

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Destination personality, self-congruity and loyalty

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Despite the interests on destination branding in general, there has been scarce investigations on destination personality which is described as the set of human characteristics associated with a destination. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived destination personality of Bodrum (a famous destination in Turkey) and the relationship among destination personality, self-congruity and loyalty. In 8 to 14 August, 2011 time period, 252 respondents who were domestic tourists that visited Bodrum destination and stayed at the hotels in the destination were surveyed with the questionnaire form privately developed for the destination. 226 usable questionnaires were analyzed. 38 personality traits were tested and destination personality of Bodrum was measured. The findings of the study indicate that tourists ascribe personality characteristics to destinations and the perceived destination personality dimensions of Bodrum are dynamism, sincerity, competence and sophistication. The results also show that the most distinct dimension which has a positive impact on loyalty to destination is sincerity. In addition, ideal self-congruity has resulted as the most effective self-congruity measure on loyalty.

**Key words:** Destination personality, self-congruity, loyalty, Bodrum, Turkey.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive world, understanding the effective factors on destination choice is important to both academicians and professionals who are playing a part in tourism sector (Beerli et al., 2007). Although, the efforts on branding tourism destinations are effective marketing tools (Uşaklı and Baloglu, 2011); only beautiful beaches, seas, hospitable local people etc. are not enough to be survived in today's competitive environment (Hosany et al., 2007; Murphy et al., 2007a). Within this scope, adapting Aaker's (1997) brand personality terminology to tourism destinations is important in terms of specifying the own characteristics of destinations and creating a different image on tourists' perceptions.

Based on the destination which reflects the tourist's own idea, characteristic and/or feeling, the tourist compares the characteristics of the destination with his own personality and this defines self-congruity (Opoku, 2009). In that case, does this congruence between the

destination personality and the tourist's characteristics reflect loyalty for the destination? Considering this basic question, the relationship among destination personality, self-congruity and loyalty was investigated in Bodrum destination. Bodrum is one of the famous destinations in Turkey. The destination which is famous for white houses and night life is located in the province of Muğla. Apart from its 31 beautiful bays, long beaches and 9 diving spots, there are 9 walking tracks, 13 ancient cities and lots of night clubs or bars ([www.muglakulturizm.gov.tr](http://www.muglakulturizm.gov.tr)). This makes Bodrum available for not only sea-sand-sun tourism (<http://www.muglakulturizm.gov.tr/belge/1-95819/bodrum.html>) (10.05.2012), but also cultural and sports tourism. Furthermore, the night life of Bodrum is well known by foreign and domestic tourists. Due to this variety seen in the destination, tourists from different countries who have different personality characteristics from each other would like to visit the destination. So as to survey the perceived brand personality characteristics of this destination, the congruence between destination personality characteristics and visitors' self-concept and intention to revisit or intention to recommend the

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destination to others, this study was carried out in Bodrum. The literature review indicates that directly no researches have been implemented in this destination related to the subject.

The study is guided by the following questions developed from the study that was carried out by Murphy et al. (2007a) about Whitsundays destination. The questions of the study were implemented on the domestic tourists visiting the destination.

- (1) What are the brand personality dimensions of Bodrum on domestic visitors' perceptions?
- (2) Is there a relationship between destination personality perceptions and self-congruity?
- (3) Is there a relationship between destination personality perceptions and domestic tourists' loyalty on the destination?
- (4) Is there a relationship between self-congruity and domestic tourists' loyalty on the destination?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Destination personality

Destination personality term is approached within brand personality context. Brand is defined as "a term, sign, symbol either design or combination of all" and developed to differentiate the product from the competitors' (Kotler, 1991). As emphasized in consumer behavior literature, brand personality is defined as the "set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997) which means any humanistic values that are seen in brands (Vaidya et al., 2009). Although, brand is an inanimate term, consumers attribute human characteristics such as youthful, energetic, masculine, rugged etc. to a brand. For example, one may use the words cool, hip and contemporary to describe Absolute vodka (Aaker, 1997), masculine to Marlboro cigarettes, feminine to Chanel perfumes and intelligent to IBM computers (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006).

Brand personality literature indicates that adapting brand characteristics to tourism destinations is important in terms of understanding the perceived destination image and tourists' destination choices (Hosany et al., 2007). With this point of view, destination personality, defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with a destination" (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006), is developed from Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale (BPS) which consists of five generic dimensions: excitement, sincerity, competence, sophistication and ruggedness and 42 descriptive traits. The applicability and validity of Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework in the context of tourism destinations were first examined by Ekinci and Hosany (2006). The results of the study proved that tourists ascribed personality characteristics to destinations which means the concept

of brand personality scale can be applied to tourism destination personality. As seen in the literature, Uşaklı and Baloglu (2011) investigated Las Vegas destination and determined the perceived destination personality dimensions: vibrancy, sophistication, competence, contemporary, and sincerity. Santos (2004) identified Portugal's personality characteristics as modern, sophisticated and traditional, whereas Wales was defined as honest, welcoming, romantic and down to earth; Spain as friendly and family oriented; Paris as romantic; and London destinations. Nevertheless, the authors concluded that destination personality consists of three distinct dimensions rather than the original five. Two of these dimensions were sincerity and excitement, same as in Aaker's (1997) brand personality dimensions, but conviviality was new and specific to tourism destinations (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006).

