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Review of the doctoral dissertation entitled:

„The Effect of Self-Place Congruity and Individualism on Visit Intention”

written by mgr Nguyet Luong Tran

under the direction of:

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Prof.

1. Choice of topic, objectives of the thesis

The dissertation of mgr Nguyet Luong Tran deals with a problem that is important from the point of view of both the development of theory in the management of tourist destinations and practice. The theorio-cognitive preconditions are evident in the critical analysis of the literature presented and the new approach of the Author demonstrated, in linking the issues addressed. She indicates that „While destination marketers and managers set the influencing intention of the visit as a primary strategic goal, making the decision to travel to a destination is a complex process from an academic point of view”, (p.1). Hence, the visit intention is seen as an emerging segmentation variable of tourism that is gaining recognition from the perspectives not only of academic but also the destination managers and marketers. It is a result of the application of travel marketers and Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) use of the link presented in the paper between tourist personality with the personality of the place. This issue is part of Destination branding and has to agree with the Author that is an important marketing tool used to differentiate destinations in highly competitive holiday markets.

As the overall aim of her own research and activities, the Author states: "is to shed light on the relationship between the self-place congruity and the intention to visit" (p. 6). Its formulation is preceded by a sound argument of the findings of other authors on contemporary issues in tourism destination management and concept scopes: „brand”, „personality traits”, „managing of destinations”, „behaviour intentions” and „individualism”.

The research objective from the author's intention is to examine in-depth the effects indicated by Matzler et al. (2016), which concerned the relationship that individualism negatively moderates the relationship of self-place congruity and visit intention. We should agree with the Author's choice of the experimental method to achieve this objective, recognising that it is one of the most reliable research methods that allows to control the research environment and inspect the nature of the relationships between variables.

The statement of objectives thus formulated is captured in the dissertation objective formulated on page 6, which is: to investigate the effect of the self-place congruity, individualism on the intention to visit a place. The main goal of the study is exploring the cause-effect relationship between the self-place congruity, individualism, and the intention of the tourist to visit a destination.

In my opinion, the objective formulated in this way is correct, original and results from the author's extensive knowledge of the problems discussed and her ability to conduct independent scientific work. The issue of the dissertation written by mgr Nguyet Luong Tran should be considered important and actual, at the same time complex and multifaceted. It involves a modern approach to tourism destination management methods using an interdisciplinary approach to research on the behaviour of tourism market actors, which is part of the social sciences in the discipline of Management and Quality Sciences.

In order to achieve the main objective of the dissertation, the Author formulated six Theory-related Objectives, one Method-related Objectives and two Managerial Objectives, which are presented in their original form as follows. (p. 6-7):

Theory-related Objectives:

- 1) Systematising the concept of tourist personality and its impact on travel behavior.
- 2) Identifying the evolution of the concept of 'destination personality'.
- 3) Identifying the evolution of the concept of 'congruity'.
- 4) Examining the effect of 'individualism' in tourism research.
- 5) Identifying the antecedents of the visit intention.
- 6) Building and testing a theoretical model related to the interactions between the self-place congruity and individualism on visit intention.

Method-related Objectives:

- 7) Examining whether the interaction effect between self-place congruity and individualism on visit intention depend on the way a researcher manipulates (versus measures) the moderators in the experiment.

Managerial Objectives:

- 8) Testing for the effect of self-place congruity on the visit intention.
- 9) Testing the moderating role of individualism on the relationship between self-place congruity and visit intention.

Out of my duty as a reviewer, I point out that Objectives 2, 3 and 5 are detailed activities and would rather be classified as research tasks.

To achieve the above mentioned practical objectives, Author has formulated the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the main effect of self-place congruity on visit intention?

RQ2: What is the main effect of individualism on visit intention?

RQ3: Is there an interaction effect between self-place congruity and individualism on visit intention?

RQ4: Does the interaction effect between self-place congruity and individualism on visit intention depend on methodological approach (whether moderators are measured or manipulated)?

In my opinion, such a set of objectives and research questions is the result of solid theoretical knowledge of area management, including tourism reception areas (destinations). It is also the evidence of knowledge of the basics and a new approach to the problems of consumer behaviour in the tourism market reflecting the intention to re-visit. Framing the objectives of the dissertation in this way also demonstrates the ability to pose problems in an original way in a scientific work, as the issue of combining intentions to stay in tourist destinations is most often limited by many authors to 'classical' factors of consumer behaviour. Nguyet Luong Tran's dissertation demonstrates an original approach and the ability to seek an original solution using correct but also innovative methods to solve a research problem.

2. Content and structure of the work

The paper has 172 pages of text and a 24-page appendix containing interview questionnaires and a data summary for the first experiment for Adventure Island. The work is documented by 28 Tables and 49 Figures. The author appropriately selected and used 266 sources of information, not separated out, legal acts and websites.

The content of the dissertation corresponds to the topic defined in the title. In the Introduction, the author clearly formulated the objectives of the dissertation, the research questions and justified the use of the research methods applied.

