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# **Developing an Extended Model of Self-congruity to Predict Chinese Tourists' Revisit Intentions to New Zealand: The Moderating Role of Gender**

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study developed an extended model of self-congruity by integrating destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, revisit intention and gender.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Surveys were conducted with 645 Chinese tourists visiting New Zealand. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was performed to estimate linkages between destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, and revisit intention. To compare effects on revisit intention across male and female Chinese tourists, PLS-Henseler's multigroup analysis and PLS-permutation test were conducted to analyze gender as a moderator in the proposed framework.

**Findings** – Our results revealed positive direct effects among destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, and revisit intention. Our findings indicated a highly significant difference in the effects of destination personality on ideal self-congruity across male and female Chinese tourists. The association between destination image and self-congruity identified through this model represents a crucial contribution to the tourism literature. This study also enriches tourism research by comparing male and female Chinese tourists' intentions to revisit New Zealand, having identified crucial heterogeneity within female tourists.

**Practical implications** – The practical implications from our research can improve destination marketing organization (DMO) officials' awareness of one-time and repeat Chinese tourists' experiences, which strongly trigger subsequent visits.

**Originality/value** – This paper is the first to examine the direct correlations among destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, and revisit intention by considering whether gender might moderate these factors. Our study innovatively adopted PLS-SEM along with several advanced analytical approaches, such as multigroup analysis (MGA) of women and men, to examine our research model.

**Keywords:** Chinese tourist; New Zealand; PLS-multigroup analysis; theory of self-congruity; gender; destination image.

## **1.0 Introduction**

Self-congruity is indispensable to the evaluation of travel behaviour but presents challenges for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) given its key role in revisit intention (Sirgy & Su, 2000; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Chua et al., 2019; Tran et al., 2021). The theory of self-congruity maintains that tourists are likely to choose destinations whose personality attributes align with individuals' self-concept (i.e., their own personality) (Pan et al., 2017). For instance, people tend to select locations that reflect their social status, personality traits, and lifestyle (Ekinici et al., 2013). In most cases, travellers take time to determine whether a destination's personality suits their self-concept; some like to experience tourism products and services personally before evaluating their purchases. Although a plethora of studies (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Liu et al., 2012; Chen & Phou, 2013; Xie & Lee, 2013; Kumar, 2016; Chua et al., 2019; Gyulavári, & Malota, 2019; Yang, Isa, & Ramayah, 2020; Yang et al., 2020) have modelled the linkage among destination image, destination personality and self-congruity to predict revisit intention, an integrative model combining gender remains omitted from the tourism literature. Within tourism and hospitality research, gender has been identified as a critical determinant of such behaviour (Han et al., 2017; Jiang & Chen, 2019; Yang et al., 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021) compared with other demographic variables. Furthermore, the effects of gender can vary based on other characteristics (Fishcher & Arnold, 1994). However, no empirical examination has yet considered a model integrating destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, revisit intention, and gender-related factors among women and men. Differences in female and male tourists' perceptions of these constructs could uniquely influence their revisit intentions.

The objectives of this study are twofold. First, we sought to investigate the effects of destination image, destination personality, and self-congruity on revisit intention. Second, we examined the moderating role of gender within the proposed framework via multigroup analysis (MGA). Study results are expected to make three key contributions. First, theoretically, the integrative model could clarify possible correlations among these variables to enrich theory development. Second, from a managerial standpoint, the implications can improve DMO officials' awareness of one-time and repeat tourists' experiences, which might influence subsequent visits. Last, from a methodological perspective, we innovatively adopted partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) along with several advanced analytical approaches, such as multigroup analysis (MGA) of women and men, to examine our research model.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Destination image**

A destination's image consists of a series of impressions, ideas, expectations, and emotional reactions to that place (Assaker, 2014). This construct greatly affects individuals' decisions (Um & Crompton, 1990; Allameh et al., 2015). In tourism, theories of destination image have proposed that a location's image includes the cognitive and affective images people associate with a destination's characteristics (Chen & Uysal, 2002; Kim & Richardson, 2003). A destination's conative image is more idealized and can inspire a person to engage in self-development (Dann, 1996). These multiple components have been addressed by many tourism scholars (Kaur et al., 2016; Stylos et al., 2016; Fu, Ye, & Xiang, 2016). Studies have clearly described how destinations' cognitive, affective, and conative images explain individuals' travel behaviour (Hallmann et al., 2015). Although the cognitive and affective components of a destination have been found to predict its conative image (i.e., tourists' behavioural intentions) (Kani et al., 2017; Yang, Isa, & Ramayah, 2021a), the interrelationships among these components are unclear (Stylos et al., 2016). Attitude theory posits that cognition, affect, and conation are linked by a sequential cause-and-effect relationship (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Despite previous literature (Hallmann et al., 2015) showing that multiple components can clarify the effects of destination image on travel behaviour, these components can also be studied separately to capture their complexity (Li et al., 2010; Stylos et al., 2016). Destination image research varies in its foci; no consensus exists regarding destination attributes, and the measurement of destination image depends on scholars' objectives (Chaulagain et al., 2019). Cognitive destination image has been studied most frequently; for instance, psychological functional attributes ranging from cultural attractions, landscape/surroundings, nature, and entertainment and nightlife to shopping facilities (Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002) are commonly adopted (e.g., Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) to explain destination image. To disentangle the nuances of destination image, several tourism scholars have conceptualized the construct as unidimensional, such as by focusing on cognitive image (Jalilvand et al., 2012; Chen & Phou, 2013; Isa, & Ramli, 2014; Souiden et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2018; Jeong, & Kim, 2019).

