A MODEL OF DESTINATION BRANDING FOR IRANIAN HISTORICAL CITIES

Kambiz Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, Hamid Saeedi
Department of Business Management, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
Hamid Saeedi (hsaeedi@Gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

The current study aims to develop and test a theoretical model of destination branding, which integrates the concepts of the branding, destination image, quality and loyalty. The study suggests historical image as a new component of historical destination brand associations. Specifically, the current study examines the relationships among brand associations for historical cities (i.e., historical, common, and unique image components), overall brand image (i.e., overall image of a destination), perceived quality and tourists’ future behaviour. The target population of this study was 750 domestic visitors, who stayed in Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah (historical cities in Iran). The results confirm that overall image is influenced by common image and is considered a critical mediator between brand associations, Perceived quality and tourists’ future behaviour. In addition, historical image had the first largest impact on the common image formation.

Keywords: historical Destination branding, Destination image, Brand image, Overall brand image, perceived quality and loyalty

1. INTRODUCTION

In western asia, Iran is home to the most inscribed sites in UNESCO\(^1\) with 16 sites. Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran, Bam and its Cultural Landscape, Bisotun, Golestan Palace, Gonbad-e Qābus, Masjed-e Jāmē of Isfahan, Meidan Emam, Esfahan, Pasargadae, Persepolis, Sheikh Safi al-din Khānegāh and Shrine Ensemble in Ardabil, Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System, Soltaniyeh,Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex, Takht-e Soleyman, chogha Zanbil, The Persian Garden. The first sites to be recognized by UNESCO from the west asia was Percepolis was a city in ancient Persia. Every year, iran historical cities accommodates a significant number of Iranian and foreign tourists. Iran has a favorable climate and many historical places Because of all these attractions, we selected Shiraz, Isfahan and Kermanshah (historical cities in Iran) as our subject of study. During the last two decades, both academia and marketing practitioners have shown an increasing interest in brand management. Branding is now widely acknowledged as a potent tool for companies to use to their advantage in achieving competitive strengthen the market, as it generates value both for the producer and consumers (Keller, 2008). the term “destination branding” is recognised as that most commonly used in tourism literature to describe the method of creating a unique identity for a destination that enables potential visitors to differentiate one destination from another (Graves and Skinner, 2009).

\(^1\) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
The core of destination branding is to build a positive destination image that identifies and differentiates the destination by selecting a consistent brand element mix (Cai, 2002). Although not explicitly examined in the context of branding, destination image should be regarded as a pre-existing concept corresponding to destination branding (Pike, 2009). The destination branding literature, however, focuses primarily on leisure and business tourism. There has been no academic investigation into the branding of historical places as centres. Destination images fall on a continuum that begins with organic images which are developed over a long period of time and represent “the totality of what a person already knows or perceives about that destination from newspapers, radio and TV news, documentaries, periodicals, dramas, novels, and non-fictional books and classes on geography and history” (Gunn, 1997). A strong, unique image is the essence of destination positioning for its ability to differentiate a destination from competitors to get into the consumers’ minds, which simplify information continuously (Botha, Crompton, & Kim, 1999; Buhalís, 2000; Calantone, et al., 1989; Chon, Weaver, & Kim, 1991; Crompton, Fakeye, & Lue, 1992; Fan, 2006; Go & Govers, 2000; Mihalic, 2000; Mykletun, Crotts, & Mykletun, 2001; Uysal et al., 2001).

The research first seeks to identify the key attribute dimensions associated with destination historical brand images and second, to assess the importance of unique and common images attributes associated with history. The focus of this paper is therefore not the destination branding itself, but rather the destination image concept, how that destination image is created, communicated and controlled, and the relationship between destination image and perceived quality and loyalty. Each of these concepts will be explored further in the paper.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Branding theory

