

SURVEY THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DESTINATION IMAGE, TOURIST SATISFACTION AND DESTINATION LOYALTY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to develop an integrated model to examine the theoretical and empirical evidence on the causal relationships among destination image, tourist trait and overall satisfaction, to Iranian domestic tourists' destination loyalty. Data were collected from tourists of Uremia city and analyzed utilizing a structural equation modeling approach. The results supported the proposed destination loyalty model: (1) destination image directly influenced trait of satisfaction; the findings reveal that the impact of destination image on tourist loyalty is significant. Similarly, the image has an effect on tourist loyalty, which is followed by affective image and cognitive image. (2) Destination image and trait of satisfaction were both direct antecedents of overall satisfaction; and (3) overall satisfaction and trait of satisfaction in turn had direct and positive impact on destination loyalty and destination familiarity, destination image, perceived value, and tourist satisfaction all influenced Iranian domestic tourists' destination loyalty. The theoretical and managerial implications were drawn based on the study findings, and recommendations for future researchers were made.

KEYWORD: *Destination image; Destination loyalty; Tourist satisfaction; Trait of satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

A plethora of studies has examined the impacts of the destination image and perceived value on tourist satisfaction (Patterson & Spreng, 1997). Most of these studies concluded that destination image and perceived value are two important antecedents of tourist satisfaction and to influence a tourist's destination choice behavior (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Customer satisfaction has been considered an essential business goal because it was assumed that satisfied customers would buy more. Studies also suggested that positive destination image and value perceptions tend to lead to favorable outcomes, such as intention to propose and revisit intentions (Faullant, Matzler, & Fu" Lear, 2008). On the other hand, a few studies examined the factors that are likely to influence tourists' destination image perceptions (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007). However, many companies have started to attend a high customer defection despite high satisfaction ratings (Oliver, 1999; Taylor, 1998). This circumstance has prompted a number of

scholars (Oliver, 1999; Reichheld, 1996) to criticize only a satisfaction study and call for a paradigm shift to the quest of loyalty as a strategic business goal. As a result, satisfaction measurement has recently been displaced by the concept of customer loyalty, because loyalty is seen as a better predictor of actual behavior. Two of the three measures making up most Customer Loyalty Indices (CLI) are behavior based, such as "probability to repurchase the product or service" and "probability to propose a product or service to others." The third element of a CLI is itself the satisfaction (Taylor, 1998). To understand retention of a measure loyalty which is desires a direct link to a company's bottom line? If the tourists' experience at, a destination is as a product, the level of loyalty can be reflected intention to revisit the destination to friends and relatives (Oppermann, 2000). A number of studies have addressed tourist loyalty in relation to travel motivation, satisfaction,

service quality, and destination image (Mechinda, Serirat, & Guild, 2009; Ramkissoon, Uysal, & Brown, 2011). Baloglu and McCleary (1999) and Tasci et al. (2007) suggested that a tourist destination is playing a significant role in the destination image formation process. Most of those studies utilized visits to a destination as a measure of tourists' familiarity with a destination (Gursoy, 2001, 2011). But familiarity with a destination enables tourists to form positive or negative perceptions of a destination and helps find a destination's attractiveness (Hornig, Liu, friends, relatives to a product/service (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). In fact, WOM referrals account for up to 65% of sales to new customers (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). So loyalty becomes a fundamental strategic component for organizations. However, in the context of travel and tourism, a review of literature reveals that there has not been more investigation on tourist satisfaction; and destination loyalty (Oppermann, 2000). Therefore, it is time for practitioners and academics to conduct more studies of loyalty in order to have more knowledge of this conceptualization to understand the role of customer satisfaction in developing loyalty, the impact of other non-satisfaction determinants of customer loyalty, and their interrelationships. Therefore, all these about customer loyalty will allow management to concentrate on customer retention. The results of such researches have shown that satisfaction, quality/performance, and different other variables are good predictors of customer intended loyalty. The more satisfied the customers are, the more likely to encourage others to become customers. In order to retain customers, organizations must seek to satisfy them, but a further objective must be to found customer loyalty. In the tourism context, satisfaction with travel experiences contributes to destination loyalty (Bramwell, 1998; Oppermann, 2000). The degree of tourists' loyalty to a destination is reflected in their intentions to revisit the destination and in their willingness to propose it (Oppermann, 2000; Maroofi & Dehqani, 2012). Maroofi & Dehqani, (2012) suggest that tourists' positive experiences of service, products, and other resources provided by tourism destinations could produce repeat visits as well as positive WOM effects to friends and/or relatives. According to customer satisfaction rule, one should not be surprised that a great deal of research has been devoted to

Chou, & Tsai, 2012). Even though the role of familiarity with a destination in decision making and the destination selection process has been well founded (Gursoy, 2003), the impact and importance of familiarity on destination image and destination loyalty formation have been somewhat overlooked in tourism studies (Prentice, 2004). Furthermore, loyal customers are more likely to act as free word-of mouth (WOM) advertising agents that informally bring networks of