The content of the dissertation is divided into five chapters, the order and proportions of which are appropriate and adapted to the methodological assumptions. The topics of the individual chapters in their original formulation are as follows:

1. Place Branding in Tourism
2. Personality of a Tourist and Personality of a Place
3. Self-Place Congruity, Individualism, and Visit Intention
4. Research Methodologies
5. The Effects of Self-Place Congruity and Individualism on Visit Intention -
6. Experimental Research.

The themes of the individual chapters are developed by dividing their content into subchapters. The content of the chapters and subchapters corresponds to the subject matter contained in the titles given to them.

The Introduction and Conclusion, are an appropriate complement to the argument. The division of Conclusions into General Discussion, Theoretical and Managerial Implications deserves a positive evaluation. Particularly important is the awareness of the possibility of developing one's own research in the future, as evidenced by the mgr Ngyuet Loung Tran inclusion of a section: Limitations and Future Research.

3. Substantive comments

In the first chapter, mgr Ngyuet Luong Tran correctly organizes the theoretical issues concerning the scope of concepts and the practical effects of implementing the concepts of Place Promotion, Place Marketing and Place Branding, using primarily the findings of Boisen et al. (2018). To illustrate the contemporary effects of research on these issues, the Author uses a bibliometric analysis which is particularly apt to present the current state of research in the field of Destinanton Branding.

In addressing this issue, it would be worthwhile, for the clarity of the argument, to introduce a definition of the term 'Tourist destinanton'. The absence of this definition can be seen, for example, in Chapter Two, where, in the concluding section, the Author cites research into tourists' perceptions of Portugal from different countries. Without clarification of the understanding of 'Tourist destinanton', doubt may arise as to how to compare the destinanton branding of countries with small tourist regions.

In the second chapter, the author reviews the definition and evolution of the concept of 'personality' in a very interesting, diligent and, above all, interdisciplinary manner. This chapter indicates the author's extensive theoretical knowledge of a broad spectrum of humanistic issues

related to the social sciences. Indeed, management issues are developed by citing the findings of other authors in sociology, psychology and even the biological basis of human behaviour. At this point, I make only the comment that when citing the history of concepts and specific data (e.g. dates) in the dissertation, there should be a citation of the source of this information.

In the second chapter, I consider it particularly important and innovative to present different approaches to the theory of personality, which, in my opinion, is an important basis for analyses of consumer behaviour (including tourists) in the contemporary market. I only make the remark that here, instead of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is one of the most frequently repeated in the scholarly community, it would be worthwhile to cite other approaches. In tourism, Maslow's theory is becoming less applicable, as in the era of popularisation of tourist travel, some forms of tourism may appear at lower levels of the hierarchy of human needs. The new approaches is shown, for example, in the hierarchy of tourist travel according to Lazarek and the pyramid of needs in tourist travel according to Rico-Scherrib.

An important and valuable element of the second chapter is the summary of the course of the argument found in its final part. The Author draws conclusions and presents her own opinion on the definitions adopted, which indicates in-depth knowledge, ability to draw conclusions and scientific maturity. In particular, mgr Nguyet Luong Tran states that "destination personality" in her opinion "is not only human characteristics associated with a destination in the perceptions of all stakeholders (residents, tourists, travel agency, etc.) to a destination based on their own identity, values, and experiences but also mental representation" (p.69). This statement is very important in the context of a regional tourism product and one has to agree with the Author.

The third chapter was devoted to relationship between self-place congruity, individualism, and visit intention based on the literature review.

The methodological basis is bibliometric analysis by 2024 on Web of Science database. The Author makes good use of this possibility, although of course some limitations that this type of analysis brings can be discussed. As an example, the mgr Ngyuet Loung Tran research shows that the first article devoted to the issue of 'visit intention' appeared in this database in 1993. Visit intention is such a fundamental concept and problem in the field of tourism that it is worth adding the comment that presumably authors working in tourism economics had undertaken this type of research earlier. However, the Author's ability to carry out the research work independently is evidenced by the methodological section (Chapter 4), which explains the principles and basis of bibliometric analysis.

From my duty as a reviewer, I note that when discussing the characteristics of cultures in the formation of 'individualism', it would be worthwhile in a possible future expansion of the research to add a regional level in addition to the national and personal level discussed in the paper. The regional level is important in tourism because of the distinctiveness exhibited in material culture, dialect, and cuisine, all of which are important in terms of tourist attraction.

Chapter four is devoted to a discussion of the methodological side of the dissertation and demonstrates the author's knowledge of the use of research methods in the discipline of Management and Quality Sciences, as well as her ability to conduct scientific research independently. The author explains in a precise manner all the methods used in the thesis and, in particular, discusses the possibilities and justification of the experiment, which is the method used to collect data and draw conclusions in the next chapter.

Chapter five presents the research process used in the thesis and the results that mgr Nguyet Luong Tran achieved. The use of an experiment is evidence of an original way of solving the research problem. The Author skilfully prepared the various stages of the study and which enabled the research questions posed earlier to be answered. In order to check the manipulation of the designed advertisements for the first experiment, the pre-test was conducted. With the success of pre-test, the first study which manipulated individualism (national level), measured self place congruity, and visit intention was conducted. The second experiment measured individualism (personal level) and visit intention while manipulated self-place congruity versus incompatibility. It is an original, even innovative approach, which shows the Author's scientific maturity.