Uncovering a brand's or destination's personality is a difficult process which needs effort and time (<http://anzmac2010.org/proceedings/pdf/anzmac10Final00497.pdf> (24.08.2011)). Nonetheless, the lack of studies in the context of destination personality leads the researchers to be interested in the subject. The literature review proves that the destination personality researchers develop their own scales or use Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale to examine a destination (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003; Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Hosany et al., 2007; Uşaklı and Baloglu, 2011).

Brand personality scales are composed of the listed traits which emphasize the personality characteristics. 5-point Likert type scale is used to measure each trait's descriptiveness. Then, factor analysis is performed to determine the personality dimensions (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003).

Although, there have been sparse empirical investigations, the tourism academics are getting enthusiastic to research on as open-minded, unorthodox, vibrant and creative (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006).

### Self-congruity

When consumer behavior literature is reviewed, it is understood that brand personality enables consumers to express themselves. In other words, people prefer products or brands whose psychological characteristics are congruent with their own characteristics (Opoku, 2009; Beerli et al., 2007). In that case, the congruity of self-concept (or self-image) which has been defined as "the totality of individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object" with product or brand refers to self-congruity (Sirgy, 1985; Uşaklı and Baloglu, 2011). Self-congruity consists of four dimensions. These dimensions are actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, social self-congruity and ideal social self-congruity. Actual self-congruity is the fit between how people actually see themselves in relation to the image of that the kind of

people who purchase the product or brand. Ideal self-congruity refers to how people like to see themselves. Social-self congruity is the fit between how people believe they are seen by others in relation to the product or brand user image. Ideal social-self congruity is the fit between how people would like to be seen by others in relation to the product or brand user image (Sirgy and Su, 2000).

When self-congruity is investigated in the context of tourism, it is seen that the fit between destination image and tourist's self-image has an impact on tourist's revisit intention (Murphy et al., 2007b). With this point of view, tourism literature shows that actual self-congruity has been emphasized more than the other three dimensions in destination image studies (Sirgy and Su, 2000). In their study Uşaklı and Baloglu (2011) have investigated actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity. More clearly, the congruence between destination personality and the two dimensions of self-congruity (how visitors see themselves and how visitors like to see themselves) have been measured. Despite the ongoing studies in consumer literature, self-congruity studies are still not commonly performed in tourism studies (Uşaklı and Baloglu, 2011).

## Loyalty

Another term that is going to be discussed in this study is loyalty. Loyalty has been recognized as one of the more important indicators of success in the marketing literature (Valle et al., 2006). The term loyalty is defined as "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" (Oliver, 1999).

Since loyalty should be performed in different ways, it is difficult to measure. Bowen and Chen (2001) identify the measurement approaches of loyalty as "behavioral, attitudinal and composite measurements". The behavioral dimension defines loyalty as actual consumption (Mechinda et al., 2010) that means a repetitious purchase behavior. The attitudinal loyalty means a sense of emotional attachment to a good/service (McKercher et al., 2011). Finally, composite loyalty is the mixture of the first two dimensions and it means both repurchasing and recommending the product/service to others (Bowen and Chen, 2001). When considered in terms of destination visitors, the composite loyalty means revisiting and recommending the destination to others.

The relevant literature proves that studies which have been implemented in the context of measuring the relationship among "destination personality, self-congruity and loyalty (revisit and recommend)" have concluded with positive results (Uşaklı and Baloglu, 2011; Murphy et al., 2007a).