According to Kotler (1997) a brand is “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.” Destinations are similar to products and follow similar branding processes. Consumers use brand names and product attributes as retrieval cues for information about product performance. Brand names and offering attributes are the links to diagnostic information about the product (Hutchinson & Alba, 1991). Keller (1998) states that a physical good, a service, a retail store, a person, an organization, a place and/or an idea can be encompassed in the concept of product. Branding has Viking origins. According to Keller (2008), the word „brand“ is an Old Norse word meaning „to burn“ and refers to the practice of marking animals by owners in order to identify them. In the American Wild West, cowboys and ranchers used a hot branding iron to singe, or “brand”. Today, branding issued to imprint a representational image of a product or service into the mind of the consumer. There are various branding strategies applied to an almost endless array of products and services. Classical branding theory has been developed largely in the context of consumer products (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001). In this context, brands are seen as complex entities (Gardner and Levy, 1955; de Chernatony and Dall Olmo Riley, 1998).

For example, a place includes tangible attributes such as historical sites or beaches as well as intangible characteristics such as culture, customs, and history. Because of the complex nature of a destination to be a brand, generalization of the identity is inevitable. Brand identity is critical for generalization of desirable characteristics projected by supplier’s perspective. It explains the expectations of a supplier about how a brand should be perceived by its target market. Defining a target market is crucial because some aspects of a destination may seem positive to one segment while ineffective to another (Fan, 2006).

2.2. Destination branding

Destination branding or the branding of places is a field that has gained increasing attention over the last decades. At least, a much cited article by Buhalís in 1999 stated that “the inadequacy of destination marketing literature probably illustrates the interest of researchers in the impacts of tourism on destinations” (Buhalís, 2000). The concept of
destination is very broad. They argue that a destination can be everything that people visit for a one day trip, a shorter stay or a longer holiday. In addition, destinations can be owned, at one end of the scale, by a single company whereas destinations, at the other end of that scale, are constituted by countries or regions (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009). Although the concept of branding has been applied extensively to products and services, the notion of branding has only recently started to expand into tourist destinations and became apparent as a topic of examination in the late 1990’s (Tasci & Kozak, 2006; Pike, 2004; Wagner & Peters, 2009).

2.3. Destination image

The definition of destination image is rather problematic (Jenkins, 1999), and often avoided (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003), since no consensus on how to define a destination’s image has been reached (Gallarza et al., 2002; Grosspietsch, 2006). Thus, many definitions are quite vague, and, in several cases, are not even explicitly stated (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993, 2003; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Pike & Ryan, 2004). The concept image remains complex and ill-defined in its nature, since it has been described as: representation, object, impressions, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, feelings or identity. The most common and widely accepted definition of brand image is “the perceptions about a brand reflected as associations existing in the memory of the consumer” (Keller, 1993).

2.4. Historical image

Goeldner et al. (2000) suggest that history may be one of the most interesting dimensions of a tourist destination, and is a rich instrument which allows creating a unique tourist experience. Local historic sites, stories, and legends – all create a romantic and lasting experience for region’s visitors. History is also what differentiates and unites nations, and is one of the important motives to visit one or another region. Historic travels become much more popular, and there are successful examples of how to use history to create a brand image of a region. Examples of popular historical attractions are Mount Vernon in the USA (plantation home of President George Washington, Virginia), Bastille square and Louvre in Paris in Sweden – Vasa Ship in central Stockholm (Goeldner et al., 2000). Complex image can be derived as a result of direct experience of the destination (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991). Since Gunn’s seminal work on destination image, many researchers have defined and conceptualized destination image in the context of tourism. Hunt (1975) defined destination image as perceptions that potential visitor should about a destination. When measuring the destination image of Mexico held by US citizens, Crompton (1979) conceptualized destination image as the sum of cognitive beliefs and affective impressions that an individual possesses of a particular destination. Similarly, Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) and Beerli et al. (2002) summarized that destination image is characterized by subjective perceptions that consist of both high levels of cognitive aspects (belief) and affective aspects (feeling). Therefore, it is deduced that:

H1: Historical image will positively affect common image of a destination.