investigating the antecedents of satisfaction (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988; Tse & Wilton, 1988). Early researches, focused on satisfaction at the global level (Oliver, 1980). Recently, there emerged a trait-level conceptualization of the antecedents of satisfaction (Oliver, 1993). Overall satisfaction is a function of trait-level evaluations. These evaluations typically capture a significant amount of variation in satisfaction (Oliver, 1993). Overall satisfaction and trait of satisfaction are distinct, though related, constructs (Maroofi & Dehqani, 2012). This study focused on overall evaluation, trait of satisfaction, and the relationship between the two. Furthermore, previous studies (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) showed that destination image will influence tourists in the process of choosing a destination, the subsequent evaluation of the trip and in their future intentions. A positive image deriving from positive travel experiences would result in a positive evaluation of a destination (Maroofi & Dehqani, 2012). If the destination has a positive image tourist satisfaction will improve and destination image affects tourists' behavioral intentions. The more favorable image will lead to higher probability to return to the same destination. To sum up, the following sequence could be founded: destination image - tourist satisfaction - destination loyalty. The destination image is an antecedent of satisfaction. Satisfaction in turn has a positive influence on destination loyalty. In an increasingly saturated marketplace, the success of marketing destinations should be analyzed destination loyalty, Familiarity and its interplay with tourist satisfaction and destination image. Nevertheless, the tourism studies to date have addressed and examined the constructs of image, satisfaction, and loyalty independently (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001); studies discussing the causal relationships among destination image, Familiarity, tourist

satisfaction, and destination loyalty are lacking. This study proposes an integrated approach for understanding destination loyalty and to examine the theoretical and empirical evidence on the causal relationships among destination image, Familiarity, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty. A research model was investigated the relevant relationships among the constructs by using a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach. The empirical data for the study was collected in a major tourism destination in the state of uremia. The city has attracted people of all ages from all around the country for several decades.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many proposed about concepts in social and behavioral sciences from different philosophical assumptions and paradigms. Therefore, their theory and operation may not be identical and often suggest multidimensional nature. As the focus of this study is to develop and test a theoretical model, which presented the elements contributing to the building of destination loyalty: destination image, trait of satisfaction, and overall satisfaction and the interrelationships of the constructs in the model is presented below. Therefore, destination images the effect of tourists' subjective perception, consequent behavior, and destination choice (Castro, Armario, & Ruiz, 2007; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Milman & Pizam, 1995). Tourists' behavior is expected to image that they have of destinations and the image will influence tourists in choosing process destination, the subsequent evaluation of the trip, and in their future intentions, which has been studied by various authors (Gartner, 1989; Goodall, 1988). It is believed that destinations with more positive images will be included in the process of decision making. Moreover, destination image has a positive influence on perceived quality and satisfaction. As well as images will lead to higher tourist satisfaction. In turn, the evaluation of the destination experience will influence the image and modify it (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Ross, 1993). Court and Lupton (1997) suggest that the image of the destination positively affects visitors' intention to revisit in the future. Kotler, Bowen, and Makens (1996) founded the following sequence: image - quality - satisfaction. Therefore, image would affect how customers perceive quality positive image corresponds to a higher perceived quality. Perceived quality will in

turn found the satisfaction of consumers (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000), because satisfaction is the result of customers' evaluation of the perceived quality. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1. Destination image positively influences tourist's satisfaction.

Recently, researchers started to pay attention to trait-level conceptualization of the antecedents of satisfaction (Oliver, 1993). According to Oliver (1993), satisfaction and trait of satisfaction are distinct but related constructs. Trait of satisfaction has a positive, and direct effects on overall satisfaction; and it captures a significant amount of variation in overall satisfaction (Oliver, 1993; Spreng, Mankenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996). Satisfaction research in tourism and recreation has indicated that tourists' satisfaction with individual component of the destination leads to their satisfaction with the overall destination (Danaher & Arweiler, 1996; Mayer, Johnson, Hu, & Chen, 1998). It is important in tourism to distinguish overall satisfaction from satisfaction with individual traits; because the characteristics of tourism have a remarkable effect on tourist satisfaction (Seaton & Benett, 1996). Tourists experience such as hotels, restaurants, shops, attractions, etc.; and they may evaluate each element separately. Overall satisfaction with a hospitality experience is a function of satisfactions with the individual elements of all the services that make up the experience, such as accommodation, weather, natural environment, social environment, etc. (Pizam & Ellis, 1999). Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H2. Trait of satisfaction positively influences overall satisfaction.

H3. Destination image positively influences tourists' trait of satisfaction.

H4. Trait of satisfaction mediated the relationship between destination image and overall satisfaction.

Satisfaction is frequently examined concepts of modern marketing thought and practice because it is essential for the survival of any type of business (Oliver, 1997; Spreng & Chiou, 2002). There are several definitions for satisfaction (Giese & Cote, 2000). But in this study, we use the definitions satisfaction as is conceptualized as a post-purchase evaluation (Fornell, 1992). The link between satisfaction and post-purchase behavior has been founded by prior literature (Hallowell, 1996; Rust &

Zahorik, 1993). It is believed that satisfaction leads to repeat purchase and positive WOM support sedation, which are indicated a loyalty. Marketing literature has paid much attention to the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty, and there is a significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty/ retention (Cronin et al; 2000). If consumers are satisfied with the product/service, they are continuing to purchase, and are willing to spread positive WOM. According to these studies, satisfaction is a necessity for a successful tourist destination because one of the most important predictors of customer loyalty is a satisfaction (Ozdemir et al., 2012). It tends to influence the choice of a destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return (Chi, 2011, 2012). Satisfied tourists are revisiting and recommend the destination to friends and relatives compared to others (Prayag & Ryan, 2012). The more satisfied customers are repurchasing the product/service and encourage others to become customers. In the tourism industry, there are empirical evidences that tourists' satisfaction is a strong indicator of their intentions to revisit and proposed the destination to other people (Juaneda, 1996; Kozak, 2001). Satisfied tourists are returning to the same destination, and are more willing to share their positive traveling experience with their friends and relatives. As WOM are a critical in tourism marketing, they are considered to be the most reliable, and are one of the most sought-after information sources for potential tourists (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). The above discussion leads to the following hypotheses:

- H5. Satisfaction significantly influenced destination
- H6. Satisfaction mediated the relationship between destination image and destination loyalty.
- H7. Satisfaction mediated the relationship between trait of satisfaction and destination loyalty.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey instrument followed the procedures recommended by Churchill & Surprenant (1982) and DeVellis (1991) for developing a standardized survey instrument. A number of items to measure were identified from the literature. The survey questionnaire consisted of the following sections: destination image, tourists' trait of satisfaction,

satisfaction, destination loyalty, and questions designed to gather tourist demographic information and travel behavior. Regarding *destination image*; a combination of two structured and unstructured techniques were used in order to capture various aspects of the respondents' perceptions of a Uremia city (west of Iran) as a travel destination, content analysis of tourism literature, promotional brochures, and the employment of qualitative research techniques such as focus group sessions, unstructured personal interviews, and managerial judgment. The selected 48 destination items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. According a *trait of satisfaction*; most of the relevant tourism literature and destination traits applicable to the Uremia situation, consisting of 29 items were found. The destination traits encompassed five domains of tourism activities: accommodation, dining, shopping, attractions, and environment. The choice of traits within each domain, varied with the chosen mix of the five tourism activities. Along five-point Likert-scales, tourists were asked to evaluate their satisfaction with each tourist attracting trait (1 = Very dissatisfied and 5 = Very satisfied). *Satisfaction*; a number of studies have measured for satisfaction (Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Fornell et al., 1996). A single measurement of satisfaction was used in this study was empirical support. The respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the overall traveling experience on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being Very dissatisfied and 5 being Very satisfied. *Destination loyalty*; the measurement of repeat purchasing intentions and WOM recommendations were used to indicate consumer loyalty, and were found to be a relevant measurement (Jones & Sasser, 1995). Prior research has shown that loyal customers are to repurchase a product in the future (Petrick et al., 2001; Sonmez & Graefe, 1998). It has also been suggested that loyal visitors are willing to propose the product to others (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). In addition, correlation has been found between consumers' repurchase intentions and significant WOM referrals (Oh, 2000). In this study, two single-item measures were used for evaluating tourist destination loyalty as the ultimate dependent construct: tourists' intention to revisit Uremia and their willingness to propose Uremia as a favorable destination to others, with 5-point Likert scale (1 = most unlikely; 5 = most likely).

3.2. RELIABILITY

Reliability presents the variances among a set of observed variables that measure an underlying construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All reliabilities for each constructs were acceptable (above 0.798). In addition, each of the Cronbach alpha values passed the threshold value of 0.8 (Nunnally, 1978), which suggests that for each of the constructs, there is a reasonable degree of internal consistence between the corresponding indicators. Based on the results of the

pilot test and feedbacks from Uremia city, the final version of the survey instrument was developed.

3.3. SAMPLATION PLAN

The target population was all the visitors who stopped by the Uremia Welcome Center, stayed at hotels, motels, and they also visited art galleries during a 2-month survey period. The confidence interval approach was used to find the sample size (Burns & Bush, 1995) and for obtaining 95% accuracy at the 95% confidence level the

$$n = \frac{z^2(pq)}{e^2} + \frac{1.96^{(0.5 \times 0.5)}}{0.05^2} = 385$$

Where z is the standard error related to choosing a level of confidence (94%); p the estimated variability in the population (52%); q = 1 - p; and e the acceptable error 74% (desired accuracy 94%). The amount of variation in the population is estimated to be 52%. Assuming a response rate of 52% and an unusable rate of 9%, a total of 961 (382/0.9). A two-stage sampling approach was used: first, sampling was applied for deciding on the stratum sample size, and second, systematic random sampling (SRS) was used to select the survey participant within each stratum, which involved choosing every kth element after a random start.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

In testing the hypotheses we used exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to derive the underlying dimensions of the destination image and visitors' trait of satisfaction. We develop our conceptual model in this section according to the research background and discussed. Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and SEM were tested regarding the conceptual model that examined the antecedents of destination loyalty.

4. RESULTS

A total of 401 questionnaires were returned (90%). The majority of the respondents (99%) were

domestic visitors from 7 different Iran states. The 97% of the respondents were traveling with partners (family and friends), and vacation/ leisure was quoted as the major purpose of the trip (89%). 23%, of the respondents were first-time visitors. Previous visits (47%) and WOM (40%) emerged as the two key information sources for respondents to learn about the travel destination.

4.1. Underlying dimensions of 'destination image' and 'trait satisfaction'

To find the basic dimension of 'destination image' for analyzing patterns of correlations among the 43 image attributes the EFA was performed. Oblimin rotation Principle of factoring method was adopted because (1) when the goal factor analysis is obtained several theoretically factors; the sloping rotation is best; (2) sloping rotation assumes that factors are correlated to each other, (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). A range of cutoff criteria was used to find the number of factors derived, such as eigenvalues, the percentage of variance, common items, and factor loadings (Hair et al., 1998). Items with loadings lower than 0.4 were eliminated. A seven factor were solution, with 33 variables being retained (Table 1).