Available empirical evidence explored the effect between destination image and destination personality (Hosany et al., 2006) However, destination personality must be differentiated from destination image (Kim et al., 2018), as these are distinct but related constructs (Hosany et al.,

2006). From a theoretical point of view, destination image refers to tourists' beliefs and knowledge about a destination (Bagozzi, 1978) and can help them discern a destination's personality (Xie & Lee, 2013). However, the connection between destination image and destination personality remains largely ambiguous (Souiden et al., 2017). More importantly, destination image and destination personality are often examined separately; only a few studies have empirically investigated these topics simultaneously to unravel their interrelationship (Chen & Phou, 2013; Souiden et al., 2017). More empirical testing is needed, hence the below hypothesis:

H1: Destination image has a positive influence on destination personality.

## **2.2 Self-congruity**

The theoretical underpinnings of self-congruity originated from the theory of self-concept. The terms "self-image" and "self-congruence" are often used interchangeably (Matzler et al., 2016). The theory of self-congruity speaks to the cognitive consistency between consumers' self-concept and a product/service or brand image (Sirgy et al., 1997; Sirgy & Su, 2000). This theory is rooted in social psychology, suggesting that consumers' personalities can be partly identified based on the products, services, and brands they choose (Ross, 1971).

Although the theory of self-congruity implies that products, suppliers, and services possess a personal image just as people do (Sirgy, 1982), this theory has been described in various ways within the social sciences (Luna-Cortés et al., 2019). Sirgy (1982) suggested the prospect of multiple selves and outlined four facets of one's self-concept: the actual self, ideal self, social self, and ideal social self. In the marketing and consumer behaviour literature, researchers have viewed these facets as multidimensional constructs (Sirgy et al., 2000; Shamah et al., 2018). Actual self-congruity reflects how consumers view themselves, ideal self-congruity refers to how consumers wish to view themselves, social self-congruity indicates how consumers believe others view them, and ideal social self-congruity captures how consumers wish to be viewed by others. Among these aspects, most studies have only operationalized the actual and ideal dimensions (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Abel, Buff, & O'Neill, 2013; Yang et al., 2020; Yang, Isa, & Ramayah, 2020; 2021b). In line with this research stream, the current paper considers self-congruity on the basis of the actual and ideal dimensions (e.g., Hosany & Martin, 2012). As stated by Ekinici and Riley (2003) pointed out, it is plausible to address actual and ideal self-congruity together, as both belong to the personal dimension of self-concept. The

social dimension of self-concept (i.e., the social self) is closely associated with actual ideal self-congruity (i.e., personal dimension) (Ekinici & Riley, 2003).

Furthermore, destination personality and self-congruity represent two key cognitive variables in destination marketing. Destination personality encompasses the set of human personality traits tied to a destination (Ekinici & Honsay, 2006), whereas self-congruity reflects the fit between tourists' self-concept and a destination's personality (Chua et al., 2019; Yang, Isa, & Ramayah, 2021b). Although self-congruity includes four dimensions (i.e., the actual, ideal, social, and ideal social self), we focused on actual and ideal self-congruity because these dimensions have been thoroughly empirically investigated and are common in related research (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy et al., 1997; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Therefore, the cognitive stage of our model consisted of destination personality and self-congruity. Aaker (1999) discovered that consumers prefer brands whose personalities are similar to their own. In tourism contexts, a destination's brand personality has been found to differentiate regional travel. Better self-congruity ratings also appear to be related to better destination personality ratings (Chua et al., 2019). We therefore hypothesize the following:

H2: Destination personality has a positive influence on actual self-congruity.

H3: Destination personality has a positive influence on ideal self-congruity.

In destination marketing, most relevant research has applied self-congruity to forecast behavioural intention, especially consumers' purchase intentions (Das, 2015; Das & Khatwani, 2018). One's purchase intentions generally depend on their self-concept. Other scholars have identified a direct effect between self-congruity and customer loyalty in contexts such as the retail industry (Das, 2015) and fast food industry (Shamah et al., 2018). Regarding tourists' loyalty towards a destination, Liu et al. (2019) and Kim and Malek (2017) found self-congruity to strongly influence tourists' behavioural loyalty. This empirical evidence informs the following hypotheses:

H4: Actual self-congruity has a positive influence on revisit intention.

H5: Ideal self-congruity has a positive influence on revisit intention.

### **2.3 Conceptualizing gender**

An overarching theory has revealed that women's and men's decision-making processes and behaviour vary (Eagly & Wood, 1991). Gender role theory posits that men are more courageous and self-dependent, whereas women are more likely to abide by social mores, express themselves emotionally, and show empathy for others (Zhang et al., 2017). Gender affects all aspects of decision making and behaviour (Riquelme & Rios, 2010).

In studies of travel behaviour, gender has been identified as a prime determinant of destination choices and future purchases (Wang et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020). Compared with research on other demographic factors (i.e., educational background, income level, marital status, or religion), gender is readily observable in investigations of how this construct shapes travellers' decisions (Han et al., 2017). However, gender-specific tourism research is limited because many studies assume that most tourists are men (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Yet gender is important to consider in destination market segmentation. Studies have shown that gender informs traveller segmentation in domains such as sex tourism (Wen et al., 2020), girlfriend getaways (Chen & Mak, 2020), solo female travellers (Karagöz et al., 2020), and Asian female travellers (Yang et al., 2018). Even so, few studies have considered gender differences in terms of entertainment, travel patterns, and travel and experience preferences (Pung et al., 2019). Gender, as a social and psychological concept, is thus likely to exert a moderating effect on certain social psychological mechanisms driving tourists' behaviour (Huang & van der Veen, 2019).