2.5. Unique image

The significance of unique image on overall image warrants a need for more attention on this construct from destination branding scholars. Interestingly, its effect was even larger than the affective image component, which has received more consideration than unique image in the destination image literature. The results of Qu et al., research also show that uniqueness of a destination has the second largest influence on overall image. The importance of unique image also lies in its usefulness to positioning the destination brand. Because unique image is an excellent source for differentiation (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993), it needs to be identified and emphasized to improve overall image and increase the points of difference among various alternatives. Thus, little attention has focused on the construct in the literature, unique image should be considered as a critical brand association to expand our knowledge of destination image to the next level of destination branding (Qu et al., 2011). It is proposed that there is an additional image component to be considered as a
brand association: unique image. Contrary to common image, unique image is highlighted as a construct that envisages the overall image of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). According to Echtner and Ritchie (1993), the overall image of a destination should be viewed and measured based on three dimensions of attributes: holistic, functional psychological, and unique-common characteristics. Uniqueness is particularly important due to its influence on differentiation among similar destinations in the target consumers’ minds (Cai, 2002; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Morrison & Anderson, 2002; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998). One of the purposes of branding is to differentiate its product from those of competitors (Aaker, 1991, p. 7). Hosting unique events can thus lead to a differentiation of a destination’s image and products which can then emphasise and enhance the uniqueness of a place (Buhalis 1999). Uniqueness provides a compelling reason why travelers should select a particular destination over alternatives. Positive brand image is partly achieved through the uniqueness of brand associations to the brand in memory (Keller, 2008, p. 56). Thus, the unique image of a destination is critical to establish the overall image in the consumers’ minds. A strong, unique image would increase the favorability of the common image toward the destination. Therefore, it is deduced that:

H2: Unique image will positively affect common image of a destination.

2.6. Destination brand images

It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a considerable literature on destination brand images particularly in the area of leisure tourism marketing (Walmsley and Young, 1998). Studies in this area have focused upon the attributes forming destination images. Several studies have sought to identify the brand image attributes of specific tourism destinations (Etchner and Ritchie, 1993). Others have sought to identify common attributes across destinations (Walmsley and Jenkins, 1993; Walmsley and Young, 1998; Young, 1995). There has been much debate on the relationship between brand and image (Tasci & Kozak, 2006), however, one way in which to classify brand image is, being a form of consumer based brand equity (Pike, 2004). In this sense, brand image can be defined as being “The perception of a brand in the minds of persons. The brand image is a mirror reflection (though perhaps inaccurate) of the brand personality or product being. It is what people believe about a brand/their thoughts, feelings, expectations” (American Marketing Association, 2008). These beliefs, or perceptions, are developed from the associations or attributes that come to a consumer’s mind when contemplating a particular brand (Shimp, 2007). Therefore, we propose a third hypothesis as follows:

H3: Common image influence overall destination brand image.

2.7. Perceived quality

Quality of service, from the perspective of Grönroos (2000), is defined from two dimensions: the technical quality (that which is delivered to the consumer) and the functional quality of service (how it is delivered). In contrast, Brady and Cronin (2001) state that the perception on the quality of service is made up from three dimensions: quality of results, quality of interaction and quality of environment. Quality of results is defined as that which the client obtains when the productive process has finished, quality of interaction is presented as the interaction which takes place while service is being offered, and the quality of environment as the background conditions where the service is offered (or the product delivered). Oliver (1997) states that every interpretation by the consumer involves a relationship to a different kind of expectation. Thus, we can define the variable expectations as previous predictions or beliefs that the consumer use to make about results or performance of the product in the future (Olson and Dover, 1979). According to Oliver (1997), the quality of service is based on perceptions of excellence, so it is logical to think that perceived quality is influenced by the expectations of the consumer. Therefore, we propose a fourth hypothesis as follows:

H4: Overall destination brand image influence perceived quality.
2.8. Tourist behaviours