## METHODOLOGY

The relationship among destination personality, self-congruity and loyalty was investigated in Bodrum destination, Turkey. According to World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2011 highlights ([http://mkt.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/unwtohighlights11enhr\\_3.pdf](http://mkt.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/unwtohighlights11enhr_3.pdf) (10.05.2012), Turkey occupies the seventh position in international tourism arrivals with 27 million and tenth in international tourism receipts with 20.8 billion US \$. Respect to these numbers, this study was determined to carry out in Turkey. As one of the well-known destination of this tourism country (<http://www.etstur.com/Bodrum> (13.05.2012; <http://www.thomascook.com/lp/1x6-enbynk/holidays-bodrum> (13.05.2012; <http://www.thomson.co.uk/destinations/europe/turkey/turkey-bodrum/holidays-turkey-bodrum.html> (13.05.2012), Bodrum has always been visited by foreign and domestic tourists. People living in different regions of Turkey would like to visit this destination, especially in summer time. The Turkish celebrities also commonly choose this destination for holiday. As understood, to investigate domestic tourists who has image about this popular destination is appropriate within the concept of this study. Thus, domestic tourists' perceptions of destination personality characteristics were measured, firstly. Secondly, the congruity between their own characteristics and the destination's was questioned. Finally, loyalty was examined in composite loyalty dimension in terms of tourists' future visits and/or recommendations to others. So as to investigate this relationship, a questionnaire form was developed and 252 respondents that were domestic tourists who visited Bodrum destination were surveyed. However, 26 questionnaires were excluded due to missing answers and 226 usable questionnaires were analyzed. SPSS 14 was used to analyze the data obtained from questionnaires. In 8 to 14 August, 2011 time period, domestic tourists staying at the hotels in Bodrum centrum, Gümbet, Gündoğan, Turgutreis, Türkbükü and Yahşi were surveyed. Adapted from Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale (BPS) 38 personality traits were tested and destination personality of Bodrum was tried to be measured. For each personality traits 5-point Likert type scale was used: 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-not sure, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree.

After specifying the destination personality, the self-congruity was analyzed by using the "new method" which was established by Sirgy et al. (1997), Sirgy and Su (2000). Sirgy et al. (1997) claim that using this method instead of the "traditional method" leads minimum statistical mistakes and reliable results. Concerning this method, the respondents are asked to think about the type of typical visitor the destination and define that type of visitor with personality traits such as sincere, friendly, young, sexy, charming, unique, feminine etc. Nonetheless, the tourist type of a destination can be inconsistent (Uşaklı and Baloglu, 2011). This is because the respondents are asked to think of the destination as if it were a person and specify its personality characteristics. Therefore in this study, the respondents clarified the characteristics of Bodrum destination in their minds and then, they responded the expressions that analyze the self-congruity by using 5-point Likert type scale: 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-not sure, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree.

Based on the Sirgy and Su (2000) study, 4 expressions were used to measure self-congruity in the plot study:

- (1) Bodrum destination is consistent with how I see myself.
- (2) Bodrum destination is consistent with how I like to see myself.
- (3) Bodrum destination is consistent with how I believe others see me.
- (4) Bodrum destination is consistent with how I would like others to see me.

The literature review shows that the original 4 expressions have

**Table 1.** Profile of respondents (N= 226).

Feature	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	111	49.1
Female	115	50.9
<b>Age</b>		
19-29	81	35.8
30-39	71	31.4
40-49	45	19.9
50-59	19	8.4
60+	10	4.4
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	113	50.0
Single	99	43.8
Other	14	6.2
<b>Education</b>		
Primary School	4	1.8
High School	39	17.3
Vocational School	64	28.3
University	93	41.2
Master's or PhD	26	11.5
<b>Income (yearly)</b>		
Less than 10.000 TL	66	29.2
10.000 TL-19.999 TL	48	21.2
20.000 TL-29.999 TL	50	22.1
30.000 TL-39.999 TL	17	7.5
More than 40.000 TL	45	19.9
<b>Travelling with whom</b>		
Alone	25	11.0
Spouse / Partner	61	27.0
Family / Relatives	89	39.4
Friends	49	21.7
Tour Group	2	0.9

been used in different studies to measure self-congruity (Sirgy et al., 1997; Sirgy and Su, 2000; Murphy et al., 2007b; Uşaklı and Baloglu, 2011). However, after implementing the pilot study that was conducted with a sample of 36 visitors to Bodrum destination, it was seen that the original 4 expressions couldn't be responded respectively by the visitors. Findings suggested that, the expressions were not clear enough to understand. Due to that reason, 4 new expressions were developed as similar to the original ones:

- (1) The personality of Bodrum is consistent with my personality characteristics.
- (2) Bodrum has some of the personality characteristics that I would like to see on me.
- (3) As I see, Bodrum and I are perceived as similar in terms of

personality by the people around me.

(4) I would like to be perceived as similar to the personality of Bodrum.

As understood from the expressions above, 4 dimensions of self-congruity were measured clearly. "The personality of Bodrum is consistent with my personality characteristics" refers to actual self-congruity; "Bodrum has some of the personality characteristics that I would like to see on me" refers to ideal self-congruity; "As I see, Bodrum and I are perceived as similar in terms of personality by the people around me" refers to social self-congruity and "I would like to be perceived as similar to the personality of Bodrum" refers to ideal social self-congruity.