### **2.4 The moderating role of gender**

In this study, gender is taken as a categorical variable and is expected to moderate the effects of constructs in the proposed framework (i.e., destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, and revisit intention). Studies have pinpointed discrepancies in perceived destination image based on gender. For instance, in the case of a Spanish destination, female tourists rated cultural/natural resources and leisure infrastructure significantly more highly than men did (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Scholars have repeatedly emphasized the role of personality in depicting destinations (Kumar & Nayak, 2018; Pan et al., 2017) versus alternative types of brand masculinity. The roles that masculine and feminine dimensions play in destination perceptions thus warrant further investigation (Pan et al., 2021). Šagovnović and Kovačić (2020) postulated that female and male tourists would perceive a destination's personality differently. According to gender schema theory, gender is a superficial feature that is highly



indicative of personal attractiveness and is central to one's self-concept (Bem, 1981). Researchers have validated a self-congruity scale that includes actual gender congruity and ideal gender congruity (Pan et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2021). Women may be more likely than men to self-assess their physical appearance (Jones, 2011). Furthermore, gender-based explorations in hospitality have shown that women are more inclined than men to revisit a particular restaurant and that each gender's dining experience varies (Han & Ryu, 2007). Gender is therefore anticipated to greatly affect destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, and travel behaviour.

The tourism literature contains several studies on the moderating effect of gender on destination image and destination personality (Kim et al., 2018), destination personality and self-congruity (Moons et al., 2020), and self-congruity and revisit intention (Yang et al., 2020). Even so, gender has not been considered as a moderator among destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, and revisit intention within a single study. The relationships among these constructs are expected to vary by gender as postulated below:

H6: Gender moderates all relationships among variables in the research model.

H6a: The positive relationship between destination image and destination personality is stronger for female Chinese tourists than for male Chinese tourists.

H6b: The positive relationship between destination personality and actual self-congruity is stronger for female Chinese tourists than for male Chinese tourists.

H6c: The positive relationship between destination personality and ideal self-congruity is stronger for female Chinese tourists than for male Chinese tourists.

H6d: The positive relationship between actual self-congruity and revisit intention is stronger for female Chinese tourists than for male Chinese tourists.

H6e: The positive relationship between ideal self-congruity and revisit intention is stronger for female Chinese tourists than for male Chinese tourists.