Table 1

Dimensions of destination image

	Eigenvalue	Variance (%)	Cronbach's α	Factor	Communalities
F1 Travel environment	15.49	41.77	0.88		
Safe and secure environment				0.70	0.73
Clean environment				0.65	0.73
Friendly and helpful local people				0.54	0.66
Pleasant weather				0.43	0.47
F2 Natural attractions	3.45	9.43	0.94		
Scenic mountain and valleys				0.84	0.75
Natural attractions				0.83	0.82
Gardens and springs				0.77	0.77
parks /rivers				0.69	0.79
Caves and underground formations				0.45	0.55
F3 Historic attractions	1.44	3.85	0.85		
Distinctive history and heritage				0.85	0.77
Vintage buildings				0.67	0.65
F4 Infrastructure	1.33	3.79	0.83		
Restaurants				0.79	0.73
Variety of shop facilities				0.69	0.72
Choice of accommodations				0.54	0.53
F5 Accessibility	1.19	2.98	0.82		
Parking information				0.75	0.75
Available parking downtown				0.65	0.57
Easy access to the area				0.57	0.58
F6 Outdoor activities	0.91	2.47	0.87		
Exciting water sports/ boating, fishing,				0.78	0.82
Opportunities for outdoor recreation				0.44	0.64
Good facilities for sports				0.45	0.64
F7 Price and value	0.83	2.29	0.88		
Reasonable price for food and accommodation				0.95	0.92
Value for money				0.73	0.74
Reasonable price for attractions and activities				0.65	0.74

Although only five factors had eigenvalues greater than 1.0. Both five -factor and seven-factor solutions were analyzed, and the loadings of the seven-factor model presented a cleaner and more interpretable solution. The last two factors included in the seven-factor model also represented important aspects of the destination image. The 33 variables ranged from 0.41 to 0.86, suggesting that the variances of each original variable (from 41% to 86%) were explained by the seven-factor solution. Factor loadings of the variables ranged from 0.41 to 0.96, above the suggested threshold value of 0.30 for practical and statistical significance (Hair et al., 1998). The

Cronbach alpha for the seven factors varied from 0.81 to 0.95, suggested high internal consistency. The seven factors were based on the core variables as: travel environment, natural attractions, historic attractions, travel infrastructure, accessibility, relaxation, and price and value seven composite variables were used as indicators for the inactive construct 'destination image' in the subsequent SEM. The EFA procedure was used to verify the dimensions of tourist satisfaction. Six factors with eigenvalues above 1.0, were generated, which explained about 73% of the total variance (Table 2).

Table 2

Underlying dimensions of 'attribute satisfaction'

	Eigenvalue	Variance	Cronbach's α	Factors	Commonalities
F1 Shopping	13.77	44.04	0.86		
Quality of merchandise				0.81	0.73
Reasonable price of merchandise				0.62	0.60
Variety of shops				0.59	0.60
Friendliness of service				0.60	0.53
F2 Lodging	1.78	5.43	0.91		
Uniqueness of lodging and facilities				0.88	0.83
Quality and cleanliness of lodging				0.80	0.74
Historic interests of lodging				0.62	0.52
Service in lodging facilities				0.52	0.72
Reasonable price of meals				0.43	0.51
Variety of lodging options				0.43	0.63
F3 Accessibility					
Availability of local parking				0.74	0.54
Travel information				0.65	0.72
Welcome center				0.61	0.61
Ease of access				0.62	0.55
F4 Attractions	1.12	3.44	0.84		
Variety of cultural sites				-.074	0.93
Variety of natural attractions				-.062	0.77
Variety of cultural options				-.053	0.73
Reasonable price for sightseeing				-.035	0.65
F5 Environment	1.12	3.34	0.86		
Restful atmosphere				0.67	0.74
Cleanliness				0.64	0.78
Friendliness of local people				0.63	0.72
Safety and security					
F6 Dining	1.06	3.22	0.86		
Quality of food				0.82	0.76
Service in restaurants				0.73	0.68
Reasonable price of meals				0.61	0.61

The common items varied from 0.40 to 0.90, suggesting that the variance in each original variable was explained by the six common factors. The factor loadings for the 31 variables ranged from 0.38 to 0.92, within the threshold value suggested by Hair et al. (1998). The loadings, also showed interpretable solution: the 31 variables loaded significantly on six factors as the researchers conceptualized lodging, dining, shopping, attractions, environment, and accessibility; no variables loaded significantly on more than one factor. The Cronbach's alphas for the six factors were robust, ranging from 0.85 to 0.91, (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating high internal consistency among the variables within each

factor. Six summated scales were used for the latent variable 'trait of satisfaction' in the subsequent SEM analysis.

4.2. THE MODEL FITS

Model fit depicts the degree to which suggested the hypothesized constructs. The χ^2 value (693.62 with 152 degrees of freedom) has a statistical significance level of 0.0. Therefore, the χ^2 value should be used as a guide rather than an absolute index of fit due to its sample size and model complexity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1982). Thus, other indices should also be evaluated. Incremental Fit Measures evaluate the

incremental fit of the model compared to a null model that has no relation among the constructs and variables. These were the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), and the Normed Fit Index (NFI), which were 0.94, 0.95, and 0.95, respectively. These measures were indicating support for the proposed model. Another measure to evaluate the model fit is the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), which provides a measure of fit that adjusts for parsimony by evaluating the discrepancy per degree of freedom in the model. The RMSEA value was a marginal 0.12. SEM was applied for testing the destination loyalty model in which seven hypotheses were developed based on a literature review. Various measures of Table 3

overall model goodness-of-fit and measurement model fit were evaluated to find if the proposed conceptual model was acceptable.

4.2.1. MEASUREMENT MODEL

The measurement model provides latent variables in the model. The evaluation of the measurement model is a pre-requisite to the evaluation of the structural model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1982). The convergent validity of the measurement scale via the following tests was examined. First, for each variable the t value related to each of the loadings was significant at the 0.01 level (Table 3).