Previous research findings indicated that destination image had both direct and indirect effect on behavioural intentions (Alcaniz et al., 2009; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Bigne et al., 2001; Castro et al., 2007; Chen and Tsai, 2007; Chi and Qu, 2008; Lee, 2009). In these studies, behavioral intentions were usually examined from two different perspectives, using the terms “intention to (re)visit and willingness to recommend to others”. Conducting a SEM, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) found that three cognitive destination image factors (quality of experience, attractions, and value/entertainment) were positively associated with word-of-mouth (i.e. willingness to recommend to others). Bigne et al. (2001) investigated interrelationships among destination image, perceived quality, satisfaction, intention to return, and willingness to recommend to others in the context of resort visitors. They found that destination image had a direct effect on intention to return and willingness to recommend to others. Meanwhile, destination image was also found to have an indirect effect on intention to return and willingness to recommend to others through quality and satisfaction. Chen and Tsai (2007) supported Bigne et al. (2001) findings by indicating that destination image had a direct effect on trip quality and behavioural intentions. In addition, destination image had an indirect effect on behavioural intentions through trip quality, perceived value, and satisfaction. Recently, Alcaniz et al. (2009) also found a direct effect of cognitive destination image on tourism behavioural intentions. More specifically, functional image was only related to revisit intention and psychological image was only related to intention to recommend, and mixed image was associated with neither of the two behavioural intentions. Applying a theory of market heterogeneity in their study, Castro et al. (2007) found that there was strong an indirect relationship between a destination image and intention to visit, in which the relationship was moderated by service quality and tourist satisfaction. Chi and Qu (2008) tested a theoretical model that examined whether or not destination image had a direct or indirect effect on behavioural loyalty using a sample of a famous spring tourists. The findings indicated that destination image was indirectly related to behavioural loyalty through attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction. Word-of-mouth (WOM) is defined as “informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service” (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 63). Therefore, we propose a fifth hypothesis as follows:

H5: perceived quality influence loyalty
3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

![Conceptual Model Diagram]

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Sampling

The target population of this study was domestic visitors, who stopped at Shiraz city (Pasargade and Persepolis), Isfahan city (Naghshe-jahan Square and Jamee mosque), and Kermanshah (Bisotun) all of which have been registered in UNESCO list of world human heritage during an four-week period in August and September 2013. A confidence interval approach was used to determine the sample size, suggested by Burns and Bush (1995). With 50% of the estimated variability in the population (Burns & Bush, 1995), the sample size was set at 750 (n = 750) at the 95% confidence level. Every visitor who stopped at the five historical attractions was approached to participate in the survey. A random starting number for each day was created. A set of questionnaires along with an instruction letter was distributed to the five historical attractions according to a proportionate subsample size (250) for each city.

4.2. Instrument

The survey questionnaire consisted of three major sections. The first section included questions to identify historical tourists. The second section was developed to assess the respondent’s historical, common, and uniqueness perceptions of overall image toward Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah as a travel destinations. To generate a complete list of the respondent’s perceptions a method used by Qu et al., 2011 was adapted. During the review of the literature on destination branding and image measurement, all the attributes used in the previous studies were recorded and grouped by the researcher into a “master list” of attributes. In addition, 20 expert in marketing and tourism were held developing multi-item scales capturing various aspects of Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah image as a travel
destinations. The last step was to have a panel of university expert judges, who are academics and practitioners in the areas of tourism, marketing, and management examine the complete list of attributes to eliminate redundancies and to add any missing attributes. Finally, 19 items relating to historical image, 24 items relating to common image and 8 items to unique image were selected and respondents were asked to rate Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah as a travel destinations on each of 51 attributes on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD); 2 = Disagree (D); 3 = Neutral (N); 4 = Agree (A); and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA).

Affective image of destination was measured by using affective image scales developed by Russel et al. (1981) and Qu et al. (2011). The scale included four bipolar scales: Arousing-Sleepy, Pleasant-unpleasant, Exciting-Gloomy, and Relaxing-Distressing. A 7-point semantic-differential scale was used for all four bipolar scales where the positive poles were assigned to smaller values: 1 = arousing and 7 = sleepy, 1 = pleasant and 7 = unpleasant, 1 = exciting and 7 = gloomy, and 1 = relaxing and 7 = distressing. In addition, the scale of overall image measurement was modified from Stern and Krakover (1993). The respondents were asked to rate their perception of overall image of Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah on a 7-point scale with 1 being very negative and with 7 being very positive. The next section was to identify the attributes that make Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah unique from Tehran as capital city of Iran. A total of 8 items were derived from the image study various travel literature and confirm of experts. Although some of the similar measures were used for capturing common and unique images of Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah, they should be considered as different measures because common image measures the perceptions of the general quality of tourist experiences in Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah as a travel destination (without any comparison with other destinations). while overall image has more focus on comparison of measures between Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah and Tehran.