In order to analyze destination loyalty, the visitors were asked if they would recommend Bodrum destination to their friends or the people around them, by using 10-point scale: 1- not recommend at all, 10- definitely recommend. Revisit intention within two years was also measured with 10-point scale: 1- do not intend to visit, 10- very likely to visit. Additionally, an open-ended question was used to examine the visitors' perceived destination image by using 3 descriptive words or phrases.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Profile of the respondents

Demographic profile of the respondents' analysis proved that the number of male and female respondents was almost equal. There were barely more female respondents (50.9%) than males (49.1%). The respondents were mostly placed in 19 to 29 age group (35.8%). The majority of the respondents were married (50%) and held a university degree (41.2%). The most of the respondents belonged to the income group of less than 10,000 TL (Turkish Lira). The question of with whom the respondents were travelling was mostly responded as family and/or relatives (39.4%).

More than half of the respondents (77,9%) were repeat visitors of the destination. The number of the previous visits ranged from 1 time to 15 times (mean 4.51). According to answers obtained from 10-point scale (1- do not intend to visit, 10- very likely to visit), most of the respondents were planning to visit Bodrum within two years (mean 7.7); 38.5% of the respondents rated 10 points. Respondents stayed an average of 9 days in the destination. Among the respondents 7 days holiday-makers were explained with 30.1%; 10 days with 17.7% and 14 days with 7.5% (Table 1).

### The image of the destination

Table 2 shows the image perceptions of the respondents towards Bodrum. Respondents were asked an open-ended question to examine their perceptions regarding the image of Bodrum. 3 answers were obtained from each respondent. Most of the respondents described their image of the destination with some unique descriptive words or phrases such as night life (18.9%), peace (11.5%) and dynamism (11.4%).

**Table 2.** Respondents' images of Bodrum (N=484).

Image	n	%
Night life	91	18.9
Peace	56	11.5
Dynamism	55	11.4
Natural Beauty	55	11,4
Sea-sand-sun	51	10.5
Modern structures	28	5.8
Holiday	22	4,5
Excitement	20	4,1
White houses	19	3.9
Sex - Love	19	3,9
Expensive shopping	17	3.5
Traffic	15	3,1
Hot weather	14	2.9
Historical monuments	13	2.7
Hospitable local people	9	1.9

On this basis, Table 2 explains that the first thing coming to their mind was night life when the respondents thought of Bodrum. This was an expected result because in Turkey, media and people who visit Bodrum describe the destination with its bar streets, clubs and pubs. Although, Bodrum is famous for its white houses, the responses showed that the respondents were mostly aware of other factors like natural beauty (11.4%), sea-sand-sun (10.5%) and modern structures (5.8%). As a surprising finding of image perception, expensive shopping (3.5%) was a common response among some of the respondents.

In order to specify the typical visitor of Bodrum, respondents were asked 6 questions with pictures for each that how strongly they associated the pictures to typical visitors of Bodrum destination (Table 3). After the pilot study implemented among 36 respondents, each picture was defined with 3 descriptive words or phrases. On this basis, respondents described picture 1 as "sophisticated, confident and business traveler", picture 2 as "young, fun loving and partier", picture 3 as "adventurous, brave and solo traveler", picture 4 as "wealthy, classy and shopper", picture 5 as "old, family oriented and peace seeker" and finally picture 6 as "*recumbent, sea-sand-sun loving and classical holidaymaker*".

According to Table 3, the typical visitor of Bodrum was intensively associated with picture 6 and 2. Responses showed that the typical visitors of Bodrum were recumbent, sea-sand-sun loving and classical holidaymaker (mean 4.72); young, fun loving and partier (mean 4.39). This means the destination is available for sea-sand-sun tourism with night life especially for young holidaymakers. Besides; adventurous, brave and solo traveler (mean 3.05) type and old, family-oriented and

peace seeker (mean 3.53) type of visitor were not associated with the destination as much. On the other hand, the sophisticated, confident and business traveler (mean 1.67) type of visitor was not associated with the destination at all. Wealthy, classy and shopper type of visitor was also commonly seen in the destination according to the responses.

### Destination personality perceptions







Respondents rated the degree to which they associated 38 brand personality traits with Bodrum destination on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The 38 personality traits were factor analyzed to reduce data and to clarify the dimensions. It was seen that Aaker's (1997) original five personality dimensions could not be duplicated in this study.

Four factors were obtained by using alpha factoring analysis with Varimax rotation method (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin = 0.864) and 21 personality traits were eliminated. Before the analysis, some of the personality traits had been thought as the special personality traits that were consistent with Bodrum destination like young, unique, outdoorsy and hospitable. The 17 traits left (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.897) and they included new ones that were special to the destination like energetic, reckless and modern exhibited factor loadings greater than 0.50. The factors have been labeled as dynamism, sincerity, competence and sophistication. It is necessary to clarify that dynamism factor was labeled as different from the original factors of Aaker's (1997) owing to the fact that all the personality characteristic items were not loaded under the original five factors. For example, cheerful and friendly were loaded on dynamism rather than sincerity; independent was also loaded on competence rather than excitement because it had greater impact on competence named factor. Murphy et al. (2007), Hosany and Ekinci (2006) were also unable to duplicate the original five dimensions of Aaker's (1997) and relabeled the factors as special to the destinations (Table 4).