LISREL results for measurement model

	Std	SMC	CR	AVE
Exogenous: destination image			0.92	0.51
Travel environment	0.81	0.65		
Natural attractions	0.72	0.50		
Historic attractions	0.56	0.32		
Infrastructure	0.75	0.54		
Accessibility	0.71	0.53		
Price and value	0.82	0.66		
Outdoor activities	0.71	0.51		
Endogenous: attribute satisfaction			0.92	0.62
Lodging	0.74	0.55		
Attractions	0.86	0.72		
Shopping	0.81	0.67		
Dining	0.74	0.53		
Accessibility	0.74	0.55		
Environment	0.77	0.57		
Endogenous: destination loyalty			0.91	0.61
Revisit intention	0.83	0.72		
Recommend intention	0.95	0.93		

The results indicated that all variables were significantly related to their constructs, verifying the relationships among educators and constructs. Second, squared multiple correlation coefficients (SMC) for the y- and x-variables were evaluated. Therefore, SMCs lie between 0 and 1. Table 3 revealed that the SMCs for y-variables ranged from 0.54 to 0.94 and for x- v varies from 0.32 to 0.63, indicating high reliability (convergent validities) of the measurement model. The construct reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) were also computed. For both CR and AVE, constructs surpassed the threshold value of .72 and .53,

respectively. Therefore, the indicators for all constructs were sufficient in terms of how the measurement model was specified. To examine the discriminant validity of the measurement model, the AVE values was compared to the squared correlations between the corresponding constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and none of the squared correlations surpassed the AVE. The above tests indicated that the discriminant validity was upheld for the measurement model.

4.2.2. Structural model

The hypothesized structural model was tested using LISREL and was also found to fit the data quite well, results showed all the paths proposed in the ‘destination loyalty’ model were statistically significant and of the appropriate direction (positive): (1) destination image positively influenced overall satisfaction ($\beta_{2,1} = 0.32$; $t = 4.08$); (2) trait satisfaction positively affected overall satisfaction ($\beta_{2,1} = 0.23$; $t = 2.81$); (3) destination image positively influenced trait satisfaction ($\beta_{1,1} = 0.74$; $t = 11.72$); (4) overall satisfaction positively affected destination loyalty ($\beta_{3,2} = 0.74$; $t = 12.34$); and from the results of (1)–(3), it can be concluded that (5) trait satisfaction mediated the relationship between destination image and overall satisfaction (Baron &

Kenny, 1986). The hypotheses 1–5 proposed causal relationships among destination image trait satisfaction, overall satisfaction, and destination loyalty is not rejected. The structural model was evaluated by the SMCs for structural equations, and indicated the variance in each endogenous latent variable accounted for by the antecedent variables in the relevant structural equation. The SMC for ‘trait satisfaction’ was 0.53, indicating that 53% of the variance in a trait of satisfaction was explained by ‘destination image.’ About 23% of the uncertainties in ‘overall satisfaction’ were accounted for by ‘destination image,’ ‘overall satisfaction,’ and ‘traits of satisfaction’ explained 42% of the variance in ‘Destination loyalty’ (SMC = 0.42).