4. Formal side of the dissertation

The formal side of the dissertation raises no major objections. The author conducts her considerations consistently, the numerical summaries are presented well, they have proper descriptions and impeccable structure and the drawings serve well to illustrate the content.

Some objection is raised by the inconsistency in citing sources and works of other Authors. The initial part of the dissertation adopts the footnote format, but in several places authors are cited in the so-called Harvard system (e.g. in sections 2.1.3 , 2.1.4, 3.2 and Conclusions). In section 2.2, the author "mixes up" the method of citation and, with one name in several places, two forms of footnote use occur simultaneously.

I have some concerns about the abstract in Polish. It contrasts with the very good English in which the dissertation was written.

5. Final conclusions

The doctoral dissertation entitled: „The Effect of Self-Place Congruity and Individualism on Visit Intention” written by mgr Nguyet Luong Tran deserves, in my opinion, a positive evaluation. The thesis meets the requirements for doctoral dissertations in accordance with the regulations of the Ustawa z dnia 20.07.2018 *Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce* (Dz. U. poz.742 ze zm.) in the elements listed below:

1. **The dissertation presents Nguyet Luong Tran's general theoretical knowledge in the discipline of Management and Quality Sciences.** The PhD student discusses in great detail the issues of: self-place congruity, individualism on the intention to visit a place. Chapters one and two, in which the Author presents an in-depth review of research on Place branding in Tourism as well as Consumer's Personality and Personality of a Place, are theoretically exploratory. These are important issues in the field of tourism destination management. The author has obtained results that are theoretically cognitive in nature to provide a more complete understanding of the impact of self-place congruity, individualism on the intention of visiting a destination. The in-depth analysis of the relationship based on the use of previous work carried out by other authors and the General Discussion carried out in the concluding part of the dissertation is evidence of the high level of knowledge in the discipline: Management and Quality Sciences.
2. **The dissertation demonstrates the ability to conduct research work independently.** The author notes the lack of study in examining the cause-effect relationship and in this dissertation, decided to adopt experimental research to investigate the cause-and-effect relationship between individualism, congruity, and visiting intention. An important and innovative approach is for the Author to investigate whether and how the congruity between personalities of a tourist and a place interacts with another key variable for tourist behaviours: individualism. In order to achieve her research objectives, the author correctly chose both secondary research methods (literature search, bibliometric analysis) and primary research methods, in which the choice of the experiment, as a new qualitative method, deserves a particularly high evaluation. Mgr Nguyet Loung Tran rightly draws conclusions that correspond to the research aims and objectives. The key theoretical contribution of this study is that it enhances the understanding of visit intention in tourism and destination research. Self-place congruity is crucial in destination branding, marketing, and management strategies. An important finding is

the moderated conceptual model developed and tested in this study, which enriches the theory of destination personality and the theory of self-congruity by adding an antecedent: (measured and manipulated) individualism.

The scientific maturity of the PhD student is also evidenced by the profound comments in the final section Limitations and Future Research, which refer to the results of other authors and to the possibility of further extending the research.

3. **The original way of solving the research problem deserves to be highlighted.** While studies on self-concept in relation to tourists and place can be found in the Place Branding and Place Marketing literature, the inclusion of the issue of individuality, is a novel approach. An important original approach is the inclusion of measured and manipulated self-place congruity on the visit intention. The conclusions on this subject bring new knowledge to the discipline of Management and Quality Sciences. It should be emphasised that there is no research using experimental methods to discover how and whether the congruity between tourist personalities and their perceptions of the personalities of a tourist destination impacts their intentions to visit the destination.

The findings of this dissertation contribute not only to theoretical implementation but also to practical implementation in an innovative and original way. This provides crucial implications for destination managers and marketers in planning strategic marketing programmes. An important result indicating the added value of the dissertation in science are the conclusions on the impact of individualism, which enable travel marketers and Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) to manage tourism using the approach presented in the dissertation regarding the use of the link between tourist personality with the personality of the place. This issue is part of Destination branding and one has to agree with the Author that it is an important marketing tool used to differentiate destinations in highly competitive holiday markets.

In conclusion, the reviewed dissertation represents a successful attempt to expand knowledge on the Effect of Self-Place Congruity and Individualism on Visit Intention. The Author has demonstrated that she has a very good understanding of the literature on the subject, and the source material obtained in the course of the research has been scientifically analysed using methods and techniques accepted in the social sciences in the discipline of Management and Quality Sciences.

The objections I have raised do not disqualify the results of the research, but suggest looking at the problem from a broader perspective and stem from the reviewer's duty.

Therefore, in accordance with the regulations Ustawy z dnia 20.07.2018 *Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce* (Dz. U. poz.742 ze zm.) I propose to the Komisja Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego do spraw stopni naukowych w dyscyplinie Nauki o zarządzaniu i jakości for the acceptance of the thesis of mgr Nguyet Luong Tran entitled: „The Effect of Self-Place Congruity and Individualism on Visit Intention” as a doctoral dissertation and admitting it to public defence.

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