### Destination personality and self-congruity

In this step of the study, multiple regression analyses were conducted to explore the relationship between the destination personality dimensions and four measures of self-congruity. First, actual and ideal self-congruity measures were regressed on the dimensions of destination personality and seen that no auto correlation problems were appeared in the models (Durbin-Watson = 2.004 and 1.872). The results can be seen in Table 5. In the models, the F values seemed high ( $F_1 = 7.132$  and  $F_2 = 9.676$ ) and the multiple R coefficients ( $R_1 = 0.338$  and  $R_2 = 0.386$ ) showed that the correlation between destination personality dimensions and two measures of

**Table 3.** Respondents' perceptions of a typical visitor to Bodrum (N = 226).

<b>Description</b>		<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Picture 1 – Sophisticated, confident, business traveler</b>			
	Not at all	145	64.2
	Not very strongly	34	15.0
	Not sure	25	11.1
	Strongly	19	8.4
	Very strongly	3	1.3
<b>Picture 2 – Young, fun loving, partier</b>			
	Not at all	8	3.5
	Not very strongly	2	0.9
	Not sure	11	4.9
	Strongly	76	33.6
	Very strongly	129	57.1
<b>Picture 3 - Adventurous, brave, solo traveler</b>			
	Not at all	42	18.6
	Not very strongly	29	12.8
	Not sure	63	27.9
	Strongly	58	25.7
	Very strongly	34	15.0
<b>Picture 4 – Wealthy, classy, shopper</b>			
	Not at all	44	19.5
	Not very strongly	39	17.3
	Not sure	66	29.2
	Strongly	56	24.8
	Very strongly	21	9.3
<b>Picture 5 – Old, family oriented, peace seeker</b>			
	Not at all	20	8.8
	Not very strongly	26	11.5
	Not sure	35	15.5
	Strongly	103	45.6
	Very strongly	42	18.6
<b>Picture 6 – Recumbent, sea-sand-sun loving, classical holidaymaker</b>			
	Not at all	4	1.8
	Not very strongly	-	-
	Not sure	2	0.9
	Strongly	43	19.0
	Very strongly	177	78.3

**Table 4.** Exploratory factor analysis (N= 226).

Scale	Mean	SD	Loading	Eigenvalue	Explained variance (%)	Cronbach's $\alpha$
<b>Dynamism</b>				6.717	39.510	0.893
Energetic	4.26	0.96	0.800			
Daring	3.96	1.04	0.767			
Exciting	4.01	0.98	0.742			
Spirited	4.27	0.96	0.701			
Cheerful	4.08	0.99	0.601			
Reckless	3.88	1.17	0.520			
Friendly	3.92	0.98	0.510			
<b>Sincerity</b>				3.054	17.963	0.881
Honest	3.27	1.17	0.835			
Wholesome	3.08	1.26	0.826			
Down-to-earth	3.39	1.12	0.764			
Reliable	3.28	1.21	0.715			
Sincere	3.51	1.10	0.666			
<b>Competence</b>				1.220	7.175	0.783
Independent	3.97	0.99	0.706			
Modern	3.82	1.05	0.613			
Confident	3.80	0.99	0.577			
<b>Sophistication</b>				1.098	6.458	0.789
Charming	3.96	0.93	0.743			
Upper class	3.80	1.08	0.681			
<b>Total variance explained</b>					71.106	

Extraction method: Alpha factoring, rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization, KMO: 0.864, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity  $p$  value 0.000 (chi-square:2319.934, df: 136).

**Table 5.** Regression analysis results - relationship between destination personality and self-congruence.

Dimension	Actual self-congruity			Ideal self-congruity		
	Beta	t-Value	Sig. t	Beta	t-Value	Sig. t
Dynamism	0.218	1.631	0.104	0.190	1.515	0.131
Sincerity	0.372	4.286	0.000	0.367	4.500	0.000
Competence	-0.123	-1.004	0.317	0.066	0.571	0.569
Sophistication	0.068	0.680	0.498	-0.005	-0.057	0.955
Constant	1.235	2.864	0.008	1.113	2.574	0.011
Multiple R	0.338			0.386		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.114			0.149		
F test statistics/ significance		F= 7.132 p= 0.000			F= 9.676 p= 0.000	
Durbin-Watson		2.004			1.872	

self-congruity were moderate ( $0.3 < R < 0.5$ ) (Cohen, 1988; in Uşaklı and Baloglu, 2011).