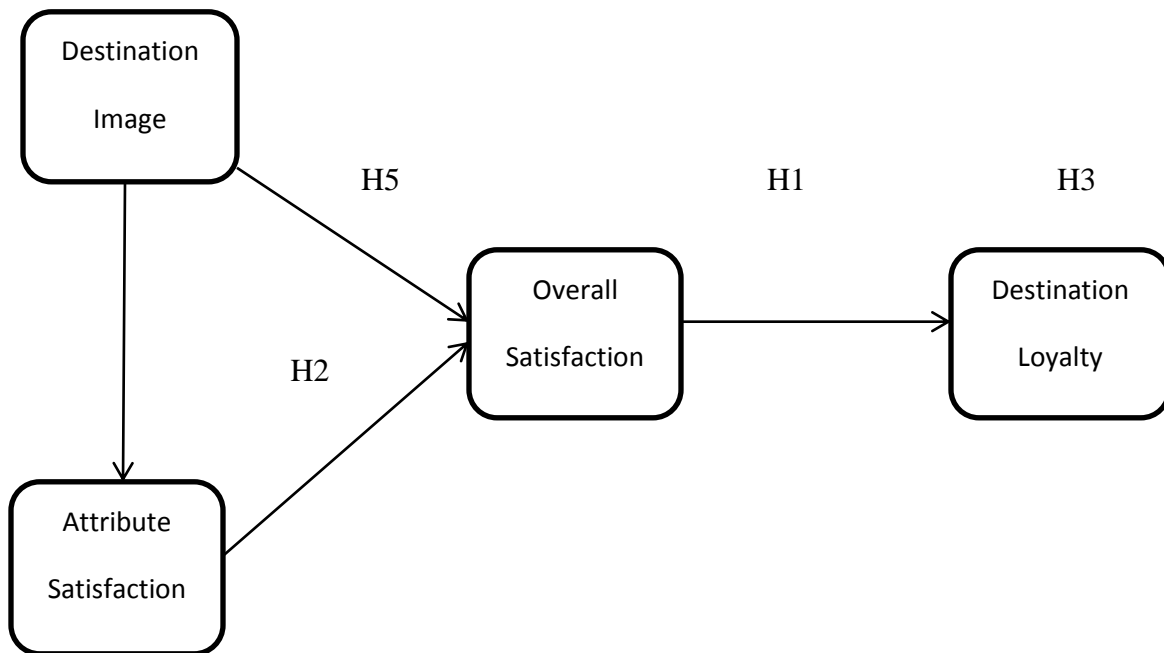


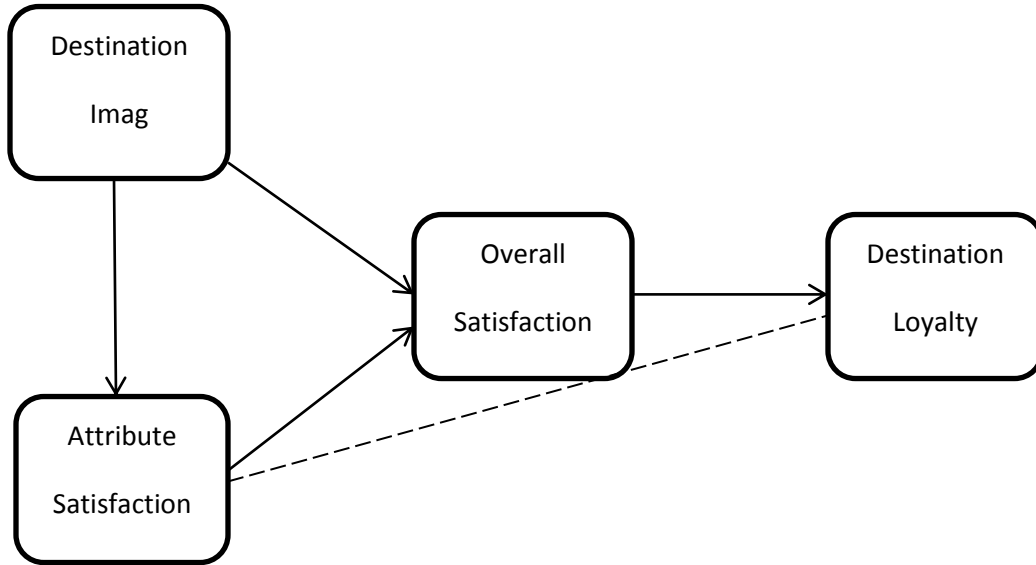
Fig. 1. Theoretical ‘destination loyalty’ model (MT).

4.2.3. COMPETING MODELS

Fig. 1 shows the evolution of final approach to the model was compared the proposed theoretical model (M_T), which acted with the alternative explanations

to the proposed model. In this study, two alternative models were proposed (Fig. 2): M₁ and M₂. M₁ shows the path between ‘trait of satisfaction’ and ‘destination loyalty.’ And M₂ shows paths between ‘destination image’ and ‘destination loyalty.’

Competing Model M1



Competing Model M2

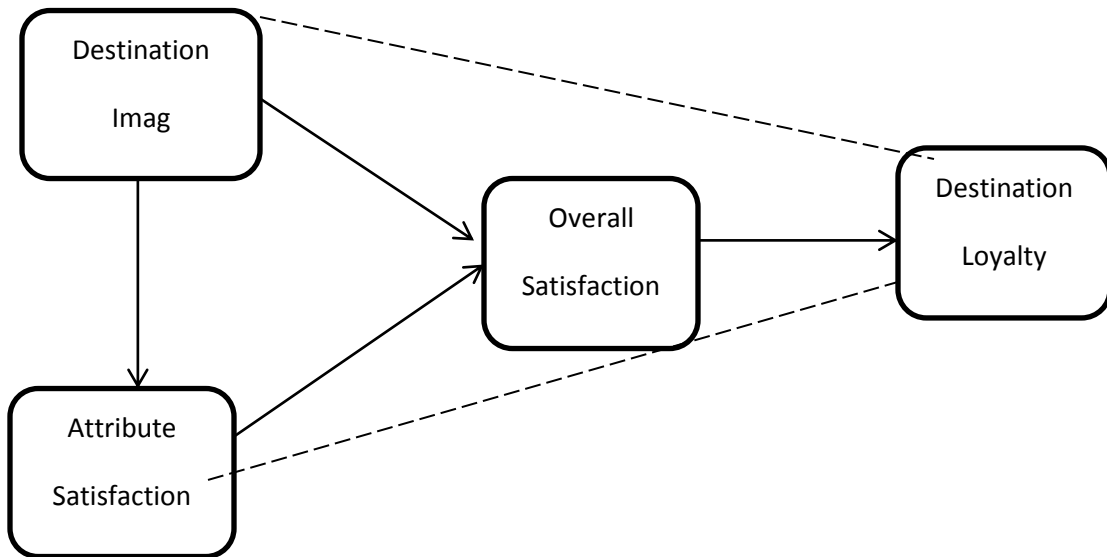


Fig. 2. Competing 'destination loyalty' models.

The sequential Chi-square (χ^2) difference tests (SCDTs) were performed to evaluate and there were

significant differences in estimated construct covariance's (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1995). The χ^2

difference test examined the null hypotheses of no significant difference between two nested structural models (denoted as $M_1-M_T = 0$ and $M_1-M_2 = 0$). The difference between χ^2 statistic values ($\Delta\chi^2$) for nested models was itself distributed as χ^2 , with degrees of freedom equal to the difference in degrees of freedom for the two models (Δdf). If the null hypothesis was upheld, the more constrained model of the two would be accepted. The χ^2 difference test between M_T and M_1 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 5.51$; $\Delta df = 1$) suggested that M_1 was performing better than the theoretical model M_T ; and the χ^2 difference test between M_1 and M_2 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 0.31$; $\Delta df = 1$) suggested that M_2 was not performing better than M_1 . The results of the χ^2 difference t test the competing model M_1 to the proposed theoretical model M_T and the alternative model M_2 (saturated model). To the effect of causal relationships, it was necessary to examine the statistical parameter coefficients for the additional paths for M_1 and M_2 . The causal relationship between ‘trait of satisfaction’

and ‘destination loyalty’ was significant ($\beta = 0.14$; $t = 2.37$); whereas the causal path from ‘destination image’ to ‘destination loyalty’ was not significant ($\gamma = 0.04$; $t = 0.56$). This suggested that there should be a direct path between ‘trait of satisfaction’ and ‘destination loyalty’ as the competing model M_1 proposed. Therefore, the relationship of tourists’ satisfaction with various components of a destination could directly lead to their loyalty with the destination. Therefore, H6 supported the overall satisfaction on the relationship between destination image and destination loyalty, and H7 did not support the overall satisfaction on the relationship between trait of satisfaction and destination loyalty. Therefore, overall satisfaction mediated the relationship between trait of satisfaction and destination loyalty (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Another comparison, a set of goodness-of-fit measures was also compared to find the three models which had the best model fit (Table 4)?