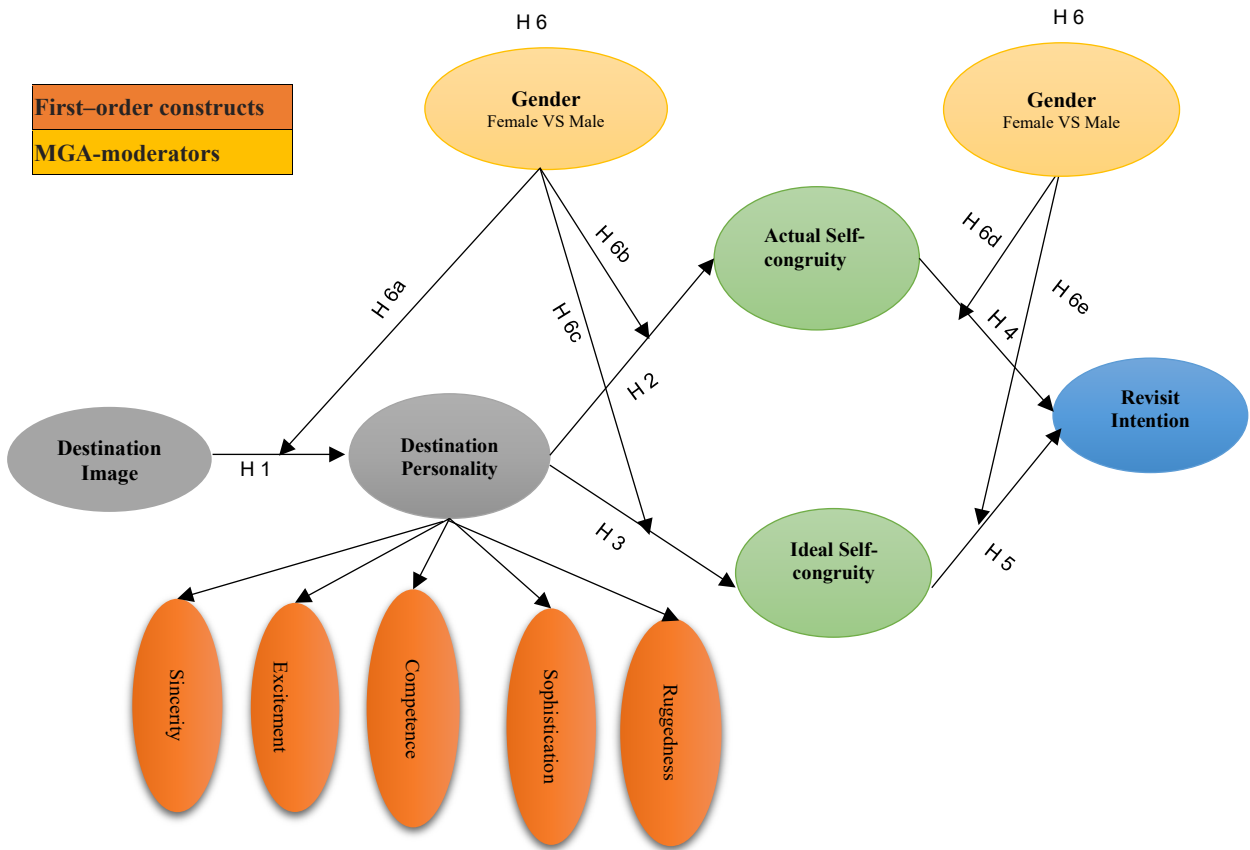


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

### 3.0 Methodology

#### 3.1 Study site and context

New Zealand (Maori: *Aotearoa*) is a small developed nation in the South Pacific Ocean and is home to roughly five million people. The country continues to welcome a growing number of international tourists to enjoy its sun, sand, wildlife, and adventure activities (World Journey, 2021). Tourism in New Zealand accounts for about \$16.2 billion of its gross domestic product (Tourism New Zealand, 2019). The island has been named the “land of long white clouds,” a slogan incorporated into marketing campaign to promote the destination to Chinese tourists. This effort has drawn a large number of Chinese visitors to the country (Tourism New Zealand, 2017): more than 50,900 Chinese tourists have come to New Zealand, representing its largest tourist market by nationality (Statistic New Zealand, 2019). Regarding what the Chinese find

appealing about New Zealand, Ryan and Mo (2002) cited the country's natural scenery and green, unpolluted environment. These attributes allow travellers to escape their busy lives, relax, and pursue adventure.

DMOs in New Zealand have successfully marketed to Chinese tourists. However, promoting these tourists' revisit intentions is equally as important to the country's sustainable tourism development. Attracting repeat tourists can also benefit DMOs' implementation of cost-effective marketing strategies (Yang, Isa, & Ramayah, 2020). Therefore, this study explored the antecedents of Chinese tourists' revisit intentions to offer insight for DMOs in New Zealand to attract repeat Chinese tourists.

### **3.2 Measurement**

A quantitative design was employed to assess the research model. A two-part survey was developed to gather primary data. The first section included questions related to respondents' demographics (gender, age, marital status, education level, and household income). The second part covered the four variables of interest in this study: destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, and revisit intention. Five items on destination image were adapted from Jalilvand et al. (2012). Six items on self-congruity (including dimensions of the actual and ideal self) were taken from Usakli and Baloglu (2011) and Kumar (2016). Three items pertaining to revisit intention were adopted from Yang et al. (2020).

Destination personality included five dimensions with 15 items adapted from Chua et al. (2019) and Huaman-Ramirez et al. (2021). Although destination personality has been framed as a multidimensional construct (Huaman-Ramirez et al., 2021), Hair et al. (2014) indicated that constructs can be modelled as second-order factors to reduce the number of hypotheses in a structural model and make a PLS structural model more parsimonious. In accordance with Ringle, Sarstedt, and Straub's (2012) guidelines on second-order constructs, destination personality was conceptualized in this study as a reflective–reflective second-order construct (i.e., considering first- and second-order relationships to be reflective). Fifteen items representing five interrelated first-order constructs – *sincerity*, *excitement*, *competence*, *sophistication*, and *ruggedness* – corresponded to a higher-order factor of destination personality.

Due to the nature of our sample (Chinese tourists whose first language was Chinese), a bilingual Chinese–English questionnaire was developed. The original questionnaire was translated into Chinese by members of our research team who were proficient in both languages. Back-translation was adopted to ensure accuracy (Brislin, 1970; Ye et al., 2020). The team members interviewed three tourism academics, and the phrasing of several questionnaire items was revised based on experts’ feedback.

### **3.3 Sample and data collection**

A cross-sectional survey was conducted with Chinese tourists from several New Zealand cities (i.e., Auckland, Hamilton, and Rotorua). Although focusing on one nation can limit results’ generalizability, a cross-sectional survey is the most established research design that constrains plausible explanations for the dependent variable (Huaman-Ramirez et al., 2021). We employed non-probability (judgemental) sampling to identify potential respondents. Specifically, the main investigator flew to New Zealand to collect data between September and December 2019. The main investigator personally interacted with potential respondents before conducting the official survey (e.g., asking about possible respondents’ nationality/residency status, visa type, and length of stay). These questions guaranteed a qualified sample. Eligible Chinese tourists were then invited to complete the questionnaire in person. The main researcher was available to explain survey items if respondents had questions while completing the survey. In total, 660 questionnaires were distributed, and 645 were retained for analysis. However, 15 surveys were discarded due to incomplete responses. A sample size between 200 and 500 is generally considered suitable for multivariate data analysis (Hair et al., 2009). Several tour leaders and the general manager of Deer Museum in Rotorua, New Zealand assisted with the survey distribution; as such, the effective response rate was quite high (98.1%).