As seen in Table 5, the four dimensions of destination personality explained 11.4 and 14.9% of the total variation in actual and ideal self-congruity. Although the

amount of variance explained by the regression model for actual and ideal self-congruity were low, the F values were highly significant which meant the models were statistically significant ( $p_1 = 0.000$  and  $p_2 = 0.000$ ). There was statistically significant relationship between sincerity

**Table 6.** Regression analysis results - relationship between destination personality and social congruence.

Dimension	Social self-congruity			Ideal social Self-congruity		
	Beta	t-Value	Sig. t	Beta	t-Value	Sig. t
Dynamism	0.116	1.013	0.312	0.037	0.285	0.776
Sincerity	0.339	4.543	0.000	0.577	6.893	0.000
Competence	0.022	0.204	0.838	0.071	0.602	0.548
Sophistication	0.166	1.918	0.056	0.104	1.072	0.285
Constant	0.448	1.134	0.258	0.461	1.038	0.301
Multiple R	0.412			0.491		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.170			0.242		
F test statistics/ significance		F=11.286 p= 0.000			F=17.596 p= 0.000	
Durbin-Watson		1.990			1.892	

personality and actual self-congruity; dynamism ( $p = 0.131$ ), competence ( $p = 0.569$ ) and sophistication ( $p = 0.955$ ) dimensions were not statistically significant in predicting ideal self-congruity.

Social self and ideal social self-congruity measures were regressed on the dimensions of destination personality and the results are represented in Table 6. The four dimensions of destination personality explained 17.0 and 24.2% of the total variation in social and ideal social self-congruity. It was clear that there were no auto-correlation problems in the models (Durbin-Watson = 1.990 and 1.892). The multiple R coefficients ( $R_1 = 0.412$  and  $R_2 = 0.491$ ) showed that destination personality dimensions and two measures of social congruence were positively correlated and the F values ( $F_1 = 11.286$  and  $F_2 = 17.596$ ) were high which described the models as statistically significant ( $p_1 = 0.000$  and  $p_2 = 0.000$ ). As seen in Table 6, there was statistically significant relationship between sincerity dimension and social self-congruity ( $p=0.000$ ). Otherwise, dynamism ( $p = 0.312$ ), competence ( $p = 0.838$ ) and sophistication ( $p=0.056$ ) dimensions were not statistically significant in predicting social self-congruity. Ideal social self-congruity was examined in the same table and it was seen that only sincerity dimension was significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) in predicting ideal social self-congruity when dynamism ( $p = 0.776$ ), competence ( $p = 0.548$ ) and sophistication ( $p = 0.285$ ) dimensions were not statistically significant.

Both Tables 5 and 6 proved that only sincerity dimension was statistically significant in predicting four self-congruity dimensions for Bodrum destination. In predicting actual self-congruity, competence dimension had negative impact ( $\beta = -0.123$ ). When considering the relationship between personality dimensions and ideal self-congruity, this time sophistication dimension ( $\beta = -0.005$ ) was seen as negatively directed in predicting ideal self-congruity. The regression analyses seen in table 6 also showed that dynamism ( $p_1 = 0.312$  and  $p_2 = 0.776$ ), competence ( $p_1 = 0.838$  and  $p_2 = 0.548$ ), and sophistication ( $p_1 = 0.056$  and  $p_2 = 0.285$ ) dimensions

were not significantly related to social self and ideal social self-congruity.

### Destination personality and loyalty

In this part of the study, both intention to recommend Bodrum destination to friends, relatives etc. and intention to revisit the destination within two years were regressed on four dimensions of the destination personality. Multiple regression analyses were conducted taking four dimensions of the destination personality as independent variables. The results are presented in Table 7.

The multiple R coefficients ( $R_1 = 0.526$  and  $R_2 = 0.355$ ) showed that the correlations between destination personality dimensions and two measures of loyalty were strong to moderate (R values > 0.3) (Cohen, 1988; in Uşaklı and Baloglu, 2011). In model 1, the four dimensions of destination personality explained 22.7% of the total variation in intention to recommend the destination to others. Beside, in model 2, 12.6% of variance was explained by destination personality dimensions in estimation of intention to revisit the destination. Table 7 also showed the statistically significant relationship among dynamism ( $p = 0.004$ ) and sincerity ( $p = 0.000$ ) dimensions and intention to recommend. However, competence dimension and intention to recommend relationship was negatively directed ( $\beta = -0.014$ ) and the dimension was not significant in defining intention to recommend the destination to others ( $p = 0.938$ ). Although sophistication dimension seemed positively directed in the model ( $\beta = 0.137$ ), the relationship was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.357$ ) which meant the dimension had no impact on intention to recommend. Eventually, the table proved that sincerity dimension had the highest impact level on intention to recommend the destination to others ( $\beta = 0.798$ ).

