extent a tourism destination, a brand, or a product represents (some dimension of) the consumer's or tourist's self (Sirgy *et al.* 1997; Sirgy and Su 2000; Sirgy 2014). That is, respondents are asked to imagine a tourism destination, then generate its image using descriptive adjectives, and finally to evaluate their mental representation of a typical destination visitor following a series of either Likert-type scales or semantic differential scales. According to Sirgy *et al*. (1997), this method measures the self-congruity directly, it guides respondents to focus on a typical destination visitor, and methodologically incudes respondents to conjure up the image at the moment of response instead of being predetermined by image dimensions. As seen from Figure 2.7, Sirgy and co-authors (1997) suggest that this method is problem-free.

Figure 2. 7: Problems of different methods of measuring self-congruity

|  | global measures | dimension-based measures |
|---|---|---|
| **direct measures** | **problem**-free | **problem:** use of pre-determined images |
| **indirect measures** | **problem:** use of discrepancy scores | **problem:** use of discrepancy scores and pre-etermined images |

Source: Sirgy *et al.* (1997, 232).

The way subjects are asked to think about a typical destination visitor at the moment of response is represented by the following instructions (Ahn *et al.* 2013, 721):

> *Take a moment to think about the kind of person who typically visits the destination you chose to visit for holiday. Imagine this person in your mind and then describe them using one or more personal adjectives such as organised, classy, poor, stylish, friendly, modern, traditional, and popular or whatever other personal adjectives you can think of to describe the typical visitor to the destination you choose.*

Then, following is a set of questions for evaluating various dimensions of self-congruity. These are presented in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6: Direct measurement items of self-congruity

| **Actual self-congruence** |
|---|
| The image of the typical visitor is similar to how I am. |
| The image of the typical visitor is similar to how I see myself. |
| **Ideal self-congruence** |
| The image of the typical visitor is similar to how I would like to be. |
| The image of the typical visitor is similar to how I would like to see myself. |

| **Social self-congruence** |
| --- |
| The image of the typical visitor is similar to how others believe I am. |
| The image of the typical visitor is similar to how others see me. |
| **Social ideal self-congruence** |
| The image of the typical visitor is similar to how I would like others to see me. |
| The image of the typical visitor is similar to how I ideally like to be seen by others. |

Source: Sirgy *et al.* (1997), Sirgy and Su (2000), and Ahn *et al.* (2013).

Many studies (Litvin and Kar 2004; Murphy, Benckendorff, *et al.* 2007b; Bosnjak and Rudolph 2008; Droseltis and Vignoles 2010; Usakli and Baloglu 2011; Liu *et al.* 2012; Ahn *et al.* 2013; Ekinci *et al.* 2013; Pratt and Sparks 2014) utilised this method when assessing the effect of self-congruity on tourism behaviour. The studies found that self-congruity was a strong predictor of tourism destination choice, travel intentions, satisfaction, and the intention to revisit or recommend a tourism destination.

Contrary to the gap-scoring formula, the direct measurement of self-congruity does not allow for a destination image to be profiled. This may represent a problem for marketing managers, since they have no ability to assess the dimensions of destination image and that of its competitors. Sirgy and co-authors (1997) acknowledge that the direct measurement is lacking this practical implication, yet they insist that it is less inferior to measurement errors of the gap-scoring formula.

*Functional congruity measurement*

Functional congruity relates to the evaluation of utilitarian destination attributes. Therefore, there is a need for identification of a set of functional destination attributes, which authors usually generate by content-analysing open-ended responses (Johar and Sirgy 1991; Sirgy *et al.* 1991; Ahn *et al.* 2013). Moreover, these attributes are then used to measure the component variables involved in multi-attribute attitude models. Among those, the most common include the belief-evaluation model, the belief-importance model, the belief-only model, the extended belief-evaluation model, and the ideal point model (Sirgy *et al.* 1991; Kressmann *et al.* 2006; Ahn *et al.* 2013). Depending on the model, functional congruity "involves the sum of the product of belief strength and importance weights across a set of utilitarian attributes" (Sirgy and Johar 1999). According to Ahn *et al.* (2013), the belief-only model appears most

frequently in literature, where functional attributes have been evaluated based on one's belief of being good or bad destination utility.

### 2.5.4   Summary

In summary, the concept of ego involvement is not novel to tourism. It has been researched as the concept of self-congruity instead of rather being perceived as the level of importance of one's self in tourism-related decisions. Self-congruity was shown to significantly influence tourism-related behaviour, such as satisfaction with a destination, intention to visit, revisit, or recommend a tourism destination. Hence, the importance of one's multiple dimensions of self in tourism destination choice is not to be denied. The concept of self-congruity was measured use the gap-scoring formula and directly (Sirgy *et al.* 1991). Both measurement approaches were shown to be biased, but as long as these are acknowledged by researchers, there are both theoretical and practical benefits of self-congruity research in tourism.

Selin and Howard (1988) suggested that ego involvement (i.e., the self-congruity) is the precursor of purchase-decision involvement. But empirical studies till now have not completely embraced their suggestion. There is still limited knowledge on how self-congruity affects one's purchase-decision involvement in terms of time spent on an information search and the quantity of information needed before a final decision has been made.

## 2.6    PURCHASE-DECISION INVOLVEMENT

Purchase-decision involvement represents "the level of concern for, or interest in the purchase process, triggered by the need to consider a particular purchase" (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005, 817). Mittal (1989, 150) writes that a response behaviour connected to purchase-decision involvement is about "what the right or wrong choice of the brand would mean /to a consumer/, and correspondingly whether or not /a consumer/ would be indifferent as to which of the several available alternatives is bought." Further, the author explains that a consumer might not extensively process the information if he or she is confident that either expert recommendations, repeat purchase, or previous knowledge is sufficient for making a purchase decision (Mittal 1989).

It is during the phase of information search that destination image formation agents could address their target audience with the advertising message. Wilkie and Dickson (1985, 85; in Schmidt and Spreng 1996) say that "information search represents the primary stage at which marketing can provide information and influence consumers' decisions." The primary purpose of one's acquisition of information is to potentially make better decision about destination choice (Bloch *et al.* 1986; Gursoy and McCleary 2004). Vogt *et al.* (1994) pointed out that product knowledge, aesthetic imagery, and planning efficiency needs were at the core of information acquisition of the destination selection process. However, we have to stress that tourists do not search for information about a tourism destination only when planning to go on holiday, but they do so if there is an intention for taking a vacation in the near future (Claxton *et al.* 1974).

Fodness and Murray (1999, 226) define information search as "a dynamic process in which travellers use various types and amounts of information sources to respond to internal and external contingencies in vacation planning." Similarly, Engel *et al.* (1995) define it as "the motivated activation of knowledge stored in memory or acquisition of information from the environment." As these two definitions suggest, the search for information is associated with the behaviour cantered around type of information and information sources, or with the process differentiating between internal or external retrieval of information. The literature also suggested to differentiate between the two.

The first stream of literature focuses on the information search behaviour by examining the roles of information content (i.e. what to search for) and information channels (i.e. how to search for it) in the destination selection process (for example, Cai *et al.* 2004; Xiang and Gretzel 2010; Jacobsen and Munar 2012; Fotis *et al.* 2012; Kim *et al.* 2013). Due to the nature of tourist consumption, the type of information depends on the time of the trip, its length, travel company, and it includes a plethora of elements of primary (i.e., attractions) and secondary tourism supply (i.e., general and tourism infra- and superstructure). Information channels, on the other hand, represent a channel of communication through which information has been transmitted. These extend to, but are not limited to, printed media (e.g. newspapers, billboards, etc.), broadcasted media (e.g. television, cinema, radio, etc.), online media (e.g. webpages, social media, etc.), and personal sources (e.g. prior knowledge, family, friends, etc.).

The second stream of literature focuses on assessing the typology of information search process, and thus distinguishes between internal and external information search process (for example, Murray 1991; Woodside and MacDonald 1994; Schmidt and Spreng 1996; Fodness and Murray 1999; Gursoy and McCleary 2004; Carneiro and Crompton 2010). Engel *et al.* (1995) describe internal search as a retrieval of knowledge from memory, whilst an external search involves gathering information from the environment.

### 2.6.1   Internal information search

Tourists will most likely search for information stored in their memory prior to using external sources (Engel *et al.* 1995; Gursoy and McCleary 2004). This internal search is similar to when tourists use information from prior experiences at the tourism destination when they plan to repeat the visit (Fodness and Murray 1997; Vogt and Fesenmaier 1998; Chen and Gursoy 2000). During the internal search, individuals rely on their personal experiences and knowledge, which they also gained and stored from previous information search about the tourism destination (Schul and Crompton 1983; Vogt and Fesenmaier 1998; Gursoy and McCleary 2004). These are referred to as prior knowledge, familiarity, and expertise.

### *Prior knowledge*
Personal experiences and that of the other with a tourism destination are important elements of prior knowledge. However, it is also important to mention that visual, verbal, and sensory

stimuli from advertising and other information channels have an important role in the prior knowledge (Vogt and Fesenmaier 1998; Gursoy and McCleary 2004). According to some authors (Bettman 1979; Bloch *et al.* 1986; Ratchford 2001), tourists' prior knowledge is created through information stored in their long-term memory. The latter is retrieved the first when the need for vacation arouses (Vogt and Fesenmaier 1998), and it serves in an evaluation of tourism destination attributes (Ratchford 2001).

Gursoy and McCleary (2004) observe that rather contradictory results exist on the relationship between information search and prior knowledge, in particular on the external information search behaviour (Gursoy and McCleary 2004). For example, it was suggested that there is a negative relationship between the amount of prior knowledge and the amount of an external search (Brucks 1985; Coupey *et al.* 1998; Fodness and Murray 1998). That is, the prior knowledge enables to tourists to search for less information from external sources. Or even to be more efficient in an external search, because they already know where they want to go and what they want to do, which enables them to search for relevant, important, and useful information (Coupley *et al.* 1998; Vogt and Fesenmaier 1988). Conversely, it was suggested that there is a positive relationship between prior knowledge and external search (Brucks 1985; Rao and Sieben 1992; Gursoy 2003). That is, the prior knowledge was suggested to encourage an external information search, because tourists come up with more detailed questions about tourism destination attributes, and thus easily process more information acquired from external information sources. Gursoy and McCleary (2004) observe that the rationale behind these perplexed results might be in studies treating tourists' prior knowledge as a uni-dimensional construct, and that most often it was referred to as either familiarity with a tourism destination or experience with previous trip to a tourism destination. According to Gursoy and McCleary (2004), familiarity and expertise are the two dimensions of the prior knowledge, however the latter is not to be replaced by them.

*Familiarity and expertise*

Alba and Hutchinson (1987) suggested that familiarity as a dimension of prior knowledge represents the subjective knowledge about a tourism destination. In tourism literature, familiarity is often measured as a number of destination-related experiences one develops from previous purchases (Cordell 1997; Baloglu 2001; Gursoy and McCleary 2004; Carneiro and Crompton 2010). These destination-related experiences represent one's subjective

knowledge about destination attributes, which were accumulated in an ongoing search process by reading travel guides, magazines etc., or by being exposed to advertising (Stewart 1992; Kent and Allen 1993; MacKay and Fesenmaier 1997; Moorthy *et al.* 1997; Gursoy and McCleary 2004).

Alba and Hutchinson (1987) define expertise as experiences with a destination that include exposure to its advertising, information search, contact with salespersons or travel agents, selection and decision-making, and previous experience with a tourism destination in various situations. Expertise refers to one's ability to perform destination-related tasks, and thus it represents the objective knowledge about a destination. Gursoy and McCleary (2004, 360) suggest "the term 'expertise' can also be used in a very broad sense that includes both the cognitive structures (beliefs about destination attributes) and cognitive processes (decision rules for acting on those beliefs) required to perform selection and vacation decision-making related tasks successfully." Moreover, the familiarity and expertise are shown to be interrelated in a way that "familiarity represents the early stages and expertise the later stages of learning, /and/ as tourists' familiarity with the destination increases, their expertise with it increases as well" (Gursoy and McCleary 2004, 359).

### 2.6.2 *External information search*

If the expertise, familiarity, and prior knowledge provide sufficient information for a tourist to make tourism-related decisions, then external search is not necessary and it is very likely that is will not happen. But if internal search proves insufficient, a tourist is likely to search for information externally and to maximise utility for his or her decision from various external information sources.

An external information search includes a variety of sources that range from one's personal and business networks (e.g. family, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, etc.), mass media, advertising, exposure to public relations activities, etc. Schmidt and Spreng (1996) classified external information sources into five groups: marketer-controlled (e.g. advertising, tourism brochures, etc. from induced image formation agents), reseller controlled (e.g. tourism brochures from autonomous image formation agents), third-party independent organisations (e.g. organic image formation agents, such as popular culture, broadcasting media, etc.),

interpersonal sources (e.g. relatives, friends, acquaintances), and direct inspection (e.g. observation, inferencing).

An external information search is influenced by: one's ability to search for information, motivation to search for information, and the perceived costs and benefits of the search process (Schmidt and Spreng 1996; Clow and Baack 2007). One's ability to search for information is connected to the ability of cognitive processing of information, and knowledge of how to search and where to search for information (Brucks 1985; Clow and Baack 2007). Schmidt and Sprenger (1996, 248) define ability as "the perceived cognitive capability of searching for and processing information." Moreover, the authors suggest that one's ability to search for information is predetermined by the level of education, and by the objective and subjective knowledge about the search object. That is, the higher the level of education, and the higher the objective and subjective knowledge, the more one's ability to engage in external search for information will increase (Brucks 1985; Schmidt and Spreng 1996; Clow and Baack 2007). In contrast, the perceived costs and benefits of search relate to the assessment of the value of information search. That is, monetary expenditure, time sacrifice, physical effort, and psychological sacrifice when involved in the information search as opposed to the outcomes are considered to be succumbed to the cost-benefit analysis (Beatty and Smith 1987; Schmidt and Spreng 1996; Gursoy and McCleary 2004).

### 2.6.3   Summary

The purchase-decision involvement relates to the information search process. It includes both internal and external information sources. It was suggested that if the purchase decision is of importance to a consumer, he or she will search for information in order to choose the best alternative offered. The information search process starts with an internal search, that is, individuals search for the information stored in their memory. It is important to stress that these were shown to be influenced by the information from external sources. This indicates that an individual is not a black box, completely excluded from the environment or immune to external information sources. Thus, one's memory is affected by information acquired from the environment on a daily basis, intentionally or unintentionally.

## 2.7    PROPOSED MODEL AND SUPPORTING HYPOTHESES

Up to this point, the chapter has reviewed relevant literature surrounding tourism destination and its image and brand personality, advertising, self-congruity, and information searches that represent four types of involvement: product involvement, advertising involvement, ego involvement, and purchase-decision involvement, respectively. Despite the involvement being at the philosophical heart of consumer behaviour studies, there is very little research on the interrelatedness of these four types of involvement. Many authors (Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Zaichkowsky 1986; Hawkins *et al.* 1995) acknowledge that involvement is influenced by more factors at the same time, and that it is important to understand their interaction in order to holistically explain consumer behaviour. The lack of interconnectedness of product, advertising, ego, and purchase-decision involvements, and their antecedents is particularly surprising given the fact that involvement is considered one of the most important concept of the decision-making process (Zaichkowsky 1985; Havitz and Dimanche 1990).

We identified three different research questions that emerged from the lack of research on the interconnectedness of four types of involvement. The first research question stems from the lack of understanding the interrelatedness of product involvement, advertising involvement, and ego involvement. Over the last two decades, nearly all self-congruity studies have elicited respondents' assessment of how congruent their self-images are with an image of a tourism destination based on respondents' imagination of the typical destination visitor (Sirgy *et al.* 1997; Hung and Petrick 2011; Sirgy 2014). This is as if the research treated the relationship between the self and a typical destination visitor as isolated from the influence of advertising and any other form of communication used by destination forming agents. Therefore, the aim of this study is not to negate the previous research, but instead to propose that past studies have deviated from the question of how the communicated destination image in a visual advertising message affects one's imagery of a typical destination visitor. Therefore, this study builds upon content-analysing the advertising message in order to assess how it affects user imagery.

As previously discussed, user imagery has two elements – a typical user that is envisioned by a consumer, and an ideal user that is portrayed in advertising (Phau and Lau 2000). It seems like self-congruity studies relied only upon the former.

In destination advertising, a typical destination visitor may or may not be portrayed. If it is portrayed, then it is an ideal visitor as envisioned by destination image forming agents. If not portrayed, then it is a typical visitor as envisioned by a viewer. But in this case, the destination advertising has to feature at least one destination attribute in order to reference the tourism destination. This would enable a viewer to get a sense of who visits the destination, and thus develop a user imager. As a result, we expect that user imagery will be strongly influenced by the destination advertising. Going back to the congruity studies, the advertising message that would portray an ideal visitor is going to be referenced in this study as the image ad, whilst the advertising message that would portray tourism destination attributes without any reference to a typical destination visitor will be referred to as the functional ad. Hung and Petrick (2011, 109) observed that "congruity studies in tourism do not seem to correspond to the destination image literature and make no differentiation on varying types of destination image," or otherwise that there is no integration of "self-congruity with affective destination image and functional congruity with cognitive destination image." Moreover, by embracing Sirgy and Su's (2000, 342) preposition that "tourists are likely to make inferences about the visitors of a destination as a direct function of the destination's advertising messages", the following question is being asked:

*RQ1: How do individuals construct congruity with the tourism destination in relation to an image ad and a functional ad?*

Congruence with the image ad and the functional ad and its potential to influence tourist behaviour, such as a tourism destination choice and information search, are perceived fundamental for this study to broaden tourist decision-making research. Despite the concepts of destination image and brand personality, destination advertising, and self-congruity being key elements of the tourist decision-making literature, the literature review revealed surprisingly little research that operationalises the interrelatedness of these three types of involvement and tests their effect on one's destination choice. Moreover, the interrelatedness of these types of involvement has not been linked to the information search, although Selin and Howard (1988) proposed that ego involvement is a precursor to purchase-decision involvement. While some authors explored the differences between value-expressive and utilitarian advertisements in relation to self-congruity (Johar and Sirgy 1991; Bilim and Yüksel 2008), its effect on tourist destination choice and information search as a consequence

of congruity was largely ignored. With this in mind, the separate effects of advertising, destination image and self-congruity have been heavily conceptualised within consumer behaviour literature, but their interrelatedness has been under empiricised. In the attempt to address this gap, the second research question was developed as follows:

***RQ2: How is tourist behaviour (destination choice and information search) affected by the construing of congruity with a tourism destination in relation to the image ad and the functional ad?***

Another gap that has been identified within the literature was the lack of research examining the predictive validity of two measurements of self-congruity in relation to destination advertising. Few studies, which have examined the differences between the two measurements, have predominately relied on a respondent's imagery of a typical destination visitor (Sirgy *et al*. 1997; Litvin and Goh 2002). Yet, any advertising efforts of destination forming agents have been significantly disregarded in these studies, and excluded the destination advertising as an important influencer of user imagery. Therefore, in the study we wish to examine the differences in self-congruity measurement using user imagery as pre-determined in the destination advertising. It is believed that this is of utmost importance because destination forming agents are shown to significantly influence tourists' perception of a tourism destination (Um and Crompton 1990; McWilliams and Crompton 1997; Tasci *et al*. 2007). As a result, we expect that user imagery will be strongly influenced by the destination advertising. If this is found to be truth, there will be a strong empirical support for the predictive validity of the two measurements of self-congruity. In addition to self-congruity being influenced by different destination advertisements, there is the likelihood that one measurement will dominate the prediction of tourist behaviour based on how/whether the ad portrays destination attributes or its typical visitor. Based on the far-reaching effects of destination advertising and predetermined destination image by destination forming agents, a third research question was developed as follows:

***RQ3: How different are the self-congruity measurements predicting tourist behaviour in relation to the image ad and the functional ad?***

### 2.7.1 Purpose of the research

The overall purpose of this study is to advance the literature on tourist decision-making by exploring the proposed research questions and testing the related hypothesis. More specifically, this study progresses the literature in the following two ways. The first contribution of this study is through the inclusion of Weber's theory of action and social action as an answer to the limitations of theories on decision-making in tourism. Weber's theory of action posits an individual in the centre of the decision-making process. As such, it enables to researchers to observe how different factors influence the decision-making process from the standpoint of an individual. Moreover, with the help of Weber's theory, the concept of involvement was brought back into the research consciousness. The latter was acknowledged as one of the most important concepts in consumer behaviour, but we cannot help noticing that it was largely forgotten. The research distinguished between four types of involvement and used them to develop a plethora of research areas. This made the comprehensive understanding of the decision-making process under-addressed.

Secondly, this study furthers the literature by testing the interrelatedness of four types of involvement – product involvement, advertising involvement, ego involvement, and purchase-decision involvement. Furthermore, the involvement, conceptualised as how important an object is to a consumer, enables for an exploration of the effect of external and internal factors on tourist decision-making more comprehensively by moving away from the narrow view of decision-making process as a black box with inputs and outputs (Smallman and Moore 2010). Therefore, this study adds to the literature by addressing Hung and Petrick's (2011) and Sirgy and Su's (2000) critique of the research for its lack of integration of various theories that have been shown as significant for furthering the understanding of the tourist decision-making process.

### 2.7.2 Research hypotheses broken down to research questions

This section aims to highlight the research questions and related hypotheses that will guide this study. We begin by presenting the conceptual model, a repetition of the proposed research question, and then continue by providing the literature that is supporting the development of hypotheses. This will be presented for each of the three research questions, across which we developed a total of 11 hypotheses.

In Figure 2.8 we present with the conceptual model on the influence of tourism destination advertising on self-congruity and tourism-related behaviour.

Figure 2.8: Model of the influence of tourism destination advertising on self-congruity and tourism-related behaviour
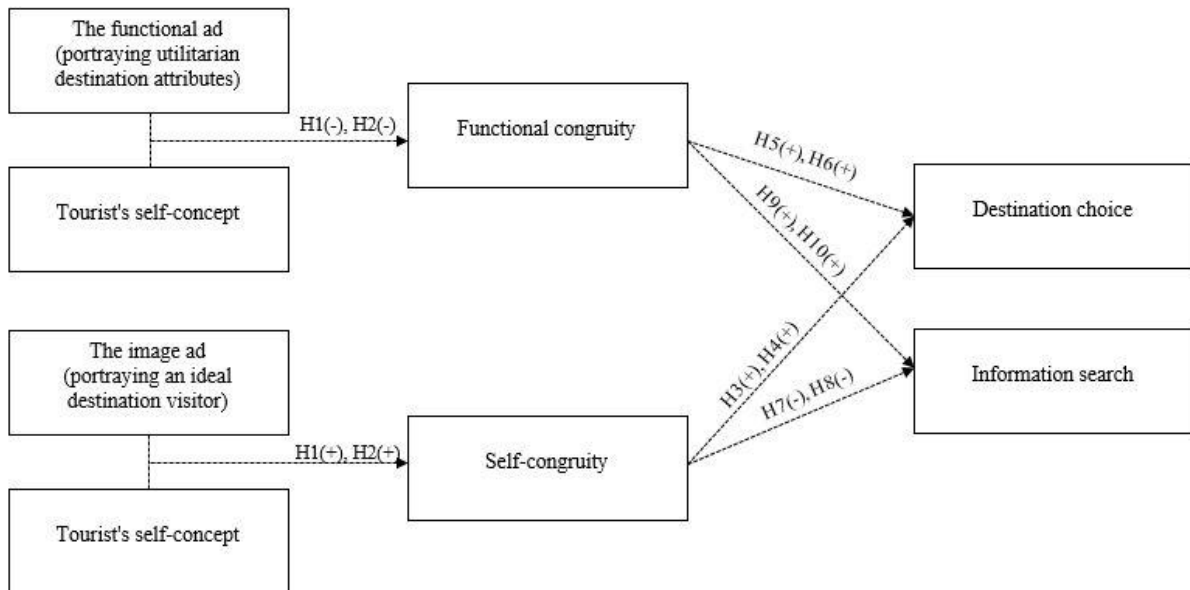


**RQ1: How do individuals construct congruity with the tourism destination in relation to an image ad and a functional ad?**

*Self-congruity and advertising*

One of the key findings of self-congruity research has been that individuals develop congruity with a tourism destination based upon their personal and public selves (Sirgy 1985; Ahn *et al.* 2013; Pratt and Sparks 2014; Sirgy 2014). The importance of matching various dimensions of one's self with either a typical destination visitor or with a destination brand personality is at the foundation of the congruity theory (Sirgy 2014). The research provided empirical evidence on how tourists form congruity with the destination brand personality (Ekinci and Riley 2003; Murphy, Benckendorff, *et al.* 2007a, 2007b; Boksberger *et al.* 2011) or with the image of a typical destination visitor (Beerli *et al.* 2007, Hung and Petrick 2011; Hosany and Martin 2012; Hung and Petrick 2012; Ahn *et al.* 2013). According to Sirgy (2014, 70–71), this suggests that "the same destination environmental cues that influence the formation of

103

destination visitor image are likely to influence the formation of destination personality" and *vice versa*. Sirgy and Su (2000) identified four dimensions of self-congruity – actual, ideal, social, and social ideal. Initially, the research (Chon 1992; Litvin and Goh 2002; Kressmann *et al.* 2006) was focused on assessing the effect of actual and social self-congruity, while the ideal and social ideal self-congruity were disregarded. The explanations provided by researchers was that the latter two self-congruity dimensions highly correlate with the actual and social self-congruity. However, Hung and Petrick (2011) found there to be a significant and positive relationship between ideal and social ideal self-congruity and travel intentions (0.448; 0.351, at p<0.001, respectively). Additionally, the authors found ideal self-congruity had the highest predictive power on cruising intentions among the four self-congruity dimensions, which was followed by social ideal self-congruity (Hung and Petrick 2011). Contrary to the common belief, Hung and Petrick's (2011) suggest for the ideal and social ideal self-congruity to be better predictors of travel intentions than the actual and social self-congruity.

So far, the research showed that there are two routes to development of congruity – the self-congruity and functional congruity (Sirgy and Su 2000; Hung and Petrick 2011; 2012; Ahn *et al.* 2013; Pratt and Sparks 2014; Sirgy 2014). Self-congruity represents the match between one's self and a tourism destination, whilst functional congruity represents a match between utilitarian destination attributes and what a tourist imagines to be ideal utilitarian attributes for that tourism destination (Sirgy 2014). But, self-congruity studies have relied upon user imagers that are in the mind of a tourist (i.e., a typical user), and disregarded that user imagery also features an ideal user as advertised by destination image forming agents. Therefore, research is very scarce in providing empirical evidence on the influence of destination advertisement on the development of congruity between an individual and a tourism destination (Johar and Sirgy 1991; Sirgy and Su 2000; Bilim and Yuksel 2008; Hung and Petrick 2011). Johar and Sirgy (1991, 31) attempted to address this by developing a conceptual model to address psychological dynamics involved in value-expressive and utilitarian advertising appeals. The model showed how value-expressive appeals stimulate the development of "a match between the user image characteristics of the product and the consumer self-concept (i.e., self-congruity)," while the utilitarian appeals stimulate the development of "a match between the functional characteristics of the product and their desired set of characteristics expected in that product (i.e. functional congruity)." However,

this study was conducted for product brands and not for tourism destination brands. Moreover, many authors (Johar and Sirgy 1991; Sirgy and Su 2000; Hung and Petrick 2011; 2012) provided managerial implications about how beneficial advertising and promotion cues are in developing, reinforcing, or changing one's perception of and attitudes towards a tourism destination, and the image of its typical visitor. However, these managerial implications were based only on authors' judgements and not on empirical evidence. Hung and Petrick (2011, 101) observe that the discussion on self-congruity is very often conducted outside the context of destination image literature, "causing disconnect in the conceptualisation and measurement of self-destination image congruity."

Based upon the support for: (1) distinguishing between the self-congruity and functional congruity, (2) the ideal and social ideal self-congruity being suggested as better predictors of tourism-related decisions, and (3) the logic behind the effectiveness of value-expressive and utilitarian advertising appeals, we believe that the ideal and social ideal self-congruity will be influenced by how the tourism destination is portrayed in its advertising (see Figure 2.8). Therefore, we present with the following hypotheses:

**H1:** The more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater is the congruity between tourist's ideal self-image and the destination. That is, the more the ad portrays destination functional attributes, the lesser the congruity between tourist's ideal self-image and the destination.

**H2:** The more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater is the congruity is between a tourist's social ideal self-image and the destination. That is, the more the ad portrays destination landscape, the lesser the congruity is between tourist's social ideal self-image and the destination.

**RQ2: How is the tourist behaviour (destination choice and information search) affected by the construing of congruity with a tourism destination in relation to the image ad and the functional ad?**

*Self-congruity, advertising and destination choice*

The literature showed a great support for how useful is to understand the influence of self-congruity in tourism-related behaviour (Sirgy 2014). Many authors linked self-congruity to one's destination choice both theoretically and empirically (Ekinci and Riley 2003; Beerli *et al.* 2007; Usakli and Beloglu 2011; Hung and Petrick 2011; 2012; Pratt and Sparks 2014).

The general assumption is that the more tourists believe that a tourism destination resembles the way they perceive themselves, or how others perceive them (actual and social self), or the way how they would like to perceive themselves, or how they would like to be perceived by others (ideal and social ideal self), the greater the likelihood that they will choose the destination for their next holiday (Sirgy and Su 2009, Sirgy 2014). However, the studies showed mixed results on the influence of self-congruity to destination choice. For example, Ahn and co-authors (2013) did not find for the actual and ideal self-congruity to be significant predictors of tourism destination choice. On the other hand, Hung and Petrick (2011) found that the actual, ideal, social, and ideal social self-congruities are directly related to travel intentions (0.230; 0.448; 0.215; 0.351, at $p < 0.001$, respectively).

Additionally, Ahn *et al.* (2013) stated that functional congruity was found to be the most significant predictor of one's tourism destination choice. Moreover, it was suggested for the functional congruity to better predict destination choice than the self-congruity (Ahn *et al*. 2013). Similarly, Hung and Petrick (2011) also showed that the functional congruity influences one's travel intentions (from 0.254 to 0.158, $p < 0.001$, respectively), but it was shown to have less power than the ideal and social ideal self-congruity. These findings provide justification for further research into the matter. Moreover, tourists' ability to match their various dimensions of self with a tourism destination is fundamental for destination advertising to be effective (Sirgy and Su 2000; Hung and Petrick 2011). This is why it is important to study tourism-related behaviour in connection to the interrelatedness of the destination advertising and self-congruity. This study attempts to address these gaps through the hypotheses presented as follows:

**H3:** The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H4:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H5:** The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H6:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

*Self-congruity, advertising, and information search*

Self-congruity and functional congruity have never been researched in direct connection to the internal information search. However, self-congruity and functional congruity demand a psychological processing of internal information in order for a match between an individual and a brand, a product, or a tourism destination is established (Sirgy 1985). To the best of our knowledge, there is only one study that examined the interrelatedness between self-congruity and functional congruity with the intention to search for destination-related information on the internet for the upcoming summer vacation (Bosnjak 2010). The study showed that the functional congruity had a positive impact on external information search intentions (0.44 at $p < 0.01$). It was also shown that the influence of actual, ideal, and social self-congruity was non-significant when the undesired congruity was introduced in the model (Bosnjak 2010). Because of the notion that the greater congruity leads to the greater willingness to visit a tourism destination (Hung and Petrick 2011; Sirgy 2014), it was expected that both the functional congruity and self-congruity would lead towards greater intention to search for information in the external environment (Bosnjak 2010). However, if we reflect back on the discussion to what constitutes the functional congruity and self-congruity, it can be expected that the functional congruity will increase information search intentions due to it representing a match between utilitarian destination attributes and that of an ideal destination attributes of a tourist. We would also expect that the self-congruity would decrease the information search intentions, because it is related to establishing a match between one's self and a tourism destination. As such, the match may influence tourists to search for less information from external sources or, on the other hand, to be more efficient in external search, because they already know where they want to go and what they want to do, so they search for what is relevant, important, and useful (Vogt and Fesenmaier 1988; Coupley *et al.* 1998). Hence, we present with the following hypotheses:

**H7:** The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) decreases the information search.

**H8:** The congruity between the social ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *image self-congruity*) decreases the information search.

**H9:** The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search.

**H10:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search.

**RQ3: How different are the self-congruity measurements predicting tourist behaviour in relation to the image ad and the functional ad?**

*Predictive validity of self-congruity measurements in relation to destination advertising*

The pioneering study of Sirgy and co-authors (1997) assessed the predictive validity of the two methods of measuring self-congruity. The authors took into account six studies involving different consumer populations, consumption settings, and consumption products. The so-called traditional method (i.e. the gap-scoring formula) was shown to be problematic, and thus the new measurement (i.e. direct measurement) was presented as a problem-free measurement. However, from the literature review we observe that authors were utilising both the gap-scoring formula and the direct self-congruity measurement. By introducing the destination advertising into the broader context of the self-congruity measurement debate, we presume that the two methods will demonstrate that the congruity will influence the destination choice, but there will be significant differences for the image as and for the functional ad. Therefore, we present with the following hypothesis and the conceptual model:

    **H11:** There is a significant difference in how self-congruity measurements, in relation to destination advertising, predict destination choice.