12 questions were included to determine the perceived quality of Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah brands that determine quality of historical destination brand in mind of tourists. Additional 6 questions were included to determine the respondent’s loyalty to Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah and the respondent’s intention to recommend Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah as a favorable destinations to others with a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = most unlikely; 5 = most likely). The final section was devoted to collecting demographic information about the respondents. The last section included questions relating to the individual travel behavior of respondents and the information source used prior to planning a trip to Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah. The travel behavior items included the number of times they visited Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kermanshah, purpose for the trip, length of stay, and total trip spending.

A pilot test was performed to assess how well the survey instrument captured the constructs it was supposed to measure, and to test the internal consistency and reliability of questionnaire items. The first draft of the survey instrument was distributed to 40 randomly selected visitors who stopped at Isfahan. A total of 40 questionnaires were collected at the site. The results of the reliability tests for each dimension showed that Cronbach’s alpha was 0.80 for historical items, 0.87 for common items, 0.87 for uniqueness, 0.88 for overall destination brand, 0.84 for perceived quality and 0.86 for loyalty. The scale reliability was tested for internal consistency by assessing the item-to-total correlation for each separate item and Cronbach’s alpha for the consistency of the entire scale. Rules of thumb suggest that the item-to-total correlations exceed .50 and lower limit for Cronbach’s alpha is .70 indicating above the minimum value of .70, which is considered acceptable as a good indication of reliability (Hair et al., 1998). Based on the results of the pilot test and feedback from experts, the final version was modified considering questionnaire design, wording, and measurement scale.

4.3. Data analysis

Principal component analyses were used to determine the underlying dimensions of the historical, common, unique image, overall image of brand, perceived quality and loyalty components of Shiraz, Isfahan,
and Kermanshah. Confirmatory factor analysis and SEM were utilized to test the conceptual model of historical destination branding. The data was processed with the statistical package SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 18.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Underlying dimensions of historical image

The result of Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 2274.63, \text{df} = 120, \text{KMO}^2 = 0.767$), indicating that nonzero correlation existed. These two tests suggested that the data was suitable for an exploratory factor analysis. A principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations was assessed to identify underlying dimensions of historical image. Based on the eigenvalue greater than one, scree-plot criteria, and the percentage of variance criterion, five components were chosen which captured 56% of the total variance. Among the 19 image attributes, three items had communalities less than .50 and factor loading less than .40. When there are variables that do not load on any factor or whose communalities are deemed too low, each can be evaluated for possible deletion (Hair et al., 1998). The results of the principle component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations and rotated component matrix are shown in Table 1. The scree plot indicated that four factors may be appropriate; however, based on a combination of scree plot and eigenvalue greater than one approach, five factors were retained. Components were labeled based on highly loaded items and the common characteristics of items they included. The component labels are “Historical buildings” (Factor 1), “Service of historical places” (Factor 2), “Historical knowledge” (Factor 3), “Price and availability” (Factor 4), and “Historical attraction” (Factor 5). These five factors were later used to construct summated scales as independent variables for structural equation modeling (SEM) for hypotheses testing.

5.2. Underlying dimensions of unique image

The results of a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett’s test of sphericity indicated that unique image set was appropriate for factor analysis ($\chi^2 = 558.18, \text{df} = 15, \text{KMO} = 0.692$). Based on the eigenvalue greater than one, scree-plot criteria, and the percentage of variance criterion, two factors were extracted through principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations. The two-factor model captured 55.3% of the total. A total of two items had communalities less than .50 and factor loading less than .40. Table 2 shows the results of the principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations. The scree plot indicated that two factors may be appropriate. A combination of scree plot and eigenvalue greater than 1 approach selected three factors. Factors were labeled based on highly loaded items and the common characteristics of items they included. They are labeled as “Unique customs of local people” (Factor 1) and “Unique facilities of historical destination” (Factor 2) (Table 2). These two factors were later used to construct summated scales as independent variables for structural equation modeling (SEM) for hypotheses testing.