When the relationship between destination personality dimensions and intention to revisit was analyzed as



**Table 7.** Regression analysis results - relationship between destination personality and loyalty.

Dimension	Intention to recommend			Intention to revisit		
	Beta	t-Value	Sig. t	Beta	t-Value	Sig. t
Dynamism	0.577	2.940	0.004	0.513	1.882	0.061
Sincerity	0.798	6.256	0.000	0.464	2.618	0.009
Competence	-0.014	-0.077	0.938	0.226	0.904	0.367
Sophistication	0.137	0.923	0.357	0.157	0.763	0.446
Constant	2.795	4.133	0.000	2.579	2.744	0.007
Multiple R	0.526			0.355		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.227			0.126		
F test statistics/ significance		F=21.151 p= 0.000			F= 7.980 p= 0.000	
Durbin-Watson		1.751			1.648	

F values ( $F_1 = 21.151$  and  $F_2 = 7.980$ ) in both model 1 (the relationship between destination personality and intention to recommend) and model 2 (the relationship between destination personality and intention to revisit) were high and the models were statistically significant according to the results of the regression analyses ( $p$  values = 0.000).

model 2 in the same table, sincerity ( $\beta = 0.464$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ) dimension was seen as significant and had positive impact on intention to revisit the destination. Nonetheless, dynamism ( $p = 0.061$ ), competence ( $p = 0.367$ ) and sophistication ( $p = 0.446$ ) dimensions were not significant in predicting intention to revisit the destination. Seen that the dimension which had the significant highest impact level on intention to revisit the destination within two years was sincerity dimension ( $\beta = 0.464$ ).

### Self-congruity and loyalty

The last multiple regression analyses were conducted to expound the relationship between the four measures of self-congruity and loyalty. The results are presented in Table 8. The multiple R coefficients ( $R_1 = 0.460$  and  $R_2 = 0.497$ ) showed that the correlations between self-congruity and two measures of loyalty were strong to moderate ( $R$  values  $> 0.3$ ) (Cohen, 1988; in Uşaklı and Baloglu, 2011). The four measures of self-congruity explained 21.1 and 24.7% of the variation in intention to recommend and intention to revisit the destination. All of the self-congruity measures; ideal self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.350$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), social self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.261$ ,  $p = 0.048$ ) and social ideal self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.283$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ) had positive impact on the relationship between self-congruity measures and intention to recommend the destination and those measures were seen as significant predictors on intention to recommend except actual self-congruity ( $p = 0.210$ ) even if it directed positively ( $\beta = 0.150$ ). On the other hand, only two measures of the self-congruity; actual self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.376$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ) and ideal self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.670$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) had positive impact and were statistically significant in estimation of

intention to revisit. These multiple regression analyses also showed that social self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.066$ ,  $p = 0.685$ ) and social ideal self-congruity ( $\beta = 0.225$ ,  $p = 0.101$ ) were not significant predictors on intention to revisit the destination.

In order to find out which measure of the self-congruity had relative importance on loyalty, beta coefficients should be reviewed in Table 8. According to the table, ideal self-congruity was found as the most effective measure on loyalty: both on intention to recommend ( $\beta_1 = 0.350$ ,  $p_1 = 0.003$ ) and intention to revisit ( $\beta_2 = 0.670$ ,  $p_2 = 0.000$ ).

### Conclusion

The relationship among destination personality, self-congruity and loyalty was investigated in this study and the sample of the study was included 252 domestic tourists who visited Bodrum destination. According to 226 usable questionnaires, the distinct demographic features of the respondents were defined as: female, young (people aged between 19 and 29), married, having bachelors' degree and getting annual income less than 10.000 TL. The results also showed that the respondents traveled to the destination with their family members and/or relatives. More than half of the respondents (77.9%) were repeat visitors of the destination and most of the respondents pointed that they were planning to visit the destination within two years (mean 7.7).

When the perceived image of the destination was investigated with an open ended question, the responses proved that the image of Bodrum destination consisted of some unique features: such as night life (18.9%), peace (11.5%) and dynamism (11.4%). On the other hand, the typical visitor of the destination was questioned. The

**Table 8.** Regression analysis results - relationship between self-congruity and loyalty.

Measure	Intention to Recommend			Intention to Revisit		
	Beta	t-Value	Sig. t	Beta	t-Value	Sig. t
Actual self-congruity	0.150	1.256	0.210	0.376	2.559	0.011
Ideal self-congruity	0.350	2.957	0.003	0.670	4.590	0.000
Social self-congruity	0.261	1.991	0.048	0.066	0.407	0.685
Social ideal self-congruity	0.283	2.550	0.011	0.225	1.646	0.101
Constant	4.991	11.242	0.000	3.364	6.135	0.000
Multiple R	0.460			0.497		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.211			0.247		
F test statistics		F=14.808			F= 18.158	
Significance		p= 0.000			p= 0.000	
Durbin-Watson		1.726			1.694	

responses clarified the typical visitors of Bodrum as recumbent, sea-sand-sun loving and classical holidaymaker (mean 4.72); young, fun-loving and partier (mean 4.39). Based on this result, Bodrum destination can be described as the destination where young holidaymakers enjoy sea-sand-sun and night life at the same time.