Table 1 summarizes respondents’ demographic profile by gender, age, marital status, income, and education level. Slightly more than one-third (36.7%) of Chinese tourists in our sample were men, and 63.3% were women. Respondents fell into five age groups: below age 25 (49.1%), 25–35 (26.7%), 36–45 (13.2%), 46–55 (8.2%), and age 55 and above (2.8%). Young Chinese tourists thus appeared more eager to visit New Zealand. Most respondents were either single (65%) or married (29.8%), suggesting that single Chinese tourists were more interested in visiting New Zealand. Regarding monthly household income, about one-quarter (24.8%) of respondents earned 10001–20000 RMB; 40% earned more than 20000 RMB. Our sample

appeared to be aware of New Zealand travel requirements: to obtain a visitor visa, Chinese tourists must present strong financial means and a clear budget/travel plan to an immigration officer. In terms of respondents' education level, most tourists in our sample held either a bachelor's degree (54.4%) or a master's degree (16.7%).

Table 1 Demographic Profile

<b>Demographic factor</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	237	36.7
	Female	408	63.3
<b>Age</b>	Below 25 years old	317	49.1
	25–35 years old	172	26.7
	36–45 years old	85	13.2
	46–55 years old	53	8.2
	Older than 55 years old	18	2.8
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	192	29.8
	Single	421	65.3
	Divorced	24	3.7
	Widow	7	1.1
	Widower	1	0.2
<b>Monthly household income</b>	Less than 5000 RMB	117	18.1
	5000–10000 RMB	110	17.1
	10001–20000 RMB	160	24.8
	More than 20000 RMB	258	40
<b>Education level</b>	Postgraduate Level	153	23.6
	Undergraduate Level	417	64.6
	Secondary Level	70	10.9
	Other	5	0.8

### 3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis involved two phases: (1) testing the associations among variables using a conceptual model and (2) conducting MGA. We adopted PLS-SEM to analyze the hypothesized relationships and evaluate the research model (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015). PLS-SEM is a nonparametric test intended to minimize the proportion of unexplained variance; this method uses the weighted components of indicator variables to improve reliability (Ringle et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2017). Following guidelines from the PLS-SEM handbook and related literature, we employed a two-step approach to data analysis (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019). We first evaluated our measurement model on the bases of inter-item reliability, convergent validity, and internal consistency. Then, we assessed the structural model to examine each hypothesis and assess its predictive power (Henseler et al., 2009).

PLS-SEM was also adopted in the second phase because nonparametric SEM approaches are well-suited to MGA (Hair et al., 2014; Henseler et al., 2016). To evaluate our model via PLS-SEM for female and male tourists, we evaluated the model (i.e., reliability and validity of reflective constructs). Then, two nonparametric approaches, Henseler’s MGA and a permutation test, were conducted (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Before proceeding to MGA, we evaluated measurement invariance using measurement invariance of composite (MICOM), a recent technique update to PLS-SEM.

### 3.5 Measurement model assessment

Table 2 shows that the CR value for each construct exceeded the benchmark of 0.7, suggesting satisfactory internal consistency (Hair et al., 2017). Convergent validity was also supported: factor loadings were between 0.66 and 0.98, and all AVE values surpassed the recommended 0.50 threshold (Hair et al., 2017). As our model included second-order constructs, we adopted a two-stage method to evaluate our measurement model (Sarstedt et al., 2019). The five focal dimensions, as latent variables, were transformed into five indicators of destination personality (see Table 2). All items displayed factor loadings of greater than 0.5 for their accompanying sub-scales. The CR and AVE values also surpassed 0.7 and 0.5, respectively, implying sufficient convergent validity of the second-order constructs. Destination personality was thus deemed a second-order reflective construct. In terms of discriminant validity, Table 3 reveals that the HTMT values were lower than the conservative threshold value of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). Discriminant validity was therefore established.

Table 2 Measurement Model

<b>1<sup>st</sup>-order construct</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup>-order construct</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b><math>\lambda</math></b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>CR</b>
Sincerity		DP1	0.85	0.69	0.90
		DP2	0.88		
		DP3	0.78		
		DP4	0.81		
		DP5	0.76		
Excitement		DP6	0.78	0.57	0.84
		DP7	0.78		
		DP8	0.68		
Competence		DP9	0.89	0.83	0.91
		DP10	0.93		
Sophistication		DP12	0.80	0.67	0.80
		DP13	0.83		
Ruggedness		DP14	0.68	0.69	0.81
		DP15	0.96		
		ASC1	0.91		

Actual self-congruity (ASC)		ASC2	0.93		
		ASC3	0.92		
Ideal self-congruity (ISC)		ISC1	0.89		
		ISC2	0.91	0.81	0.93
		ISC3	0.90		
		<i>Sincerity</i>	0.73		
		<i>Excitement</i>	0.81		
Destination personality (DP)	<i>Destination personality (DP)</i>	<i>Competence</i>	0.77	0.58	0.87
		<i>Sophistication</i>	0.80		
		<i>Ruggedness</i>	0.69		
		DI2	0.66		
Destination image (DI)		DI3	0.74		
		DI4	0.71	0.51	0.80
		DI5	0.74		
Revisit intention (RI)		RI1	0.91		
		RI2	0.94	0.86	0.95
		RI3	0.93		

$\lambda$ : loadings; AVE: average variance extracted; CR: composite reliability; DI1 was deleted (AVE<0.5); DP11 was deleted (HTMT >0.9)