5.3. Underlying dimensions of common image

The results of a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett’s test of sphericity indicated that common image set was appropriate for factor analysis ($\chi^2 = 4046.23, \text{df} = 190, \text{KMO} = 0.830$). Based on the eigenvalue greater than one, scree-plot criteria, and the percentage of variance criterion, five factors were extracted through principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations. The five-factor model captured 55.8% of the total. A total of four items had communalities less than .50 and factor loading less than .40. Table 3 shows the results
of the principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations. The scree plot indicated that five factors may be appropriate. A combination of scree plot and eigenvalue greater than 1 approach selected five factors. Factors were labeled based on highly loaded items and the common characteristics of items they included. They are labeled as “Affective image” (Factor 1), “Local properties” (Factor 2), “information and facilities” (Factor 3) “Perception image” (Factor 4) “Cognitive image” (Factor 5) (Table 3). These three factors were later used to construct summated scales as independent variables for structural equation modeling (SEM) for hypotheses testing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Historical buildings</th>
<th>Service of historical places</th>
<th>Historical knowledge</th>
<th>Price and availability</th>
<th>Historical attraction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q7_1</td>
<td>.813</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8_1</td>
<td>.756</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6_1</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9_1</td>
<td>.543</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.816</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.698</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.648</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.816</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.774</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11_1</td>
<td>.344</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14_1</td>
<td>.339</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.636</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4. Underlying dimensions of overall destination brand image

The results of a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett’s test of sphericity indicated that overall destination brand image set was appropriate for factor analysis ($\chi^2 = 3334$, df= 45, KMO= 0.910). Based on the eigenvalue greater than one, scree-plot criteria, and the percentage of variance criterion, two factors were extracted through principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations was assessed to identify underlying dimensions of overall image. The two-factor model captured 55.3% of the total. Only one item had communalities less than .50 and factor loading less than .40. Table 4 shows the results of the principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations. The scree plot indicated that two factors may be appropriate. A combination of scree plot and eigenvalue greater than 1 approach selected two factors. Factors were labeled based on highly loaded items and the common characteristics of items they included. They are labeled as “Cognitive brand” (Factor 1) and “Historical brand” (Factor 2) (Table 4). These two factors were later used to construct summated scales as independent variables for structural equation modeling (SEM) for hypotheses testing.
5.5. Underlying dimensions of perceived quality
The results of a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett’s test of sphericity indicated that perceived quality set was appropriate for factor analysis ($\chi^2=746.62$, df= 28, KMO= 0.705). Based on the eigenvalue greater than one, scree-plot criteria, and the percentage of variance criterion, three factors were extracted through principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations was assessed to identify underlying dimensions of perceived quality. The three-factor model captured 58.5% of the total.

A total of four items had communalities less than .50 and factor loading less than .40. Table 5 shows the results of the principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations. The scree plot indicated that three factors may be appropriate. A combination of scree plot and eigenvalue greater than 1 approach selected three factors. Factors were labeled based on highly loaded items and the common characteristics of items they included. They are labeled as “Overall satisfaction” (Factor 1), “Perceived quality of services” (Factor 2) and “Perception of safety and services” (Factor 3) (Table 5). These three factors were later used to construct summated scales as independent variables for structural equation modeling (SEM) for hypotheses testing.