Figure 2.9: Model depicting the effect of tourism destination advertising on the self-congruity measurements
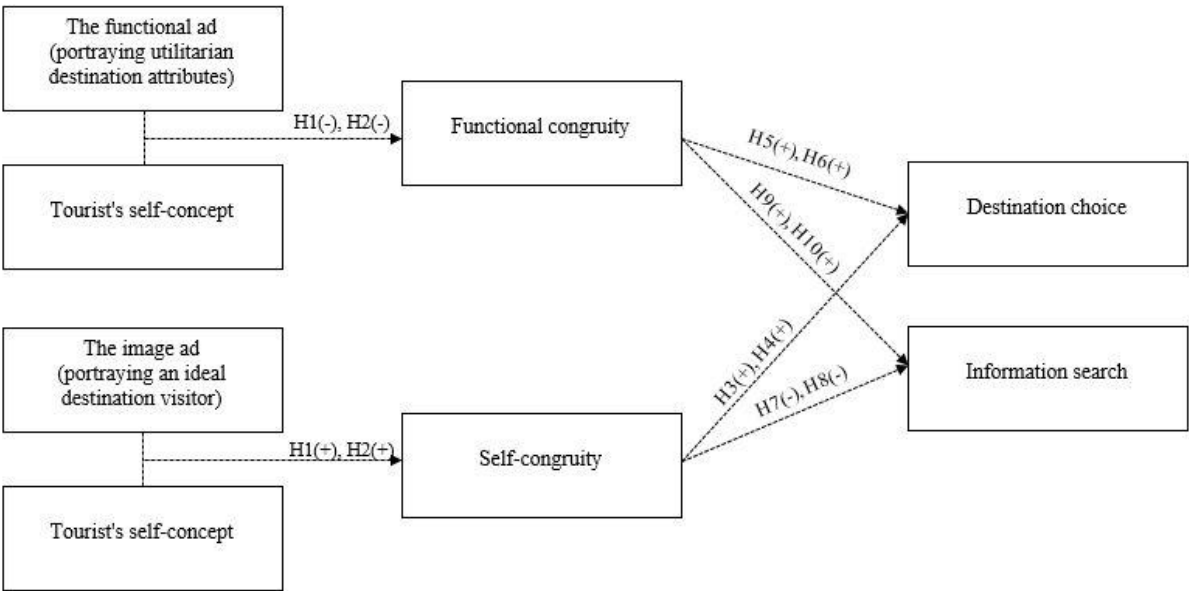


108
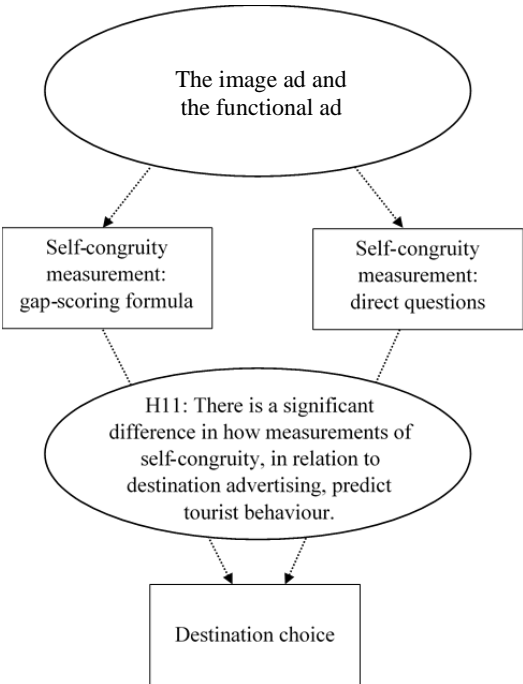
# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we will discuss the methodology used to answer the previously highlighted research questions and test the related hypotheses. The chapter will begin by revisiting the research framework that consists of the previously mentioned research questions and related hypotheses. The presentation of research framework is followed by a discussion on the site selection, as well as the content analysis used to design and test the influence of destination advertising on self-congruity and tourism-related behaviour. This discussion will conclude with a presentation of statistical methods used to test the proposed hypotheses.

## 3.2 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

In this study, we seek to answer three specific research questions using 11 hypotheses. Again, we will review them below by following the framework of delivering the research questions with related hypotheses and models.

Figure 3.1: Model of the influence of tourism destination advertising on self-congruity and tourism-related behaviour

*RQ1: How do individuals construct congruity with a tourism destination in relation to an image ad and a functional ad?*

**H1:** The more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater the congruity is between a tourist's ideal self-image and the destination. That is, the more the ad portrays destination functional attributes, the lesser the congruity is between a tourist's ideal self-image and the destination.

**H2:** The more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater the congruity is between a tourist's social ideal self-image and the destination. That is, the more the ad portrays destination landscape, the lesser the congruity is between a tourist's social ideal self-image and the destination.

*RQ2: How is tourist behaviour (destination choice and information search) affected by the construing of congruity with a tourism destination in relation to an image ad and a functional ad?*

**H3:** The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H4:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H5:** The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H6:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H7:** The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) decreases the information search.

**H8:** The congruity between the social ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *image self-congruity*) decreases the information search.

**H9:** The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search.

**H10:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search.

Figure 3.2: Model depicting the effect of tourism destination advertising on self-congruity measurements
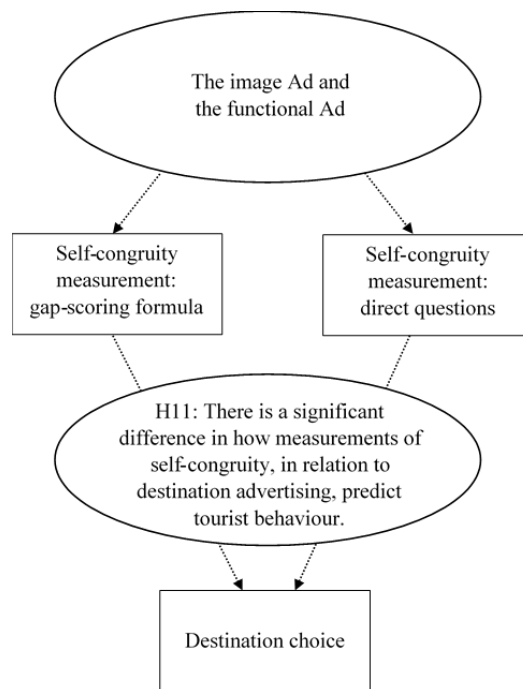


RQ3: How different are the self-congruity measurements predicting tourist behaviour in relation to an image ad and a functional ad?

**H11:** There is a significant difference in how self-congruity measurements, in relation to destination advertising, predict destination choice.

## 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.3.1 Study population and sampling

Mallett (2006, 161) defines the research population as "the collection of all elements of interest," whilst the elements are defined as "the basic unit of analysis" that extends to a person, a household, a store, a trip, etc. For Zikmund and co-authors (2010, 387), the research population represents any complete group of entities, which have some characteristics in common. For the purpose of this study, Slovenian residents comprise the population of interest. Slovenian residents were chosen as a population in which to examine the research questions of this study based upon the importance of this tourism market segment for Croatian tourism (in 2015 there were more than 1.2 million Slovenian tourists in Croatia, which makes them the second biggest incoming tourists in Croatia).

This study is very specific because it aims to examine how destination advertising effects the development of self-congruity and tourism-related behaviour. From the theory, it is known that destination advertising is only one of the marketing mix tools used by destination image formation agents, and that it is very difficult to measure its effectiveness. With this in mind, we wish to discuss some limitations. The first limitation refers to the destination of interest. We have chosen Croatian island of Pag as our destination of interest. The island is associated with the entertainment at the Zrće beach. The latter represents two important elements of its tourism product: first, the sandy beach, and second, the entertainment. Because of these two elements, we can more easily distinguish between the utilitarian and value-expressive advertising appeals. However, this leads to a second limitation, which is related to the population of interest. Due to the tourism product specific to this tourism destination, the target audience is primarily young people who want to spend their summer vacation at a beach and party. This is why we decided to limit ourselves to young Slovenians (aged 18 to 35 years), because they most resemble the target audience of Pag.

Further, we developed the sampling frame. According to Mallett (2006, 166), a sampling frame represents "a list of survey population elements or could be composed of maps, population estimates, and rules to identifying, enumerating, and selecting sample units." The sampling frame represents "the subset of the population that actually has a chance to enter the sample" (Mallett 2006, 166). For example, in a telephone survey, a sample frame would be represented by people that live in a household with a telephone number registered in a telephone book, who speak the language in which a survey can be conducted, and who are at home at the time of conducting a survey, etc. For the purpose of this study, the sampling frame is represented by all Slovenians aged 18 to 35 years with access to the internet. The list of elements important for this study is the gender distribution for the age limit. According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (2016), in 2015 there were 915,477 Slovenians aged 18 to 35, of which 475,397 were men and 440,080 were women (see Figure 3.3).

At the time of survey design, the internet represented an extremely appealing medium for conducting the survey, both timewise and accessibility-wise. This means that the internet represented the medium with which the population important for this study was easily

accessible. Moreover, an online survey was considered to be a faster data collection method as compared to a telephone survey, mail survey, or face-to-face survey. However, an online survey is connected to the issue of coverage with the probability sampling method being difficult to apply (Mallett 2006). Therefore, we adopted a nonprobability sampling approach, which consisted of intercept sampling and snowball sampling at social media sites and emails lists.

Figure 3.3: An illustration of the study population by gender
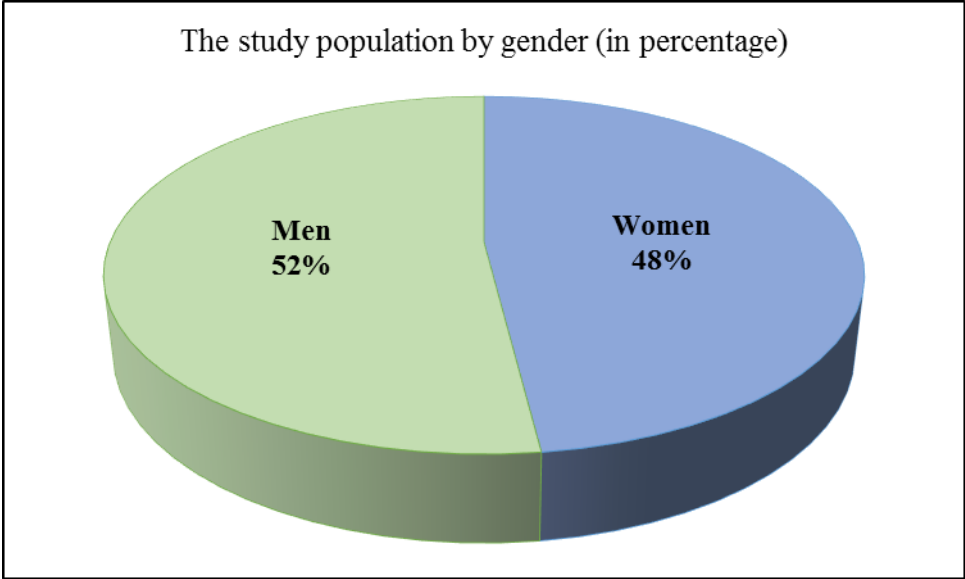


Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (2016).

### 3.3.2 Data collection method

The data collection method chosen for this survey is the self-administered online survey. As previously mentioned, the coverage issue is related to online surveys due to the target population opting-out of surveys either at the beginning, or at any point of filling-in the questionnaire (Mallett 2006). Obviously, we wanted to distribute the questionnaire as widely as possible. We published the questionnaire on multiple social media channels (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and asked respondents to invite their peers to fill-in the questionnaire. By doing the latter, we made them the gatekeepers of the survey, which is significant for the snowballing sampling method (Mallett 2006).

The survey was created in the 1ka.si software. The software generated the link to the questionnaire, which was posted across various social media channels. Respondents were

asked to participate in the survey using a brief introduction into the survey (see Appendix A). If individuals agreed to participate, the questionnaire was displayed with the click of the button 'Next' (see Appendix B). The survey was open for participation from 4 June to 9 July 2015. Throughout this five-week period of data collection, 1,146 individuals were exposed to the brief introduction, with 832 individuals willing to participate in the study. This equated to an initial response rate of 72.6%. However, out of 832 individuals, only 519 answered the questionnaire. This equated to the return rate of 62.4% and a combined return and response rate of 44.7%. After cleaning the incomplete questionnaires and excessive missing data, the number of usable surveys was reduced to 372 (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Response rate broken down by data collection method

| Method | Exposure | Accept | Accept rate | Returned survey | Return rate | Usable surveys | Overall response rate |
|--------|----------|--------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| *Online* | 1146 | 832 | 72.6% | 519 | 62.4% | 372 | 44.7% |
| *Panel* | 207 | 206 | 99.5% | 188 | 91.3% | 171 | 83.0% |
| **Total** | **1353** | **1038** | **86.1%** | **707** | **76.9%** | **543** | **52.3%** |

However, a closer examination of the data revealed that there was a higher percentage of female respondents in the sample. In order to match the sample with the population on gender and age, we reviewed the literature on the options. The literature revealed that there are two principal options for solving this issue: the weighting of the data or undertaking yet another round of data collection. Weighting is considered "a simple and most general way" for reducing differences in selection probabilities (Mallett 2006). But, this study will use multiple statistics, including regression analysis, for which the adjustment of respondents' answers through weighting will not be of significant benefit. Therefore, we opted for the second option: that is, we initiated the second round of data collection. Here, our focus was on balancing the sample with population in age and gender. Therefore, we utilised the service of a Slovenian company for consulting and marketing research, Valicon Ltd. We used their services in terms of panel data collection, because they enabled us to access their panel with the specific age, geography, and gender characteristics that were needed for this study. After calculating the estimates needed for the sample to be balanced with population in terms of age and gender, the estimate for the number of respondents from Valicon's panel was 150 male respondents. These respondents were approached via emails with the same brief introduction to the project as in the first round of data collection. The survey was distributed from 24 May

to 28 May 2016. Throughout this one-week period of data collection, 2,131 emails were sent with only 207 individuals exposed to the brief introduction. Of those, 206 individuals were willing to participate in the study. This equated to an initial response rate of 99.5%. However, out of 206 individuals, only 188 filled-in the questionnaire. This equated to a return rate of 91.3% and a combined return and response rate of 83.0%. After cleaning the incomplete surveys, the number of usable surveys was reduced to 171 (see Table 3.1).

## 3.4 MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT

Due to the specifics of the research questions and hypotheses, for the development of measurement instrument we have had to: (1) focus on the study site and its advertising, (2) perform a content analysis of the destination advertising to examine what user-imagery was created by the destination forming agents, and then (3) develop a questionnaire that would be based on the results of the content analysis and measurement variables for the examined constructs. Therefore, the presentation of the development of measurement instrument follows the same rationale.

### 3.4.1  The study site

Firstly, in order to assess the influence of destination advertising on the self-congruity and functional congruity and, consequently, on tourism-related behaviour, we focused our research on the Croatian island of Pag.

### About the Island of Pag

Pag is a Croatian island located in the northern Adriatic Sea. It has a population of 9,059 people and is the fifth-largest island of Croatian coast (Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia 2015, 47). The island is considered to be the sunniest island in the Adriatic Sea with over 2,500 sunny hours per year, and as such is a very popular tourism destination in Croatia. Its development as a tourism destination has its origins in the beginning of the twentieth century. The first hotel was built in 1929 in the centre of town Pag, which coincided with the island's first tourism brochure being presented.

In the years to follow, the island experienced a significant migration deficit due to many residents migrating to USA, Canada, and Australia. Therefore, there was no significant development of tourism until the beginning of the 1960s, when the island experienced its first

tourism boom. That is, tourism development intensified with the opening of Hotel Bellevue in 1968, which accommodated up to 370 people at the time. Additionally, over the years, there was a significant increase in the number of camps, hotels, and private accommodation, followed by a rich offer of restaurant and shopping opportunities (economic development of the town Pag).

Nowadays, Pag annually records over 300,000 tourist arrivals and more than 2 million overnight stays (MINT 2014a). Pag is popular for its natural heritage (e.g. beautiful beaches, stone walls), cultural heritage (e.g. lace making, salt making), and gastronomy (e.g. sheep milk cheese, wine). The island's leading micro-destination is the town Novalja, which accounted for 62% of total tourist arrivals and 60% of total overnight stays. Novalja is the most popular among international tourists: 95% of total tourist arrivals and overnight stays in Novalja are generated by international tourists. The popularity of Novalja could be attributed to its famous beach Zrće, which offers a plethora of entertainment opportunities for young people. The beach itself is considered to be a "phenomenon of Croatian tourism" (*Entertainment at Zrće*) due to many clubs offering 24-hour parties and other entertainment activities.

### Collegium – the leading Slovenian youth travel agency

Young Slovenian tourists visit Pag in two ways: (1) either they organise their trips individually, or (2) in most cases, they book their trips with Slovenian youth travel agencies. Collegium Mondial Travel Agency (hereinafter: 'Collegium' or 'the Agency') is the biggest of these agencies, and is currently the leader in the market and in the South-Eastern Europe (Collegium).

Collegium was established in 1996 by Dominik S. Černjak, who decided to organise post-graduate trips. With 20 years of business experience, the agency is nowadays a regional youth market leader that offers its services in SE Europe (i.e., Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia). Collegium offers a variety of holidays: new-year celebration trips, ski trips, graduate and post-graduate trips, summer trips (i.e., boat party trips, spring break trips), and trips to various music festivals in the Adriatic region. Their offer extends mostly to tourism destinations in Greece (Zakynthos, Corfu, and Crete), Croatia (Poreč, Rovinj, Pag, and Hvar), Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad), and France (ski trips to Les Ores). The Collegium target group is

comprised of individuals aged 18 to 35. The agency was also recognised by the Tourism Association Slovenia for its achievements in youth tourism in 2010, and by Slovenian Tourism Organisation for its project 'Cooltura' as one of the most innovative projects in tourism in 2011 (Collegium).

Before 2010, they focused on organising trips for seniors. However, after 2011 they partnered up with numerous agencies specialised in organising electronic music festivals. Therefore, in 2011 they served as the official logistics partner for the Hideout Festival in Zrće, Pag. Soon after in 2013, they organised the first Spring Break Island festival in Zrće, Pag, where young people were entertained by famous DJs at the beach and on sail boats. At that time, they were also the official logistics partner of the Sonus Festival in Zrće, Pag. Since 2014, they have established the brand Croatian Music Festivals, which, among others, extends to organisation of various music and party events in Zrće, Pag: such as, Hideout, Sonus, Barrakud, Spring Break, and Fresh Island. Collegium has proclaimed itself as "specialised in handling groups, especially in tourism destinations Novalja and Pag, or elsewhere in Croatia in arranging round trips, city packages, incentives, tours with special themes, adventure and sport holidays, and tailor-made programmes" (Zrće Travel).

Collegium is the leader in organising trips for young people on Pag. As such, it is an important induced image formation agent that influences and co-creates the image of Pag independently from the Croatian Destination Management Organisation. Collegium's tourism product for the Island of Pag, which is predominately themed as the summer holiday entertainment, might have influenced the island's image in a completely different way than the DMO. Conversely, this offers an opportunity for our research, because it limits the target audience to be addressed and develops the opportunity to focus on examining limited destination advertising messages.

### 3.4.2 Content analysis

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), content analysis has been widely used as a qualitative research technique for the purpose of interpreting the meanings from the content of text data, visual data, etc. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) note that there are three distinctive approaches to content analysis – conventional, directed, and summative, which differ in the coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats of trustworthiness.

The conventional approach is based on the coding categories deriving directly from the data, while in the directed approach the data categories are derived from the theory and relevant research findings, and are then applied as guidance for content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). The summative approach is based on "identifying and quantifying certain words or content in text with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of words or content" (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1283). The purpose of the latter is not to infer meaning, but to explore the use of words or content. Moreover, the study in which a summated content analysis approach is employed starts with keywords or codes that are identified before and during the data analysis, and can be derived from the interest of a reviewer (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). The advantage of the summative approach is in the unobtrusive and non-reactive way of studying the point of interest (Babbie 2014) that can provide basic insight into how codes are actually used (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). However, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) suggest that there is an important limitation to be acknowledged. The authors say that the basic insight into the point of interest cannot be used for the purpose of generalisation about the phenomenon, since it heavily relies on credibility that can be evidenced only through demonstration of how the visual evidence is consistent with the interpretation (Hsieh and Shannon 2005).

Given the aim of the study, we decided to approach the content analysis of this study by using the summated content analysis. With the content analysis, we aim at identifying and quantifying the content of destination advertising of Pag. Our purpose is to understand how the destination advertising influences the self-congruity and functional congruity. Hence, the codes are pre-determined by our interest in two distinct visual imageries of Pag, which relate to how the destination is portrayed based on its functional attributes and based on an ideal tourist as envisioned by Collegium.

The content analysis followed seven steps, as recommended by Kaid and Wadsworth (1989): (1) formulate the research questions, (2) select the sample to be analysed, (3) define the categories to be applied, (4) outline the coding process and the coder training, (5) implement the coding process, (6) determine trustworthiness, and (7) analyse the results of the coding process (see Table 3.2). Kaid and Wadsworth (1989) encouraged researchers to follow these steps in order to produce reliable and valid results of the content analysis.

Table 3.2: The steps of the content analysis

| Step | Recommended process | Implementation |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Formulate the research question | How does Collegium portray Pag in its advertising to young Slovenians? |
| 2 | Select the sample of items | Visuals of Pag as presented at (1) specialised websites (www.collegium.si; www.zrcetravel.hr; www.springbreak-island.com), and (2) social media sites (Facebook pages: Collegium Mondial Travel, Spring Break Island; Instagram profiles: @collegiummondial and @springbreakisland). |
| 3 | Define the categories | 1. Category: destination functional attributes (functional attributes) of the Island of Pag.<br><br>2. Category: the typical destination visitor (image attributes) of the Island of Pag. |
| 4 | Coding outline | For each source of code (website or social media site) we examined those visuals that explicitly mentioned Pag. |
| 5 | Implementation of coding process | Website search: visuals referenced by text Pag, Island of Pag, Zrće beach.<br><br>Facebook search: visuals referenced by text Pag, Island of Pag, Zrće beach.<br><br>Instagram search: referenced by hashtags #pagisland and #zrcebeach. |
| 6 | Trustworthiness | Discussion with six young Slovenians on whether the visual evidence is consistent with the interpretation (a small pilot test). |
| 7 | Analyse the results | Discussion with tourism researchers and representatives of the travel agency. |

Source: Modified from Kaid and Wadsworth (1989).

## Step 1: Formulate the research question

Step one of Kaid and Wadsworth's (1989) recommendation is to formulate what exactly is to be analysed through performing the content analysis. The main research question derived from an extensive literature review that is documented in sections in Chapter 2 on product involvement, advertising involvement, and ego involvement. The findings revealed that destination image formation agents such as the Collegium Mondial Travel Agency are important induced image formation agents, and moreover, that they co-create the image of a

destination independently from official induced agents, such as DMOs. In its advertising to young Slovenians, Collegium has the power to create visual imagery of Pag, which gives it an important role in influencing young tourists' decisions to visit the island. Therefore, the research question of the content analysis is how does Collegium portray Pag in its advertising to young Slovenians?

***Step 2: Select the sample of items***

Kaid and Wadsworth's next step suggests to select the sample of items that are going to be used in content analysis. This involves the creation of a pool of items reflecting the ads of Pag. Specific attention was given to visuals of Pag as presented at three specialised websites – www.collegium.si; www.zrcetravel.hr; www.springbreak-island.com, and five social media sites: three Facebook pages – Collegium Mondial Travel, Zrće Travel, and Spring Break Island; and two Instagram profiles – @collegiummondial and @springbreakisland. These websites and social media were demonstrated to be owned and managed by Collegium. The basic characteristics of each website and social media are presented in Table 3.3. Furthermore, these websites and social media helped in creating a pool of items that were examined based on the pre-determined categories and coding outlines.

Table 3.3: Characteristics of Collegium websites and social media, specific for the promotion of Pag

| Site | Type | Total number of followers | Total number of photos |
|---|---|---|---|
| www.collegium.si | website | 3,000* | 80 |
| www.zrcetravel.hr | website | 132* | 55 |
| www.springbreak-island.com | website | 341* | 345 |
| Collegium Mondial Travel | Facebook profile | 55,161 | 53,138 |
| Zrće Travel | Facebook profile | 214 | 98 |
| Spring Break Island | Facebook profile | 25,086 | 3,534 |
| @collegiummondial | Instagram profile | 1,643 | 342 |
| @springbreakisland | Instagram profile | 1,072 | 267 |

Note: *average number of followers in the last six months according to SimilarWeb.

From the above, it is evident that the selected websites and social media profiles are very versatile in the number of total followers and the number of photos displayed. For websites, the total number of followers is represented by the average number of unique visitors to the website in the last six months. In order to generate those numbers, we utilised the tool found at SimilarWeb.com. The limitation of this procedure is in averaging the numbers of unique

visitors over a period of time instead of demonstrating the actual unique visits to the sites across different time periods. With this limitation in mind, we further examined how each site performed for each month over the last six months, and the results were very different (see Appendix C). For example, the website Collegium.si averaged 3,000 unique visitors over the last six months (starting from April 2016), however it was shown that it generated almost 4,000 unique visitors in August 2016, while its lowest number was 1,000 unique visitors in June 2016. Similarly, the website Springbreak-island.com averaged 341 unique visitors in the last six months, with almost 20,000 unique visitors in April and May 2016, and only 500 unique visitors in September 2016.

### *Step 3: Define the categories*

All the items generated from the three websites, three Facebook profiles and two Instagram profiles – a total of 57,859 photos – subsequently enter the content analysis. However, step 3 necessitated the definition of categories, whose purpose is to help in differentiating between content of interest. Therefore, based on our research questions, we have set two categories: (1) destination functional attributes (functional attributes) of Pag, and (2) an ideal destination visitor (image attributes) of Pag.

### *Step 4-6: Coding outline, implementation, and trustworthiness*

Steps 4 and 5 require an outline of the coding and the implementation of the coding process. Based on the step 3, we identified more than 57 thousand pictures to be examined. However, we only focused on those that were connected to Pag, and thus eliminated the rest from the analysis. The purification of the pool of pictures to be analysed was done with the help of another set of codes that helped us identify only the visual content related to the point of interest. Hence, for the visuals derived from the websites and Facebook profiles, we only referenced those that were textually related to Pag or Zrće beach, and for the visuals that derived from the Instagram profiles, we only referenced those that related to hashtags #pagisland and #zrcebeach. The latter two were identified as being repeated across visuals whenever there was a post about the Island. Moreover, with the help of hashtags and by focusing on the visuals that are textually connected to the point of interest we partially established the validity of content analysis, since there is a very limited chance of error if the visual-text connectedness is established. Additionally, trustworthiness was also established by asking six young Slovenians (aged 25 to 30) to assess whether the visual evidence is

consistent with the interpretation of the results. Lastly, the results of the content analysis were discussed with the two representatives of Collegium Mondial Travel Agency and two tourism researchers before they were taken further to be implemented in the measurement instrument.

*Step 7: Results of the content analysis*

A summated content analysis was performed on a total of 1,925 pictures, which were shown as associated with the destination of interest. During the analysis, we developed an additional category named 'Other,' since some pictures did not reflect either destination functional attributes or its ideal visitor. In Table 3.4, we present with the results of the content analysis.

Table 3.4: Summary of pictures allocated over the categories

| Site | Destination functional attributes | Ideal destination visitor | Other | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| www.collegium.si | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| www.zrcetravel.hr | 28 | 7 | 20 | 55 |
| www.springbreak-island.com | 15 | 321 | 9 | 345 |
| Collegium (FB) | 36 | 312 | 7 | 355 |
| Zrće Travel (FB) | 20 | 67 | 11 | 98 |
| Spring Break Island (FB) | 53 | 571 | 161 | 785 |
| @collegiummondial | 1 | 15 | 0 | 16 |
| @springbreakisland | 25 | 206 | 36 | 267 |
| **Total** | **178** | **1,502** | **245** | **1,925** |

Note: FB = Facebook, @ = denotes an Instagram profile.

The results revealed that almost all Collegium communication channels place a great emphasis on the portrayal of an ideal visitor to the destination. The latter is portrayed as an individual that is dancing and having fun (hereinafter: 'partying') with friends, is dressed as appropriate for summer (i.e. light clothes, swimwear, and beachwear), and spends time at a beach, at a party place, or on a boat (see Appendix D). Conversely, destination functional attributes are comprised of its famous beach Zrće, sailing boats, blue sea, and the party place known as the Papaya Beach Club (see Appendix E).

Based on these results, the 10 most distinctive pictures of Pag (five for each category) were showed to six people and they were asked to evaluate which two pictures most distinctively portray Pag. The same process was applied to the discussion about results with the representatives of the Collegium and tourism researchers. As a result, a picture portraying a beach as a functional ad (i.e. utilitarian appeal) and a picture portraying young people having

fun on a boat as the image ad (i.e. value-expressive appeal) were taken forward for the development of measurement instrument (see Appendix F).

### 3.4.3   Development of measurement variables

The measurement instrument was based on the results from the content analysis and on the scales used to measure self-congruity, destination choice, and information search, which were adapted and modified based on previous research. These are outlined in the following sections.

#### Self-congruity scales

In order to measure how tourist-destination congruence is developed based on the destination advertising, we utilised both the gap-scoring formula and direct measurement of self-congruity.

#### Methodological Procedures

Methodological procedures as suggested by Sirgy *et al.* (1997), Sirgy and Su (2000), and Ahn *et al.* (2013) were followed to introduce respondents to the point of interest. Therefore, at the beginning of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to follow the next instructions:

> "Take a moment to think about the person you are, the person you would like to be, and the way would like to be seen by others. Place special focus on the person you would like to be and how you would like to be seen by others."

Afterwards, respondents were asked to assess to what extent the "Self-congruity" scale items for the gap-scoring formula applied to them based on how they would like to see themselves (i.e. *ideal self-congruity*) and how they would like to be seen by others (i.e. *social ideal self-congruity*). Similarly, later in the questionnaire, they were shown both ads – the functional ad and the image ad. When respondents were shown the functional ad, they were asked to think about the kind of person who typically visits the destination in the picture, and to assess to what extent the self-congruity scale items apply to the typical visitor. When respondents were shown the image ad, they were asked to carefully look at the picture, which portrays ideal destination visitors and to assess to what extent the self-congruity scale items apply to the tourist in the ad.

*Gap-Scoring Formula*

In order to measure the key constructs of ideal and social ideal congruity, an adapted version of the Hiernomimus' (2003) 10-item personality measure scale was used. Specifically, the measure of personality used five items that were designed to capture the cognitive dimension of personality, and five items for the emotional dimension (Boksberger *et al.* 2010). Boksberger *et al.*'s (2010) found the scale to be reliable in measuring self-congruity. The items constituting the self-congruity scale are presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Self-congruity scale items for the gap-scoring formula

| Self-congruity scale for the gap-scoring formula (Adapted from Hiernomimus 2003; Boksberger *et al.* 2011) | |
|---|---|
| **in English** | **translated into Slovene** |
| Reliable | Zanesljiv |
| Of high spirits | Pozitiven |
| Authentic | Pristen |
| Passionate | Strasten |
| Honest | Pošten |
| Imaginative | Domiseln |
| Down to earth | Prizemljen |
| Cheerful | Vesel |
| Successful | Uspešen |
| Adventurous | Drzen |

Note: Items were rated on a 5-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

*Direct Measurement*

In order to measure the ideal and social ideal self-congruity directly, we used an adapted version of measurements from Sirgy *et al.* (1997), Sirgy and Su (2000), and Ahn *et al.* (2013). Both Sirgy *et al.* (1997) and Sirgy and Su (2000) suggested that the direct measurements of self-congruity using the items presented in the Table 3.6 enable to researcher to holistically approach the concept.

Table 3.6: Items for the direct measurement of the self-congruity

| The direct measurements of the self-congruity (Adapted from Sirgy *et al.* 1997; Sirgy and Su 2000; Ahn *et al.* 2013) | |
| --- | --- |
| **in English** | **translated into Slovene** |
| *Ideal self-congruity* | |
| This destination A is consistent with how I would like to see myself. | Oseba, ki obiskuje destinacija A je zelo podobna osebi, kot si želim postati. |
| This destination B is consistent with how I would like to see myself. | Oseba, ki obiskuje destinacijo B je zelo podobna osebi, kot si želim postati. |
| *Social ideal self-congruity* | |
| This destination A is consistent with how I would like others to see me. | Oseba, ki obiskuje destinacijo A je zelo podobna temu kako želim, da bi me kot osebo dojemali drugi ljudje. |
| This destination B is consistent with how I would like others to see me. | Oseba, ki obiskuje destinacijo B je zelo podobna temu kako želim, da bi me kot osebo dojemali drugi ljudje. |

Note: Items were rated on a 5-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.
Destination A represents the functional ad (i.e., functional congruity).
Destination B represents the image ad (i.e., self-congruity).