Table 3 HTMT0.85

	ASC	COM	DI	EXC	ISC	RI	RUG	SIN	SOP
<b>ASC</b>									
<b>COM</b>	0.18								
<b>DI</b>	0.54	0.42							
<b>EXC</b>	0.3	0.71	0.43						
<b>ISC</b>	0.8	0.31	0.52	0.45					
<b>RI</b>	0.43	0.21	0.28	0.35	0.44				
<b>RUG</b>	0.17	0.58	0.28	0.63	0.31	0.31			
<b>SIN</b>	0.24	0.53	0.25	0.67	0.35	0.33	0.76		
<b>SOP</b>	0.49	0.85	0.68	0.81	0.58	0.4	0.76	0.6	

### 3.6 Structural model assessment

Before proceeding to PLS bootstrapping, the  $R^2$  value for each exogenous variable must be checked to identify the coefficient of determination (Hair et al., 2019). All variables'  $R^2$  values were above the desired 0.1 threshold (Hair et al., 2017). For instance, destination image accounted for 15% of the variance in destination personality. Destination personality explained for 10% of the variance in actual self-congruity and 18% of the variance in ideal self-congruity. Actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity each accounted for 18% of the variance in revisit intention. Additionally, to assess predictive power, Hair et al. (2017) and Hair et al. (2019) recommended that scholars conduct a blindfolding procedure to obtain Stone-Geisser's  $Q^2$  value and then evaluate the model's predictive relevance. All  $Q^2$  values in the current model were greater than zero ( $Q^2_{\text{Destination personality}} = 0.08$ ,  $Q^2_{\text{Actual self-congruity}} = 0.08$ ;  $Q^2_{\text{Ideal self-congruity}} = 0.15$ ;  $Q^2_{\text{Revisit intention}} = 0.15$ ), indicating an acceptable fit and satisfactory predictive relevance.

Next, we examined our hypothesis results via a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples; path coefficients, beta values, *t*-values, and *p*-values are listed in Table 4. Destination image exerted a positive and significant effect on destination personality ( $\beta = 0.39$ ,  $t = 11.28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); as such, H1 was supported. Destination personality highly positively influenced tourists' actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity ( $\beta_{\text{actual}} = 0.31$ ,  $t = 7.74$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $\beta_{\text{ideal}} = 0.43$ ,  $t = 11.75$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting H2 and H3. Finally, actual self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $t = 4.17$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and ideal self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $t = 4.34$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) were each positively and strongly related to revisit intention, lending support to H4 and H5.

Table 4 Path coefficients

Hypotheses	Beta Values	Standard Deviation	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	CILL	CIUL
DI -> DP	0.39	0.03	11.28	0.00***	0.33	0.44
DP-> ASC	0.31	0.04	7.74	0.00***	0.24	0.37
DP -> ISC	0.43	0.04	11.75	0.00***	0.36	0.48
ASC -> RI	0.22	0.05	4.17	0.00***	0.13	0.31
ISC -> RI	0.24	0.05	4.34	0.00***	0.14	0.32

Note: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; CILL: confidence interval lower limit; CIUL: confidence interval upper limit.

### 3.7 Moderator analysis (MGA)

Methodological scholars have stressed that measurement invariance must be checked prior to running MGA between two groups with SEM (Henseler et al., 2016). Whereas most approaches to evaluating measurement invariance assume common-factor models, PLS-SEM is a composite model whose latent variable scores are determined using a composite model algorithm (Henseler et al., 2016). Regarding the MICOM in MGA data, PLS-SEM is especially powerful (Henseler et al., 2016). In this study, we sought to compare a research model over two groups via a three-step approach: (1) configural invariance assessment; (2) compositional invariance assessment; (3) equal means and variances assessment (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). However, before performing these steps, researchers must assess their measurement model for each group (i.e., women and men in our case). Each group's factor loadings and CR and AVE values exceeded the benchmark value (see Appendix 1). Discriminant validity was also well established for each group based on HTMT values (see Appendix 2). We determined the partial measurement invariance (i.e., Steps 1 and 2) per group according to the MICOM procedure (see Table 5); doing so is critical when comparing and reporting group-specific differences in MGA (Henseler et al., 2016). The results of MICOM analysis met acceptable criteria in Step 3 (i.e., equal means and variance assessment; see Table 5). These outcomes were rare in prior



literature. The results of Step 3 showed that measurement invariance was fully established, reflecting the suitability of our data for MGA. Guidance from Henseler et al. (2016) indicated that we could combine the three groups of data (female tourists, male tourists, and both [i.e., composite]; see Appendices 1 and 2) to verify full measurement invariance.

Upon carrying out Henseler's MGA and the permutation test (see Table 6), we found a highly significant difference for the positive effect of destination personality on ideal self-congruity. The positive association between destination personality and ideal self-congruity was stronger for female tourists compared to male tourists. H6c was thus supported. However, we observed a non-significant difference among other path coefficients and relationships for female and male tourists; as such, H6a, H6b, H6d, and H6e were not supported. Finally, the two MGA applied in this study indicated the significance/non-significance of differences between female and male tourists, enhancing the robustness of our findings.