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Historical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o7_1</td>
<td>.804</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o6_1</td>
<td>.774</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o9_1</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o10_1</td>
<td>.745</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o8_1</td>
<td>.731</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o5_1</td>
<td>.668</td>
<td>.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o4_1</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>.429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o2_1</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o1_1</td>
<td>.762</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o3_1</td>
<td>.744</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6. Underlying dimensions of loyalty of tourist
The results of a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett’s test of sphericity indicated that loyalty set was appropriate for factor analysis ($\chi^2=979.19$, df= 15, KMO= 0.765). Based on the eigenvalue greater than one, scree-plot criteria, and the percentage of variance criterion, two factors were extracted through principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations was assessed to identify underlying dimensions of unique image. The two-factor model captured 61.7% of the total. Only one item had communalities less than .50 and factor loading less than .40. Table 6 shows the results of the principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations. The scree plot indicated that two factors may be appropriate. A combination of scree plot and eigenvalue greater than 1 approach selected two factors. Factors were labeled based on highly loaded items and the common characteristics of items they included. They are labeled as “Intention to repeat” (Factor 1) and “Intention to recommend” (Factor 2) (Table 6). These two factors were later used to construct summated scales as independent variables for structural equation modeling (SEM) for hypotheses testing.

Table 5: Rotated Component Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Overall satisfaction</th>
<th>Perceived quality of services</th>
<th>Perceived quality of services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q48_1</td>
<td>.810</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q49_1</td>
<td>.700</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q50_1</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q51_1</td>
<td>.717</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q54_1</td>
<td>.538</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>.796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q57_1</td>
<td>.753</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q56_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Rotated Component Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Intention to repeat</th>
<th>Intention to recommend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q59_1</td>
<td>.812</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q60_1</td>
<td>.793</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q62_1</td>
<td>.640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q61_1</td>
<td>.613</td>
<td>.850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q63_1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7. Measurement model

Through principal component analyses, the five underlying dimensions of historical image, the two dimensions of unique image, the five dimensions of common image, the two dimensions of overall image, the three dimensions of perceived quality, the two dimensions of loyalty were identified. There is no reason to expect uncorrelated perceptions; thus the factors are allowed to correlate as well (Hair et al., 1998).

For purposes of CFA in this study, AMOS program (version 18) was chosen to estimate the measurement model and the construct covariances.

5.8. Confirmatory factor analysis

If correlations in the standardized solution exceed 1.0 or two estimates are highly correlated, one of the constructs should be removed (Hair et al., 1998). Based on this, for Confirmatory factor analysis of historical image measurement model, one component of historical image, which were greater than 1.0 was deleted. The deleted component was “Historical attraction”. The modified measurement model was then re-estimated for assessing overall model fit. The overall model fit statistics for the CFA were good ($\chi^2 = 144/7$, df = 29, p < .05, GFI=.96, AGFI= .92, CFI= .96, RMSEA=0/039), indicating that the individual indicators are behaving as expected.

For Confirmatory factor analysis of unique image measurement model, the modified measurement model was then re-estimated for assessing overall model fit. The overall model fit statistics for the CFA were good ($\chi^2 = 494/5$, df = 165, p < .05, GFI=.93, AGFI= .92, CFI= .91, RMSEA=0/052), indicating that the individual indicators are behaving as expected.

For Confirmatory factor analysis of common image measurement model, The modified measurement model was then re-estimated for assessing overall model fit. The overall model fit statistics for the CFA were good ($\chi^2 = 41/89$, df = 15, p < .05, GFI=.98, AGFI= .96, CFI= .96, RMSEA=0/049), indicating that the individual indicators are behaving as expected.

For Confirmatory factor analysis of overall image measurement model, The modified measurement model was then re-estimated for assessing overall model fit. The overall model fit statistics for the CFA were good ($\chi^2 = 6/69$, df = 4, p < .05, GFI=.98, AGFI= .99, CFI= .99, RMSEA= 0/030), indicating that the individual indicators are behaving as expected. These results indicated that all variables were significantly related to their specified

3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis
constructs, verifying the posited relationships among indicators and constructs.