***Tourist behaviour***

Since this study distinguished between the destination choice and information search, we looked for scales appropriate for measuring these tourism-related behaviours. For the purpose of this study, we adopted several scales to measure the destination choice and information search. Therefore, the destination choice was measured on a reversed scale of risk of purchase. The scale comprised four statements measuring the degree to which a respondent believes that the tourism destination featured in the image ad or the functional ad would represent a risky choice (Dean and Biswas 2001). Dean and Biswas' (2001) scale had a Cronbach alpha reliability of 0.88 and 0.87 across their two factorial experiments, respectively. In Table 3.7, we present the list of items of the tourism destination choice scale.

For the information search, the scale proposed by Mittal (1989) was used. In his study, Mittal (1989, 159) suggested that the extent of consumer information search to be "one of the most important consequences of purchase-decision involvement" and has reported a correlation of 0.79 for the two statements presented in Table 3.7 below.

Table 3.7: Items for measuring tourism-related behaviour

| Tourist behaviour scales | |
|---|---|
| **in English** | **translated into Slovene** |
| Destination choice (reversed risk of purchase) (modified from Mittal 1989; Dean and Biswas 2001) | |
| Choosing this destination would probably be a wrong choice. | Takšna destinacija bi zame najverjetneje bila napačna izbira. |
| Choosing this destination would probably be a very risky choice. | Izbira takšne destinacije mi popolnoma ustreza.* |
| It is likely that I would be unsatisfied with this destination. | Zelo verjetno je, da bi bil nezadovoljen s takšno destinacijo. |
| It is likely that the destination would not meet my expectations. | Zelo verjetno je, da takšna destinacija ne bi izpolnila mojih pričakovanj. |
| Information search (modified from Mittal 1989) | |
| I would probably seek out more information before choosing this destination. | Verjetno bi poiskal več informacij o tej destinaciji, preden bi se zanjo odločil. |
| I would spend more time looking for information about this destination before I make a decision. | Porabil bi veliko časa, da bi poiskal informacije o tej destinaciji, preden bi se odločil za nakup. |

Note: Items were rated on a 5-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.
*In translation, this statement was intentionally reversed from the original.

### 3.4.4 Additional measurement variables

In this study, we additionally utilised scales used for measuring one's decision-making style and attitude towards the ad. These were adapted from previous tourist behaviour studies and are outlined below.

### Decision-making style

In order to measure one's decision-making style, a few scales have been purposively adapted from previous literature: that is, the scales of Mantel and Kardes (1999), Gursoy and Gavcar (2003), and Huang *et al.* (2014) were used. Items constituting the decision-making style scale are presented in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8: Items for measuring tourists' decision-making style

| in English | translated into Slovene |
|---|---|
| **Decision-making style scale** | |
| (Mantel and Kardes 1999; Gursoy and Gavcar 2003; | |
| Huang *et al.* 2014) | |
| When I choose a vacation destination, it is not a big deal if I make a mistake. | Ko izbiram destinacijo, ni nič hudega, če se napačno odločim. |
| It is really annoying to purchase a vacation that is not suitable. | Zares je nadležno, če izberem destinacijo, ki sploh ni primerna zame. |
| If, after I buy a vacation, my choice proves to be poor, I would be really upset. | Če se izbor destinacije izkaže kot napaka, bi se resnično razburil. |
| Whenever one buys a vacation, one never really knows whether it is the one that should have been bought. | Ko se nekdo odloča o izboru destinacije, nikoli zares ne more vedeti, ali je to prava izbira. |
| When I face a variety of vacation choices, I always feel a bit at loss to make my choice. | Vsakič, ko izbiram med velikim številom različnih destinacij, se vedno počutim zelo neodločenega. |
| Choosing a vacation destination is rather complicated. | Izbira destinacije je precej zapleten proces. |
| You can tell a lot about a person by the vacation destination he or she chooses. | Izbira destinacije veliko pove o tem, kakšna oseba si. |
| The vacation I visit gives a glimpse of the type of man/woman I am. | Destinacije, ki jih obiskujem, mi omogočajo, da izrazim svojo osebnost. |
| The vacation you visit tells a little bit about you. | Izbira destinacije malo pove o tebi. |
| One can say vacation destinations interests me a lot. | Lahko bi rekli, da me izbira destinacije zelo zanima. |
| Destination choice process is a pleasure of mine. | Izbira destinacije mi vedno daje posebno zadovoljstvo. |
| I attach great importance to a destination choice. | Veliko pomena pripisujem izbiri destinacije. |
| | Z izbiro destinacije se sploh ne ukvarjam. |
| A destination choice is a topic that leaves me totally indifferent. | Odločitev pride kar sama po sebi. |
| The answers just come to me. | Po navadi poiščem veliko informacij o destinaciji, preden se odločim za nakup. |
| I usually seek out destination information before making a decision. | Vsakič, ko izbiram med destinacijami, se bolj odločam na podlagi mojih vtisov in občutkov, kot na podlagi zapletenih primerjav med destinacijami. |
| In making my decision, I focus more on my personal impressions and feelings rather than on complex trade-offs between attributes. | Pri izbiri poskušam uporabiti kar se da veliko informacij. |
| I try to use as much information as possible. | Veliko časa namenim iskanju informacij o destinaciji, preden se odločim za nakup. |

| | |
|---|---|
| I spend a lot of time looking for information about destinations before I make a purchase. | Ko se odločam med dvema destinacijama, zelo previdno primerjam njune značilnosti. |
| I carefully compare the two alternatives on several different attributes. | |
| | Moja odločitev sloni na trdnih dejstvih, ne pa na splošnih vtisih in občutkih. |
| My decision is based on facts rather than on general impression or feelings. | Pogosto se posvetujem z drugimi, katero destinacijo izbrati. |
| When I make vacation decisions, I am likely to rely on other people's opinions. | Moja odločitev je rezultat skrbnega razmišljanja in presoje. |
| My decision is based on careful thinking and reasoning. | Pogosto poiščem informacije o tem, katero destinacijo izbrati. |
| I often seek out information regarding which destination to choose. | Rad poiščem veliko informacij o destinaciji, preden se odločim za nakup. |
| I like to have a great deal of information before I choose a destination. | |

Note: Items were rated on a 5-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

### *Attitude towards an ad*

Since the respondents will be exposed to the visual elements of advertising, it is of our interest also to measure attitude towards the ads. For this purpose, the scale as proposed by Close *et al.* (2009) was used. The items constituting the attitude towards the ad scale is presented in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9: Items for measuring tourists' attitude towards an ad

| Attitude towards the ad scale | |
|---|---|
| (modified from Close *et al.* 2009) | |
| **in English** | **as translated into Slovene** |
| With this type of picture, I feel like visiting this destination. | Ta fotografija me spodbuja k obisku destinacije. |
| When choosing a destination, I usually look for this type of pictures. | Navadno iščem tovrstne fotografije, ko se odločam o izbiri destinacije. |
| I usually consider only these types of destinations as my summer choice. | Navadno upoštevam samo tovrstne destinacije za preživljanje svojih poletnih počitnic. |

Note: Items were rated on a 5-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

### *Demographic variables*

In addition to the scales mentioned above, five demographic questions were included in this study because of their relevance in analysing the data. These demographic variables included gender, age (measured by the year of birth), education, employment status, and marital status.

## 3.5    DATA ANALYSIS AND STATISTICS

For the purpose of answering the research questions, multiple statistical tests were needed to test the hypotheses. First, the gap-scoring formula was utilised for calculating the congruity between an individual and a functional ad or an image ad. Furthermore, significance tests (the McNemar and the paired sample test) were used to examine for differences between individuals with varying emphasis on self-congruity when exposed to the two ads.

The second research question was related to the relationship between the self-congruity and tourism-related behaviour. More specifically, the ideal and social ideal congruity were suggested to be significantly related to the destination choice and information search. More specifically, it was suggested that the ideal and ideal social self-congruity have a positive influence on destination choice and that they would decrease destination search in relation to the image ad. Moreover, it was suggested that the ideal and ideal social self-congruity have a positive influence on destination choice and that they would increase destination search in relation to the functional ad.  In order to fully test the second research question, a combination of exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis was employed.

The third research question was focused on assessing the predictive validity of two distinctive measurement approaches to congruity in relation to a functional ad and an image ad. Simple regression analysis was used to test for significant differences between the direct measurement of self-congruity and the gap-scoring formula. Below we present with a more detailed description of the statistics employed for the data analysis.

### 3.6.1    Calculations of self-congruity

For self-congruity, we distinguished between the gap-scoring formula and the direct measurement. For the gap-scoring formula, the literature suggests employing mathematical formulas used for calculating the degree of congruence between an individual and a tourism destination brand personality based on matching the ratings of the attributes examined.

### Gap-scoring formula

In alignment with the previous work (Sirgy 1982; Sirgy *et al.* 1991; 1997; Kressmann *et al.* 2006; Boksberger *et al.* 2011), the self-congruity scores were computed using absolute distance scores between each destination brand personality attribute (for the functional ad and

the image ad) and its corresponding ideal and social ideal self-image attribute (ISC and SISC, respectively). These were averaged across all personality attributes for each respondent. The general mathematical formulation for self-congruity are presented in Formulae 3.1.

Formulae 3.1: The general mathematical formulation of self-congruity.

$$D_k = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}|DP_{ik} - SI_{ik}|}{n}$$

Legend:
$D_k$ = self-congruity scores
$DP_{ik}$ = destination rating along personality attribute $i$ for respondent $k$
$SI_{ik}$ = self-image (ideal or social ideal) rating along personality attribute $i$ for respondent $k$
$n$ = number of personality attributes ($n = 10$)
$i$ = personality attribute $i$ ($i = 1…n$)
Source: Kressmann *et al.* (2006).

The above equation was further operationalised into two self-congruity indices: the ideal self-congruity and social ideal self-congruity. The indices are presented in Formulae 3.2 and 3.3.

Formulae 3.2: Mathematical expression for the ideal self-congruity

$$ISC_k = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}|DP_{ik} - ISI_{ik}|}{n}$$

Legend:
$ISC_k$ = ideal self-congruity (average weighted congruity between destination personality and ideal self-image) for respondent $k$
$DP_{ik}$ = destination rating along personality attribute $i$ for respondent $k$
$ISI_{ik}$ = ideal self-image rating along personality attribute $i$ for respondent $k$
$n$ = number of personality attributes ($n = 10$)
$i$ = personality attribute $i$ ($i = 1…n$)
Source: Kressmann *et al.* (2006).

Formulae 3.3: Mathematical expression for the social ideal self-congruity

$$SISC_k = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}|DP_{ik} - SISI_{ik}|}{n}$$

Legend:

$SISC_k$ = social ideal self-congruity (average weighted congruity between destination personality and social ideal self-image) for respondent $k$

$DP_{ik}$ = destination rating along personality attribute $i$ for respondent $k$

$SISI_{ik}$ = social ideal self-image rating along personality attribute $i$ for respondent $k$

$n$ = number of personality attributes ($n = 10$)

$i$ = personality attribute $i$ ($i = 1…n$)

Source: Kressmann *et al.* (2006).

We calculated the absolute differences at item level, which resulted in 10 variables for each congruity. The values ranged from 0 (indicating a perfect match between the self and the ad = 100% congruity) to 4 (indicating towards no match between the self and the ad = 0% congruity). For example, if an individual evaluated oneself as being very passionate (5), but assessed that the functional ad or the image ad as not passionate at all (1), then a value of 4 would indicate no match being established between the two, that is there is no congruity between the individual and one of the ads. Therefore, the congruity values ranged from 0 to 4, indicating towards a match/mismatch between the self and the ad assessed.

Further, in order to determine the threshold that would indicate those who are congruent with the ad or non-congruent with it, we looked at the previous studies on self-congruity. It was found that only Boksberger *et al.* (2011) reported the threshold to be at the value of 1.0, which was arbitrarily selected. Boksberger *et al.* (2011) observed that other self-congruity studies did not report on the threshold and were thus considered to be incomparable. Hence, for this study, we set the threshold for self-congruity to be at the value 1.0 by following the approach of Boksberger *et al.* (2011). That is, there is a maximum permissible difference between the self and the functional ad or the image ad: if the ad differed from one's self across all attributes by a value that is higher than 1.0, it was considered to be non-congruent and *vice versa*. With this approach, we ensured that the both ends of a positive or negative scale were viewed as the same, whereas the change from the negative to positive side was not accepted. By following this practice, we were able to create two groups of respondents for each ad: the first group included those respondents that reported on high self-congruity with the ad, and the second comprised respondents of low self-congruity with the ad.

*Direct measurement of self-congruity*

The direct measurement of self-congruity was conducted by directly asking respondents to assess to what extent they agreed with how the ads represented how they would like to see themselves and how they would like to be seen by others (the ideal and social ideal self). These questions were assessed on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. With the purpose of differentiating between respondents reporting on high self-congruity from those reporting on low self-congruity, we created two groups for each question from the scale. Since the five-point Likert-type scale was used, the value of 3 (exact middle of the scale) was used as an arbitrary cut-off point (Crowley *et al.* 1992; McKercher 2002; Šegota *et al.* 2017). It was presumed that those respondents who were indecisive about whether they were congruent or not would skew toward lower categories than those respondents who agreed that they were congruent with the ad. Therefore, we interpreted answers 1–3 as meaning low congruency and values of 4–5 as highly congruent.

### 3.6.2   *Regression analysis*

Regression analysis represented a statistical tool with which one could investigate relationships between different constructs by "relating one or more independent (predictor) variables to a dependent (criteria) variable" (Lehmann 2006, 255). Moreover, it also allows testing whether independent variables are statistically significant related to the dependent variable, and to what extent they predict the criteria to take place (Lehmann 2006). There are numerous types of regression analysis, for example, simple linear regression, multiple regression, multinomial regression, stepwise regression, logistic regression, etc. The decision of the latter depends on the nature of the relationship and assumptions that have to be met for each particular regression, because of their specifics (Garson 2013).

Prior to using linear and stepwise regression analysis, some assumptions had to be met. First, all variables entered in the regression analysis had to be measured on a continuous level and treated as interval or ratio variables. Second, Q-Q Plots were created to check for normality of the linear relationship. In case the scatter plots would not showcase the existence of linear relationships between constructs, other regression analyses would have had to be employed (for example, logistic regression, nonlinear regression, etc.). Thirdly, Pearson's Bivariate Correlation was utilised to check for multicollinearity between the independent variables. Multicollinearity occurs when the independent variables are portrayed not to be independent

from each other (Garson 2013). The specific cut-off associated with Pearson's coefficient was 1: that is, the correlation coefficient indicating that a correlation among all independent variables should be smaller than 1 (Garson 2013). Moreover, by conducting factor analyses with an orthogonal rotation, the independence of independent variables was established. Fourthly, Garson (2013) suggested for regression to have little or no autocorrelation in the data, which occurs when the residuals were not independent from each other. Additionally, Durbin-Watson's test may be used for checking for the autocorrelation, where the values of $1.5<D<2.5$ are associated with non-existence of autocorrelation of residuals. Lastly, regression also assumes that the error terms along the regression would have been equal: that is, having homoscedasticity. Garson (2013) suggested to use scatter plots with a significant pattern along the regression line in order to check for the homoscedasticity. In the case of homoscedasticity's presence, linear regression would not be an optional statistical tool to conduct data analysis.

### 3.6.3 Exploratory factor analysis

In order to answer the research question pertaining to examining how tourism-related behaviour is affected by the construing of congruity with a tourism destination in relation to an image ad and a functional ad, exploratory factor analysis would have to complement regression analysis. Exploratory factor analysis was employed in order to reduce the number of personality attributes across ideal and social ideal congruity with both ads. The reliability of each factor was tested using Cronbach's alpha. Exploratory factor analysis was used in order to test how personality attribute items load on each congruity, and to delete those that did not reflect the construct accurately. Hair *et al.* (2010) suggested considering those significant correlations between variables that exceeded a value of 0.50. Moreover, the orthogonality was ensured through the varimax rotation method, that tried to ensure that "only one or a few observed variables have large loadings on any given factor" (Sharma and Kumar 2006, 387).

### 3.6.4 Significance testing

Lastly, the McNemar test of significance represented the statistical test used to answer the first research question with subsequent hypotheses (1 and 2, respectively). The McNemar test is a statistical significance test used with binary variables in non-independent samples. The

non-independent samples represent such as before-after or matched-pair studies, such as ours, since the study participants were firstly exposed to the functional ad and then to the image ad. Therefore, there is a presumption that the responses of the image ad would be influenced by the responses given for the functional ad. Or else, the responses for both ads were interrelated due to the design of the study. These correlated or related samples occur when "the response of the *nth* person in the second sample is partially a function of the response of the *nth* person in the first sample" (Garson 2012, 155). According to Garson (2012), the McNemar test is designed to estimate the significance of the differences between the two groups when a variable of interest is a dichotomy. It always uses two groups that are binary coded and for which "the population distribution of the paired differences in assumed to be symmetric" (Garson 2012, 155).

## 3.7    SUMMARY

In this chapter, we discussed the methodology used to answer the research questions and hypotheses. This chapter begins by restating the research questions and hypotheses in order to remind the reader of the main goals of the study. It continues with a more detailed description of the research design. The latter was presented through a description of the study population, and methods for sampling and data collection. Then we included a description of the development of measurement instrument. The content analysis and development of measurement variables were used in developing the final measurement instrument (i.e., the questionnaire). This chapter concluded with a detailed description on statistical tests that will be utilised in testing hypotheses. The latter introduced the traditional method and the new method for measuring self-congruity. This was followed by a description of the factor analysis, regression analysis, and significance tests.

# CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

## 4.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings of the data analysis from the study's pilot test and primary data collection. Hence, it was broken into several sections. The first section describes the pilot test conducted in order to refine the survey items when these were translated into Slovene. The second section introduces primary data collection and its assessment. It starts with description of the data validation process that is complemented by the summary of demographic characteristics of respondents. Furthermore, basic descriptive statistics of personality attributes are presented, followed by a description on how self-congruity was measured and calculated in this study. Then, the primary data analysis introduces specific statistical tests used for answering each research question and subsequent hypotheses. In that matter, significance testing is related to testing hypotheses 1 and 2, followed by the exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis for testing hypotheses 3–10. These hypotheses specifically focused on testing for differences in destination choice and information search based upon a match between an individual and the destination advertising (a functional ad and an image ad). Lastly, regression analysis was employed for testing the predictive validity of two distinguished congruity measurement approaches, which was addressed in the third research question and its subsequent hypothesis 11.

## 4.2   PILOT TEST

Before conducting the primary data collection, a pilot test of the generated survey items was performed. It was executed by talking to six young Slovenians of different demographics in terms of age, gender, education, and employment status. These talks were based on the understanding of the generated survey items that have been translated and back-translated from English to Slovene. The pilot test helped refine the list of generated items, since pilot test participants were asked to identify the items that were difficult to understand or confusing. There were no major suggestions concerning the measurement instrument, and thus as such it was proposed as definite for the primary data collection.

## 4.3  PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ASSESSMENT

The purified questionnaire translated into Slovene was administered online to Slovenian residents using the internet, a snowball sampling method, and a panel. As mentioned in the methodology section, a total of 1,353 individuals were exposed to a survey, with 1,038 participants. Of those, 707 individuals returned the survey, which resulted in an initial response of 76.9%. The final number of returned, cleaned, and usable surveys was 496, with the ultimate response rate of 47.8%. The result is based upon 496 ultimately usable data sets, and is presented below, beginning with the description of how the data was validated and continuing with a provision of the descriptive analysis of the sample.

### 4.4.1  *Data validation*

Before conducting the analysis, the data needed to be prepared in terms of cleaning the data set of non-response biases and analysing the missing data. Cleaning the data represents the first step into analysing the freshly collected data. First, we observed that a large number of responses had haphazardly answered cells. These included a large number of those respondents who entered the survey and answered only one question: but, the software 1KA.si included them into the dataset as valid answers regardless of all other questions being unanswered. Therefore, we decided to count them as invalid responses and clean them out of the dataset. This cleaning process reduced the number of 707 returned surveys to 543 usable responses. Second, some respondents only entered a two-digit number instead of a four-digit number when asked for their year of birth. It was noted that some entered their age instead of the year of birth. These were corrected into an appropriate four-digit number. These two procedures were done in Excel prior to importing the data into the SPSS software for statistical data analysis. After the data was imported from Excel to SPSS, the frequency analysis was run in order to identify if all values have been in range of the scales used. Following this analysis, only one respondent was identified as having provided a false year of birth (for example, a number 199 was entered), which was treated as a missing value. For the remaining data, it was shown not to have any missing variables.

Furthermore, since our sample had to be limited in terms of the age (ranging from 18 to 35), we calculated this statistic from the variable 'year of birth'. The results showed that there were four respondents under the age of 18, and 42 respondents above the age of 35. These

were not taken for further analysis and have been reduced from the dataset. This process reduced the number of 543 surveys to 496 usable responses.

### 4.4.2   Demographic characteristics of respondents

The demographic characteristics comprised of gender, age, education, marital status, and employment status. Chi-square test results show how we assessed the similarity between the sample and the population. The Chi-square test is a univariate test that considers the goodness-of-fit of proportions between the dataset and that of the population (Garson 2012). The null hypothesis for the test was that the sample proportions for each demographic characteristic was a good fit to the population proportions. The test, if non-significant, confirms the null hypothesis. The results are presented in the Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 496)

| Demographic profile | Sample (N) | Sample (%) | Population (%) | Chi-square test |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Gender* | | | | |
| Male | 256 | 51.6 | 51.9 | $\chi2 = 0.019$, df = 1 |
| Female | 240 | 48.4 | 48.1 | |
| | | | | |
| *Age (average 27.0 years)* | | | | |
| 18-23 | 127 | 25.6 | 26.9 | |
| 24-29 | 226 | 45.6 | 33.8 | $\chi2 = 34.161*$, df = 2 |
| 30-35 | 143 | 28.8 | 39.3 | |
| | | | | |
| *Marital status* | | | | |
| Not married[a] | 443 | 89.3 | 81.3 | |
| Married | 53 | 10.7 | 17.7 | $\chi2 = 23.937*$, df = 3 |
| Widowed | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | |
| Divorced | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.0 | |
| | | | | |
| *Education* | | | | |
| Elementary school | 7 | 1.4 | 13.4 | |
| High school | 235 | 47.4 | 59.3 | $\chi2 = 170.468*$, df = 2 |
| Higher education | 254 | 51.2 | 27.3 | |
| | | | | |
| *Employment* | | | | |
| Employed/self-employed | 221 | 44.6 | 55.4 | |
| Unemployed | 55 | 11.1 | 10.4 | $\chi2 = 123.569*$, df = 4 |
| Student | 215 | 43.3 | 24.4 | |
| Housemaker/other | 5 | 1.0 | 9.7 | |

Note: *Significant at p > 0.05. [a] New category 'Not married' includes respondents who are single (49.4%) and in a relationship or domestic partnership (39.9%).

137

From the above, it is evident that the sample is comparable to the Slovenian population proportions only for the demographic characteristic of gender, whereas for all the other characteristics the sample did not meet the population proportions. Therefore, it would be difficult to generalise the results across the population: however, this is a very common result across studies with internet or snowball sampling method (Mallett 2006)

Overall, the sample was slightly more male (51.5%) than female (48.4%), with an average age of 27 years old. The majority of the sample members (89.3%) have never married, therefore they are either single (49.4%) or in a relationship with or without a status of domestic partnership (39.9%). The sample was largely well educated, with 47.4% having finished high school including college or technical school, and 51.2% having obtained a higher education institution degree (bachelor's, master's, or Ph.D.). Additionally, the sample generally reported that they were employed (44.6%) or a student (43.3%), with a low level of unemployed (11.1%) or homemakers (1.0%).

## 4.5   PRIMARY DATA ANALYSIS

The following proportion of the results section focuses on presenting the main data analysis and results from hypotheses testing. The results are presented based on the research questions and subsequent hypothesis for the better understanding of the primary data analysis. First, descriptive statistics of the gap-scoring formula results and direct self-congruity measurement across the two ads are presented. Second, a research question relating to how the individuals develop congruity with a destination in relation to the image ad and the functional ad is presented by the results of the McNemar tests. Third, exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis summaries are presented, which have been employed for testing hypotheses 3–10, related to destination choice and an information search being influenced by ideal and social ideal functional congruity, and ideal and social ideal image self-congruity. Lastly, a summary of the regression analysis is presented for assessing the differences in predictive validities of two distinct congruity measurements approached in relation to the destination choice.

### 4.6.1 Descriptive statistics of personality attributes

The basic descriptive statistics for each personality attribute, based on which respondents evaluated how they would like to see themselves and how they would like to be seen by others, are presented in Table 4.2.

Overall, respondents would like to think highly of themselves, as they would like for others to think the same. More than 90% of the sample agree that they would like to think of themselves as reliable, honest, of high spirits, authentic, and cheerful, whilst they would most certainly like to be perceived as reliable, of high spirits, and honest by others (i.e. more than 90% of the same agreed with these three attributes). Also, thinking of themselves as adventurous (68.3% agreed) or being perceived by others as passionate and adventurous (66.3% and 63.9% agreed, respectively) is of least importance to them.

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics of the personality attributes of one's self

| Personality attributes | Mean | St. dev. | Responses in % | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Agree* | Disagree** | Neutral*** |
| *The ideal self* | | | | | |
| Reliable | 4.41 | 0.770 | 92.4 | 4.0 | 3.6 |
| Of high spirits | 4.43 | 0.727 | 91.8 | 2.6 | 5.6 |
| Authentic | 4.30 | 0.739 | 90.1 | 2.8 | 7.1 |
| Passionate | 4.01 | 0.825 | 77.3 | 4.4 | 18.3 |
| Honest | 4.44 | 0.804 | 91.4 | 3.8 | 4.8 |
| Imaginative | 4.17 | 0.844 | 82.1 | 5.0 | 12.9 |
| Down to earth | 3.95 | 0.893 | 73.5 | 6.9 | 19.6 |
| Cheerful | 4.38 | 0.736 | 90.5 | 2.6 | 6.9 |
| Successful | 4.31 | 0.736 | 87.5 | 2.6 | 9.9 |
| Adventurous | 3.87 | 0.900 | 68.3 | 7.3 | 24.4 |
| *The social ideal self* | | | | | |
| Reliable | 4.54 | 0.666 | 95.4 | 1.6 | 3.0 |
| Of high spirits | 4.41 | 0.732 | 91.1 | 2.0 | 6.9 |
| Authentic | 4.33 | 0.736 | 89.3 | 2.0 | 8.7 |
| Passionate | 3.87 | 0.921 | 66.3 | 6.5 | 27.2 |
| Honest | 4.57 | 0.654 | 96.2 | 1.4 | 2.4 |
| Imaginative | 4.16 | 0.838 | 82.9 | 4.0 | 13.1 |
| Down to earth | 4.01 | 0.871 | 75.0 | 4.6 | 20.4 |
| Cheerful | 4.32 | 0.744 | 88.1 | 1.8 | 10.1 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Successful | 4.29 | 0.785 | 85.3 | 2.0 | 12.7 |
| Adventurous | 3.83 | 0.918 | 63.9 | 6.3 | 29.8 |

Note: * Agree: strongly agree and agree. ** Disagree: strongly disagree and disagree. *** Neutral: neither agree nor disagree.

The basic descriptive statistics for respondents' evaluation of the two ads are presented in Table 4.3. These provided with some interesting results. First, the image ad, which portrayed a mixed group of young people sitting on a boat, smiling and taking 'a selfie' (i.e. a picture of themselves) was evaluated as least down to earth, reliable, and honest (25.2%, 30.6%, 35.3% agreed, respectively), whilst it was considered as very cheerful and of high spirits (88.3% and 84.7% agreed, respectively). Second, the functional ad, which portrayed a sandy beach and a clear blue sea and for which respondents were asked to imagine its typical visitor, was evaluated as being least down to earth (39.2% agreed), but it was considered as very cheerful and of high spirits (80.1% and 85.1% agreed, respectively). Therefore, compared to the way people assessed themselves, it might be concluded that there are some major discrepancies.

Table 4.3: Descriptive statistics of the personality attributes of the ads

| Personality attributes | Mean | St. dev. | Responses in % | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Agree* | Disagree** | Neutral*** |
| *The image ad* | | | | | |
| Reliable | 3.12 | 0.903 | 30.6 | 21.4 | 48.0 |
| Of high spirits | 4.15 | 0.787 | 84.7 | 3.4 | 11.9 |
| Authentic | 3.39 | 0.979 | 45.4 | 15.3 | 39.3 |
| Passionate | 3.86 | 0.875 | 69.5 | 6.3 | 24.2 |
| Honest | 3.31 | 0.759 | 35.3 | 9.3 | 55.4 |
| Imaginative | 3.47 | 0.953 | 50.4 | 14.9 | 34.7 |
| Down to earth | 2.96 | 0.931 | 25.2 | 27.6 | 47.2 |
| Cheerful | 4.22 | 0.752 | 88.3 | 2.4 | 9.3 |
| Successful | 3.53 | 0.871 | 50.6 | 8.7 | 40.7 |
| Adventurous | 3.81 | 0.975 | 65.7 | 9.1 | 25.2 |
| *The functional ad* | | | | | |
| Reliable | 3.43 | 0.873 | 47.6 | 13.1 | 39.3 |
| Of high spirits | 4.13 | 0.716 | 85.1 | 1.6 | 13.3 |
| Authentic | 3.56 | 0.921 | 57.2 | 11.5 | 31.3 |
| Passionate | 3.73 | 0.944 | 62.9 | 9.1 | 28.0 |
| Honest | 3.51 | 0.806 | 50.6 | 7.3 | 42.1 |
| Imaginative | 3.31 | 1.106 | 45.5 | 23.0 | 31.5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Down to earth | 3.25 | 0.934 | 39.2 | 18.3 | 42.5 |
| Cheerful | 4.05 | 0.776 | 80.1 | 3.0 | 16.9 |
| Successful | 3.2 | 0.887 | 60.8 | 6.5 | 32.7 |
| Adventurous | 3.36 | 1.204 | 50.0 | 23.4 | 26.6 |

Note: * Agree: strongly agree and agree. ** Disagree: strongly disagree and disagree. *** Neutral: neither agree nor disagree.

### 4.6.2 Self-congruity measurements

#### The gap-scoring formula

Following mathematical formulas (see formulas 3.2 and 3.3 on page 130), the ideal and social ideal congruity for the functional ad and the image ad were computed. By further following the suggestion by Kressmann *et al.* (2006), testing of the correlation between the ideal and social ideal self-congruity for each ad was conducted. The results showed that ideal and social ideal indices correlated highly (0.884 and 0.840, at $p > 0.001$, respectively), as expected. As mentioned in the hypotheses, the two indicators for self-congruity for each ad will be treated as separated and will be subjected to further empirical testing (for hypotheses 3-11).

Further, by following the same approach Boksberger *et al.* (2011), we set the threshold of self-congruity at the value 1.0. That is, there is a maximum permissible difference between the self and the ad assessed: if the ad differed from the self-assessment across all attributes by value that is higher than 1.0, it was considered to be non-congruent and *vice versa*. With this approach, it was also ensured that both ends of the positive or negative scale were viewed as the same, whereas the change from the negative to positive side was not accepted. In Table 4.4 we present with the results of the reported match between two dimensions of the self (ideal and social ideal) and the functional ad or with the image ad. It was found that at the threshold at value 1.0 more 60% of all respondents could be considered congruent with the functional ad (60.9% for ideal self and 61.1% for social ideal self), whilst less than 60% of all respondents could be considered congruent with the image ad (56.9% for ideal self and 57.3% for the social ideal self).

Following the practice of Boksberger *et al.* (2011), we created two groups: the first group included those respondents that reported on high self-congruity and the second comprised respondents of low self-congruity. These were coded as 0 and 1, with those less congruent with the ad were coded 0, and those highly congruent were coded 1.

141

Table 4.4: Descriptive values of the extent of congruity measures

| Congruity measure (max. difference permissible for the self-assessment and destination assessment still deemed congruent) (points) | Percentage of reported ideal congruity functional ad (cumulative %) | Percentage of reported social ideal congruity with functional ad (cumulative %) | Percentage of reported ideal congruity with image ad (cumulative %) | Percentage of reported social ideal congruity with image ad (cumulative %) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.2 | 5.6 | 8.5 | 4.4 | 6.7 |
| 0.4 | 14.5 | 16.1 | 10.5 | 12.7 |
| 0.6 | 28.2 | 27.6 | 20.8 | 22.4 |
| 0.8 | 42.1 | 41.5 | 40.3 | 39.5 |
| **1.0** | **60.9** | **61.1** | **56.9** | **57.3** |
| 1.2 | 72.6 | 74.2 | 71.8 | 70.6 |
| 1.4 | 83.0 | 84.5 | 81.7 | 80.6 |
| 1.6 | 88.9 | 90.3 | 90.3 | 89.7 |
| 1.8 | 93.8 | 94.6 | 93.3 | 92.3 |
| 2.0 | 96.4 | 97.4 | 97.0 | 96.8 |
| 2.2 | 98.0 | 98.4 | 98.2 | 98.2 |
| > 2.4 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Note: The bold values represent the threshold chosen for the ad to be considered congruent with a respondent.