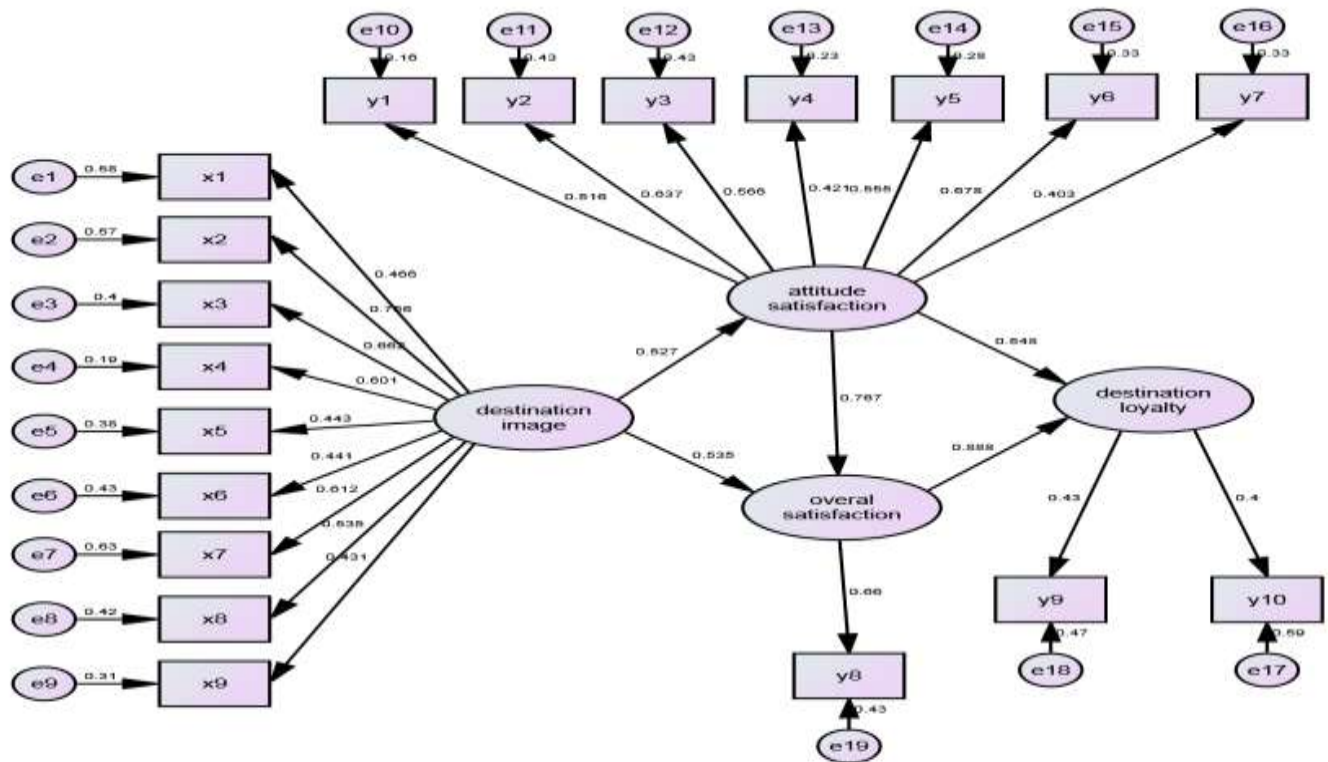
Table 4

Competing models

	MT	M1	M2
Chi-square	690.67	682.87	681.35
Degrees of freedom	152	150	149
RMSEA	0.12	0.12	0.12
RMR	0.063	0.057	0.058
GFI	0.82	0.82	0.82
CFI	0.94	0.94	0.94
NNFI	0.96	0.96	0.96
PNFI	0.81	0.80	0.80

The fit indices such as RMSEA, CFI, and PNFI were identical, indicating that the three competing models achieved the same level of model fit. Thus, it was concluded that the competing model M_1 could be retained as a feasible alternative for acceptance. Considering the measurement for large models and large sample sizes, the final model M_1 (Fig. 3), not achieving the desirable levels of fitness, may

represent the best available model until further research identifies improvements in theoretical relationships or the measurement of the constructs.



* X1.....X9: travel environment, natural attractions, entertainment and events, historic attractions, travel infrastructure, accessibility, relaxation, outdoor activities, and price and value

* Y1.....Y10: lodging, dining, shopping, attractions, activities and events, environment, accessibility, satisfaction, revisit intention, referential intention

* Values in parenthesis are t-statistics (t critical value at 0.05 levels = 1.96)

Fig. 3. Results of destination loyalty model (M₁).