Table 5 Invariance Measurement Evaluation using Permutation

Constructs	Compositional Invariance			Partial Measurement Invariance established	Equal Mean assessment			Equal variance assessment			Full Measurement invariance established
	Configurational Invariance (Same algorithmic for Both groups)	C=1	CI		Differences	CI	Equal	Differences	CI	Equal	
ASC	Yes	1.00	[1.00, 1.00]	Yes	-0.08	[-0.16, 0.16]	Yes	-0.11	[-0.22, 0.20]	Yes	Yes
DI	Yes	0.98	[0.98, 1.00]	Yes	-0.01	[-0.16, 0.15]	Yes	-0.02	[-0.23, 0.24]	Yes	Yes
DP	Yes	1.00	[0.99, 1.00]	Yes	0.11	[-0.14, 0.14]	Yes	-0.09	[-0.28, 0.29]	Yes	Yes
ISC	Yes	1.00	[1.00, 1.00]	Yes	0.06	[-0.18, 0.15]	Yes	0.09	[-0.22, 0.26]	Yes	Yes
RI	Yes	1.00	[1.00, 1.00]	Yes	-0.07	[-0.16, 0.14]	Yes	0.01	[-0.21, 0.22]	Yes	Yes

Note: CI: confidence interval.

Table 6: Results of MGA hypothesis testing

Relationships	Path Coefficient			Confidence Interval			Path Coefficient Difference	p-value Difference (one-tailed test)		Supported
	Complete	Female	Male	Complete	Female	Male		Permutation	Henseler's MGA	
DI -> DP	0.38*	0.43*	0.32*	[0.32,0.44]	[0.35,0.49]	[0.26,0.43]	0.11	0.12	0.06	No/No
DP -> ASC	0.31*	0.35*	0.26*	[0.25,0.37]	[0.26,0.42]	[0.16,0.38]	0.09	0.31	0.15	No/No
DP -> ISC	0.43*	0.50*	0.28*	[0.36,0.47]	[0.43,0.56]	[0.18,0.39]	0.22	0.00	0.00	Yes/Yes
ASC -> RI	0.22*	0.26*	0.23*	[0.15,0.33]	[0.17,0.37]	[0.07,0.38]	0.04	0.74	0.38	No/No
ISC -> RI	0.25*	0.27*	0.11 <sup>NS</sup>	[0.13,0.31]	[0.16,0.38]	[-0.04, 0.27]	0.16	0.14	0.09	No/No

Note: In Henseler's MGA method, a p-value lower than 0.05 or higher than 0.95 indicates significant differences at the 5% level between the path coefficient across two groups. \* $p < 0.001$ ; NS: not significant

#### **4.0 Discussion and Conclusion**

This study involved the development of a theoretical and integrative model to inform advanced tourism marketing strategies. This study is the first of its kind to link between destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, revisit intention and gender. First, the path coefficients pointed to a direct positive and highly significant association between destination image and destination personality (H1). Scholars have also emphasized a connection between these two constructs (Chen & Phou, 2013; Souiden et al., 2017). Therefore, if Chinese tourists hold a more positive image of New Zealand, then they are more likely to perceive its destination personality. Further, these findings support those of earlier work (Ekinici & Hosany, 2006) revealing a cause-and-effect relationship between destination image and destination personality. In other words, Chinese tourists could have favourable impressions towards New Zealand and subsequently perceive its personality traits. The current results also partially accord with research conducted in Beijing, China with a sample of international tourists (Xie & Lee, 2013). Destination image thus appears interrelated with destination personality across distinct samples in separate destinations.

Second, as hypothesized (H2, H3, H4, H5), destination personality exerted a positive influence on self-congruity (actual and ideal), and self-congruity (i.e., actual and ideal) positively influenced revisit intention. These associations have been well documented in empirical tourism research (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Kumar, 2016; Kim & Malek, 2017; Chua et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020) and conceptual tourism papers (Yang, Isa, & Ramayah, 2020, 2021b). In terms of the impact of self-congruity on travel behaviour, a better fit between destination personality and self-congruity encourages revisit intention (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Liu et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020). Our findings further showed that self-congruity can predict Chinese tourists' intentions to revisit New Zealand. More specifically, a closer match between New Zealand's personality and Chinese tourists' own personalities should promote their interest in returning to the country. Our results confirm the applicability of the theory of self-congruity in New Zealand.

More importantly, we found that our integrated theoretical model highlighted gender as the moderator in explaining Chinese tourists' intentions to revisit New Zealand. The PLS-MGA results indicated a highly significant difference in destination personality's impacts on ideal self-congruity across female and male Chinese tourists (H6c). Destination personality strongly affected ideal congruity among female Chinese tourists; for male Chinese tourists, the

influence of destination personality on ideal self-congruity was slight. The theory of self-congruity integrates one's affective and cognitive understanding of who and what they are (Malär et al., 2011). Our findings implied that female Chinese tourists did not identify New Zealand as having a favourable destination personality which reflected their true selves (actual self-congruity) but did find New Zealand's personality to enhance their self-esteem (ideal self-congruity). This finding aligns with research attributing female heterogeneity to more complex gender-related factors such as self-concept/image (Khoo-Lattimore & Prayag, 2016). Overall, our results suggest that more gender-oriented studies are needed which focus on Chinese women to engender a clearer understanding of these tourists' cognition and emotions.

Surprisingly, our findings did not reveal any differences between female and male Chinese tourists' destination image, destination personality, actual self-congruity, and revisit intentions (H6a, H6b, H6d, H6e). These results are consistent with prior studies in contexts such as South Korea, the UK, and Belgium (Kim et al., 2018; Moons et al, 2020; Yang et al., 2020). In sum, gender did not moderate the proposed framework in this study except for the variables of destination personality and ideal self-congruity. However, our unexpected findings also partially contrast with previous tourism research indicating that female and male tourists have different destination perceptions (Pan et al., 2021). Similarly, hospitality scholars have suggested that female guests are more inclined than men to revisit a restaurant for dining (Han & Ryu, 2007). The studies' varied research settings or sample characteristics may have led to associated inconsistencies in results.