Table 4.5: Frequencies for self-congruity groups of the gap-scoring formula

| Self-congruity | Low congruity group | | High congruity group | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % |
| Ideal self congruence with the functional ad | 194 | 39.1 | 302 | 60.9 |
| Social ideal self congruence with the functional ad | 193 | 38.9 | 303 | 61.1 |
| Ideal self congruence with the image ad | 214 | 43.1 | 282 | 56.9 |
| Social ideal self congruence with the image ad | 212 | 42.7 | 284 | 57.3 |


***The direct measurement***

Direct measurement of self-congruity involved directly asking respondents to what extent they agreed that the ad represented the way they would like to be, or the way they would like to be seen by others. Therefore, mathematical calculations were not needed, but the basic descriptive statistics and frequencies are presented in Table 4.6 and Table 4.7.

Table 4.6: Descriptive statistics for the direct measurement of self-congruity for the ads

| Personality attributes | Mean | St. dev. | Responses in % | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | Agree* | Disagree** | Neutral*** |
| *The image ad* | | | | | |
| Ideal self-congruity | 2.84 | 1.045 | 25.8 | 36.7 | 37.5 |
| Social ideal self-congruity | 2.82 | 1.036 | 26.4 | 39.1 | 34.5 |
| *The functional ad* | | | | | |
| Ideal self-congruity | 3.00 | 1.036 | 32.7 | 31.0 | 36.2 |
| Social ideal self-congruity | 2.96 | 1.013 | 31.3 | 32.1 | 36.6 |

Note: * Agree: strongly agree and agree. ** Disagree: strongly disagree and disagree. *** Neutral: neither agree nor disagree.

Table 4.7: Frequencies for self-congruity groups of the direct measurement

| Self-congruity | Low congruity group | | High congruity group | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | N | % | N | % |
| Ideal self congruence with the functional ad | 334 | 67.3 | 162 | 32.7 |
| Social ideal self congruence with the functional ad | 341 | 68.8 | 155 | 31.3 |
| Ideal self congruence with the image ad | 368 | 74.2 | 128 | 25.8 |
| Social ideal self congruence with the image ad | 365 | 73.6 | 131 | 26.4 |

From the above, it is evident that more than 30% of people agreed that the functional ad where they had to imagine the typical visitor was similar to how they would like to see themselves or how they would like to be seen by others (32.7% and 31.3%, respectively). In contrast, only a quarter of the respondents felt like an ideal visitor from the image ad is similar to their ideal self (25.8%) and social ideal self (26.4%).

### 4.6.3 Significance tests for answering research question 1

Following the calculations of self-congruity and after establishing low and highly congruent groups, research question 1 specifically pertained to differences in how individuals develop congruity with a tourism destination in relation to the image ad and the functional ad. As previously mentioned in the section on methodology, hypotheses 1 and 2 specifically stated that there would be differences between the two ads, where if the ad includes an ideal tourist, the greater the congruity is between one's ideal and social ideal self and the destination.

143

In order to test these two hypotheses, the McNemar test was performed with the low and high congruity groups as dichotomous variables across the functional ad and the image ad. The test was performed separately for the gap-scoring formula and the direct measurement. Therefore, for the ideal self-congruity the distributions of different values across low and high congruent groups for the functional ad and the image ad were compared, with the null hypothesis representing the distribution to be equally likely across groups. The same process was repeated for the social ideal congruity and across the results of the gap-scoring formula and direct measurement of self-congruity.

The McNemar test revealed statistically significant differences for ideal and social ideal congruence between a tourist's self and the destination only when individuals were directly asked to evaluate their congruence with the ads at the 0.05 level (see Table 4.8). Since the McNemar test only observes whether there were statistically significant differences between group frequencies across the functional ad and the image ad, a paired samples t-test was performed in order to identify whether the significant change was in favour of the functional ad or the image ad. The paired t-test did demonstrate the difference to be in favour of the functional ad in the case of both ideal and social ideal congruity (see Appendix G). That is, our paired samples statistic box revealed that the mean number of ideal and social ideal congruity with the functional ad to be greater than the mean of the image ad (0.069 and 0.040 at $p>0.05$). Thus, we can conclude that individuals were able to develop greater ideal and social ideal self-congruency when they had to imagine a typical destination visitor than when the ideal visitor was presented to them in the ad. Based upon these results, Hypotheses 1 states, "The more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater the congruity is between a tourist's ideal self-image and the destination. That is, the more the ad portrays destination functional attributes, the lesser the congruity is between a tourist's ideal self-image and the destination" is not supported for the gap-scoring formula, nor for the direct measurement. Similarly, Hypotheses 2 states, "The more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater the congruity is between a tourist's social ideal self-image and the destination. That is, the more the ad portrays destination landscape, the lesser the congruity is between a tourist's social ideal self-image and the destination", is also not supported by the gap-scoring formula or by the direct measurement.

Table 4.8: The results of the McNemar test for Hypotheses 1 and 2

| Hypotheses | Hypothesised relationship | McNemar statistic | P | Support for hypothesis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Gap-scoring formula* | | | | |
| H1 | Image Ad ↑ ideal self-congruity (+) | 2.654 | 0.103 | N |
| H2 | Image Ad ↑ social ideal self-congruity (+) | 2.512 | 0.113 | N |
| *Direct measurement* | | | | |
| H1 | Image Ad ↑ ideal self-congruity (+) | 8.127 | 0.004 | N |
| H2 | Image Ad ↑ social ideal self-congruity (+) | 4.008 | 0.045 | N |

### 4.6.4 *Statistical analyses for answering research question 2*

The second research question on how tourism-related behaviour is affected by the construing of self-congruity with a tourism destination in relation to the image ad and the functional ad required multiple statistical analyses in order to answer it.

Several exploratory factor analyses were performed, followed by a set of regression analyses in order to test hypotheses 3–10 for the congruities calculated through the gap-scoring formula. Therefore, in the following section, we first start by explaining the results of an exploratory factor analysis for the functional ad and the image ad, followed by an exploratory factor analysis for other important constructs for the model related to tourism destination choice and information search. These are followed by a report on the regression analyses and subsequent results of the hypothesis testing.

### 4.6.5 *Exploratory factor analysis*

An exploratory factor analysis was performed in order to assess the dimensionality of each scale and to observe how the items loaded on the rotated factors. The first set of an exploratory factor analysis was performed on data for the computed congruity for the functional ad, and separately for the ideal and social ideal congruity. A second set of exploratory analysis was performed on data for the computed congruity for the image ad, and separately for the ideal and social ideal congruity. Since we had 10 personality indicators computed for each congruity, this data reduction technique was most helpful in identifying personality dimensions that could explain one's congruity with the ads. As stated in the section on methodology, personality items were factor analysed using a principal component analysis with an orthogonal varimax rotation. The results for the functional ad (presented in

Table 4.9) suggested a three-factor solution for both ideal and social ideal functional congruity. As evident from the table, the total variances explained were 59.64% and 65.06% for the ideal and social ideal functional congruity, respectively. The scales had moderate reliabilities (Cronbach's α >.62) and moderate-to-high factor loadings.

Table 4.9: Factor analyses' results for functional congruity

| Functional congruity | Factor loadings | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 |
| *Ideal congruity[a]* | | | |
| Adventurous | 0.785 | | |
| Imaginative | 0.741 | | |
| Passionate | 0.689 | | |
| Successful | 0.541 | | |
| Reliable | | 0.772 | |
| Down to earth | | 0.726 | |
| Honest | | 0.686 | |
| Of high spirits | | | 0.884 |
| Cheerful | | | 0.806 |
| Eigenvalues | 3.164 | 1.187 | 1.017 |
| % of variance explained | 35.161 | 13.188 | 11.297 |
| Cronbach's α | 0.699 | 0.622 | 0.665 |
| *Social ideal congruity[b]* | | | |
| Reliable | 0.783 | | |
| Down to earth | 0.739 | | |
| Honest | 0.738 | | |
| Adventurous | | 0.771 | |
| Imaginative | | 0.763 | |
| Passionate | | 0.718 | |
| Cheerful | | | 0.837 |
| Of high spirits | | | 0.808 |
| Eigenvalues | 2.898 | 1.217 | 1.090 |
| % of variance explained | 36.227 | 15.209 | 13.622 |
| Cronbach's α | 0.682 | 0.671 | 0.642 |

[a] KMO = 0.808; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 870.059; sig = 0.000.
[b] KMO = 0.763; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 798.989; sig = 0.000.

The same data reduction technique was performed for the image ad. The results are presented in Table 4.10. A two-factor solution for both the ideal and social ideal self-congruity was suggested, where ideal self-congruity included nine variables, whereas social ideal self-congruity included all 10 variables. As evident from Table 4.10, total variances explained were 50.97% and 50.75% for the ideal and social ideal self-congruity, respectively. The scales had moderate to high reliabilities (Cronbach's α >.62) and moderate to high factor loadings.

Table 4.10: Factor analyses' results for self-congruity

| Self-congruity | Factor loadings | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
| *Ideal congruity[a]* | | |
| Reliable | 0.779 | |
| Honest | 0.766 | |
| Down to earth | 0.705 | |
| Authentic | 0.641 | |
| Imaginative | 0.531 | |
| Cheerful | | 0.772 |
| Of high spirits | | 0.770 |
| Adventurous | | 0.549 |
| Passionate | | 0.545 |
| Eigenvalues | 3.305 | 1.282 |
| % of variance explained | 35.724 | 14.248 |
| Cronbach's α | 0.764 | 0.628 |
| *Social ideal congruity[b]* | | |
| Honest | 0.770 | |
| Reliable | 0.736 | |
| Down to earth | 0.735 | |
| Authentic | 0.639 | |
| Imaginative | 0.601 | |
| Successful | 0.557 | |
| Cheerful | | 0.781 |
| Of high spirits | | 0.699 |
| Passionate | | 0.686 |
| Adventurous | | 0.561 |
| Eigenvalues | 3.753 | 1.322 |
| % of variance explained | 37.531 | 13.221 |
| Cronbach's α | 0.794 | 0.670 |

[a] KMO = 0.828; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 960.565; sig = 0.000.
[b] KMO = 0.861; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 1208.178; sig = 0.000.

Furthermore, a separate set of exploratory factor analyses were performed for both destination choice and information search indicators for the functional ad and the image ad. Therefore, a total of four factor analyses were performed. The results for the functional ad and the image ad (presented in Table 4.11 and Table 4.12, respectively) suggested a two-factor solution for tourist behaviour, where one factor represented destination choice and the other represented information search. Moreover, the destination choice factor included all four variables as proposed by Mittal (1989) and Dean and Biswas (2001), whereas the information search factor included two variables as proposed by Mittal (1989). As evident from Table 4.11, the total variances explained were 43.84% and 24.50% for destination choice and information

search with regard to the functional ad, respectively, with the scales having moderate to high reliabilities and as well as high factor loadings (>.76). Additionally, from Table 4.12 it is also evident that total variances explained were 47.33% and 25.62% for destination choice and information search with regard to the image ad, respectively, with the scales having high reliabilities (Cronbach's α >.70) and moderate to high factor loadings (>.68). These four factors were further used for regression analysis.

Table 4.11: Factor analyses' results of tourist behaviour for functional congruity

| Tourist behaviour | Mean | St. Deviation | Factor loadings |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Destination choice* | | | |
| Choosing this destination would probably be a wrong choice. | 2.52 | 1.069 | 0.879 |
| Choosing this destination would probably be a very risky choice. | 2.53 | 1.009 | 0.760 |
| It is likely that I would be unsatisfied with this destination. | 2.53 | 1.133 | 0.781 |
| It is likely that the destination would not meet my expectations. | 2.81 | 1.049 | 0.781 |
| Eigenvalues | | 2.630 | |
| % of variance explained | | 43.841 | |
| Cronbach's α | | 0.815 | |
| *Information search* | | | |
| I would probably seek out more information before choosing this destination. | 3.88 | 0.846 | 0.835 |
| I would spend more time looking for information about this destination before I make a decision. | 3.23 | 0.943 | 0.841 |
| Eigenvalues | | 1.470 | |
| % of variance explained | | 24.500 | |
| Cronbach's α | | 0.605 | |

KMO = 0.719; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 868.245; sig = 0.000.

Table 4.12: Factor analyses' results of tourist behaviour for self-congruity

| Tourist behaviour | Mean | St. Deviation | Factor loadings |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Destination choice* | | | |
| Choosing this destination would probably be a wrong choice. | 2.87 | 1.070 | 0.885 |
| Choosing this destination would probably be a very risky choice. | 2.92 | 0.981 | 0.697 |
| It is likely that I would be unsatisfied with this destination. | 2.73 | 1.020 | 0.845 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| It is likely that the destination would not meet my expectations. | 2.90 | 1.053 | 0.848 |
| Eigenvalues | | 2.840 | |
| % of variance explained | | 47.328 | |
| Cronbach's α | | 0.842 | |
| *Information search* | | | |
| I would probably seek out more information before choosing this destination. | 3.64 | 0.946 | 0.878 |
| I would spend more time looking for information about this destination before I make a decision. | 3.27 | 1.980 | 0.873 |
| Eigenvalues | | 1.538 | |
| % of variance explained | | 25.629 | |
| Cronbach's α | | 0.731 | |

KMO = 0.744; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 1163.425; sig = 0.000.

### 4.6.6 *Hypotheses testing and regression analysis*

After assessing how the items loaded on the factors, the next step was to examine the hypothesised relationships between the constructs using regression analysis. This analysis was done in accordance with answering research question 2 and testing hypotheses 3–10. The behaviours we wanted to predict were destination choice and information search for the functional ad and the image ad, thus making both behaviours our dependent variables. Still, independent variables used for predicting the value of dependent variables are ideal and social ideal congruities related to each ad.

Since our previous analysis suggested that ideal and social ideal congruities are comprised of more than one factor, our predictions of tourist behaviours would therefore be based on the value of three factors for assessing the tourist behaviour for the functional ad and two factors for assessing the tourist behaviour for the image ad. For that matter, prediction of tourist behaviours is in general theory driven, however the theory has not indicated towards a specific set of destination personality attributes that would influence these behaviours in relation to destination advertising. Therefore, a stepwise regression analysis would be an effective choice for predicting behaviours. This could help in assessing which particular factors of congruities, and subsequently personality attributes, account for the most variance explained in each behaviour.

Additionally, there was a difference between congruity calculated using the gap-scoring formula and the direct measurement. Since for both ads respondents were directly asked to evaluate to what extent the ad represented how they wanted to see themselves or be seen by others, this meant that direct measurement represented a single-items construct. Therefore, regression analysis was again proven to be an effective choice to test for prediction of tourist behaviour, since it allows for assessing the influence of single categorical variables on the dependent variable (Garson 2013), which might not be the case in any other statistical analyses for path estimates.

Prior to using regression analysis for testing the hypotheses, some assumptions had to be met. First, all our variables entered in the regression analysis were factor scores, which have been saved as regression scores. This comes for all independent and dependent variables, except for the direct measurements of congruity. The latter were considered to be measured on a continuous level and in the SPSS, they were treated as interval or ratio variables. Second, Q-Q Plots were created to check for normality of the linear relationship. In the case that the scatter plots would not showcase the existence of linear relationships between constructs, other regression analyses would have to be employed (for example, logistic regression, nonlinear regression, etc.). Then, Pearson's Bivariate Correlation was utilised to check for multicollinearity between the independent variables. Multicollinearity occurs when the independent variables are portrayed as not being independent from each other (Garson 2013). The specific cut-off associated with Pearson's coefficient is 1, that is, the correlation coefficient indicating towards correlation among all independent variables should be smaller than 1 (Garson 2013). Moreover, by conducting the factor analyses with orthogonal rotation, the independence of independent variables was already established. Then, Garson (2013) suggests that regression should have little or no autocorrelation in the data, which occurs when the residuals are not independent from each other. Additionally, Durbin-Watson's test may be used for checking for the autocorrelation, where the values of $1.5 < D < 2.5$ are associated with the nonexistence of autocorrelation of residuals. Lastly, regression also assumes that the error terms along the regression would be equal: that is, having homoscedasticity. Garson (2013) suggests to use scatter plots with a significant pattern along the regression line in order to check for homoscedasticity. In the case of homoscedasticity's presence, linear regression is not optional for data analysis. After conducting a number of analyses to meet these assumptions, no problems were detected with multicollinearity,

homoscedasticity, and correlations between independent variables. Therefore, linear regression analysis was yet again shown to be the appropriate analysis for the data.

We then ran separate sets of linear and stepwise regression analyses for the functional ad and the image ad for both the gap-scoring formula results and the direct measurement. For the linear regression analyses, ideal functional congruity index, social ideal functional congruity index, ideal self-congruity index, and social ideal self-congruity index (calculated using formulae 3.2 and 3.3) were treated as separate independent variables. We used total indices instead of factor scores because it was important to assess what in the relationship exists, and to what extent each index predicted the behaviour. Additionally, as following the notion of Sirgy *et al.* (1997), the smaller the relationship coefficients, congruity would be a better predictor of the dependent variable: that is, since the value 0 indicated towards high congruity, the smaller is the coefficient, the better predictor it is of the dependent variables. Moreover, direct measurements were each treated as separate independent variables for the same purpose. All these independent variables were hypothesised to influence destination choice and information search, respectively for each ad. The latter two were included in linear and stepwise regression analysis as the dependent variables, where destination choice indicated greater risk of destination choice, and information search indicated more information acquisition. Moreover, for the stepwise regression analysis, the latter two were regressed over factors: for ideal and social ideal functional congruity, there were three factors for each construct, whereas for ideal and social ideal image self-congruity, there were two factors for each construct. As previously mentioned, a stepwise regression analysis was utilised in order to gain insight into which specific congruity factor with associated personality attributes predicted tourist behaviour for each ad. As a reminder, the hypothesised relationships between the constructs were:

**H3:** The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H4:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H5:** The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H6:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H7:** The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) decreases the information search.

**H8:** The congruity between the social ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) decreases the information search.

**H9:** The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search.

**H10:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search.

These hypotheses were tested based on: (1) the relationship between the constructs should be statistically significant at the level 0.05 or below, which provided with the confidence level of at least 95%, and (2) the nature of the hypothesised relationship (+ or -) and its power (< or >). Table 4.13 provides the hypothesised relationships, the magnitude of the unstandardised path coefficients, *t*-values, and the statistical significance of the relationships. For each hypothesis, regression assumptions, predictive power, and significances will be reported in the section *Hypothesis testing* below.

Table 4.13: Hypothesised relationships between constructs and observed relationships from the regression analyses

| Hypotheses | Hypothesised relationship | B | t | Support for hypothesis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Gap-scoring formula* | | | | |
| H3 | Ideal self-congruity → Destination choice (+) | 0.424 | 5.058* | Supported |
| H4 | Social ideal self-congruity → Destination choice (+) | 0.416 | 5.093* | Supported |
| H5 | Ideal functional congruity → Destination choice (+) | 0.547 | 6.724* | Supported |
| H6 | Social ideal functional congruity → Destination choice (+) | 0.549 | 6.760* | Supported |
| H7 | Ideal self-congruity → Information search (-) | -0.306 | -3.599* | Supported |
| H8 | Social ideal self-congruity → Information search (-) | -0.226 | -2.714** | Supported |
| H9 | Ideal functional congruity → Information search (+) | -0.243 | -2.881** | Not supported |
| H10 | Social ideal functional congruity → Information search (+) | -0.177 | -2.090*** | Not supported |
| *Direct measurement* | | | | |
| H3 | Ideal self-congruity → Destination choice (+) | -0.491 | -13.277* | Supported |
| H4 | Social ideal self-congruity → Destination choice (+) | -0.485 | -12.907* | Supported |
| H5 | Ideal functional congruity → Destination choice (+) | -0.484 | -12.753* | Supported |
| H6 | Social ideal functional congruity → Destination choice (+) | -0.494 | -12.846* | Supported |
| H7 | Ideal self-congruity → Information search (-) | 0.122 | 2.851** | Not supported |
| H8 | Social ideal self-congruity → Information search (-) | 0.131 | 3.033** | Not supported |
| H9 | Ideal functional congruity → Information search (+) | 0.213 | 4.987* | Supported |
| H10 | Social ideal functional congruity → Information search (+) | 0.208 | 4.784* | Supported |

Note: *Significant at $p < .001$, **Significant at $p < .01$, ***Significant at $p < .05$. Scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

### *Hypothesis testing*

#### *Hypotheses 3-6*

Hypotheses 3 to 6 specifically focus on the testing of the previously established relationships between the ideal and social ideal congruities and destination choice. For each hypothesis, there is a corresponding table presenting a summary of the results of linear and stepwise regression analyses of both measurements. For stepwise regression, only significant results have been reported.

Hypothesis 3 "The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice" was supported by the study for both the gap-scoring formula and direct measurement of congruity (see Table 4.14). In the case of the gap-scoring formula, a significant regression equation was found ($F(1,494) = 25.582$,

p<.000) with ideal self-congruity explaining 4.9% of variance of destination choice for the image ad. Moreover, the risk of purchase increased with the image ad being less of a match to one's ideal self. Moreover, both factors of ideal self-congruity were shown to be predictors of destination choice. That is, if individuals exposed to the image ad perceive it to have demonstrated rational and emotional personality attributes, and thus create the match between their ideal self and that of the ideal visitor, the lesser will be the risk of purchase.

In contrast, the direct assessment of whether the ideal destination visitor represented how they would like to see themselves showed to be a stronger predictor of destination choice (26.3% of variance explained), with $F(1,494) = 176.280$ at p<.000. Moreover, the risk of purchase decreased with the greater match between the ideal self and that of the image ad ($\beta = -0.513$, $t = -13.277$).

Table 4.14: Regression results for ideal self-congruity and destination choice

| Linear regression analysis | Unstandar. coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | -0.436 | 0.097 | | -4.509 | 0.000 | |
| Ideal self-congruity[a] | 0.424 | 0.084 | 0.222 | 5.058 | 0.000 | 0.049 |
| 2 Constant | 1.394 | 0.112 | | 12.462 | 0.000 | |
| Ideal self-congruity[b] | -0.491 | 0.037 | -0.513 | -13.277 | 0.000 | 0.263 |
| **Stepwise regression analysis** | **Unstandar. coefficients** | | **Standardised coefficients** | | | |
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | | | | | | |
| Ideal self-congruity Factor 1 | 0.192 | 0.044 | 0.192 | 4.342 | 0.000 | 0.037 |
| 2 Constant | | | | | | |
| Ideal self-congruity Factor 1 | 0.192 | 0.044 | 0.192 | 4.365 | 0.000 | |
| Ideal self-congruity Factor 3 | 0.110 | 0.044 | 0.110 | 2.495 | 0.013 | 0.049 |

Note: [a] Based on the gap-scoring formula. [b] Based on the direct measurement.

Hypothesis 4 "The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice" was also supported by the study for both the gap-scoring formula and direct measurement of congruity (see Table 4.15). In the case of the direct measurement, the direct assessment of whether the ideal destination visitor

represented how they would like to be seen by others showed to be a strong predictor of destination choice (25.2% of variance explained), with F(1,494) = 166.603 at p<.000. Additionally, destination choice increased with the greater match between the social ideal self and that of the ideal destination visitor portrayed in the image ad (β = -0.485, *t* = -12.907).

In the case of the gap-scoring formula, a significant regression equation was found (F(1,494) = 24.934, p<.000) with the social ideal self-congruity explaining 5.0% of variance of destination choice for the image ad. The destination choice decreased with the image ad being less of a match to one's social ideal self. Moreover, both factors of social ideal self-congruity were shown to be predictors of destination choice: that is, if individuals exposed to the image ad perceive it to have demonstrated rational and emotional personality attributes, and thus create the match between how they would be seen by others and how the ideal destination visitor is portrayed in the ad, the lesser will be the risk of purchase.

Table 4.15: Regression results for social ideal self-congruity and destination choice

| Linear regression analysis | Unstandar. coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | -0.422 | 0.094 | | -4.503 | 0.000 | |
| Social ideal self-congruity[a] | 0.416 | 0.082 | 0.223 | 5.093 | 0.000 | 0.050 |
| 2 Constant | 1.368 | 0.113 | | 12.118 | 0.000 | |
| Social ideal self-congruity[b] | -0.485 | 0.038 | -0.502 | -12.907 | 0.000 | 0.252 |
| **Stepwise regression analysis** | **Unstandar. coefficients** | | **Standardised coefficients** | | | |
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | | | | | | |
| Social ideal self-congruity Factor 1 | 0.200 | 0.044 | 0.200 | 4.549 | 0.000 | 0.040 |
| 2 Constant | | | | | | |
| Social ideal self-congruity Factor 1 | 0.200 | 0.044 | 0.200 | 4.567 | 0.000 | |
| Social ideal self-congruity Factor 3 | 0.099 | 0.044 | 0.099 | 2.266 | 0.024 | 0.050 |

Note: [a] Based on the gap-scoring formula. [b] Based on the direct measurement.

Hypothesis 5 "The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice" was supported by the study for both the gap-scoring formula and direct measurement of congruity (see Table 4.16). In the

case of the gap-scoring formula, a significant regression equation was found ($F_{(1,494)} = 45.218$, $p<.000$) with the ideal functional congruity explaining 8.4% of the variance of destination choice after looking at the functional ad. Destination choice decreased with the functional ad being less of a match to one's ideal self. Moreover, two of three factors of ideal functional congruity were shown to be predictors of destination choice: that is, if individuals exposed to the functional ad think that the typical destination visitor was both reliable, down to earth, and honest – as well as adventurous, imaginative, passionate, and successful – the lesser the risk of its purchase. However, the direct assessment of whether the typical visitor as envisioned from the functional ad represented how they would like to see themselves showed to be a strong predictor of destination choice (24.8% of variance explained), with $F_{(1,494)} = 162.640$ at $p<.000$. Additionally, destination choice increased with the greater match between one's ideal self and the functional ad ($\beta = -0.484$, $t = -12.753$).

Table 4.16: Regression results for ideal functional congruity and destination choice

| Linear regression analysis | Unstandar. coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | -0.538 | 0.091 | | -5.922 | 0.000 | |
| Ideal functional congruity[a] | 0.547 | 0.081 | 0.290 | 6.724 | 0.000 | 0.084 |
| 2 Constant | 1.452 | 0.120 | | 12.065 | 0.000 | |
| Ideal functional congruity[b] | -0.484 | 0.038 | -0.498 | -12.753 | 0.000 | 0.248 |
| **Stepwise regression analysis** | **Unstandar. coefficients** | | **Standardised coefficients** | | | |
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | | | | | | |
| Ideal functional congruity Factor 1 | 0.200 | 0.044 | 0.200 | 4.549 | 0.000 | 0.065 |
| 2 Constant | | | | | | |
| Ideal functional congruity Factor 1 | 0.256 | 0.043 | 0.256 | 5.880 | 0.000 | 0.084 |
| Ideal functional congruity Factor 3 | 0.136 | 0.043 | 0.136 | 3.160 | 0.002 | |

Note: [a] Based on the gap-scoring formula. [b] Based on the direct measurement.

Hypothesis 6 "The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice" was also supported by the study for both the gap-scoring formula and direct measurement of congruity (see Table 4.17). In the case of the direct measurement, tourist's direct assessment of whether the destination

represented how they would like to be seen by others showed to be a strong predictor of destination choice (25.0% of variance explained), with $F(1,494) = 165.027$ at $p<.000$. Additionally, destination choice increased with the greater match between one's social ideal self and the functional ad ($\beta = -0.494$, $t = -12.846$).

In the case of the gap-scoring formula, a significant regression equation was found ($F(1,494) = 45.693$, $p<.000$) with social ideal functional congruity explaining 8.5% of variance of destination choice for the functional ad. Destination choice decreased with the functional ad being less of a match to one's social ideal self. Moreover, two factors of social ideal functional congruity were shown to be predictors of destination choice: that is, if individuals exposed to the functional ad have demonstrated passion, adventure, imagination, reliability, honesty, and calmness, and thus create the match between how they would be seen by others and how they envisioned a typical destination visitor for the functional ad, the lower the risk of purchase.

Table 4.17: Regression results for social ideal functional congruity and destination choice

| Linear regression analysis | Unstandar. coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | -0.530 | 0.089 | | -5.926 | 0.000 | |
| Social ideal functional congruity[a] | 0.549 | 0.081 | 0.291 | 6.760 | 0.000 | 0.085 |
| 2 Constant | 1.463 | 0.120 | | 12.156 | 0.000 | |
| Social ideal functional congruity[b] | -0.494 | 0.038 | -0.500 | -12.846 | 0.000 | 0.250 |
| **Stepwise regression analysis** | **Unstandar. coefficients** | | **Standardised coefficients** | | | |
| **Model** | **B** | **Std. error** | **Beta** | **t** | **Sig.** | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | | | | | | |
| Social ideal functional congruity Factor 3 | 0.243 | 0.044 | 0.243 | 5.568 | 0.000 | 0.059 |
| 2 Constant | | | | | | |
| Social ideal functional congruity Factor 3 | 0.243 | 0.043 | 0.243 | 5.626 | 0.000 | 0.080 |
| Social ideal functional congruity Factor 1 | 0.145 | 0.043 | 0.145 | 3.365 | 0.001 | |

Note: [a] Based on the gap-scoring formula. [b] Based on the direct measurement.

*Hypotheses 7-10*

Hypotheses 7 to 10 specifically focus on the testing of the previously established relationships between the ideal and social ideal congruity and the information search. For each hypothesis, there is a corresponding table presenting a summary of the results of linear and stepwise regression analyses of both measurements. For the stepwise regression, only significant results have been reported.

Hypothesis 7 "The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) decreases the information search" was not supported by the study for direct measurement of congruity, but it was supported for congruity calculated by the gap-scoring formula (see Table 4.18). In the case of the gap-scoring formula, a significant regression equation was found ($F(1,494) = 12.955$, $p<.000$) with the ideal self-congruity explaining 2.6% of variance of information search for the image ad. Information search decreased with the image ad being more of a match to one's ideal self. Moreover, the factor comprising of reliability, down to earth, and honest personality attributes was shown to influence information search. That is, if individuals exposed to the image ad perceive an ideal tourist to be reliable, honest, and down to earth, and thus creates the match between their ideal self and an ideal tourist, then they will acquire less information about the destination and spend less time on the external search process.

In contrast, a tourist's direct assessment of whether the image ad represented how they would like to see themselves showed to be a poor predictor of information search (1.6% of variance explained), with $F(1,494) = 8.130$ at $p<.005$. Moreover, information search increased with the greater match between one's ideal self and the image ad ($\beta = 0.122$, $t = 2.851$), which is contrary to what was hypothesised. Therefore, in this case, the hypothesised relationship is not supported.

158

Table 4.18: Regression results for ideal self-congruity and information search

| Linear regression analysis | Unstandar. coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | 0.314 | 0.098 | | 3.209 | 0.001 | |
| Ideal self-congruity[a] | -0.306 | 0.085 | -0.160 | -3.599 | 0.000 | 0.026 |
| 2 Constant | -0.346 | 0.129 | | -2.676 | 0.000 | |
| Ideal self-congruity[b] | 0.122 | 0.043 | 0.127 | 2.851 | 0.005 | 0.016 |
| Stepwise regression analysis | Unstandar. coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | | | |
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | | | | | | |
| Ideal self-congruity Factor 3 | -0.164 | 0.044 | -0.164 | -3.395 | 0.000 | 0.027 |

Note: [a] Based on the gap-scoring formula. [b] Based on the direct measurement.

Hypothesis 8 "The congruity between the social ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) decreases the information search" was not supported by the study for direct measurement of congruity, but it was supported for congruity calculated by the gap-scoring formula (see Table 4.19). In the case of one's direct assessment of whether the image ad represented how they would like to see themselves showed to be a poor predictor of information search (1.8% of variance explained), with $F(1,494) = 9.197$ at $p<.003$. Moreover, information search increased with the greater match between the social ideal self and that of the ideal visitor portrayed in the image ad ($\beta = 0.131$, $t = 3.033$), which is contrary to what was hypothesised. Therefore, in this case, the hypothesised relationship is not supported.

Conversely, a significant regression equation was found ($F(1,494) = 7.366$, $p<.007$) with social ideal self-congruity explaining 1.5% of variance of information search for the image ad in the case of the gap-scoring formula. Information search decreased with the image ad being more of a match to how one would like to be seen by others. Moreover, the factor comprising reliability, down to earth, and honest personality attributes was shown to influence information search. That is, if the image ad portrayed an ideal visitor to be cheerful, adventurous, passionate, and of high spirits, and if individuals match it to their social ideal self, then they will acquire less information about the destination and spend less time on the external search process.

Table 4.19: Regression results for social ideal self-congruity and information search

| Linear regression analysis | Unstandar. coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | 0.229 | 0.960 | | 2.400 | 0.017 | |
| Ideal self-congruity[a] | -0.266 | 0.083 | -0.121 | -2.714 | 0.007 | 0.015 |
| 2 Constant | -0.368 | 0.129 | | -2.847 | 0.005 | |
| Ideal self-congruity[b] | 0.131 | 0.043 | 0.135 | 3.033 | 0.003 | 0.018 |
| **Stepwise regression analysis** | **Unstandar. coefficients** | | **Standardised coefficients** | | | |
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | | | | | | |
| Ideal self-congruity | -0.135 | 0.045 | -0.135 | -3.033 | 0.003 | 0.018 |
| Factor 3 | | | | | | |

Note: [a] Based on the gap-scoring formula. [b] Based on the direct measurement.