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1. THEORITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The SEM analysis statistically supported significant relationships between destination image and overall satisfaction (H1), trait of satisfaction and overall satisfaction (H2), destination image and trait of satisfaction (H3), and overall satisfaction and

destination loyalty (H5). The SEM analysis also confirmed the mediation role and trait of satisfaction played between destination image and overall satisfaction (H4), and the mediation role overall satisfaction played between destination image and destination loyalty (H6). The only hypothesis (H7) that was not supported overall satisfaction as a mediator, rather than a full mediator as originally proposed, between the trait of satisfaction and destination loyalty. Therefore, it can be said that tourist overall satisfaction was found by destination image and trait satisfaction, tourist trait of satisfaction was also directly influenced by destination image, and destination loyalty was in turn influenced by overall satisfaction. In addition, the newly proposed direct path from the trait of satisfaction to destination loyalty was shown to be significant; thus, trait of satisfaction was also a direct antecedent of destination loyalty. The findings confirmed that tourists' loyalty was enhanced by positive destination image and high satisfaction. The empirical results of this study providing arguable evidence that the proposed structural equation model consider simultaneously destination image, overall and trait of satisfaction, and destination loyalty.

Moreover, the trait of satisfaction influenced the destination loyalty. Therefore, destination image plays an essential role in achieving the loyalty of an individual, and tourists' satisfaction must be handled proactively in order to develop it into a lasting relationship beneficial to both parties. Destination image had a positive effect on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. An improvement in the overall image of an individual increased to make a positive evaluation of the stay. Consequently, by the review of the literature, the analysis of the interrelationships as a whole confirmed the proposed model. This study confirmed the existence of the critical relationships among destination image, trait/overall satisfaction, and destination loyalty. The findings suggested that it would be useful for destination managers to make investments in their tourism destination resources, in order to continue to enhance the tourists' experiences.

5.2. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Destinations today are facing vertical competitions. It is essential to understanding of why travelers are loyal to a destination and what drives the loyalty. The findings show significant managerial implications for tourism and marketers. The analyses revealed that destination image was consisting of six latent dimensions, and the trait of satisfaction had six underlying factors. These results could help destination marketers better and factors contributing to tourist satisfaction and loyalty so that they are able to deliver products and services that accommodate the tourists' needs and wants. Despite the considerable amount of studies on destination image and tourist loyalty, the multi-dimensional nature of the constructs and the variability across studies make it difficult to ascertain a solid linkage between the variables. Additionally, the SEM findings are providing guideline for the marketing destinations. It is a direct antecedent of the traits of satisfaction and overall satisfaction as well as a major factor in influencing destination loyalty. Therefore, destination managers must attempt to improve the image tourists hold of a destination. As an image is formed, it is difficult to change; it is important for destinations to present the right image and then maintain it. Because the image that tourists hold of a destination will affect tourists' satisfaction with the travel experiences, the WOM communication after the trips as well as the intention in the future, destination marketers should take a serious approach to manage the image. Although it is not possible to control all the elements contributing to the shaping of the image

of a destination, it is possible to manipulate some of them such as advertising and promoting tourist attractions, administering service quality, providing by tourism infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants, tourist centers, etc. Similarly, the current study proposed and confirmed a framework which is more comprehensive in accounting for and testing the multiple dimensions simultaneously. Since the image is modified by information or stimulus received by an individual, friends, or family will help to find the diversification of a detail and realistic image of a destination. Because tourists tend to rely on this image for satisfaction evaluation and destination choice decisions, all efforts should improve the experience. To conclude, tourism destinations must take care of the image that they attempt to convey and the quality of the services and products they offer, as all these will affect visitors' satisfaction and their intentions for future behavior. Moreover, destination managers should consider the role tourist satisfaction played in developing destination loyalty. It is assumed that if tourists are satisfied with their travel experiences, they are willing to revisit a destination as well as positive WOM. This study provided empirical evidence supporting this assumption: satisfaction was directly affected destination loyalty in a positive direction. Higher tourist satisfaction will lead to higher destination loyalty, which prompts tourists to visit a destination again and/or proposed the destination to others. Therefore, destination managers should focus on finding a high tourists' satisfaction level so improve sustain destination competitiveness. Since the threat of satisfaction affects destination loyalty both directly and indirectly through overall satisfaction, its measurement and improvement is critical to destination managers. The special characteristics of tourism found that many elements are involved in the formation of tourists' satisfaction, from the providers of specific services of accommodation, leisure, among others, to the tourism information offices, the local residents, etc. The situations are complicated when a single unpleasant incident leads to a negative evaluation, depending on how important the incident is to the tourist. Therefore, in order to achieve a high overall level of satisfaction, it is essential for all parties involved to have a coordination and cooperation and should be aware of the critical importance of providing quality service/product quality.

6. LIMITATIONS

The limitation of this research is as: first, tourists who travel in different seasons may have different opinions of a destination. Therefore, tourism research findings should be taken into consideration in the interpretation stage. Therefore, future researchers could conduct similar surveys in different seasons. The survey results should be compared to identify similarities and differences in them. In addition, the population of this study was limited to visitors of a tourist destination. Overall satisfaction and repurchase were measured by a single question. In the present study, overall image demonstrated the potential of serving as a strong proxy for the destination image. Compared to the traditional approach which treats the cognitive aspects of destination image, overall image may represent a novel and broader theoretical view and therefore deserves further scrutiny into its nature and possible underlying dimensions. The findings also provided tenable evidence that the destination image exerts different influence on the different dimensions of tourist loyalty. Destination image, trait of satisfaction and overall satisfaction was studied as antecedents to destination loyalty. Therefore, future researchers are advised to investigate additional antecedents of tourist loyalty. This may not lead to the relationships tested in the current study and to conceptual refinement and extension. In addition, since the survey was conducted by the staffs working at different local destinations such as the welcome center, hotels/motels, and shops, it was not sure that all respondents would have completed their traveling experiences with Uremia while replying to the survey. Therefore, Data collected from this study were affected relationships reported. Although SEM allows one to assume causal relationships, the present study's model specification was based on previous research and theory. As a consequence, the relationships suggested by the model in this study may not represent the true causal relationships among the constructs.

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