Apart from the demographics of the respondents and the image perceptions of the destination, four research questions were examined to measure the relationship between destination personality, self-congruity and loyalty. The results are listed below:

#### **What are the brand personality dimensions of Bodrum on domestic visitors' perceptions?**

The personality traits were factor analyzed and finally the dimensions of the destination personality (consisted of 17 traits) specified as: dynamism, sincerity, competence and sophistication. Dynamism dimension was labeled as different from the original brand personality factors of J. Aaker (1997) and this dimension seemed as a unique characteristic of the destination. This result supports the studies of Ekinçi and Hosany (2006) and Murphy et al. (2007a) which have been concluded as the tourists ascribe personality characteristics to destinations and Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale can be applied to tourism destinations with some shifting and unique dimensions that are specific to destinations.

#### **Is there a relationship between destination personality perceptions and self-congruity?**

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to measure if there was a relationship between destination personality and four measures of self-congruity. According to the results of the regression analyses, the relationship between sincerity dimension and actual self-congruity was significant. More specifically, the relationship between

sincerity and the degree to which Bodrum destination was consistent with 'how respondents see themselves' was statistically significant. The same result was represented in terms of the relationship between sincerity dimension and ideal self-congruity which meant the relationship between sincerity dimension and the degree to which Bodrum destination was consistent with 'how respondents like to see themselves' was also significant.

When considered the relationship between social self-congruity and the personality dimensions, sophistication and sincerity dimensions were seen as significant in this relationship. It meant that the relationship between sincerity dimension and the degree to which Bodrum destination was consistent with 'how respondents believed others to see them' was statistically significant. The final examination showed that social self-congruity and sincerity dimension's relationship which meant the relationship between sincerity dimension and the degree to which Bodrum destination was consistent with 'how respondents would like others to see them' was statistically significant again.

With respect to these results, only sincerity dimension, as a unique characteristic for the destination, was described as significant in predicting four self-congruity dimensions for Bodrum destination. Another important result of the study which supports Uşaklı and Baloglu's (2011) study is self-congruity theory can be applied in the context of tourism researches.

#### **Is there a relationship between destination personality perceptions and domestic tourists' loyalty on the destination?**

In this study, loyalty has been measured within two aspects: intention to recommend and intention to revisit. According to the results of multiple regression analyses, the correlation between destination personality and two measures of loyalty seemed significant. The relationship among dynamism and sincerity dimensions and intention

to recommend resulted positively and significantly. On the other hand, the relationship between sincerity dimensions and intention to revisit concluded as significant again. These results make it clear that sincerity dimension has the highest impact level on loyalty, both intention to recommend the destination to others and intention to revisit the destination within two years. Conversely, to the Murphy et al. (2007a) study, these results show the link between destination personality and intention to revisit the destination. Otherwise, the positive relationship between destination personality and intention to recommend has been supported by Ekinci and Hosany's (2006) study claiming the stronger destination personality develops the more effect of destination image on intention to recommend.

### **Is there a relationship between self-congruity and domestic tourists' loyalty on the destination?**

According to the results obtained from regression analyses, all of the self-congruity measures (ideal self-congruity, social self-congruity and social ideal self-congruity) were significant in estimation of intention to recommend except actual self-congruity. Besides, only two measures of the self-congruity (actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity) were significant in estimation of intention to revisit. These multiple regression analyses also showed that social self-congruity and social ideal self-congruity were not significant in predicting intention to revisit the destination. Consequently, the study verified that there was a relationship between self-congruity and loyalty and more importantly, ideal self-congruity was found as the most effective measure on loyalty; both on intention to recommend and intention to revisit.

The findings of the self-congruity analyses also supported the Sirgy and Su's (2000) study regarding the effects of self-congruity in the context of tourism which proposed the greater match between self-congruity creates the more motivation to revisit the destination. In their study, Uşaklı and Baloglu (2011) also concluded actual self-congruity as the measure which had greater impact on intention to return to Las Vegas destination. Besides, the researchers mentioned that ideal-self congruity had relatively greater impact on intention to recommend the destination to others.

According to the results, the research questions have been responded positively in this study. The relationship among destination personality, self-congruity and loyalty has been confirmed for Bodrum destination by the perceptions of domestic tourists and the most effective dimension in estimation of loyalty has appeared as sincerity and the most effective self-congruity measure on loyalty has resulted as ideal self-congruity.

The results of the study also suggest that destination management organizations (DMOs) of Bodrum can focus on the four dimensions of destination personality (dynamism, sincerity, competence and sophistication) to

understand the behaviors of the tourists. Furthermore, they should create the greater match between the personality dimensions of Bodrum and the tourists' self-congruity perceptions which can lead more loyal tourists for the destination that means maintaining the competitiveness in the future.

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