Hypothesis 9 "The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search" was supported by the study for the direct measurement of congruity, but it was not supported for the gap-scoring formula (see Table 4.20). In the case of the gap-scoring formula, a significant regression equation was found (F(1,494) = 8.301, p<.004) with ideal functional congruity explaining 1.7% of variance of information search for the functional ad, which is very poor. Information search decreased with the functional ad being less of a match to one's ideal self. Moreover, two of three factors of ideal functional congruity were shown to be predictors of less information search: that is, if individuals exposed to the functional ad think that the typical destination visitor was adventurous, imaginative, passionate, and successful, as well as cheerful and of high spirits, they will acquire less information and spend less time on information search.

Despite this, one's direct assessment of whether the typical destination visitor as envisioned through the functional ad represented how they would like to see themselves showed to predict information search (4.8% of variance explained), with F(1,494) = 24.873 at p<.000. Additionally, information search increased with the greater match between the ideal self and the functional ad ($\beta = 0.219$, $t = 4.987$).

Table 4.20: Regression results for ideal functional congruity and information search

| Linear regression analysis | Unstandar. coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | 0.239 | 0.094 | | 2.537 | 0.011 | |
| Ideal functional congruity[a] | -0.243 | 0.084 | -0.129 | -2.881 | 0.004 | 0.017 |
| 2 Constant | -0.639 | 0.135 | | -4.718 | 0.000 | |
| Ideal functional congruity[b] | 0.213 | 0.043 | 0.219 | 4.987 | 0.000 | 0.048 |
| **Stepwise regression analysis** | **Unstandar. coefficients** | | **Standardised coefficients** | | | |
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | | | | | | |
| Ideal functional congruity Factor 1 | -0.098 | 0.045 | -0.098 | -2.185 | 0.029 | 0.010 |
| 2 Constant | | | | | | |
| Ideal functional congruity Factor 1 | -0.098 | 0.045 | -0.098 | -2.192 | 0.029 | 0.018 |
| Ideal functional congruity Factor 7 | -0.093 | 0.045 | -0.093 | -2.080 | 0.038 | |

Note: [a] Based on the gap-scoring formula. [b] Based on the direct measurement.

Hypothesis 10 "The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search" was supported by the study for the direct measurement of congruity, but it failed to support the hypothesis for the gap-scoring formula (see Table 4.21). In the case of the direct measurement, one's direct assessment of whether the typical destination visitor as envisioned through the functional ad represented how they would like to be seen by others showed to predict information search (4.4% of variance explained), with F(1,494) = 22.890 at p<.000. Additionally, the more tourist believed that the functional ad represented how they would like to be seen by others, the greater the information search ($\beta = 0.210$, $t = 4.784$).

In the case of the gap-scoring formula, a significant regression equation was found (F(1,494) = 4.366, p<.037) with the social ideal functional congruity explaining less than 1% of variance of information search for the functional ad (0.9% to be exact), which is a terribly poor result. Information search decreased with the functional ad being less of a match to one's social ideal self. Additionally, there is no summary on the stepwise regression, because the variables failed to have entered the equation.

Table 4.21: Regression results for social ideal functional congruity and information search

| Linear regression analysis | Unstandar. coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Sig. | $R^2$ |
| 1 Constant | 0.170 | 0.093 | | 1.832 | 0.068 | |
| Social ideal functional congruity[a] | -0.177 | 0.085 | -0.094 | -2.090 | 0.037 | 0.009 |
| 2 Constant | -0.615 | 0.136 | | -4.527 | 0.000 | |
| Social ideal functional congruity[b] | 0.208 | 0.043 | 0.210 | 4.784 | 0.000 | 0.044 |

Note: [a] Based on the gap-scoring formula. [b] Based on the direct measurement.

### 4.6.7 *Assessing predictive validity for answering research question 3*

With the last of the research questions, we were interested in the effectiveness of two self-congruity measurements in predicting tourist behaviour in relation to the image ad and the functional ad. Therefore, it was hypothesised that "there is a significant difference in how self-congruity measurements, in relation to destination advertising, predict destination choice." We followed the suggested validation process by Sirgy *et al.* (1997). Thus, we utilised the regression analysis in testing for the significant differences of the two measurements.

First, a correlation between the dependent and independent variables was observed. Therefore, the Pearson's correlation coefficient between destination choice and the direct measurement of ideal functional congruity was -0.498 (p<.000), whilst with the ideal functional congruity from the gap-scoring formulae was 0.290 (p<.000). Then, the standard regression analysis was performed using both measurements of congruity as predictors of destination choice. The results indicated a high and significant beta weight for the direct measurement of ideal functional congruity ($\beta$ = -0.480, p<.000), whereas the gap-scoring formulae's congruity did not achieve significance ($\beta$ = 0.033, p<.471). Moreover, these results provide the conclusion that direct measurement of congruity is more predictive of destination choice over and beyond predictiveness of the gap-scoring formula. However, with respect to convergent validity, both measurements were highly correlated.

In Table 4.22, it was demonstrated that, regardless of whether individuals were asked to assess the functional ad or the image ad, the direct measurement of congruity was a

significant predictor of destination choice across ideal and social ideal congruity. Therefore, we can conclude that the tenth hypothesis is supported by the data.

Table 4.22: Predictive and convergent validity of the self-congruity measurements

| Model | Dependent variable | Relationship | Correlation | β weights | df |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Destination choice (DC) | DC/DM | -0.498* | -0.480* | 2,493 |
| | | DC/GF | 0.290* | 0.033 | 2,493 |
| | | DM/GF | -0.534* | --- | --- |
| 2 | Destination choice (DC) | DC/DM | -0.500* | 0.045 | 2,493 |
| | | DC/GF | 0.291* | -0.477* | 2,493 |
| | | DM/GF | -0.516* | --- | --- |
| 3 | Destination choice (DC) | DC/DM | -0.513* | -0.530* | 2,493 |
| | | DC/GF | 0.222* | -0.035 | 2,493 |
| | | DM/GF | -0.485* | --- | --- |
| 4 | Destination choice (DC) | DC/DM | -0.502* | -0.504 | 2,493 |
| | | DC/GF | 0.223* | -0.004 | 2,493 |
| | | DM/GF | -0.451* | --- | --- |

Note: DM=Direct measurement of congruity, GF=Gap-scoring formula for measuring congruity, Model 1: Ideal functional congruity; Model 2: Social ideal functional congruity; Model 3: Ideal self-congruity; Model 4: Social ideal self-congruity.
* Significant at p<.000.

## 4.7    SUMMARY

This chapter started with a description of the pilot test. At the beginning of the chapter, the discussion on the pilot test is provided. This is followed by the part on primary data collection, which starts by discussing the descriptive analysis of the data, as well as the demographic characteristics of the sample. Furthermore, the primary data analysis was divided into four sub-sections with regard to research questions for the easier following and presentation of statistical analyses and their results. Therefore, first sub-section opened the discussion of primary data analysis by providing calculations of self-congruity measurements. These were essential for further analysis.

A second sub-section opened with significance testing for the differences in how individuals develop congruity with a tourism destination in relation to an image ad and a functional ad. The McNemar test was employed and the results showed no support for hypotheses stating that the more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater the ideal and social ideal self-congruity.

The third sub-section introduced an exploratory factor analysis, complemented by linear and stepwise regression analyses for testing hypotheses 3–10 related to examining the differences in predicting tourist behaviours (i.e. destination choice and information search) in relation to ideal and social ideal congruities between tourists and two distinctive destination ads. The regression analysis confirmed four out of eight hypotheses being tested and demonstrated that all four congruities were significantly related to destination choice. Yet, the results from regression analysis partially confirmed the other four hypotheses. It was demonstrated that when tourists directly assessed how they would like to see themselves and how they would like to be seen by others, the image ad was positively related to information search, whilst the gap-scoring formula of personality attributes showcased the relationship to be negative. Similarly, the functional ad was negatively related to information search when congruity was assessed directly, whilst the gap-scoring formula of personality attributes showcased the relationship to be positive.

Lastly, the fourth sub-chapter offered the results of the regression analysis of the predictive validity of two distinctive measurements of self-congruity with relation to destination choice. Hypothesis 11 was supported by the data, stating that the there is a significant difference in how self-congruity measurements in relation to the destination advertising predict destination choice. That is, direct measurement of self-congruity was demonstrated to be positive and a significant predictor of destination choice regardless of what the ad portrays about the tourism destination. In Table 4.23 we present with the overall support for hypothesised relationships examined in this study.

Table 4.23: Summary of the support for the hypothesised relationships

| Hypotheses | Hypothesised relationship | Overall support for hypothesis |
|---|---|---|
| H1 | Image Ad ↑ ideal self-congruity (+) | Not supported |
| H2 | Image Ad ↑ social ideal self-congruity (+) | Not supported |
| H3 | Ideal self-congruity → Destination choice (+) | Supported |
| H4 | Social ideal self-congruity → Destination choice (+) | Supported |
| H5 | Ideal functional congruity → Destination choice (+) | Supported |
| H6 | Social ideal functional congruity → Destination choice (+) | Supported |
| H7 | Ideal self-congruity → Information search (-) | Partially supported |
| H8 | Social ideal self-congruity → Information search (-) | Partially supported |
| H9 | Ideal functional congruity → Information search (+) | Partially supported |
| H10 | Social ideal functional congruity → Information search (+) | Partially supported |
| H11 | Direct measurement ≠ the gap scoring formula | Supported |

Note: Partial overall support for hypothesis indicates that it was supported only for one of the two congruity measurement approaches.

The next chapter takes these findings and discusses the implications with regard to past research on self-congruity, destination advertising, and the tourist decision-making process. The chapter specifically reviews the three research questions and highlights their theoretical and practical implications. Furthermore, it concludes with the limitations associated with the study, and thus provides areas upon which future research can be built.

# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

## 5.1 REVIEW OF THE STUDY'S AIMS

The main purpose of this study was to expand the literature on the decision-making process in tourism by addressing several specific research gaps. The literature on consumer decision-making in tourism, in its own right, provided numerous conceptual models on the decision-making process, showing evidence of the factors that influence it and the outcomes. The models originated from the so-called Grand Models of Consumer Behaviour (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005), in which individuals were perceived to make everyday decisions by collecting and analysing information in order to maximise the utility of their actions prior to making decisions. Thus, decision-makers were perceived to be very rational in their decisions, but also a sort of a black box that is influenced by numerous internal and external factors (Smallman and Moore 2010). So, many authors focused on examining these factors, and hence alienated from the consumer's point of view whether these factors are of any significance to a consumer. The consumer was perceived as a *persona non grata*, instead of being at the core of the decision-making process. This highlighted the need to provide the theoretical framework capable of bringing decision-making research back to its original foundation: that is, to refocus on consumers points of view, rather than examining processes and influences as if consumer is a non-significant element of the process. This is not a critique of the literature, but more a recognition that when examining such a complex process as is decision-making, researchers need to treat the relationship between the personal significance of the object of consumption and consumer behaviour as central to the internal and external factors influencing the relationship. Several authors (Cohen 1983; Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Zaichkowski 1986) called for a holistic approach to the research of consumer decision-making. The authors acknowledged that consumer decision-making is influenced by numerous factors, however it is up an individual to decide which of the factors is more important, or else brings meaning to the consumption.

It is from the above that we drew our research inspiration. The first research gap we addressed in this study was to provide the theoretical framework capable of bringing back a consumer's viewpoint into the research spotlight. The theory capable of addressing this issue was Weber's theory of action. This theory posits that an individual's action is filled with subjective meanings. So, by perceiving consumption through a Weberian lens, it is an action that

happens if an actor attaches subjective meaning to it, therefore it is influenced by one's beliefs, thoughts, interests, and views. Moreover, if consumption is necessarily subjectively meaningful for consumers, so are its stimuli. This opened a new avenue for research gaps to be addressed in this study.

Tourist consumption is different from the consumption of tangible products. The outcome of tourist consumption is concentrated around a variety of experiences and is mostly of psychological nature (Frochot and Batat 2013). Tourism products are services rather than goods. They represent an amalgam of experiential factors, emotional factors, and physical factors (UNWTO and ETC 2011). This is why the outcome of tourist consumption is characterised as intangible, perishable, and variable. Moreover, the majority of tourist consumption outcomes are constructed *in situ* – at a tourism destination. This makes the destination choice an *objet d'art*, especially when tourists have no prior experience with a tourism destination. When one has no prior experience with a tourism destination, he or she will be more 'under the influence' of destination advertising. This type of advertising, especially if its message is delivered visually, has greater power in addressing consumers and raising awareness about a tourism destination (Meenaghan 1995). Moreover, destination advertising has the ability to provide information to consumers about the type of person who visits the destination, and the way a tourism destination is supposed to be consumed (Siegel and Ziff-Levine 1990; Sirgy and Su 2000; Keller 2003). Percy and Elliot (2009, 296) explained that visual advertising messages have the ability to establish a relationship between a viewer and an image by enabling a viewer to imagine himself or herself "as either part of what is shown in the picture, or outside observing what is there." As such, visual advertising messages help in creating user imagery, which is either envisioned by viewers or portrayed in advertising. However, the role of advertising in tourist consumption has not gained much attention among academic researchers. Moreover, researchers very often drew marketing implications from their research, but very rarely have they provided empirical evidence on the topic (Hung and Petrick 2011).

The second and third research gaps stemmed from a lack of understanding of the interrelatedness of tourism product, destination advertising, and user imagery, and how these influence tourism-related behaviour. That is, up-to-date research has not provided the evidence of how tourists develop user imagery based on a tourism product that is being

167

advertised. Moreover, the literature lacks empirical evidence on how this user imagery influences one's destination choice and information search. Empirical evidence on the influence of user imagery on tourism destination choice has only been based upon how consumers imagine a typical destination visitor (Sirgy *et al*. 1997; Hung and Petrick 2011; Sirgy 2014). The studies to provide with such evidence were based on the self-congruity theory. This theory suggests that consumer behaviour is influenced by the degree of matching various dimensions of one's self to a typical user of the object of consumption (Sirgy 1985). However, these studies have deviated from the research on destination image and destination advertising (Hung and Petrick 2011) and heavily neglected the fact that destination advertising affects one's imagery of a typical destination visitor.

The fourth research gap was associated with assessing the predictive validity of two measurements of self-congruity in relation to destination advertising. The self-congruity studies in tourism utilised various scales to assess the degree of matching the self to the user imagery. These scales ranged from brand personality scales used in marketing research, to destination brand personality scales used in tourism research, to a direct assessment of self-congruity. In the case of brand personality scales, a gap-scoring formula for computing self-congruity was introduced, where personality attributes were weighted across destination personality attributes. In the case of the latter, survey participants were asked to directly access to what extent a typical destination visitor matches their actual, ideal, social, and ideal social self. Sirgy *et al.* (1997) were the only ones who assessed the predictive validity of the two distinctive approaches to the measurement of self-congruity. However, these were again based on user imagery as envisioned by consumers, and without any reference to advertising.

These four research gaps highlighted the need for research that is capable of bringing together different research areas under one umbrella study. That is, to incorporate the literature on advertising and self-congruity with specific reference to tourist consumption. With the aim to bring better understanding of consumer behaviour in tourism, three research questions and eleven hypotheses were proposed. These are presented below.

*RQ1: How do individuals construct congruity with the tourism destination in relation to the image ad and the functional ad?*

**H1:** The more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater the congruity is between a tourist's ideal self-image and the destination. That is, the more the ad portrays destination functional attributes, the lesser the congruity is between a tourist's ideal self-image and the destination.

**H2:** The more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater the congruity is between a tourist's social ideal self-image and the destination. That is, the more the ad portrays a destination landscape, the lesser the congruity is between a tourist's social ideal self-image and the destination.

*RQ2: How is tourist behaviour (destination choice and information search) affected by the construing of congruity with a tourism destination in relation to the image ad and the functional ad?*

**H3:** The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H4:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H5:** The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H6:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice.

**H7:** The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) decreases the information search.

**H8:** The congruity between the social ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) decreases the information search.

**H9:** The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search.

**H10:** The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search.

*RQ3: How different are the self-congruity measurements predicting tourist behaviour in relation to the image ad and the functional ad?*

**H11:** There is a significant difference in how self-congruity measurements, in relation to destination advertising, predict destination choice.

With the aim to address these research questions and test the hypotheses, a large-scale online study was conducted across young Slovenians, aged 18 to 35. A detailed description of the methodology and results of the statistical tests are provided in chapters three and four, respectively. The remaining portion of the discussion and conclusion section will begin by discussing the results over each research question separately. Then, theoretical and practical (i.e. managerial) implications are discussed, complemented by limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

## 5.2    DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

### 5.2.1    Research question one

The first research question asked "*How do individuals construct congruity with the tourism destination in relation to the image ad and the functional ad?*" Past self-congruity research in tourism that explored the match between individuals and tourism destinations relied upon how individuals envisioned a typical destination visitor (Sirgy and Su 2000; Hung and Petrick 2011; Sirgy 2014). These studies deviated from the integration of findings from the research on advertising literature and failed in providing with a holistic understanding of the decision-making process in tourism. It was Hung and Petrick (2011) who called for studies that would address this issue, with particular focus on destination choice.

Having this in mind, this study sought to respond to the call. However, it was recognised that this study is the first to evaluate the effect of advertising on tourism-related behaviour with reference to self-congruity. This is why its research scope is very narrow, and focuses on a specific tourism product. Therefore, it was decided to focus on the Croatian island of Pag and its target audience comprising of Slovenians aged 18 to 35. The tourism product of Pag is very specific –sun and beach tourism accompanied with entertainment for young people. The island is very popular among young Slovenians, and its tourism product is advertised by the youth tourism agency Collegium Mondial Travel. So, a first step in the study was to use content analysis of Collegium's advertising messages about Pag. The results revealed that the Collegium is advertising Pag predominately through its functional attributes (e.g. beach, blue sea, entertainment places, etc.) and the ideal tourists (e.g. young people having fun with friends). Based on these results, we incorporated two distinctive pictures into the questionnaire. The first picture portrayed the tourism destination landscape and was referred

to as a functional ad, whilst the second picture portrayed the ideal tourists and was referred to as the image ad.

The two ads were used in the questionnaire in the following way. When survey participants were shown the functional ad, they were asked to try to imagine the typical destination visitor. In contrast, when they were shown the image ad, they were asked to directly evaluate the typical destination visitor as portrayed in the ad. Respondents were referenced to 10 personality attributes for the evaluation of the ads. In the case of both ads, the typical destination visitor was perceived to be cheerful ($M = 4.22$ for the image ad, and $M = 4.05$ for the functional ad) and of high spirits ($M = 4.15$ for the image ad, and $M = 4.13$ for the functional ad). Conversely, the typical destination visitor as portrayed in the image ad was assessed as least down to earth and reliable ($M = 2.96$ and $M = 3.12$, respectively), whilst the one from the functional ad was perceived to be least successful and down to earth ($M = 3.20$ and $M = 3.25$, respectively). At the same time, respondents were also asked to assess how those 10 personality attributes applied to them. The results showed that young Slovenians would like to see themselves as honest and of high spirits ($M = 4.44$ and $M = 4.43$, respectively), whilst they would like for the other to see them as honest and reliable as possible ($M = 4.57$ and $M = 4.54$, respectively).

In order to test for hypotheses 1 and 2, we calculated the congruence between a respondent and the ad. By following the suggestion of Boksberger *et al.* (2011), we set the congruency threshold at the value 1.0. Our analysis showed that almost 60% of all respondents were highly congruent with both ads, when their personality attributes were mathematically matched to those from the ads. These results align with the findings of Boksberger *et al.* (2011), who found that 58% of people matched their personality to that of a typical cruising tourist. By comparing the result of each type of congruity with the corresponding ad, we observed that the share of self-congruity is slightly higher in relation to the functional ad as compared to the image ad. Furthermore, we tested for the difference between those highly congruent and low congruent for different types of self-congruity utilising the McNemar test. The results showed no statistically significant differences between those highly congruent and low congruent with the ads. That is, ideal and social ideal congruity groups for both ads had similar group membership. We concluded that when self-congruity is computed by aggregating the attribute-level values across the ads for ideal and social ideal self-congruity,

little or no difference is to be observed between those highly congruent and low congruent with the ads. This observation confirms Boksberger *et al.*'s (2011) suggestion that the self-congruity measurement can affect the percentage of those deemed as highly congruent and those deemed as low congruent. In case we would choose to report on the results using a less-strict threshold, the percentage of those highly congruent members could increase up to 80% or even 90% (in the case of threshold at value 1.4 and 1.6, respectively). In contrast, a stricter threshold at the value 0.4 would result in only 16.1% of the sample labelled as highly congruent with an ad.

The results from the direct measurement of congruity with the ads are different to those results obtained from the gap-scoring formula. In the case of the direct measurement of self-congruity, study participants were shown the ad and were asked to directly evaluate to what extent the ad represented how they would like to see themselves (i.e., the ideal congruity), and how they would like to be seen by others (i.e., the social ideal congruity). The results showed that approximately 26% of participants agreed that their ideal and social ideal self-match the image ad, whilst 31.5% agreed that their ideal and social ideal self-match the functional ad. The results of the McNemar test showed that there are statistically significant differences between those highly congruent and low congruent with ads in the case of the ideal and social ideal congruity. The paired t-test further revealed that it is in the case of the functional ad that the group membership is greater as compared to the groups for the image ad.

These results do not support hypotheses one and two. With hypothesis one we suggest that "the more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater is the congruity between tourist's ideal self-image and the destination. That is, the more the ad portrays destination functional attributes, the lesser the congruity is between a tourist's ideal self-image and the destination." With hypothesis two we suggested that "the more the ad portrays an ideal destination visitor, the greater the congruity is between a tourist's social ideal self-image and the destination. That is, the more the ad portrays a destination landscape, the less the congruity is between a tourist's social ideal self-image and the destination." An explanation for these results can be found in how respondents evaluated their ideal and ideal social self across 10 personality traits. Participants of this study perceived themselves as reliable, honest, and of high spirits. However, they thought of an ideal destination visitor from the image ad as

less reliable and honest than the typical destination visitor they envisioned for the functional ad.

Another explanation for the non-support of hypotheses can be related to the demographic characteristics of the study sample. Firstly, respondents were on average 27 years of age, 40% were reported to be in a relationship, and 55% were either employed or self-employed. The image ad, on the other hand, portrayed the ideal destination visitor as young, surrounded by friends, and taking a picture on a sailing boat. Presumably, those employed or in a relationship think of their summer vacation different to sailing with a group of friends. Instead, they think of their summer vacation as sunbathing on a beach and spending valuable time with their love partners. However, these presumptions have not been tested in this study, but are very valuable for a follow-up study. More specifically, the studies interested in assessing how a tourism destination corresponds to one's self, they are advised to firstly assess which tourism products respondents relate to that destination.

### 5.2.2  *Research question two*

The second research question asked, "*How is tourist behaviour (destination choice and information search) affected by the construing of congruity with a tourism destination in relation to the image ad and the functional ad?*" The developed hypotheses were based on the results from the studies of self-congruity in tourism. Many studies suggested that the higher the congruity between a tourist and a tourism destination, the more likely it is that a tourist would visit a tourism destination, re-visit it, or recommend it (Sirgy and Su 2000; Hung and Petrick 2011; 2012; Ahn *et al.* 2013; Sirgy 2014). This positive nature of the relationship between congruity and tourism-related behaviour was proposed for the relationship between congruity and tourist behaviour when destination advertising is suggested to moderate the relationship.

#### *On the relationship between self-congruity and destination choice*
It was hypothesised that the ideal and social ideal congruity between an individual and the ads would positively influence the destination choice. This was addressed in Hypotheses 3 to 6. Hypotheses 3 and 4 suggested that the ideal and ideal social self-congruity would lead one to a greater willingness to visit the destination. Similar, Hypotheses 5 and 6 suggested that the ideal and ideal social functional congruity would lead one to a greater willingness to visit the

destination. All four hypotheses were tested for the congruity resulting from the gap-scoring formula and the direct measurement.

The results show that all four hypotheses were supported in this study. More specifically, Hypothesis 3 "The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice" was supported by the data (0.424 at p=0.000, and -0.491 at p=0.000, for the gap-scoring formula and the direct measurement, respectively). Similarly, Hypothesis 4 "The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) positively influences the destination choice" was also supported by the data (0.416 at p=0.000, and -0.485 at p=0.000, for the gap-scoring formula and the direct measurement, respectively). Hypothesis 5 "The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice" was supported by the data (0.4547 at p=0.000, and -0.484 at p=0.000, for the gap-scoring formula and the direct measurement, respectively). Lastly, Hypothesis 6 "The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) positively influences the destination choice" was also supported by the data (0.549 at p=0.000, and -0.494 at p=0.000, for the gap-scoring formula and the direct measurement, respectively). These results are similar to the findings of Sirgy and Su (2000), Hung and Petrick (2011), and Ahn *et al.* (2013), where both the self-congruity and the functional congruity were shown to influence one's destination choice.

More specifically, the ideal and social ideal congruity were shown to predict one's destination choice. These findings justify Hung and Petrick's (2011) call for the inclusion of ideal and social ideal congruity in the studies on destination choice, and not to focus the research on actual and social congruity. The results of this study also showed that the ideal and social ideal congruity was shown to predict one's destination choice across both measurements of congruity, and for both the functional ad and the image ad. Additionally, the direct assessment of ideal self-congruity predicted 26.3% of destination choice, as compared to that of 4.9% for when the ideal self-congruity was computed using the gap-scoring formula. Similarly, the direct assessment of social ideal self-congruity predicted 25.2% of destination choice as compared to only 5% in the case of the gap-scoring formula. Similar results could be observed across functional congruity, where 24.8% and 25% of destination choice were predicted by directly assessed functional congruity, whereas only 8.4% and 8.5% could be

observed across mathematically computed functional congruity. This supports suggestion of Sirgy *et al*. (1997) that the direct measurement of congruity is better at predicting destination choice as compared to the gap-scoring formula.

Findings from testing the above hypotheses show that the self-congruity has greater predictive power over destination choice as compared to the functional congruity. For the ideal congruity, the results revealed 0.424<0.547 at p=0.000 for the gap-scoring formula and 0.491<-0.484 at p= 0.000 for the direct measurement. In this sense, the greater the match between an ideal destination visitor and one's ideal self, decision-makers feel less of a risk of making a wrong choice if they decide to visit the destination. For the social ideal self-congruity, the results revealed 0.416<0.547 at p=0.000 for the direct measurement. This suggests that the greater the match between an ideal destination visitor and one's ideal social self, decision-makers would feel less of a risk of making a wrong choice if they decide to visit the destination. These results fully coincide with that of Hung and Petrick (2011), where the functional congruity was shown to exhibit less predictive power over one's destination choice than self-congruity.

The above findings provide justification of the inclusion of destination advertising in future studies on self-congruity in tourism. Clearly, destination advertising was shown to influence the match between how individuals would like to see themselves or how they would like to be seen by others, and how they evaluate a typical destination visitor when one is included in the advertising and when one is not. Moreover, it was shown that there the risk of one making the wrong destination choice diminishes when an ideal destination visitor portrayed in the ad matches one's ideal and social ideal self.

### *On the relationship between self-congruity and information search*

Hypotheses 7–10 were developed in order to test the relationship between the ideal and social ideal congruity and the information search in relation to destination advertising. Hypotheses 7 and 8 suggested that the ideal and ideal social self-congruity would decrease one's information search. Similar, Hypotheses 9 and 10 suggested that the ideal and ideal social functional congruity would increase one's information search. All four hypotheses were tested for the congruity resulting from the gap-scoring formula and the direct measurement.

175

Results of the hypothesis testing were shown to be ambiguous. For example, Hypothesis 7 "The congruity between the ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) decreases the information search" was supported for the gap-scoring formula (-0.306 at p=0.000), but not for the direct measurement of congruity (0.122 at p=0.005). Similarly, Hypothesis 8 "The congruity between the social ideal self-image and the image ad (i.e. *self-congruity*) decreases the information search" was again supported by the gap-scoring formula (-0.226 at p=0.007), but not for the direct measurement of congruity (0.131 at p=0.003).

Conversely, Hypothesis 9 "The congruity between the ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search" was supported for the direct measurement of congruity (0.213 at p=0.000), but not by the gap-scoring formula (-0.243 at p=0.004). Similarly, Hypothesis 10 "The congruity between the social ideal self-images and the functional ad (i.e. *functional congruity*) increases the information search" was again supported by the direct measurement of congruity (0.208 at p=0.000), but not by the gap-scoring formula (-0.177 at p=0.037).

With these ambiguous results, where the hypothesis has been supported for one approach to measuring the congruity, whilst for the other approach it was not, we conclude for the hypotheses 7–10 to be partially supported. Nonetheless, the ideal and social ideal congruity were shown to influence the information search. The value of predicted information search for both measurement approaches was not greater than 4.8%, which indicates towards a very vague relationship between congruity and external information search process. This indicates less external information search if the match between the typical destination visitor and one's self is developed. Regardless, these findings justify our proposition to include destination advertising in future studies on self-congruity in tourism yet again. It was demonstrated that destination advertising was shown to influence the match between how individuals would like to see themselves or how they would like to be seen by others, and how they evaluate a typical destination visitor when one is included in the advertising and when one is not. This was shown to diminish one's information search in the external environment. Moreover, the results are also justified for the ideal and social ideal congruity to be considered when the degree of one's information search is being researched, instead of only focusing on actual and social congruity.

The results coincide with the findings of Bosnjak (2010), where it was suggested that the functional congruity directly influences external information search intentions. Interestingly, one of the best ways to increase one's need for more information about a tourism destination is by including more functional destination attributes in the advertisement message. Our study showed that if people feel that functional destination attributes represent the way they would like to see themselves as spending their summer vacations or the way they would like others to see them, the more likely it is that they will search for more information about that tourism destination.

### 5.2.3   Research question three

The third research question addressed the lack of assessing the predictive validity of two congruity measurements in relation to destination advertising. To remind us, there are two measurement approaches to measuring self-congruity – the gap-scoring formula and the direct measurement. Sirgy *et al.* (1997) suggested that the direct measurement is a better predictor of consumer behaviour than the gap-scoring formula. Following this suggestion, we hypothesised that there will be significant differences between the two approaches in predicting destination choice in relation to destination advertising. Thus, Hypothesis 11 was developed as following: "There is a significant difference in how self-congruity measurements, in relation to destination advertising, predict destination choice."

The results of the regression analysis, with the destination choice as the dependent variable, showed that the direct measurement has positively and more significantly predicted destination choice. However, the gap-scoring formula was non-significant in influencing one's destination choice when both measurement approaches entered the same equation. These results support the hypothesis. Similar to Sirgy *et al.* (1997), we can conclude that the direct measurement provides a more holistic approach to the self-congruity measurement and is not bound by pre-determined personality traits. Also, the direct measurement approach diminishes the research bias of using irrelevant personality attributes. In order to avoid this, we suggest the direct measurement approach be used in assessing the degree of matching one's self to what has been portrayed in destination advertising.

## 5.3 CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### 5.3.1 *Theoretical implications of the study*

This study aimed at advancing the literature on decision-making in tourism. Our literature review suggested that many authors (Wahab *et al.* 1976; Schmoll 1977; Mathieson and Wall 1982) initially perceived the consumer as *Homo Economicus*. The latter makes rational decisions based on collecting and analysing information in order to maximise the utility of his or her actions prior to making decisions. This presumption was introduced in the context of tourism from the so-called Grand Models of Consumer Behaviour, which were based in everyday decision-making processes (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005). The authors proposed numerous models that were concerned with the processes and steps of decision-making (Mayo and Jarvis 1981; Mathieson and Wall 1982; van Raaij and Francken 1984; Woodside and MacDonald 1994), and with factors that influence tourism-related decisions (Moutinho 1987; Woodside and Lysonski 1989; Ajzen and Driver 1992; Um and Crompton 1990). The models eventually evolved into recognising that tourist choices are not always rational (Woodside and MacDonald 1994), and that one's decision is influenced by both cognitive and affective factors (Woodside and Lysonski 1989; Ajzen and Driver 1992). This brings us to the discussion on why the research showed that there are so many external and internal factors that influence the decision-making process, and yet practitioners still struggle to sell their goods and services. The decision-making models, right in their own purpose, focus on examining which factors influence decision-making, and so are alienated from the important issue of whether these factors are of any significance to a consumer. Similar to Smallman and Moore (2010), we observed that the consumer was perceived as a *persona non grata*, instead of being at the core of the decision-making process. This highlighted the need to provide with a theoretical framework capable of bringing the decision-making research back to its original foundation: that is, research on decision-making needs to treat the link between personal significance of the object of consumption and consumer behaviour as the centre piece of the process.