5.9. Structural model

Based on the results of CFA, the structural model was tested. The overall model fit statistics show that the model is acceptable to represent the hypothesized constructs ($\chi^2 = 5619/9, \text{df} = 1923, p < .05, \text{CFI} = .75, \text{GFI} = .79, \text{AGFI} = .77, \text{RMSEA} = .051$). All the paths proposed in the structural model were statistically significant and of the expected positive direction (Table 7). Thus, all five hypotheses failed to be rejected.
Hypothesis 1, the more positive historical image of a destination, the more likely visitors would have the positive common image of the destination, was failed to reject (β = 0.772; t-value = 7.57; Sig. < 0.01).
Hypothesis 2, the more positive unique image of a destination, the more likely visitors would have the positive common image of the destination, was failed to reject (β = 0.604; t-value = 6.353; Sig. < 0.01).
Hypothesis 3, the more positive common image of a destination, the more likely visitors would have the positive overall brand image of the historical destination, was failed to reject (β = 0.310; t-value = 4.780; Sig. < 0.01).
Hypothesis 4, the more positive overall brand image of the historical destination, the more likely visitors would have the positive perceived quality of the historical destination, was failed to reject (β = 0.730; t-value = 7.047; Sig. < 0.01).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Destination branding is the set of marketing activities that support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination (Blain et al., 2005). This study analyzed the signification and importance of historical destination branding, historical destination image and the role of perceived quality and loyalty in the destination branding for Iranian historical destinations. Another aim of this study was to examine the image of the Shiraz, Isfahan and Kermanshah by seeking to uncover perceptions and attitudes towards the destination. As visitors seek out differences in culture, heritage and landscape from their everyday life when they choose a destination, destinations should develop images based on their unique features to differentiate themselves from their competitors (Bramwell and Rawding, 1996). Insights gained from these findings therefore provide additional information to destination marketers in developing the unique attributes of the Iranian historical cities.

The purpose of this study was to develop a relatively new concept of historical destination branding in the marketing and tourism field by applying traditional branding theory and practices to the Shiraz, Isfahan and Kermanshah cities in order to build a unique and favourable destination brand in the Iranian domestic tourism market. Both researchers and practitioners emphasize the importance of historical image creation and destination differentiation as integral elements in building a strong historical destination brand. It was proposed that common destination image (i.e., brand image) is a multi-dimensional construct, influenced by the historical and unique, images that collectively affect tourist behaviors.

However, based on research findings Historical image of the tourist destination in Iran Historical Image forming components include: historical sites, the availability of tour guides, tours for historical sites, Museums, Historical Buildings, Historical Cemetery, historical mosques, knowledge of history, historical Advertising, historical places brochure, tours price, availability of historical places and historical places ticket price. But unique image components include: Museums, Historical celebrations, historical architecture, historical symbols, Culture, Natural attraction and Hospitality.also common image components include: Pleasant, exciting, friendly, Hospitality, lifestyles, Security, natural landscape, music, health and Handicrafts.

In spite of the fact that Shiraz is the first choice of Iranian historical tourist, Isfahan is second and Kermanshah is third. The findings provide historical image have more impact on common image than unique image. All research hypotheses were partially supported. Results of this study have provided useful strategic directions for the Iranian historical cities to improve its destination competitiveness.

6.1. Limitations and further research

The findings and conclusion of this research should be read consideration of several limitations.

First the population of this study was limited to visitors who stopped at shiraz city (pasargad and persepolis), isfahan city (naghshe jahan square and jamee mosque), and Kermanshah (sang nebeshte biston) all of have been registered in UNESCO list of world human heritage during an four-week period and It may not be generalizable for other historical places in Iran.

The second and main limitation of this research is the credibility of the research findings based on the
selected sample. Future research should be undertaken using a bigger sample, for a better understanding of the determinants of the destination’s image and its relationship with the destination branding.

Last, There may be other factors influencing the historical brand image formation process and other items that form the image of a destination. This study is limited to including demographic variables that repeatedly appear in the literature. We believe that historical destination branding activities should also be focused on maintaining and enhancing historical visitor loyalty to ensure long-term destination success. As such, we suggest that improve the historical knowledge, relationship management techniques and practices designed to strengthen visitor loyalty within the context of destination branding could usefully be explored in future studies. In the end, the historical image of a city is central to its success (or failure) as a historical destination but it needs to be related to other aspects of the brand.

7. REFERENCES