#### **4.1 Theoretical contributions**

The present study made theoretical contributions to tourism literature. First, despite previous tourism literature has explored factors affecting revisit intention through the theory of self-congruity (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Liu et al., 2012; Chua et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020), destination image has been less incorporated into self-congruity models in tourism, especially regarding Chinese tourists' intentions to revisit New Zealand. Hence, the current study extended Usakli and Baloglu's (2011) model by confirming the correlations between destination image, destination personality, self-congruity and revisit intention.

Second, no empirical study apart from this one has investigated an integrated theoretical model encompassing destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, gender, and revisit intention. Our primary contribution involves identifying the moderating role of gender (as a

categorical variable) in this holistic framework. Although gender has been found to moderate revisit intention in several tourism studies (Kim et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2020), prior research involved separate models. By filling this gap, our work represents the first effort to empirically examine the proposed model in the tourism literature. Interestingly, the non-significant moderating effect of gender as the categorical variable did not contribute to the proposed framework (H6a, H6b, H6d, H6e). Yet our other results revealed that gender moderated New Zealand's destination personality and tourists' ideal self-congruity (H6c). We therefore found support for the self-congruity construct when comparing female and male Chinese tourists.

Third, the current study was conducted with female and male Chinese tourists in New Zealand. This country represents an emerging study setting that has been mostly neglected, particularly in applications of Henseler's MGA and the permutation test, with the exception of a few tourism studies (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2007; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Two groups of data were thus employed to cross-validate our conclusions. Through this technique, our study adds methodological value to the tourism literature.

#### **4.2 Practical contributions**

Besides advancing existing research by presenting an integrated model, this study provides valuable insight for tourism stakeholders such as DMOs and tourism policymakers in New Zealand. Identifying the factors that increase Chinese tourists' intentions of returning to a destination is crucial in helping DMOs and policymakers sustainably develop the Chinese tourist market and, in this case, in highlighting New Zealand as a prime travel destination.

Practically, this study's contributions will greatly affect New Zealand's economic growth and competitiveness via tourism. For instance, findings can shape key guidelines for DMOs in devising effective marketing strategies. The constructs of destination image, destination personality, and self-congruity each need to be stressed at a promotional level. Tourism marketers should capitalize on New Zealand's destination image to distinguish it from competitors. The country's beautiful scenery, natural attractions, pleasant climate, and general safety should be emphasized in marketing campaigns. Such messaging would highlight the positive image of New Zealand as a tourism destination. The slogan "*land of long white clouds*" has already contributed to the nation's image. The reality program *Where are We Going, Dad?* has also cast New Zealand in a positive light and expanded its Chinese tourism. Therefore,

destination marketers should leverage the country's compelling properties to promote it in China.

Our study also discovered that greater congruence between New Zealand's destination personality and Chinese tourists' personalities made these travellers more likely to return. Specific destination personality traits in New Zealand, such as sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, appeared unique to the Chinese market (e.g., down-to-earth, charming, outdoorsy). These dimensions afforded Chinese tourists an opportunity to connect with New Zealand and feel at ease and at home, potentially persuading them to return in the future. DMOs should therefore conduct market research on Chinese tourists' personality traits before engaging in promotion. Doing so could foster a strong match between New Zealand as a potential destination and Chinese tourists. Chinese travellers may revisit New Zealand frequently because they find its destination personality similar to their own.

Moreover, the current study is the first to notify DMOs that gender differences in this model cannot be overlooked. In terms of gender, female Chinese tourists in particular appeared to perceive New Zealand's personality as reflecting how they wish to be. Given the distinctions between female and male Chinese tourists, strategic planners can tailor their marketing methods to respectively promote female and male Chinese tourists' revisit intentions. It is crucial for DMOs to highlight personality traits that match the self-concept of female Chinese tourists. The ideal self-congruity of New Zealand personality traits and target female tourists' personality traits could be enhanced through advertisements and other promotions. For instance, advertising agencies could create campaigns framing New Zealand destinations as sincere, exciting, competent, sophisticated, and rugged, as Chinese women want to possess these types of traits. New Zealand's tourism industry could then attract a sustainable number of Chinese female visitors, including repeat tourists, based on this appealing destination personality.

#### **4.3 Limitations and future research**

Although our work is novel, as with any study, limitations exist. First, we only examined the direct relationships among destination image, destination personality, self-congruity, and revisit intention. To advance our model, indirect effects (i.e., mediators and serial mediators) should be investigated in future research. Findings would offer a more comprehensive view of

revisit intention. Second, we took self-congruity as the main construct to predict revisit intention by comparing female and male Chinese tourists. To promote a clearer understanding of the theory of self-congruity, we recommend that similar comparative studies be conducted in different tourism destinations. The methodological limitations of this research must be highlighted as well: SEM focused on the correlations between latent constructs in our case. Other important information, such as descriptive statistics (e.g., means and standard deviation), were not computed. Some scholars consider SEM and other estimation methods problematic because factor scores can be calculated using different approaches and may be ambiguous (Kline, 2005), requiring further explanation. Finally, subsequent studies should move beyond cross-sectional and self-report data to include interviews or triangulated observations (e.g., against self-report measures or on-site approaches) to explore tourists' revisit intentions.

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