This study suggests that the theory that holds a lot of promise to realign the perspectives on the role of consumer in the decision-making process is Weber's theory to action. This is because Weber (1964) talks about the action as the behaviour when and in so far as it has been imbued with subjective meaning. For the author, meaningful action is a psychological process, internal to an individual that is only being manifested in one's behaviour or in

relation to processes and phenomena which are devoid of subjective meaning (Weber 1964). The latter are objects that influence one's behaviour only if an individual is aware of them or if an individual orients the action towards them. Through the Weberian lens, consumer behaviour is a process in which consumers attach subjective meaning to objects of consumption. Moreover, many external factors that were suggested to influence the decision-making process are not significant to the process unless consumers were either aware of them or their actions were oriented towards them. But in most cases, it seems as if many authors interested in uncovering the decision-making process in tourism neglected this important proposition. Weber's theory of action also helped with understanding why it is wrong to presume that consumption of goods and services is always of a social kind. Some of the early models on decision-making in tourism (Moutinho 1987; van Raaij and Francken 1984) claimed that tourism-related decisions are far more affected by social influences, such as family members and reference groups. These models placed greater attention to the influence of others as being external forces, instead of focusing on to what extent one refers to them in his or her decision-making. Greater attention placed to others as external forces of decision-making process originates in the social action theory (as suggested by Mead, Mills, Shutz, Levine), where a situation necessary involves both an actor and other members (Campbell 1996). However, Weber (1964) writes that social action is social only, and in so far as an individual attaches subjective meaning to it by taking into account the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course. For Weber, the situation does not necessarily involve both the actor and the others. Instead, it is the actor's definition of the situation that is important with regards to others (Weber 1964). Through the Weberian lens, the actor's viewpoint is what is crucial in staying unique to the consumption – the decision-making process evolves around how one attaches meaning to the object of consumption (how I would like to see myself in reference to the object of consumption), and how one attaches subjective meaning to the object of consumption with regard to others (how I would like for the others to see me in reference to the object of consumption).

This study builds upon the questions of how individuals would like to see themselves and how individuals would like for the others to see them in reference to the object of tourist consumption. Tourist consumption is different from the consumption of tangible products. The outcome of tourist consumption is concentrated around a variety of experiences and is mostly of a psychological nature (Frochot and Batat 2013). Tourism products are services

rather than goods and they represent an amalgam of experiential, emotional, and physical factors (UNWTO and ETC 2011). The outcome of tourist consumption is characterised as intangible, perishable, and variable. Moreover, the majority of tourist consumption outcomes are constructed *in situ* – at a tourism destination. This makes the destination choice an *objet d'art*, especially when tourists have no prior experience with a tourism destination. As such, tourism is considered a high-involvement decision-making context, including high-risk decisions and purchases (Gursoy and Gavcar 2003; Sirakaya and Woodside 2005). High-involvement decision-making is represented by the stimulus of consumption being of greater personal relevance to individuals (Zaichkowsky 1986; Mittall 1989; Cai *et al.* 2004). This coincides with the concept of involvement, which is suggested to represent to what extent is the stimulus of consumption important to the consumer. If the stimulus is not important at all, it will not have a role in the one's decision-making. If the stimulus is of high importance, the individual will be aware of it and it will significantly influence one's behaviour (Kapferer and Laurent 1985; Zaichkowski 1986). With this in mind, the concept places the consumer at the forefront of the decision-making process and it builds on the role of the stimuli in the process. The concept of involvement has been operationalised within the marketing literature and was predominately focused on examining the personal relevance of the stimuli in the consumption of goods. However, very rarely has it been operationalised with reference to tourist consumption. For the operationalisation of the concept of involvement in the context of tourism, we built upon four types of involvement. First, product involvement was defined with the reference to a collection of tourist experiences, tourism services, and related product amenities that are to be consumed by tourists during their visit to a tourism destination. By acknowledging that a tourism destination is in the first place a geographic location (UNWTO 2002; Hanna and Rowley 2010), and that it already comes with a given name, the product involvement was operationalised through the perceptions of a tourism destination brand in the mind of a consumer. Second, advertising involvement was operationalised through destination advertising, more particularly to the user imagery. Destination advertising, especially if its message is delivered visually, has the ability to provide information to consumers about the type of a person who visits the destination and the way a tourism destination is supposed to be consumed (Siegel and Ziff-Levine 1990; Sirgy and Su 2000; Keller 2003). Percy and Elliot (2009) suggested that visual advertising messages help in creating user imagery which is either envisioned by viewers or portrayed in advertising. Third, ego involvement was operationalised thought the concept of self-congruity. The latter was referred to as a degree of

matching how one would like to see himself and would like to be seen by others in reference to destination advertising user imagery. As such, it was perceived to influence tourism-related behaviour – tourism destination choice and information search. The latter was set to represent the purchase-decision involvement. Different from other tourism and leisure studies on involvement (Cai *et al.* 2004; Gursoy and Gavcar 2003; Carneiro and Crompton 2010; Huang *et al.* 2014), we have not focused only on assessing how one type of involvement influences tourism-related behaviour. Instead, the study was built on the literature, in which there has been expressed the need for a comprehensive framework of involvement, capable of empirically outlining structural relationships among different types of involvement for a specific product category (Cohen 1983; Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Zaichkowsky 1986). Focusing on one of the initial tourism-related decisions – that is, tourism destination choice (Moutinho 1987; Um and Crompton 1990; Woodside and MacDonald 1994), the results of this study showed that decision-making in tourism is influenced by the interrelatedness of product involvement, advertising involvement, and ego involvement.

Research (2015–2016, n=496) on how tourism destination choice and information search are influenced by how individuals would like to see themselves and how individuals would like for the others to see them in reference to user imagery conveyed through destination advertising, showed that we can confirm the majority of the propositions which we developed from the literature. Initial proposition was interested in examining how individuals construct congruity with a tourism destination in relation to the image ad and the functional ad. The functional ad portrayed tourism destination landscape and requested for an individual to envision a typical destination visitor based on the functional destination attributes, whilst the image ad portrayed the ideal destination visitor. Significance test analysis showed that almost 60% of all respondents developed a match between how they would like to see themselves and how they would like for others to see them based on the user imagery from the ads when congruency was computed using mathematical indices. The results are very similar to those of Boksberger *et al.* (2011). However, the results showed that only one third of the respondents developed congruency with the destination advertising when they had to evaluate user imagery directly from the ad. Results of the significance tests did not support our hypotheses that congruency with the destination advertising will be greater when the ad portrays ideal destination visitors, as compared to when respondents have to envision a typical destination visitor based on functional destination attributes. Nonetheless, we can recognise that this

study is pioneering in the sense of responding to the call of numerous authors (Jenkins 2003; Bilim and Yüksel 2008; Hung and Patrick 2011) on exploring the role of advertising in tourism. Jenkins (2003) and Bilim and Yüksel (2008) said that the role of destination advertising in tourist destination selection process has been under-researched. Moreover, Hung and Petrick (2011) observed that the past self-congruity studies heavily relied upon how individuals envisioned a typical destination visitor, based on which they draw marketing implications from their research, but very rarely provided empirical evidence on the topic (Sirgy *et al.* 1991; 1997; Sirgy and Su 2000; Hosany *et al.* 2006; Ahn *et al.* 2013; Bekk *et al.* 2016). This study addressed this literature gap by empirically including destination advertising in assessing congruity between one's self and a tourism destination. As such, it can serve as a theoretical and empirical background for the inclusion of other elements of destination advertising in examining tourism-related decisions.

The results of the regression analysis from this study suggest that tourism destination choice is influenced by how individuals would like to see themselves or how they would like to be seen by others in relation to how they evaluate a typical destination visitor when one is included in the advertising and when one is not. These results coincide with the findings of Sirgy and Su (2000), Hung and Petrick (2011), and Ahn *et al.* (2013), where both the self-congruity and the functional congruity were shown to influence one's destination choice. It was also demonstrated that the risk of one making the wrong destination choice diminishes when an ideal destination visitor portrayed in the ad matches one's ideal and social ideal self. These results fully coincide with that of Hung and Petrick (2011), where the functional congruity was shown to exhibit less predictive power over one's destination choice than self-congruity. Moreover, regression analysis results suggest that both the ideal and social ideal congruity influence one's tourism destination choice. This suggests that the ideal and social ideal congruity are equally important as actual and social congruity, and thus deserve to be included in research on tourism destination choice (Hung and Petrick 2011). Still, research on how information search is influenced by the interrelatedness of destination advertising and self-congruity provided with ambiguous results. The hypotheses on the examined relationship were supported for one measurement approach to self-congruity, but were not supported for the other approach. Nonetheless, regression analysis showed that if people feel that functional destination attributes represent the way they would like to see themselves as spending their summer vacations or the way they would like others to see them, the more likely it is that they

would search for more information about that tourism destination. The results coincide with the findings of Bosnjak (2010), where it was suggested that the functional congruity directly influences external information search intentions. Interestingly, one of the best ways to increase one's need for more information about a tourism destination is by including more of functional destination attributes in the advertising message.

Lastly, in this study we were interested in the predictive validity of two congruity measurements in relation to the destination advertising. The results from the regression analysis showed that direct measurement of self-congruity, where respondents are directly asked to what extent they agree that the ad portrayed the way they would like to see themselves or the way they would like to be seen by others, has greater predictive power of tourism destination choice over the gap-scoring formula. This confirms the results of Sirgy *et al.* (1997), who demonstrated that the direct approach had greater predictive power than the gap-scoring formula in relation to consumption of goods. So, this study adds to the literature in demonstrating that the direct measurement of congruity is a more reliable and valid measurement tool capable of holistically capturing one's self-congruity with destination advertising in the context of tourism.

This study provided answers to research questions many researchers in leisure and tourism studies highlighted in connection to the study of self-congruity and tourism-related behaviour. There are several important theoretical contributions of this study. First, this study emphasises that the decision-making process needs to be understood from the standpoint of the consumer him or herself. In that way, the decision-making process and its internal and external factors need to be understood in relation to how one ascribes subjective meaning to them. The study suggested that Weber's theory of action could provide theoretical underpinning of future research on consumer behaviour by bringing the consumer back to the forefront of decision-making process. Moreover, in the study it is suggested that by applying Weber's theory of action, both tourism and marketing researchers will be able to dig deeper into analysing why and when intrinsic or extrinsic influencers are successful in affecting consumer behaviour. Second, this study operationalised the concept of involvement in the context of tourism. It provided a theoretical framework for each of the four types of involvement and tested them in relation to tourism-related behaviour. Third, the study showed that destination advertising influences how people create tourism destination user imagery. Results of up to 60% of match

between destination advertising and how individuals would like to see themselves or how they would like to be seen by others are perceived as very important for the inclusion of advertising in future studies on self-congruity. Up to this point advertising was predominately neglected within the theory of self-congruity, in both marketing and tourism literature. Moreover, the existing research has not placed much attention to the role of advertising in tourism-related behaviour. The study contributes to the latter by exploring the role of destination advertising and self-congruity in tourism destination choice and information search. Additionally, the study contributes to the academic debate on the benefits and drawbacks of two self-congruity measurement approaches (i.e., the gap-scoring formula or the direct measurement), since it was demonstrated that the direct measurement is a more reliable tool that holistically captures self-congruity in relation to destination advertising.

### 5.3.2  *Practical implications of the study*

Additional to its theoretical implications, this study also provides practical implications for marketing managers, especially those in tourism and hospitality. The study offers answers on how to influence tourism destination choice by addressing potential and existing consumers with appropriate visual advertising messages. Key practical implications can be divided into two parts. From the standpoint of tourism destination management, it is very important to emphasise that potential and existing visitors associate themselves with destination brand personality. The study showed that destination brand personality is evaluated through user imagery, that is, who one thinks is the typical destination visitor. Because user imagery is developed through marketing communications, it is important for typical representatives of destination visitors to be featured in visual advertising messages. Moreover, it is very important to carefully select which destination brand personality attributes will be depicted through typical representatives in destination advertising. The results showed matching tourists with tourism destinations can be intensified if personality attributes as conveyed by typical representatives are similar to those of the viewers. Therefore, it is suggested that marketing managers find ways to include existing and potential tourists in destination branding, especially when elements of destination brand, such as personality and image, are to be identify and created.

The results also show that if tourists match how they would like to see themselves and how they would like to be seen by others to user imagery, they will feel it would be less of the risk

to choose this destination for their next trip. Moreover, the results of how those ads depicting a typical representative of visitors will lower the risk of purchase more than the ads portraying functional destination attributes. However, the latter will stimulate viewers for external information search. These results are very important when marketing managers are trying to target those with no prior experience with the tourism destination. That is, if potential visitors would feel like the visual advertising message matches how they would like to be seen by others or how they would like to see themselves, then it is more likely they would be interested in the destination. However, based on the results, it is suggested that visual advertising messages include both functional destination attributes and typical representative(s) of visitors. This can result in raising awareness of the tourism destination among broader public, or maybe among those individuals that feel as if typical representative does not fully match with how they would like to spend their holidays.

There are two examples that represent the kind of marketing strategies we wish to point the reader towards. The first is the marketing campaign *"Visit Croatia. Share Croatia."* created by Croatian National Tourism Organisation (MINT 2014b). The campaign is interesting in how it addresses viewers and engages with them by transforming a destination's reality into a tourist's fantasy, and calls upon the action to again re-transform this fantasy into reality when the actual visit takes place. In this sense, the advertising message works through mobilising and triggering a viewer's desires and fantasies by offering seductive and palpable imageries, which are to be accepted by viewers as realities. Moreover, this message relies upon associative learning, since it wishes to stimulate viewers to associate a destination with positive emotions and tangible experiences. The second example is the marketing strategy of Slovenian youth travel agency Collegium Mondial Travel. This example refers to the practices of Collegium as an induced destination image formation agent. Collegium has a very specific target audience (young people), and therefore the destination tourism product is predominately imbued with entertainment activities. The case is very interesting in how Collegium influences destination image by relying upon user imagery to maximise its communication efforts. That is, with a focus on a very specific target audience, its advertising messages predominately include typical representatives of visitors to tourism destinations. Collegium identified that it wants to associate tourism destinations with a very specific tourism product – entertainment. Elements such as objects, people, and contexts to be included in advertising messages are very carefully selected and most often include un-staged

activities. These elements are then presented in such a way that they are irresistible to the viewers and thus, have the potential to fully capture the attention of those willing to be entertained. With this marketing strategy, Collegium aims at minimising the risk of purchase by conveying reliable messages and portrayals how their promises to their customers are being fulfilled.

### 5.3.3 *Limitations of the study*

Despite its theoretical and practical implications, we wish to acknowledge that the study is not without limitations. We acknowledge that one of the limitations is the way we addressed the concept of self-congruity. In this study, we focus on highlighting those aspects of the concept of self-congruity, which were shown relevant in our understanding of how it influences tourism-related behaviour. We acknowledge that this is very narrow and that the concept should have been studied in relation to anthropomorphism and symbolic interactionalism. Moreover, the study neglects a broader, stakeholder perspective on a few concepts: destination brand personality, destination advertising, and self-congruity. We focused only on the perspective of consumers. We acknowledge that destination management organisations and other destination image forming agents are important in the whole process of destination choice and that their perspective on the topic of this study would have been interesting. However, due to the time constraints and special topic interest we decided to neglect this important aspect of the study.

There are also other limitations of this study, connected to its methodology. Firstly, in this study, we used Hieromimus (2003) personality scale, which was applied by Boksberger *et al.* (2011) when testing for congruity of cruising passengers. This scale had only 10 personality items, which distinguished between rational and emotional attributes. Moreover, this scale was much less extensive as were the other personality scales (for example, Aaker 1997; Ekinci and Hosany 2006). This might have resulted in the loss of specific personality attributes of the assessed tourism destination. In this sense, it would be beneficial to replicate the study and to see whether the results would be any different for other personality scales. However, this study focused on assessing the influence of destination advertising in tourism-related behaviour. For this purpose, the questionnaire had to be short and focused, for which it was evaluated that only 10 personality attributes would be sufficient for this study. The second limitation is related to focusing only on assessing two out of four self-congruity

dimensions. We acknowledge that we focused only on assessing ideal and social ideal congruity in relation to destination advertising, thus disregarding actual and social self-congruity. The latter were shown through the literature to have been predominately used in explaining tourist behaviour (Hung and Petrick 2011; 2012). Maybe the results would have been different for both destination choice and information search if these two types of congruities were to be included in the study. The third limitation relates to using already existing pictures, which might have been seen by respondents. This was not controlled for, since the primary goal of the study was to assess to what extent the existing destination advertising influences one's congruity with a destination. Moreover, the ads included only pictures, and disregarded the influence of the advertisement's copy. Maybe the inclusion of the copy would have provided with different results on congruity and tourism-related behaviour. The fourth limitation relates to the sampling and data collection. As stated in the Chapter 3, this study utilised snowballing and online sampling in addition to panel data. Moreover, the sample is only representative for population across gender. Therefore, these results might not be generalised across the whole Slovenian population of younger people aged 18 to 35. We acknowledge that representative sample would enable the generalisability of the results. However, we acknowledge that this issue is common across online studies.

Regardless, these limitations do not make this study less interesting and less useful for destination marketing managers, advertisers and academics. In the following section, we present suggestions for future research.

### 5.3.4 Suggestions for future research

There are several suggestions for future research that stem from this study. The examples represent only a few areas from which future research can be built. One of the key areas is in exploring the interconnectedness between various types of involvement for providing better understanding of consumer behaviour within the context of tourism. While this study demonstrated how product involvement, advertising involvement, and ego involvement are interrelated, it did not significantly explain the power for purchase-decision involvement. Therefore, this calls for retesting and re-conceptualising study results in various tourism destination settings and across different market segments. For example, the setting of this study was in Slovenia, sampling its young residents via an online questionnaire. It would be appropriate to test the questionnaire in some other country, as well as using other methods of

data collection (for example, focus groups, face-to-face interviews, social media activity analysis, etc.). This would help to refine and further develop the questionnaire into a more robust measurement instrument for measuring the interrelatedness of various types of involvement. In addition, future research should also examine other self-congruity types, like actual and social self-congruity, which have been neglected in this study for a particular reason. By including actual and social self-congruity into the research, a better perspective on the development of a match between one's self and a tourism destination in relation to advertising. Moreover, future tourism research could use different advertising appeals in order to better understand the tourist-destination congruity towards niche forms of tourism. For example, advertising messages used in addressing ecotourists, volunteer tourists, cruising passengers, young, seniors, etc. could perhaps shed light on how different market segments associate specific advertising messages to their personalities. We can only assume that destination advertising could have more influence over seniors in settings such as second-home vacation destinations or in family resorts.

Finally, the influence of destination advertising on one's information search in relation to tourist-destination congruity has the potential to be further explored. Contrary to expectations, this study only partially supported the hypotheses related to examining these relationships. Future research could benefit from examining these relationships in greater detail. Advertising is one of the key elements in external information search process (Schmidt and Sprenger 1996), and the more it helps in conveying the message that is appealing to the audience, the more it will lead to the greater intention of additional external information search (Bosnjak 2010). Additional research into the subject would highlight if the relationships are significant across different advertising appeals, different destination images, and for different market segments. Moreover, future research could operationalise the concept of purchase-decision involvement by examining how much time people actually spend on websites such as TripAdvisor or by utilising other time-search related items used by other studies (such as Gursoy and McCleary 2004; Xiang and Gretzel 2010; Kim *et al*. 2013).

# CONCLUSIONS

Research on consumer behaviour and destination image is, and continues to be, one of the most important and extensively examined topics within tourism research. Understanding how and why tourists choose a tourism destination is very important for destination marketing managers and tourism academics. This quest for understanding has resulted in many academics being interested in the tourism decision-making process since the early 1960s. There have existed numerous decision-making models, right in their own purpose, which explored many external and internal factors that influence decision-making in tourism. However, this brought us to a discussion on why the research showed that there are so many factors influencing the decision-making process, and yet practitioners still struggled to sell their goods and services. In the literature review, we observed that these models alienated whether these factors were of any significance to a consumer – a very important issue – and hence treated the consumer as a *persona non grata*. In order to realign the perspectives on the role of consumer in the decision-making process, this study suggested for the consumer behaviour to be studied through Weber's theory of action. Through the Weberian lens, the actor's viewpoint is what is crucial in staying unique to the consumption – the decision-making process evolves around how one attaches meaning to the object of consumption (how I would like to see myself in reference to the object of consumption), and how one attaches the subjective meaning to the object of consumption with regards to others (how I would like for the others to see me in reference to the object of consumption).

This study builds upon the questions of how individuals would like to see themselves and how individuals would like for the others to see them in reference to the object of tourist consumption. Weber's theory of action helped to introduce the concept of involvement, which builds upon on the role of the stimuli in the decision-making process. The concept of involvement has been operationalised within the marketing literature and was predominately focused on examining personal relevance of the stimuli in the consumption of goods. But, we acknowledged that tourist consumption is different from the consumption of goods. The former is centred around a variety of experiences and is characterised as intangible, perishable, and variable. The majority of tourist consumption outcomes are suggested to be constructed *in situ* – at a tourism destination, which makes the destination choice sort of an *objet d'art* of high-involvement decision-making. By focusing on tourism destination choice, we operationalised the concept of involvement in the context of tourism and empirically

demonstrated that the decision-making in tourism is influenced by the interrelatedness of product involvement, advertising involvement, and ego involvement.

In this sense, this study empirically addressed three research gaps. These research gaps tackled the interrelatedness between four types of involvement – product involvement, advertising involvement, ego involvement, and purchase-decision involvement. First, we were interested in how destination advertising influences one's self-congruity with a tourism destination. After examining how an organic destination image formation agent visually portrays the destination of interest (i.e. Croatian island of Pag) in its advertising messages, two distinctive ads were included in the measurement instrument as its key elements. That is, the two ads served as points of reference for assessing how destination advertising affects tourists in their processing of the advertising messages. More specifically, what is the role of destination advertising in establishing a match between a tourism destination and the way tourists would like to see themselves (i.e., the ideal self), or how would they like to be seen by others (i.e., the social ideal self). Second, we were interested in how tourism-related behaviour (i.e., destination choice and information search) is influenced by the construing of self-congruity with a tourism destination based in destination advertising. Tested in a regression analysis, the ad that portrayed functional destination attributes and the ad that portrayed a typical destination visitor were found to significantly influence destination choice. That is, the more tourists felt the ad portrayed how they would like to see themselves or how they would like to be seen by others, the more likely that they would visit that tourism destination. However, the ads were shown to partially influence the time tourist would spend searching for more information about that tourism destination, and the quantity of information one would need prior to making the final decision. Third, we were interested in assessing the predictive validity of two congruity measurements in relation to destination advertising. Both the traditional measurement approach (i.e., the gap scoring formula) and the new approach (i.e., the direct measurement) were applied in this study when assessing the construing of self-congruity with a tourism destination. The results confirmed the existence of significant differences among two measurement approaches. More specifically, the new measurement approach, in which individuals were directly asked to assess to what degree the ad represented the way they would like to see themselves or how would they like to be seen by others, was shown to have greater influence on destination choice over the traditional measurement

approach, in which personality attributes across one's ideal and social ideal self was mathematically linked to that of a tourism destination.

These results have multiple implications. The results suggest that tourism-related behaviour is affected by destination advertising. This shows the appropriateness of using Weber's theory of action as a theoretical framework for bringing consumers into the core of decision-making process: that is, it was demonstrated that if consumers feel that destination advertising represents how they would like to see themselves and how they would like to be seen by others, it is more likely they would choose that destination for their summer holiday. These findings also suggest that if destination advertising has the ability to fully capture one's personality by portraying an ideal destination visitor with the same personality-attribute set, then communication between the advertisers and target audience will be more successful. This specifically implies on how destination advertising messages should be created and what is to be communicated. This study also was meant to validate the predictive validity of two congruity measurement approaches in relation to destination advertising.

This study advances the literature on consumer behaviour in tourism. Moreover, it shows that it is important to study the role of advertising in tourism-related behaviour, which has been over-neglected by the existing tourism research. The study contributes to the academic debate by exploring the role of destination advertising and self-congruity in tourism destination choice and information search. It also suggests on the reliability of tools for measuring congruity in tourism. However, the complexity of tourist decision-making process and the relationships of intrinsic and extrinsic variables influencing that process speak of the need for further research into the phenomenon.

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# INDEX

212

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: Short project description given to respondents

<u>In Slovene:</u>

Pozdravljeni!

Sem študentka doktorskega študija Tržnega komuniciranja na Fakulteti za družbene vede. Pred Vami se nahaja vprašalnik o vplivu oglaševanja in samopodobe na izbiro turistične destinacije, ki ga preučujem v okviru svoje doktorske disertacije.

Odgovarjanje na zastavljena vprašanja Vam bo vzelo približno 10 minut vašega časa. Vaša anonimnost bo zagotovljena, rezultati pa bodo uporabljeni izključno v raziskovalne namene.

Uporabljeni izrazi so zapisani v slovnični obliki moškega spola in so uporabljeni nevtralno. Zelo Vam bom hvaležna, če boste povezavo do vprašalnika posredovali svojim prijateljem in znancem.

Najlepša hvala za Vaš čas!
Tina Šegota

S klikom na NASLEDNJA STRAN pričnete z izpolnjevanjem ankete.

<u>Translated into English:</u>

Greetings!

I'm a doctoral student at the Faculty of Social Sciences, majoring in Marketing Communication. In front of you is a questionnaire about the influence of advertising and self-congruity on destination choice, the research topic that is at the core of my doctoral thesis.

Answering these questions will take about 10 minutes of your time. Your anonymity will be ensured, and the results will be used only for the research purposes.

All terms have been written in the male form in order to ensure neutrality of genders. I would be very grateful if you would share the link to the questionnaire among your friends and acquaintances.

Thank you for your time!
Tina Šegota

By clicking NEXT PAGE you will begin answering the questions.

**APPENDIX B: The final survey for primary data collection (in Slovene)**

Vzemite si čas in pomislite na to, kakšna oseba ste, kakšna oseba si želite biti ter kako želite, da bi vas kot osebo dojemali drugi ljudje. Predvsem se osredotočite na to, kakšna oseba si želite biti in kako želite, da bi vas kot osebo dojemali drugi ljudje. Prosim vas, da zadržite misel o tem in odgovorite na spodaj zastavljena vprašanja.

**Q1 - V kolikšni meri se strinjate, da spodaj navedeni pridevniki najbolj opisujejo OSEBO, KAKRŠNA BI SI ŽELELI POSTATI?**

| | Sploh se ne strinjam | Se ne strinjam | Niti niti | Se strinjam | Povsem se strinjam |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zanesljiv | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pozitiven | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pristen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Strasten | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pošten | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Domiseln | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Prizemljen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Vesel | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Uspešen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Drzen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Q2 – V kolikšni meri se strinjate, da spodaj navedeni pridevniki najbolj opisujejo kako želite, da bi vas KOT OSEBO DOJEMALI DRUGI LJUDJE?**

| | Sploh se ne strinjam | Se ne strinjam | Niti niti | Se strinjam | Povsem se strinjam |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zanesljiv | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pozitiven | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pristen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Strasten | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pošten | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Domiseln | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Prizemljen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Vesel | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Uspešen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Drzen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Q3 – V kolikšni meri se strinjate z naslednjimi trditvami?**

| | Sploh se ne strinjam | Se ne strinjam | Niti niti | Se strinjam | Povsem se strinjam |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ko izbiram destinacijo, ni nič hudega, če se napačno odločim. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Zares je nadležno, če izberem destinacijo, ki | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | Sploh se ne strinjam | Se ne strinjam | Niti niti | Se strinjam | Povsem se strinjam |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| sploh ni primerna zame. | | | | | |
| Če se izbor destinacije izkaže kot napaka, bi se resnično razburil. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Ko se nekdo odloča o izboru destinacije, nikoli zares ne more vedeti, ali je to prava izbira. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Vsakič, ko izbiram med velikim številom različnih destinacij, se vedno počutim zelo neodločenega. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Izbira destinacije je precej zapleten proces. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Izbira destinacije veliko pove o tem, kakšna oseba si. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Destinacije, ki jih obiskujem, mi omogočajo, da izrazim svojo osebnost. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Izbira destinacije malo pove o tebi. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Lahko bi rekli, da me izbira destinacije zelo zanima. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Izbira destinacije mi vedno daje posebno zadovoljstvo. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Veliko pomena pripisujem izbiri destinacije. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Z izbiro destinacije se sploh ne ukvarjam. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Q4 – Pomislite na to, kako po navadi izbirate počitniške destinacije. Določite v kolikšni meri spodnje trditve veljajo za vas.**

| | Sploh ne velja | Ne velja | Niti niti | Velja | Povsem velja |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Odločitev pride kar sama po sebi. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Po navadi poiščem veliko informacij o destinaciji, preden se odločim za nakup. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Vsakič, ko izbiram med destinacijami, se bolj odločam na podlagi mojih vtisov in občutkov, kot na podlagi zapletenih primerjav med destinacijami. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pri izbiri poskušam uporabiti kar se da veliko informacij. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Veliko časa namenim iskanju informacij o destinaciji, preden se odločim za nakup. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Ko se odločam med dvema destinacijama, zelo previdno primerjam njune značilnosti. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Moja odločitev sloni na trdnih dejstvih, ne pa na splošnih vtisih in občutkih. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pogosto se posvetujem z drugimi, katero destinacijo izbrati. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Moja odločitev je rezultat skrbnega razmišljanja in presoje. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pogosto poiščem informacije o tem, katero destinacijo izbrati. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Rad poiščem veliko informacij o destinaciji, preden se odločim za nakup. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## APPENDIX B: The final survey for primary data collection (in Slovene) (continued)

**Na spodnji fotografiji je prikazana destinacija A. Pomislite na osebo, ki navadno obiskuje to destinacijo. Imejte to osebo v mislih, ko odgovarjate na spodaj zastavljena vprašanja.**

Fotografija 1: DESTINACIJA A



**Q5 – V kolikšni meri se strinjate, da spodaj navedeni pridevniki najbolj opisujejo OSEBO, KI OBISKUJE DESTINACIJO A?**

|  | Sploh se ne strinjam | Se ne strinjam | Niti niti | Se strinjam | Povsem se strinjam |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zanesljiv | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pozitiven | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pristen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Strasten | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pošten | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Domiseln | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Prizemljen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Vesel | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Uspešen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Drzen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Q6 – V kolikšni meri se strinjate s spodaj navedenimi trditvami?**

|  | Sploh se ne strinjam | Se ne strinjam | Niti niti | Se strinjam | Povsem se strinjam |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oseba, ki obiskuje destinacijo A, je zelo podobna osebi, kakršna si želim postati. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Oseba, ki obiskuje destinacijo A, je zelo podobna temu kako želim, da bi me kot osebo dojemali drugi ljudje. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

220

|  | Sploh se ne strinjam | Se ne strinjam | Niti niti | Se strinjam | Povsem se strinjam |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ta fotografija me spodbuja k obisku destinacije. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Izbira takšne destinacije bi zame najverjetneje bila napačna izbira. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Izbira takšne destinacije mi popolnoma ustreza. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Zelo verjetno je, da bi bil nezadovoljen s takšno destinacijo. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Navadno iščem tovrstne fotografije, ko se odločam o izbiri destinacije. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Verjetno bi poiskal več informacij o tej destinaciji, preden bi se zanjo odločil. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Zelo verjetno je, da takšna destinacija ne bi izpolnila mojih pričakovanj. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Porabil bi veliko časa, da bi poiskal informacije o tej destinaciji, preden bi se odločil za nakup. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Navadno upoštevam samo tovrstne destinacije za preživljanje svojih poletnih počitnic. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Q7 – Kako verjetno je, da bi destinacijo A izbrali za svoje poletne počitnice?**

○ Zagotovo je ne bi izbral.
○ Mogoče bi jo izbral.
○ Zagotovo bi jo izbral.
○ Ne vem.

**Na fotografiji 2 so prikazane osebe, ki navadno obiskujejo destinacijo B. Pozorno si oglejte sliko. Imejte te osebe v mislih, ko odgovarjate na spodaj zastavljena vprašanja.**

Fotografija 2: Obiskovalci DESTINACIJE B

**Q8 – V kolikšni meri se strinjate, da spodaj navedeni pridevniki najbolj opisujejo osebo, ki obiskuje DESTINACIJO B?**

| | Sploh se ne strinjam | Se ne strinjam | Niti niti | Se strinjam | Povsem se strinjam |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zanesljiv | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pozitiven | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pristen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Strasten | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pošten | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Domiseln | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Prizemljen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Vesel | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Uspešen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Drzen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Q9 – V kolikšni meri se strinjate s spodaj navedenimi trditvami?**

| | Sploh se ne strinjam | Se ne strinjam | Niti niti | Se strinjam | Povsem se strinjam |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oseba, ki obiskuje destinacijo B, je zelo podobna osebi, kakršna si želim postati. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Oseba, ki obiskuje destinacijo B, je zelo podobna temu kako želim, da bi me kot osebo dojemali drugi ljudje. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Ta fotografija me spodbuja k obisku destinacije. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Izbira takšne destinacije bi zame najverjetneje bila napačna izbira. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Izbira takšne destinacije mi popolnoma ustreza. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Zelo verjetno je, da bi bil nezadovoljen s takšno destinacijo. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Navadno iščem tovrstne fotografije, ko se odločam o izbiri destinacije. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Verjetno bi poiskal več informacij o tej destinaciji, preden bi se zanjo odločil. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Zelo verjetno je, da takšna destinacija ne bi izpolnila mojih pričakovanj. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Porabil bi veliko časa, da bi poiskal informacije o tej destinaciji, preden bi se odločil za nakup. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Navadno upoštevam samo tovrstne destinacije za preživljanje svojih poletnih počitnic. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Q10 - Kako verjetno je, da bi destinacijo B izbrali za svoje poletne počitnice?**
◯ Zagotovo je ne bi izbral.
◯ Mogoče bi jo izbral.
◯ Zagotovo bi jo izbral.
◯ Ne vem.

**Pred vami so ZADNJA VPRAŠANJA, ki se nanašajo na demografske podatke.**

**Q11 - Spol:**
◯ Moški
◯ Ženski

**Q12 - Katerega leta ste rojeni? (Prosim, vpišite številko.)**

**Q13 - Katera je najvišja stopnja izobrazbe, ki ste jo končali do zdaj?**
◯ Osnovna šola
◯ Srednja šola
◯ Tehnična, poklicna ali trgovska šola
◯ Fakulteta
◯ Magisterij
◯ Doktorat

**Q14 – Kakšen je vaš trenutni zaposlitveni status?**
◯ Zaposlen
◯ Samozaposlen
◯ Brezposeln
◯ Upokojenec
◯ Dijak ali študent
◯ Gospodinja
◯ Drugo:

**Q15 – Kakšen je vaš zakonski stan?**
◯ Samski
◯ Poročen
◯ Živim v izven zakonski skupnosti
◯ Ovdovel
◯ Ločen

**Q16 - Katera izmed dveh fotografij po vašem mnenju najbolje prikazuje otok Pag na Hrvaškem?**
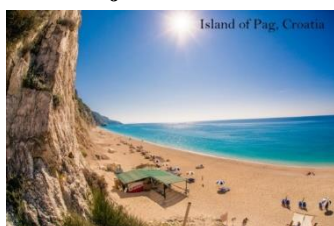
**Destinacija A**          **Destinacija B**



◯ Destinacija A          ◯ Destinacija B

**APPENDIX C: Total visits across websites**

Figure C.1: Total visits for website www.collegium.si
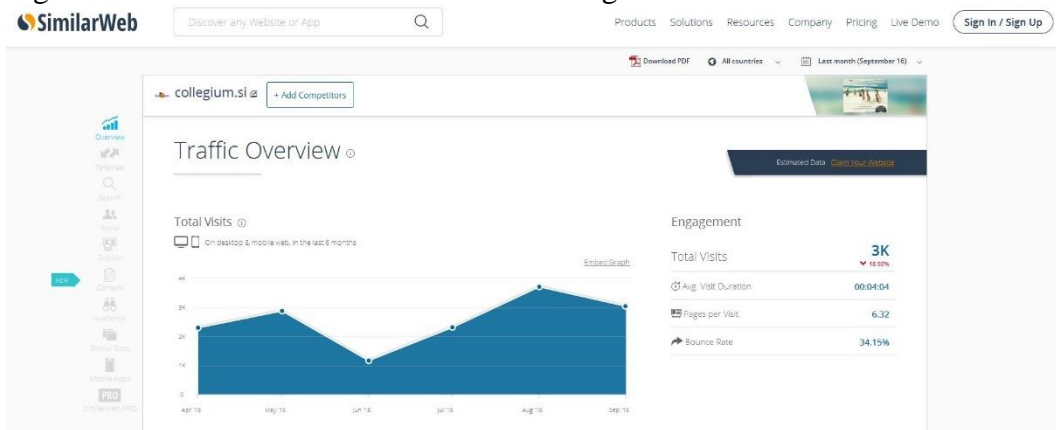


Source: SimilarWeb (2016).

Figure C.2: Total visits for website www.zrcetravel.hr
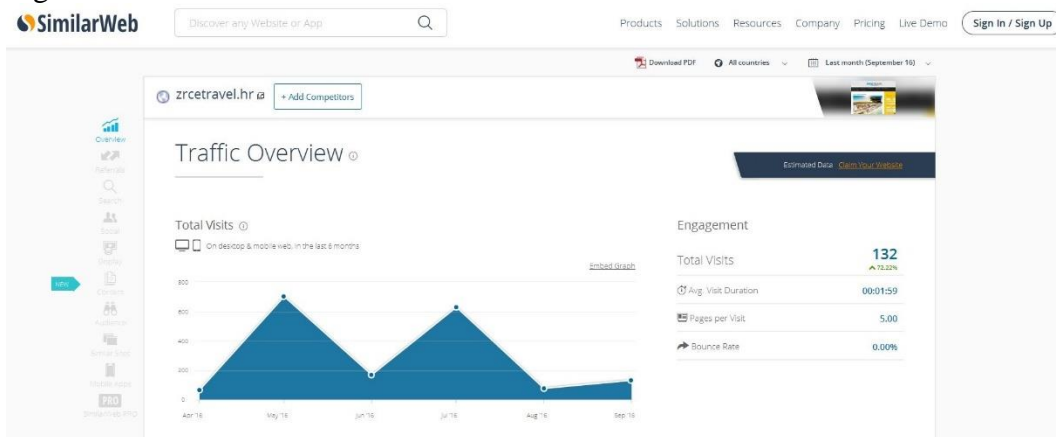


Source: SimilarWeb (2016).

Figure C.3: Total visits for website www.springbreak-island.com
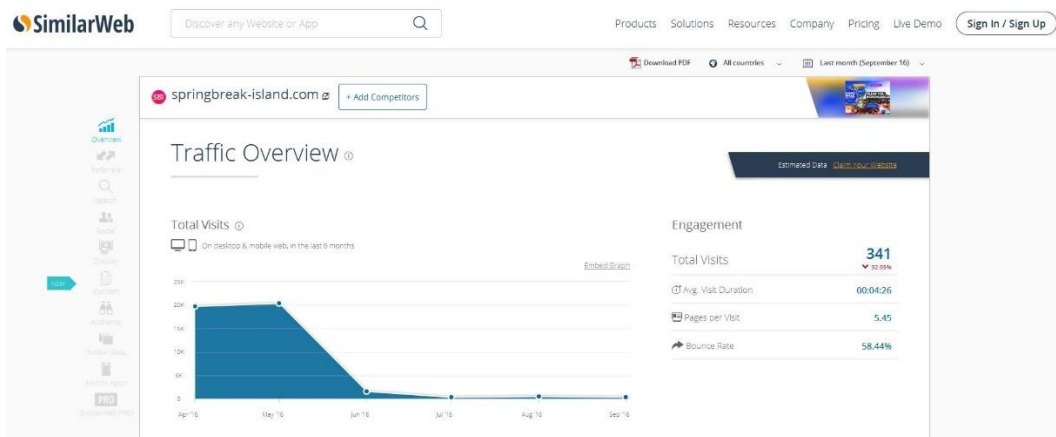


Source: SimilarWeb (2016).

**APPENDIX D: Final set of pictures with utilitarian appeal**

Figure D.1: Picture portraying the island of Pag



Source: Spring Break Island (2015c).

Figure D.2: Picture portraying the Zrće beach
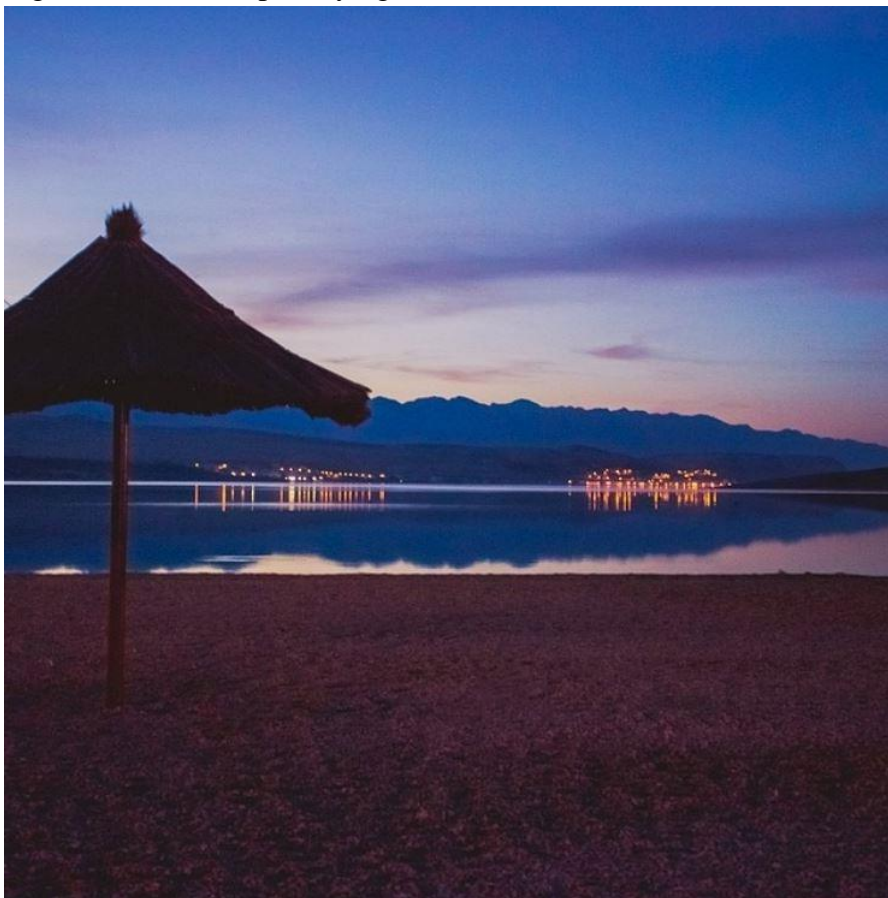


Source: Spring Break Island (2015a).

**APPENDIX D: Final set of pictures with utilitarian appeal (continued)**

Figure D.3: Picture portraying a sailing boat



Source: Spring Break Island (2015a).

Figure D.4: Picture portraying the party location (Papaya beach club)



Source: Collegium (2015).

**APPENDIX D: Final set of pictures with the utilitarian appeal (continued)**

Figure D.5: Picture portraying the sea



Source: Spring Break Island (2015a).

**APPENDIX E: Final set of pictures with the value-expressive appeal**

Figure E.1: Picture portraying a mixed group of young people playing 'picigin' in shallow water



Source: Spring Break Island (2015a).

Figure E.2: Picture portraying young men drinking and having fun



Source: Spring Break Island (2015b).

**APPENDIX E: Final set of pictures with value-expressive appeal (continued)**

Figure E.3: Picture portraying a mixed group of young people dancing on the party boat



Source: Spring Break Island (2015b).

Figure E.4: Picture portraying a mixed group of young people dancing



Source: Spring Break Island (2015a).

**APPENDIX E: Final set of pictures with value-expressive appeal (continued)**

Figure E.5: Picture portraying a young woman at the dance club



Source: Spring Break Island (2015a).

**APPENDIX F: Final set of pictures for the primary data collection**

Figure F.1: Picture with utilitarian appeal (i.e. *the functional congruity*)



Source: Marko Delbello Ocepek (2015).

Figure F.2: Picture with value-expressive appeal (i.e. *the self-congruity*)



Source: Shutterstock (2015).

**APPENDIX G: Significance test results for research question 1**

**Legend**
ISC – ideal self-congruity
SISC – social ideal self-congruity
AD1 – the functional Ad
AD2 – the image Ad

*Results of the McNemar test*

## Hypothesis Test Summary

| | Null Hypothesis | Test | Sig. | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The distributions of different values across ISC_groups_gap formula AD1 and ISC_group_gap fomula AD2 are equally likely. | Related-Samples McNemar Test | ,103 | Retain the null hypothesis. |

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

## Related-Samples McNemar Change Test

| ISC_groups_gap formula AD1 | ISC_group_gap fomula AD2 | |
|---|---|---|
| | low congruence group | high congruence group |
| low congruence group | Observed Frequency =136 | [bar chart] |
| high congruence group | [bar chart] | Observed Frequency =224 |

Frequency
■ Observed
■ Hypothesized
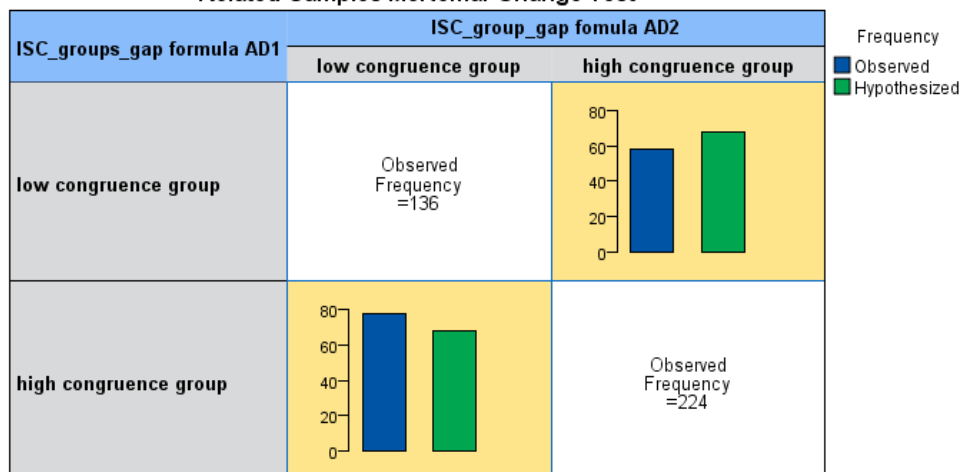
| | |
|---|---|
| **Total N** | 496 |
| **Test Statistic** | 2,654 |
| **Degrees of Freedom** | 1 |
| **Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)** | ,103 |

## Hypothesis Test Summary

| | Null Hypothesis | Test | Sig. | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The distributions of different values across SISC_groups_gap fomula AD1 and SISC_group_gap formula AD2 are equally likely. | Related-Samples McNemar Test | ,113 | Retain the null hypothesis. |

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

### Related-Samples McNemar Change Test
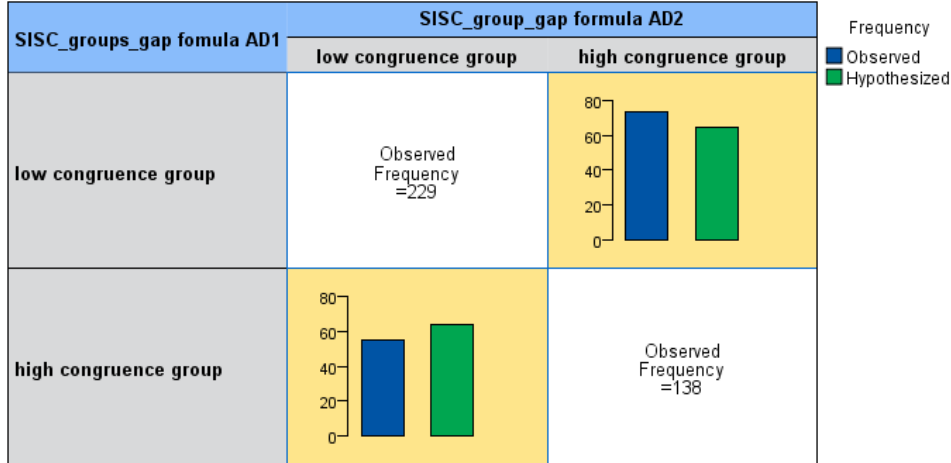


| Total N | 496 |
|---|---|
| Test Statistic | 2,512 |
| Degrees of Freedom | 1 |
| Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test) | ,113 |

## Hypothesis Test Summary

| | Null Hypothesis | Test | Sig. | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The distributions of different values across ISC_groups direct measurement AD1 and ISC_groups direct measurement AD2 are equally likely. | Related-Samples McNemar Test | ,004 | Reject the null hypothesis. |

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

233

## Related-Samples McNemar Change Test

| ISC_groups direct measurement AD1 | ISC_groups direct measurement AD2 | |
| | low congruence group | high congruence group |
| low congruence group | Observed Frequency =78 |  |
| high congruence group |  | Observed Frequency =284 |

Frequency
- Observed
- Hypothesized
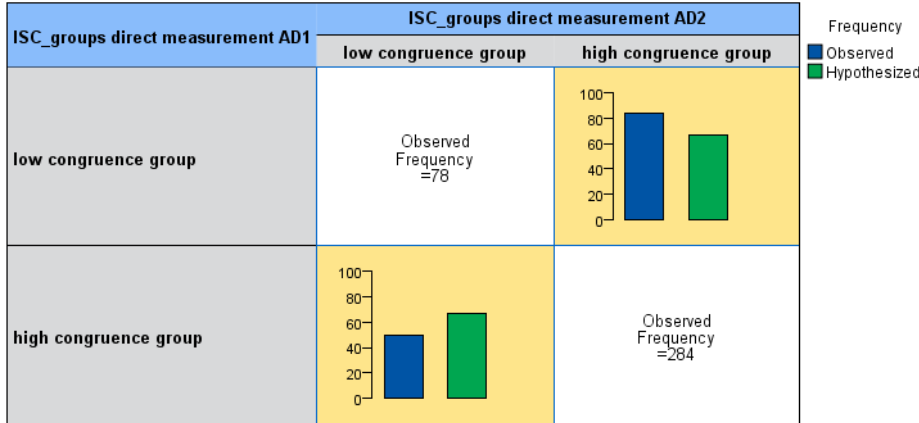
| | |
|---|---|
| Total N | 496 |
| Test Statistic | 8,127 |
| Degrees of Freedom | 1 |
| Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test) | ,004 |

## Hypothesis Test Summary

| | Null Hypothesis | Test | Sig. | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The distributions of different values across SISC_groups direct measurement AD1 and SISC_groups direct measurement AD2 are equally likely. | Related-Samples McNemar Test | ,045 | Reject the null hypothesis. |

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

## Related-Samples McNemar Change Test

| SISC_groups direct measurement AD1 | SISC_groups direct measurement AD2 | |
| | low congruence group | high congruence group |
| low congruence group | Observed Frequency =77 |  |
| high congruence group |  | Observed Frequency =287 |

Frequency
- Observed
- Hypothesized
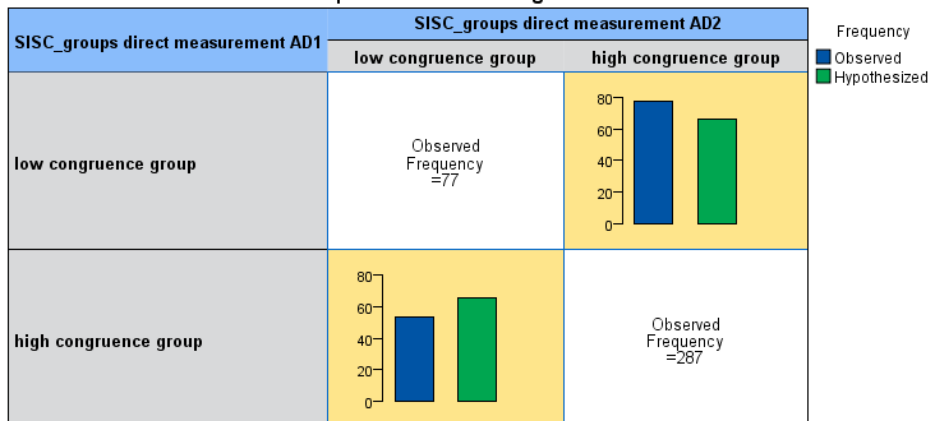
| | |
|---|---|
| Total N | 496 |
| Test Statistic | 4,008 |
| Degrees of Freedom | 1 |
| Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test) | ,045 |

234

### Results of the paired sample t-test

Table E.1: Paired samples statistics

| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | ISC_group_gap formula AD2 | .57 | 496 | .496 | .022 |
| | ISC_groups_gap formula AD1 | .61 | 496 | .488 | .022 |
| Pair 2 | SISC_group_gap formula AD2 | .57 | 496 | .495 | .022 |
| | SISC_groups_gap formula AD1 | .61 | 496 | .488 | .022 |
| Pair 3 | ISC_groups direct measurement AD2 | .26 | 496 | .438 | .020 |
| | ISC_groups direct measurement AD1 | .33 | 496 | .469 | .021 |
| Pair 4 | SISC_groups direct measurement AD2 | .26 | 496 | .441 | .020 |
| | SISC_groups direct measurement AD1 | .31 | 496 | .464 | .021 |

Table E.2: Paired samples test

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | Mean | Std. Dev. | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Pair 1 | ISC_group_gap formula AD2 - ISC_groups_gap formula AD1 | -.040 | .523 | .023 | -.086 | .006 | -1.718 | 495 | .086 |
| Pair 2 | SISC_group_gap formula AD2 - SISC_groups_gap formula AD1 | -.038 | .509 | .023 | -.083 | .007 | -1.676 | 495 | .094 |
| Pair 3 | ISC_groups direct measurement AD2 - ISC_groups direct measurement AD1 | -.069 | .516 | .023 | -.114 | -.023 | -2.960 | 495 | .003 |
| Pair 4 | SISC_groups direct measurement AD2 - SISC_groups direct measurement AD1 | -.048 | .514 | .023 | -.094 | -.003 | -2.096 | 495 | .037 |

# POVZETEK DOKTORSKE NALOGE V SLOVENŠČINI

## UVOD

Doktorska disertacija obravnava relevantno in aktualno problematiko vloge oglaševanja turistične destinacije v procesu nakupnega odločanja turista, saj je ta kljub prepoznani pomembnosti pomanjkljivo raziskana. Natančneje, namen te študije je podati nova spoznanja o vplivu oglaševanja turistične destinacije na ustvarjanje imidža tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije in o vplivu le-tega na izbiro turistične destinacije ter na iskanje informacij o tej destinaciji. Pregled literature pokaže, da številni avtorji (Wahab in drugi 1976; Schmoll 1977; Mathieson in Wall 1982) obravnavajo potrošnika kot Homo Economicus, ki na podlagi zbranih in analiziranih informacij sprejme racionalne odločitve z namenom uživanja rezultatov maksimiziranja koristnosti svojih dejanj. Ta predpostavka sloni na vsakdanjih odločitvah, ki se največkrat obravnavajo znotraj tako imenovanih »Velikih modelov potrošniškega vedenja« in kot takšna je bila tudi vpeljana v kontekst turizma (Sirakaya in Woodside 2005). Rezultati tovrstnega prenosa znanja v raziskovanju se nanašajo predvsem na spoznanja o procesu nakupnega odločanja v turizmu in značilnostih posameznih korakov nakupnega odločanja (Mayo in Jarvis 1981; Mathieson in Wall 1982; van Raaij in Francken 1984; Woodside in MacDonald 1994) ter na spoznanja o dejavnikih, ki vplivajo na te nakupne odločitve (Moutinho 1987; Woodside in Lysonski 1989; Ajzen in Driver 1992; Um in Crompton 1990). Sčasoma so avtorji spoznali, da turisti niso povsem racionalni v svojih odločitvah (Woodside in MacDonald 1994) ter, da so njihove nakupne odločitve pod vplivom kognitivnih in afektivnih dejavnikov (Woodside in Lysonski 1989; Ajzen in Driver 1992). Takšne ugotovitve iz pregleda literature so pripeljale do diskusije o tem, da se kljub obstoju številnih raziskav na temo dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na nakupno odločitev turistov, poslovneži nenehno srečujejo z izzivom, na kakšen način prepričati posameznika v nakup izdelkov in storitev. Teoretični in empirični modeli nakupnega odločanja, katerih namen je raziskovanje dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na nakupno odločanje, se istočasno oddaljujejo od pomembnega vprašanja, ali potrošniki te dejavnike v svojih nakupnih odločitvah sploh zaznavajo kot pomembne. Podobno kot pri Smallman in Moore (2010), so rezultati opravljene študije vključene v to disertacijo pokazali, da so modeli nakupnega odločanja obravnavali potrošnika kot persona non grata, namesto da bi bil potrošnik v središču nakupnega odločanja. To je poudarilo potrebo po zagotovitvi teoretičnega okvira, ki bi omogočil povrnitev raziskovanja o

nakupnem odločanju v prvotni okvir, kjer mora biti povezava med osebnim pomenom predmeta porabe in vedenjem potrošnikov postavljena v osrčje nakupnega procesa.

Ta študija zagovarja stališče, da je najustreznejša teorija, ki omogoča prilagoditev perspektive o vlogi potrošnika v procesu nakupnega odločanja, Webrova teorija delovanja. Weber (1964) govori o delovanju kot o dejanju, v kolikor je ta prežet s subjektivnim pomenom. Delovanje je za avtorja psihološki proces, ki je notranji posamezniku, a ga je moč opaziti zgolj v posameznikovem vedenju ali pa v njegovem odnosu do procesov in pojavov, ki nimajo subjektivnega pomena per se (Weber 1964). Procesi in pojavi brez subjektivnega pomena so navadni vsakdanji predmeti, ki vplivajo na vedenje le, če se jih posameznik zaveda ali, če posameznik usmeri svoje delovanje proti njim. Skozi Webrovo lečo je potrošnikovo stališče tisto, ki je ključnega pomena za razumevanje potrošništva, saj se proces nakupnega odločanja razvije okoli načina, kako potrošniki pripisujejo subjektivni pomen objektu potrošnje (kako si potrošnik želi videti samega sebe glede na objekt potrošnje). Tako številni zunanji dejavniki, ki so bili predlagani, da vplivajo na nakupno odločitev, postanejo nepomembni za proces odločanja, če se jih potrošniki ne zavedajo ali njihova dejanja niso usmerjena vanje in pregled literature kaže, da mnogi avtorji, ki se zanimajo za raziskovanje odločitvenih procesov v turizmu, ta pomemben predlog zanemarijo. Skozi Webrovo teorijo delovanja je v disertaciji obravnavan tudi poskus razumevanja vpliva družbe na nakupno odločanje turistov. Nekateri zgoraj omenjeni modeli odločanja v turizmu (Moutinho 1987; van Raaij in Francken 1984) trdijo, da je družbeni vpliv zelo pomemben v nakupnem odločanju turistov, predvsem, ko gre za vpliv družinskih članov in referenčnih skupin. Ti modeli večjo pozornost namenijo vplivu drugih, namesto, da bi se osredotočali na to, kako potrošniki pripisujejo subjektivni pomen objektu potrošnje v navezavi na pomembne druge (kako si potrošnik želi, da ga drugi vidijo v povezavi z objektom potrošnje). Večja pozornost namenjena pomembnim drugim, kot zunanjim dejavnikom v procesu odločanja, izhaja iz teorije družbenega delovanja (kot to predlagajo npr. Mead, Mills, Shutz, Levine), kjer mora nakupna situacija nujno vključevati odločevalca in pomembne druge (Campbell 1996). V nasprotju s tem Weber (1964) piše, da je delovanje družbeno, če posameznik ob pripisu subjektivnega pomena objektu potrošnje upošteva vedenje drugih in na podlagi tega usmerja svoj potek delovanja. Za Webra nakupna situacija ne vključuje nujno odločevalca in pomembnih drugih, temveč je odločevalec postavljen v središče nakupne situacije, ki svoje odločitve sprejme glede na to, kako si potrošnik sam želi, da ga drugi vidijo v povezavi z objektom potrošnje.

237

Ta študija v ospredje postavlja vprašanji, kako si posamezniki želijo videti sebe in kako si želijo, da bi jih drugi videli v povezavi s predmetom turistične potrošnje. Turistična potrošnja se razlikuje od potrošnje otipljivih izdelkov, saj jedro turistične potrošnje predstavljajo različne izkušnje, pričakovanja in emocije, ki so predvsem psihološke narave (Frochot in Batat 2013). Predmet turistične potrošnje je definiran skozi amalgam izkustvenih, čustvenih in fizičnih dejavnikov (UNWTO in ETC 2011), ne zgolj kot storitev, in tako predmet turistične potrošnje postane neotipljivo, neponovljivo in edinstveno doživetje, ki se zgodi in situ oziroma na turistični destinaciji. Zaradi tega je izbira turistične destinacije sama po sebi objet d'art, še posebej, če turisti nimajo predhodnih izkušenj s turistično destinacijo, zato se turizem šteje za okolje, v katerem turisti veliko tvegajo pri svojih nakupnih odločitvah (Gursoy in Gavcar 2003; Sirakaya in Woodside 2005). V takšnem okolju bo posameznik pripisal večji subjektivni pomen predmetu potrošnje (Zaichkowsky 1986; Mittall 1989; Cai in drugi 2004), kar sovpada s konceptom vpletenosti uveljavljenim v marketingu, ki se nanaša na obseg pomembnosti dražljajev pri potrošnji. Dražljaj, ki sploh ni pomemben, ne bo imel pri odločanju nobene vloge, nasprotno pa bo posameznik dražljaj, ki je zanj zelo pomemben, zaznal in dražljaj bo tudi pomembno vplival na njegovo vedenje (Kapferer in Laurent 1985; Zaichkowski 1986). Tako koncept vpletenosti postavlja potrošnika v ospredje procesa nakupnega odločanja, saj temelji na vplivu dražljajev, ki ga ti imajo na posameznika. V kontekstu turizma je koncept vpletenosti operacionaliziran skozi štiri tipe vpletenosti. Prvič, vpletenost v predmet turistične potrošnje je opredeljena skozi turistična doživetja, storitve in objekte, ki jih turisti srečujejo ob obisku turistične destinacije, ki je primarno opredeljena kot geografska lokacija (UNWTO 2002; Hanna in Rowley 2010) z določenim geografskim nazivom, ki služi kot njena tržna znamka. Kot takšni ji ne moremo pripisati klasičnega procesa znamčenja, ker gre tukaj za proces ustvarjanja pozitivnega imidža tržne znamke turistične destinacije med potrošniki. Drugič, vpletenost v oglaševanje je obravnavana skozi pomen oglaševalskih sporočil, predvsem skozi njihove vizualne elemente, saj imajo oglaševalska sporočila, predvsem vizualna, veliko možnosti, da pritegnejo pozornost posameznikov ter jim tako podajo informacije o tipu osebe, ki obiskuje to destinacijo ter o doživetjih, ki jih ta destinacija obljublja (Siegel in Ziff-Levine 1990; Sirgy in Su 2000; Keller 2003). Percy in Elliot (2009) trdita, da vizualna oglaševalska sporočila pomembno vplivajo na oblikovanje imidža tipičnega obiskovalca turistične destinacije, bodisi tako, da je prikazana pokrajina turistične destinacije in se posledično zahteva od posameznika, da si sam ustvari predstavo o obiskovalcu destinacije, bodisi skozi oglas, v katerem je prikazan tipičen

obiskovalec turistične destinacije. Tretjič, vpletenost ega je povezana s konceptom skladnosti jaza, ki je definirana kot stopnja ujemanja med tem, kako si posamezniki želijo videti sebe in kako si želijo, da bi jih drugi videli glede na tipičnega obiskovalca turistične destinacije. Za skladnost jaza je bilo dokazano, da vpliva na potrošniško vedenje turistov oziroma na izbiro turistične destinacije in iskanje informacij o turistični destinaciji. Prav iskanje informacij predstavlja četrti tip vpletenosti oziroma vpletenost v proces nakupnega odločanja, ki se nanaša na količino informacij o turistični destinaciji in čas, ki ga posameznik porabi za iskanje teh informacij, preden dokončno izbere turistično destinacijo za preživljanje svojega prostega časa. Ta študija ni osredotočena le na raziskovanje vplivanja ene vrste vpletenosti na vedenje potrošnikov v turizmu, kot je to praksa obstoječih raziskav (Cai in drugi 2004; Gursoy in Gavcar 2003; Carneiro in Crompton 2010; Huang in drugi 2014); namesto tega je študija grajena skozi celovito obravnavo prepletanja štirih tipov vpletenosti, ki vplivajo na izbiro turistične destinacije (Cohen 1983; Laurent in Kapferer 1985; Zaichkowsky 1986).

## PREDLAGANI RAZISKOVALNI MODEL

Identificirana so bila tri različna raziskovalna vprašanja, ki izhajajo iz pomanjkanja raziskav s področja povezanosti štirih tipov vpletenosti. Prvo raziskovalno vprašanje izhaja iz pomanjkanja razumevanja povezanosti vpletenosti v produkt, vpletenosti v oglaševanje in vpletenosti ega. V zadnjih dveh desetletjih so skoraj vse študije o skladnosti jaza ali skladnosti samopodobe (t.i. self-congruity studies) od anketirancev zahtevale oceno skladnosti njihove samopodobe z imidžem turistične destinacije osnovane na domišljiji anketirancev o tipičnem obiskovalcu destinacije (Sirgy in drugi 1997; Hung in Petrick 2011; Sirgy 2014). Tako zastavljeno raziskovanje obravnava odnos med jazom in tipičnim obiskovalcem brez upoštevanja vpliva oglaševanja ter katere koli druge oblike komunikacije, ki je uporabljena za oglaševanje destinacije. Cilj te študije ni ovreči preteklih raziskav, temveč pojasniti razkorak med preteklimi študijami in vprašanjem, kako komuniciranje o imidžu destinacije v vizualnih oglaševalskih sporočilih vpliva na splošno percepcijo tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije. Posledično ta študija z analizo vsebine ocenjuje vpliv oglaševalskih sporočil na predstavo o obiskovalcih turistične destinacije.

Kot je bilo že prej omenjeno, je predstava o obiskovalcih turistične destinacije sestavljena iz dveh elementov – tipičnega obiskovalca, kot si ga predstavlja potrošnik in idealnega obiskovalca, kot je ta predstavljen v oglaševanju (Phau in Lau, 2000). Pri oglaševanju

destinacij je lahko tipični obiskovalec destinacije prikazan ali ne; če je, potem gre za idealnega obiskovalca kot si ga predstavljajo oglaševalci destinacije, v nasprotnem primeru pa gre za tipičnega obiskovalca kot si ga predstavlja gledalec in tu mora oglaševanje destinacije vsebovati vsaj eno značilnost destinacije, zaradi katere je ta prepoznavna. To gledalcu omogoči, da dobi občutek o turistični destinaciji in razvije predstavo o obiskovalcih, zaradi česar je utemeljeno domnevati, da na predstavo o obiskovalcih ali na imidž obiskovalcev močno vpliva oglaševanje destinacije. V tej študiji o skladnosti jaza je oglaševalsko sporočilo, ki prikazuje idealnega obiskovalca, prikazano kot imidž oglas, medtem ko je oglaševalsko sporočilo, ki prikazuje značilnosti turistične destinacije brez sklicevanja na tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije, prikazano kot funkcionalni oglas. Hung in Petrick (2011, 109) sta zaključila, da »študije skladnosti samopodobe v turizmu ne ustrezajo literaturi o imidžu destinacije in ne razlikujejo med različnimi vrstami imidža destinacije« oz., da integracija med »skladnostjo samopodobe z afektivnim imidžem destinacije in funkcionalno skladnostjo s kognitivnim imidžem destinacije« ne obstaja. S sprejetjem predloga, ki ga ponudita Sirgy in Su (2000, 342), da »bo sklepanje turistov o obiskovalcih destinacije verjetno direktna posledica oglaševalskih sporočil destinacije«, se postavlja naslednje vprašanje:

RV1: Kako posamezniki zgradijo skladnost samopodobe s turistično destinacijo glede na imidž oglase in funkcionalne oglase?

Usklajenost imidž in funkcionalnega oglasa ter potencialni vpliv skladnosti na vedenje turistov, npr. v obliki izbire turistične destinacije in iskanja informacij, so temeljnega pomena za to študijo, ki želi razširiti raziskovanje odločitvenega procesa turistov. Četudi so koncepti imidža destinacije in osebnosti blagovne znamke, oglaševanja destinacije in skladnosti samopodobe ključni elementi v literaturi o odločitvenem procesu turistov, je literarni pregled odkril presenetljivo malo raziskav, ki operacionalizirajo medsebojno povezanost teh treh vrst vpletenosti in testirajo njihov učinek na posameznikov izbor destinacije. Dalje, medsebojna povezanost teh vrst vpletenosti še ni povezana z iskanjem informacij, četudi Selin in Howard (1988) domnevata, da je vpletenost ega predhodnik vpletenosti v nakupno odločitev. Nekateri avtorji so raziskovali razlike med vrednostno-izraznimi in utilitarnimi oglasi glede na skladnost samopodobe (Johar in Sirgy 1991; Bilim in Yüksel 2008), vendar je bil ta učinek na izbor turistične destinacije in iskanje informacij, kot posledica skladnosti, večinoma zanemarjen. Upoštevajoč to, so bili individualni učinki oglaševanja, imidža destinacije in skladnosti jaza močno konceptualizirani v literaturi o vedenju potrošnikov, vendar je bila

njihova medsebojna povezanost pomanjkljivo empirično raziskana in zavoljo zapolnitve te vrzeli, se drugo raziskovalno vprašanje glasi:

RV2: Kako na vedenje turistov (izbiro destinacije in iskanje informacij) vpliva razumevanje skladnosti samopodobe in turistične destinacije glede na imidž oglase in funkcionalne oglase?

Naslednja vrzel, ki je bila opredeljena znotraj literature, je pomanjkanje raziskav, ki preučujejo napovedno moč dveh mer skladnosti jaza glede na oglaševanje destinacij. Nekaj študij, ki so preučevale razlike med dvema merama, se je opiralo predvsem na anketirančevo percepcijo tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije (Sirgy in drugi 1997; Litvin in Goh 2002), medtem ko so bili vsi oglaševalski poskusi oglaševalcev destinacij v teh študijah večinoma zanemarjeni in je bilo oglaševanje destinacij kljub pomembnemu vplivu na imidž uporabnikov, izločeno. Ta študija premošča to vrzel in preučuje tudi razlike med merami skladnosti samopodobe z uporabo imidža uporabnikov, kot je ta predhodno določen v oglaševanju destinacije. To je izredno pomembno, ker raziskave kažejo, da lahko oglaševalci destinacij znatno vplivajo na percepcijo turistov o turistični destinaciji (Um in Crompton 1990; McWilliams in Crompton 1997; Tasci in drugi 2007) in posledično je moč pričakovati, da bo oglaševanje destinacije močno vplivalo na imidž uporabnikov. Potrditev te hipoteze bo pomenila, da obstaja močna empirična podpora za napovedno moč obeh mer skladnosti samopodobe. Poleg tega, da različno oglaševanje destinacije vpliva na skladnost jaza, obstaja verjetnost, da bo ena izmed mer prevladala pri napovedovanju vedenja turistov glede na to kako in ali oglasi prikazujejo značilnosti destinacije ali pa tipičnega obiskovalca. Glede na daljnosežne učinke oglaševanja destinacije in, s strani oglaševalcev destinacij, vnaprej določen imidž destinacije, se tretje raziskovalno vprašanje glasi:

RV3: Kako različni sta si meri skladnosti samopodobe, ki napovedujeta vedenje turistov, glede na imidž oglase in funkcionalne oglase?

**EMPIRIČNA ŠTUDIJA IN ANALIZA REZULTATOV**

Na raziskavo (2015-2016, n = 496) o izbiri turistične destinacije in iskanju informacij vpliva, kako bi posamezniki radi videli sami sebe in kako bi posamezniki radi, da jih drugi vidijo glede na imidž uporabnikov, ki je razviden iz oglaševanja destinacije. Rezultati kažejo, da je večina hipotez razvitih na podlagi literature, potrjena.

***Odgovori na prvo raziskovalno vprašanje***

Prvo raziskovalno vprašanje se je glasilo: »*Kako posamezniki zgradijo skladnost samopodobe s turistično destinacijo glede na imidž oglase in funkcionalne oglase?*« in pretekle raziskave o skladnosti samopodobe v turizmu, ki so preučevale ujemanje med posamezniki in turističnimi destinacijami, so se opirale na predstavo posameznikov o tipičnem obiskovalcu destinacije (Sirgy in Su 2000; Hung in Petrick 2011; Sirgy 2014). Te študije niso vključevale rezultatov raziskav iz oglaševalske literature in posledično niso zagotovile celovitega razumevanja procesa odločanja v turizmu, zato sta Hung in Petrick (2011) pozvala k študijam, ki bi obravnavale to vprašanje s poudarkom na izbiri destinacije.

Ta študija je bila sicer izvedena kot odziv na prej omenjeni poziv, vendar je potrebno omeniti, da je ta študija tudi prva, ki preučuje učinke oglaševanja na vedenje posameznikov povezano s turizmom, s poudarkom na skladnosti samopodobe, zaradi česar je tudi raziskovalni okvir zelo ozek in usmerjen na specifičen turistični produkt. Rezultat tega je usmeritev raziskovanja na hrvaški otok Pag ter na ciljno skupino sestavljeno iz Slovencev starih med 18 in 35 let. Turistični produkt Paga je zelo specifičen – poletni turizem (sonce in plaža) z veliko zabave za mlade, zato je otok priljubljen med mladimi Slovenci, njegovo turistično ponudbo pa oglašuje mladinska turistična agencija Collegium Mondial Travel. Prvi korak v študiji je bila vsebinska analiza oglaševalskih sporočil agencije Collegium o Pagu, ki je pokazala, da se Collegium poslužuje pretežno oglaševanja funkcionalnih značilnosti (npr. plaže, modrega morja, krajev za zabavo, ipd.) ter idealnih turistov (npr. mladih, ki se zabavajo s prijatelji). Glede na te rezultate, sta bili v vprašalnik vključeni dve značilno različni sliki; prva je bila funkcionalni oglas, na katerem je bila prikazana pokrajina turistične destinacije, medtem ko je bila druga imidž oglas, na kateri so bili prikazani idealni turisti.

Oba oglasa sta bila uporabljena v vprašalniku na sledeči način; ko je bil udeležencem pokazan funkcionalni oglas, so bili pozvani, da si poskušajo predstavljati tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije, medtem ko so bili ob soočenju z imidž oglasom pozvani, da direktno ocenijo tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije, kot je bil ta prikazan v oglasu. Anketiranci so se lahko pri ocenjevanju oglasov sklicevali na 10 osebnostnih značilnosti. Pri obeh oglasih je bil tipični obiskovalec destinacije percipiran kot vesel ($M = 4{,}22$ za imidž oglas in $M = 4{,}05$ za funkcionalni oglas) in pozitiven ($M = 4{,}15$ za imidž oglas in $M = 4{,}13$ za funkcionalni oglas). Tipični obiskovalec destinacije iz imidž oglasa je bil ocenjen najmanj prizemljen in zanesljiv

($M = 2,96$ in $M = 3,12$), medtem ko je bil tisti iz funkcionalnega oglasa ocenjen kot najmanj uspešen in prizemljen ($M = 3,20$ in $M = 3,25$). Istočasno so bili anketiranci pozvani, da ocenijo, katere izmed teh 10 osebnostnih lastnosti veljajo za njih same in rezultati kažejo, da se mladi Slovenci vidijo kot pošteni in pozitivni ($M = 4,44$ ter $M = 4,43$), medtem ko želijo, da jih drugi dojemajo kot kar se da poštene in zanesljive ($M = 4,57$ in $M = 4,54$).

Zavoljo testiranja hipotez 1 in 2 je bila izračunana skladnost med anketirancem ter oglasom in sicer tako, da je bil prag skladnosti postavljen pri 1,0, kot to predlagajo Boksberger in drugi (2011). Ta analiza je pokazala, da je skoraj 60 % vseh anketirancev visoko skladnih z obema oglasoma, ko so se njihove osebnostne značilnosti statistično značilno ujemale s tistimi iz oglasov in ti rezultati potrjujejo izsledke Boksberger in drugi (2011), da osebnost 58 % ljudi ustreza osebnosti tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije. Ob primerjavi rezultatov vseh vrst skladnosti z ustreznim oglasom, je bilo jasno, da je delež skladnosti jaza večji pri funkcionalnem oglasu kot pa pri imidž oglasu. Za testiranje razlik med visoko skladnimi in malo skladnimi različnimi vrstami skladnosti jaza je bil uporabljen McNemarjev test in rezultati niso pokazali statistično značilnih razlik med oglasi, kar pomeni, da je bil profil članov idealno in družbeno idealno skladnih skupin za oba oglasa podoben. Zaključek te študije je, da ko je skladnost jaza izračunana z agregiranjem vrednosti značilnosti med oglasi za idealno in družbeno idealno skladnost jaza, je razlika med visoko skladnimi in nizko skladnimi oglasi majhna ali statistično neznačilna. Ta ugotovitev potrjuje zaključek Boksberger in drugi (2011), da lahko merjenje skladnosti jaza vpliva na odstotek tistih, ki štejejo za visoko skladne in tistih, ki štejejo za nizko skladne. Pri uporabi manj strogega kriterija se odstotek visoko skladnih članov poveča do 80 % ali celo 90 % (v primeru, da je prag pri vrednosti 1,4 za rezultat 80 % in 1,6 za rezultat 90 %), medtem ko pri strožjem pragu pri vrednosti 0,4, le 16,1 % članov v vzorcu zadosti pogoju za visoko skladnost z oglasom.

Rezultati neposrednega merjenja skladnosti z oglasi so različni od rezultatov pridobljenih s formulo za točkovanje vrzeli (t.j. *gap-scoring formula*). V primeru neposrednega merjenja skladnosti jaza je bil udeležencem študije pokazan oglas in bili so pozvani, da neposredno ovrednotijo, v kolikšni meri oglas predstavlja, kako si želijo videti same sebe (t.j. *idealna skladnost*) ter, kako želijo, da jih vidijo drugi (t.j. *družbeno idealna skladnost*). Rezultati so pokazali, da približno 26 % udeležencev meni, da njihov idealni in družbeno idealni jaz ustreza imidž oglasu, medtem ko je bilo 31,5 % udeležencev mnenja, da njihov idealni in

družbeno idealni jaz ustreza funkcionalnemu oglasu. Rezultati McNemarovega testa so pokazali, da gre pri idealni in družbeno idealni skladnosti za statistično značilne razlike med visoko in nizko skladnimi oglasi. Parni t-test je razkril, da je članstvo skupine večje v primeru funkcionalnega oglasa, kot v primeru imidž oglasa.

Ti rezultati ne potrjujejo prve in druge hipoteze. V prvi hipotezi je zastopano stališče, da »bolj, kot oglas prikazuje idealnega obiskovalca destinacije, večja bo skladnost med turistovo idealno samopodobo ter destinacijo in bolj, kot oglas prikazuje funkcijske značilnosti destinacije, manjša bo skladnost med turistovo idealno samopodobo in destinacijo«. Hipoteza dve pravi, da »bolj, kot oglas prikazuje idealnega obiskovalca destinacije, večja bo skladnost med turistovo družbeno idealno samopodobo ter destinacijo in bolj, kot bo oglas prikazoval pokrajino destinacije, manj bo skladnosti med turistovo družbeno idealno samopodobo in destinacijo.« Te rezultate pojasnjujejo tudi odzivi anketirancev, ki so ocenjevali svoj idealni in družbeno idealni jaz glede na 10 osebnostnih lastnosti. Udeleženci te študije sami sebe dojemajo kot zanesljive, poštene in pozitivne, medtem ko o idealnem obiskovalcu destinacije iz imidž oglasa menijo, da je manj zanesljiv in pošten kot tipični obiskovalec destinacije, kot si ga predstavljajo iz funkcionalnega oglasa.

Drugo pojasnilo za nepotrjeni hipotezi je povezano z demografskimi značilnostmi vzorca študije. Prvič, udeleženci so bili povprečno stari 27 let, 40 % jih je odgovorilo, da so v zvezi in 55 % je bilo zaposlenih ali samozaposlenih, medtem ko je imidž oglas prikazoval idealnega obiskovalca destinacije kot mladega, obkroženega s prijatelji, ki se na jadrnici fotografira. V študiji je upoštevana domneva, da zaposleni in tisti v zvezah poletnih počitnic ne dojemajo kot jadranja s skupno prijateljev, temveč kot sončenje na plaži in preživljanje prostega časa s svojimi partnerji. Ta domneva v tej študiji ni bila testirana, odpira pa možnosti za nadaljnje raziskovanje. Natančneje, pri študijah osredotočenih na oceno ustreznosti turistične destinacije glede na posameznikov jaz, je priporočljivo, da se najprej oceni, katere turistične produkte anketiranci povezujejo z dotično destinacijo.

### *Odgovori na drugo raziskovalno vprašanje*

Drugo raziskovalno vprašanje se glasi: »*Kako na vedenje turistov (izbiro destinacije in iskanje informacij) vpliva razumevanje skladnosti samopodobe in turistične destinacije glede na imidž oglase in funkcionalne oglase?*« Iz tega razvite hipoteze so temeljile na rezultatih

študije o skladnosti samopodobe oz. skladnosti jaza v turizmu. Številne raziskave so pokazale, da višja kot je skladnost med turistom in turistično destinacijo, večja je verjetnost, da bo turist destinacijo obiskal, ponovno obiskal ali priporočil (Sirgy in Su 2000; Hung in Petrick 2011; Ahn in drugi 2013; Sirgy 2014). Pozitivna narava odnosa med skladnostjo in vedenjem povezanim s turizmom se predpostavlja tudi za odnos med skladnostjo in vedenjem turistov, ko oglaševanje destinacije blažilno vpliva na ta odnos.

*O razmerju med skladnostjo jaza in izbiro destinacije*

Iz hipotez 3 do 6 izhaja, da idealna in družbeno idealna skladnost med posameznikom in oglasi pozitivno vpliva na izbiro destinacije; hipotezi 3 in 4 pravita, da idealna in družbeno idealna skladnost jaza vodi do večje pripravljenosti obiska destinacije, medtem ko hipotezi 5 in 6 predlagata, da idealna in družbeno idealna funkcionalna skladnost vodi do večje pripravljenosti obiska destinacije. Vse štiri omenjene hipoteze so bile testirane za skladnost po formuli za točkovanje vrzeli in z neposrednim merjenjem.

Rezultati kažejo, da ta študija potrjuje vse štiri hipoteze. Hipotezo 3 oz. »skladnost med idealno samopodobo in imidž oglasom (t.j. *skladnost jaza*) pozitivno vpliva na izbiro destinacije«, podatki podpirajo (0,424 pri p = 0,000 pri uporabi formule za točkovanje vrzeli in -0,491 pri p = 0,000 pri neposrednem merjenju). Podobno velja za hipotezo 4 oz. »skladnost med družbeno idealno samopodobo in imidž oglasom (t.j. *skladnost jaza*) pozitivno vpliva na izbiro destinacije«, kar podatki tudi potrjujejo (pri uporabi formule za točkovanje vrzeli je rezultat 0,416 pri p = 0,000, pri neposrednem merjenju pa -0,485 pri p = 0,000). Hipoteza 5 oz. »skladnost med idealno samopodobo in funkcionalnim oglasom (t.j. *funkcionalna skladnost*) pozitivno vpliva na izbiro destinacije«, je potrjena (pri uporabi formule za točkovanje vrzeli je rezultat 0,4547 pri p = 0,000, pri neposrednem merjenju pa -0,484 pri p = 0,000). Tudi hipoteza 6 oziroma »skladnost med družbeno idealno samopodobo in funkcionalnim oglasom (t.j. *funkcionalna skladnost*) pozitivno vpliva na izbiro destinacije«, je potrjena (pri uporabi formule za točkovanje vrzeli je rezultat 0,549 pri p = 0,000, pri neposrednem merjenju pa -0,494 pri p = 0,000). Ti rezultati ustrezajo ugotovitvam avtorjev Sirgy in Su (2000), Hung in Petrick (2011) ter Ahn in drugi (2013), da obe, tako skladnost jaza, kot tudi funkcionalna skladnost, vplivata na posameznikovo izbiro destinacije.

Natančneje, dokazano je, da idealna in družbeno idealna skladnost napovedujeta posameznikovo izbiro destinacije in ti izsledki utemeljujejo poziv Hunga in Petricka (2011) po vključitvi idealne in družbeno idealne skladnosti v raziskave o izbiri destinacije, da se raziskave prenehajo osredotočati le na dejansko in družbeno skladnost. Rezultati te študije kažejo, da idealna in družbeno idealna skladnost napoveduje tudi posameznikovo izbiro destinacije pri vseh merah skladnosti ter za oboje, tako funkcionalne, kot tudi imidž oglase. Neposredno ocenjevanje idealne skladnosti jaza je napovedalo 26,3 % izbire destinacij, formula za točkovanje vrzeli pa le 4,9 %. Podobno je neposredno ocenjevanje družbenega ideala skladnosti jaza napovedalo 25,2 % izbire destinacij v primerjavi z le 5 %, ki jih je napovedala uporaba formule za točkovanje vrzeli. Podobne rezultate da tudi analiza funkcionalne skladnosti, kjer je neposredna ocena funkcionalne skladnosti napovedala 24,8 % in 25 % izbire destinacije, medtem ko je matematičen izračun funkcionalne skladnosti napovedal le 8,4 % in 8,5 %. Ti rezultati so skladni z ugotovitvami Sirgyj in drugi (1997), da so neposredne meritve skladnosti boljše pri napovedovanju izbire destinacije kot formula za točkovanje vrzeli.

Rezultati testiranja zgornjih hipotez kažejo, da ima pri izbiri destinacije skladnost jaza večjo napovedno moč kot funkcionalna skladnost. Pri idealni skladnosti so rezultati pokazali 0,424 < 0,547 pri p = 0,000 ob uporabi formule za točkovanje vrzeli ter 0,491 < -0,484 pri p = 0,000 pri neposrednem merjenju. Pri večjem ujemanju med idealnim obiskovalcem destinacije in posameznikovim idealnim jazom so tisti, ki sprejemajo odločitev, izpostavljeni manjšemu tveganju za napačno odločitev, če se odločijo obiskati dotično destinacijo. Pri družbeno idealni skladnosti jaza so rezultati pokazali 0,416 < 0,547 pri p = 0,000 pri neposrednem merjenju, kar pomeni, da večje ujemanje med idealnim obiskovalcem destinacije in posameznikovim idealnim družbenim jazom vodi do manjšega tveganja odločevalca, da sprejme napačno odločitev, če se odloči obiskati destinacijo. Ti rezultati povsem sovpadajo z rezultati Hung in Petrick (2011), ki sta pokazala, da ima funkcionalna skladnost manjšo napovedno moč o posameznikovi izbiri destinacije, kot skladnost jaza.

Zgornje ugotovitve podpirajo vključitev oglaševanja destinacij v prihodnje študije skladnosti jaza v turizmu, saj je bil potrjen vpliv oglaševanja destinacije na ujemanje med tem, kako bi posamezniki radi videli same sebe, tem, kako bi radi, da jih vidijo drugi in tem, kako ocenjujejo tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije, ko je ta vključen v oglaševanje ali pa ne.

Pokazano je bilo tudi, da se tveganje, da posameznik pri izbiri destinacije sprejme napačno odločitev, zmanjša, ko je prisotno ujemanje med idealnim obiskovalcem destinacije prikazanim v oglasu ter posameznikovim idealnim in družbeno idealnim jazom.

*O odnosu med skladnostjo jaza in iskanjem informacij*

Hipoteze 7 do 10 so bile razvite za testiranje odnosa med idealno ter družbeno idealno skladnostjo in iskanjem informacij v povezavi z oglaševanjem destinacije. Hipotezi 7 in 8 pravita, da idealna in družbeno idealna skladnost jaza zmanjšuje posameznikovo iskanje informacij, hipotezi 9 in 10 pa, da idealna in družbeno idealna funkcionalna skladnost povečuje posameznikovo iskanje informacij. Vse štiri hipoteze so bile testirane za skladnost pridobljeno z uporabo formule za točkovanje vrzeli in z neposrednim merjenjem.

Rezultati testiranja teh štirih hipotez so mešani. Hipotezo 7 oz. »skladnost med idealno samopodobo in imidž oglasom (t.j. *skladnost jaza ali skladnost samopodobe*) zmanjša iskanje informacij« je bila ob uporabi formule za točkovanje vrzeli potrjena (0,306 pri p = 0,000), medtem ko hipoteza pri neposrednem merjenju skladnosti ni bila potrjena (0,122 pri p = 0,005). Podobno velja za hipotezo 8 oz. »skladnost med družbeno idealno samopodobo in imidž oglasom (t.j. *imidž skladnost jaza*) zmanjša iskanje informacij«, ki je bila potrjena ob uporabi formule za točkovanje vrzeli (-0,226 pri p = 0,007), a ne tudi pri neposrednem merjenju skladnosti (0,131 pri p = 0,003).

Nasprotno velja za hipotezo 9 oz. »skladnost med idealno samopodobo in funkcionalnim oglasom (t.j. *funkcionalna skladnost*) poveča iskanje informacij«, ki jo je rezultat uporabe neposrednega merjenja skladnosti potrdil (0,213 pri p = 0,000), formula za točkovanje vrzeli pa ne (-0,243 pri p = 0,004). Hipoteza 10 oz. »skladnost med družbeno idealno samopodobo in funkcionalnim oglasom (t.j. *funkcionalna skladnost*) poveča iskanje informacij« je bila tudi potrjena ob uporabi neposredne meritve skladnosti (0,208 pri p = 0,000), a ne ob uporabi formule za točkovanje vrzeli (-0,177 pri p = 0,037).

Ob takih mešanih rezultatih, kjer je bila hipoteza sprejeta ob uporabi enega pristopa merjenja skladnosti, a ne tudi ob uporabi drugega, lahko zaključimo, da so hipoteze 7-10 le delno potrjene, kljub temu pa se je pokazalo, da idealna in družbeno idealna skladnost vpliva na iskanje informacij. Vrednost napovedanega iskanja informacij pri obeh pristopih merjenja ni

bila višja od 4,8 %, kar kaže na šibko povezavo med skladnostjo in procesom iskanja eksternih informacij. Posledično to pomeni tudi manj iskanja zunanjih informacij, če je ujemanje med tipičnim obiskovalcem destinacije in posameznikovim jazom prisotno. Ne glede na to, izsledki te raziskave podpirajo predlog o vključitvi oglaševanja destinacije v prihodnje raziskave o skladnosti jaza v turizmu. Pokazano je bilo, da oglaševanje destinacije vpliva na ujemanje med tem, kako bi posamezniki radi videli same sebe, tem, kako bi radi, da jih vidijo drugi in tem, kako ocenjujejo tipičnega obiskovalca destinacije glede na njegovo prisotnost ali odsotnost v oglasu. Rezultati so pokazali, da oglaševanje destinacije zmanjša posameznikovo iskanje informacij v zunanjem okolju, hkrati pa tudi podpirajo stališče, da bi morala biti idealna in družbeno idealna skladnost upoštevana ob raziskovanju stopnje posameznikovega iskanja informacij, namesto, da se raziskovanje osredotoča le na aktualno in družbeno skladnost.

Rezultati sovpadajo z rezultati Bosnjaka (2010), ki je zagovarjal tezo, da funkcionalna skladnost neposredno vpliva na namero iskanja zunanjih informacij. En izmed boljših načinov povečanja posameznikove potrebe po več informacijah o turistični destinaciji je z vključitvijo več funkcionalnih značilnosti destinacije v oglaševalsko sporočilo. Ta študija je pokazala, da je iskanje večje količine informacij o turistični destinaciji bolj verjetno, če imajo ljudje občutek, da funkcionalne značilnosti destinacije prikazujejo način, kako bi radi videli sami sebe ob preživljanju poletnih počitnic, ali kako želijo, da jih vidijo drugi.

*Odgovori na tretje raziskovalno vprašanje*

Tretje raziskovalno vprašanje je obravnavalo pomanjkanje vrednotenja napovedne moči dveh mer skladnosti glede na oglaševanje destinacije. Dva merska pristopa k merjenju skladnosti jaza sta formula z točkovanjem vrzeli in neposredno merjenje. Sirgy in drugi (1997) so zagovarjali stališče, da je neposredno merjenje boljši napovedovalec vedenja potrošnikov kot formula s točkovanjem vrzeli in na podlagi tega je bila v tej študiji oblikovana hipoteza, da bo med pristopoma napovedovanja izbire destinacije glede na oglaševanje destinacije prisotna statistično značilna razlika. Posledično je bila hipoteza 11 razvita kot: »Obstaja statistično značilna razlika pri tem, kako mere skladnosti jaza glede na oglaševanje destinacije napovejo izbiro destinacije.«

Rezultati regresijske analize, v kateri je bila izbira destinacije odvisna spremenljivka, so potrdili hipotezo ter pokazali, da neposredno merjenje pozitivno in statistično bolj verjetno predvidi izbiro destinacije, kljub temu pa rezultati uporabe formule za točkovanje vrzeli niso bili statistično neznačilni glede vplivanja na posameznikovo izbiro destinacije, če sta bila oba merska pristopa vnesena v isto enačbo. Podobno kot Sirgy in drugi (1997) lahko zaključimo, da neposredno merjenje zagotavlja bolj celovit pristop k merjenju skladnosti jaza, hkrati pa tudi ni omejeno s vnaprej določenimi osebnostnimi lastnostmi. Pristop neposrednega merjenja zmanjša raziskovalno pristranskost uporabe nerelevantnih osebnostnih značilnosti in temu v izogib ta študija zagovarja stališče, da se pristop neposrednega merjenja uporabi pri ocenjevanju stopnje ujemanja posameznikovega jaza z vsebino oglasov o destinaciji.

## ZAKLJUČEK

Ta raziskava je podala številne odgovore na raziskovalna vprašanja povezana z raziskovanjem skladnosti jaza in vedenja povezanega s turizmom, ki so jih izpostavili raziskovalci s področja prostega časa in turizma. Obstaja več pomembnih teoretičnih prispevkov te študije. Prvič, ta študija poudarja, da je potrebno proces odločanja razumeti s stališča potrošnika in posledično je potrebno sprejeti proces odločanja ter razumeti pripadajoče notranje in zunanje dejavnike na način, kakor jim potrošnik pripiše subjektivni pomen. V ta namen je podan predlog uporabe Webrove teorije družbenega delovanja, ki nudi teoretično osnovo za prihodnje raziskovanje vedenja potrošnikov, pri katerem je potrošnik ponovno postavljen v ospredje odločitvenega procesa. Nadalje je v študiji tudi zastopano stališče, da bodo raziskovalci turizma in marketinga z uporabo Webrove teorije delovanja zmožni globje analizirati zakaj in kdaj so notranji in zunanji vplivi učinkoviti pri spreminjanju vedenja potrošnikov. Drugič, ta študija operacionalizira koncept vpletenosti v koncept turizma, saj ponudi teoretični okvir za vsako izmed štirih vrst vpletenosti in jih tudi testira glede na vedenje povezano s turizmom. Tretjič, ta raziskava je pokazala, da oglaševanje destinacije vpliva na uporabnikovo percepcijo imidža turistične destinacije ter dejstvo, da je do 60 % ujemanja med oglaševanjem destinacije in tem, kako posamezniki želijo videti sami sebe oziroma kako želijo, da jih vidijo drugi, kar kaže na pomembnost vključitve oglaševanja v prihodnje raziskave skladnosti jaza. Do sedaj je bilo oglaševanje v teoriji skladnosti jaza tako v marketinški, kot tudi v turistični literaturi, večinoma zapostavljeno. Obstoječe raziskave niso dajale poudarka na vlogo oglaševanja pri vedenju povezanim s turizmom, ta študija pa to spreminja, saj raziskuje vlogo oglaševanja destinacije in skladnosti jaza pri izbiri turistične destinacije in iskanju informacij.

Dodatna vrednost te študije je tudi v tem, da pripomore k akademski debati o prednostih in slabostih dveh pristopov merjenja skladnosti jaza (t.j. formule točkovanja vrzeli ter neposrednega merjenja), saj je bilo dokazano, da je metoda neposrednega merjenja bolj zanesljivo orodje, ki celovito zajame skladnost jaza glede na oglaševanje destinacije.

Poleg teoretičnih prispevkov ta študija ponuja tudi praktične implikacije za tržnike, predvsem tiste v turizmu in hotelirstvu, saj na vprašanje kako vplivati na izbiro turistične destinacije ponuja odgovor, da je možno turistično destinacijo obstoječim potencialnim novim kupcem približati z ustreznimi vizualnimi oglasnimi sporočili. Ključne praktične prispevke je mogoče razdeliti na dva dela; s stališča upravljanja turističnih destinacij je pomembno poudariti, da potencialni in obstoječi obiskovalci sami sebe osebno povezujejo z tržno znamko destinacije. Ta študija je pokazala, da je značilnost tržne znamke destinacije ocenjena s stališča predstave o uporabniku, torej tistega, ki naj bi bil tipičen obiskovalec destinacije. Ker je imidž obiskovalcev razvit skozi marketinško komunikacijo, je pomembno, da so tipični predstavniki obiskovalcev destinacije prisotni v vizualnih oglasnih sporočilih. Ravno tako je pomembno, da so skrbno izbrane osebnostne značilnosti tržne znamke destinacije ustrezno predstavljene skozi tipične predstavnike vključene v oglaševanje destinacije. Rezultati so pokazali, da je ujemanje turistov s turističnimi destinacijami lahko izboljšano, če so osebnostne lastnosti, ki jih izraža tipični predstavnik, podobne osebnostnim lastnostim (potencialnih) turistov in posledično je v študiji predlagano, da tržniki najdejo načine za vključitev obstoječih in potencialnih turistov v znamčenje destinacije, predvsem, ko so lahko elementi blagovne znamke destinacije, kot npr. osebnost in imidž, identificirani in ustvarjeni.

Rezultati kažejo tudi, da se bodo turisti, če uskladijo način, na katerega želijo videti same sebe ter način, na katerega želijo, da jih vidijo ostali, z imidžem uporabnikov, počutili manj podvrženi tveganju napačne izbire turistične destinacije za naslednje potovanje. Dodatno, oglasi, ki prikazujejo tipičnega obiskovalca zmanjšajo tveganje ob nakupu bolj kot oglasi, ki prikazujejo funkcionalne značilnosti destinacije, četudi slednji stimulirajo gledalce za iskanje zunanjih informacij. Ti rezultati so pomembni za tržnike, ki skušajo ciljati na tiste brez izkušenj s turistično destinacijo, saj če imajo potencialni obiskovalci občutek, da se vizualno oglaševalsko sporočilo ujema z načinom, kako želijo, da jih vidijo drugi ali tem, kako obiskovalci želijo videti sami sebe, potem je bolj verjetno, da bodo zainteresirani v destinacijo. Glede na rezultate, študija priporoča, da se v vizualna oglasna sporočila vključi

tako funkcionalne značilnosti destinacije, kot tudi tipične obiskovalce destinacije, kar bo vodilo do ozaveščanja širše javnosti o turistični destinaciji in do ozaveščanja tistih posameznikov, ki se jim zdi, da tipični obiskovalci ne ustrezajo njihovi predstavi o preživljanju počitnic.