

Effect of Destination Image and Satisfaction on Loyalty of Heritage Tourists: Presenting a Conceptual Model

(Case Study: Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili collection)

Roya Esmi^{1*}
Habib Shahbazi Shiran²

1. Masters Graduate, Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil Iran.

2. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Iran.

*Corresponding Author. Email: roya.esmi20@gmail.com

Abstract: The basis for the restoration, preservation and prosperity of historical buildings in Iran is directly related to the attraction of heritage tourists. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of destination image and satisfaction on heritage loyalty in a conceptual model based on the visitors of Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili collection (Ardabil city, Iran). The research method was descriptive-survey and the sample size selected 375 people by using available sampling method and Cochran formula (with unspecified population size). Data analysis was performed using SPSS22 and AMOS software. Findings showed that most of the respondents had relatively satisfactory satisfaction with the visit to the collection. According to the results of SEM, the most effective variables related to image of destination, satisfaction and loyalty were variables of awareness and knowledge, costs and variable of revisiting tourists, respectively. Also, the image of destination has a significant effect on satisfaction, but the effect of the image of destination on the loyalty of heritage tourists is mediated by the satisfaction mediator variable. Therefore, the mere focus of heritage tourism marketing programs on enhancing the image of destination among heritage tourists does not necessarily lead to increased tourists' return visits to the collection. Therefore, the mere focus of heritage tourism marketing programs on enhancing the image of destination among heritage tourists does not necessarily increase the revisiting tourists to the collection. But paying attention to satisfaction variables, especially in terms of reducing tourism costs and increasing feeling of secure, can be effective.

Keywords: Heritage tourists, Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili collection, Tourist loyalty, Satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the sustainable economic, social, and cultural movements with many important functions including economic development, social empowerment, environmental protection, and booming tourism destinations (Parmawati et al., 2018). In the third world countries, repair and maintenance of historical monuments has close relationship with presence level of heritage tourists; because, mostly support programs and budgets provided by government are very insignificance and not considered as high

socio-cultural priorities. So, increase of heritage tourists is a long term guarantee for survival and protection of historical monuments to be taken into consideration. It goes without saying that, the verbal and oral advertising of loyal tourists among their friends, families, and other potential tourists of tourism destinations is considered as an important factor in tourism boom (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999; Leou et al., 2015). Tourist satisfaction of what has been experienced during travel is related to tourism destination loyalty. Positive satisfaction with tourism destination can lead to revisit and positive advices given to friends and families in this respect (Chi & Qu, 2008).

With a civilization history of several thousand years, many historical attractions listed in the World Heritage Center (UNESCO), and numerous religious places; Iran shares just lower than one percent of the world tourism market. Therefore, taking heritage tourism boom into consideration is inevitable; and, principles for tourist attraction not being observed has negative consequences including justified actions taken for protection, revival, and sustainability of historical buildings being started to stray from the point (López-Guzmán et al., 2018). Necessary cares not taken of historical buildings, textures and sites in the world as for their repair and maintenance will lead to gradual destruction of a part of the world heritage. Creating tourist loyalty and/or its maintenance (especially in terms of heritage tourism) has considerable effect on economic boom of historical regions such as Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili collection in Ardabil city (northwest of Iran); because, financial, legal, and human support provided by government for repair and maintenance of historical monuments has a slow and erosive trend ordered, with no required coverage provided. So, heritage tourism boom in the world collections such as that of Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili collection (listed in the UNESCO World Heritage Center, 1450) will be gradually slowing down, with no support (financially or others) made by heritage tourists. In other words, taking different stages of creation and optimization of heritage tourists' loyalty to aforementioned collection into consideration; considering tourists' perspectives and motivations in terms of traveling to a certain destination are of especial necessity in terms of planning and marketing tourism development in historical regions (Assaker et al., 2015). Also, they create existential and sufficient identity to take revival and maintenance of this global collection more into consideration. Nowadays, most marketing management programs especially those related to historical buildings are focused on advertisement to optimize tourism destination image among tourists. So, the research is intended to study which of the available effective latent and obvious variables are leading to optimization of tourists' loyalty and finally their revisit to the global collection of Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili; and, whether mere attention paid to optimization of tourism destination image is sufficient for more prosperity of this historical tourism region, or not? Here, main variables of the research would be defined:

- Heritage tourists' loyalty

What is defined as heritage tourists' loyalty is their intention to revisit tourism region and to promote that region through the verbal and oral advertising (Jayaraman et al., 2010; Frangos et al., 2015). Tourist loyalty has been discussed as a form of customer loyalty in the field of tourism; and, destination is considered as a product. Tourists may choose to revisit the site or suggest that to their friends and families by oral advertising (Atikahambar et al., 2018).

- Tourism destination image

Tourism destination image includes a comprehensive spiritual image and/or personal or group impression regarding a certain tourism destination. The variable can be indicative of a simplified set of individual impressions of tourist including much information regarding a certain place, and leading to tourism motivations to be created or not created in that person (Chao, 2004). Also, tourism destination image has been defined as an explanation of individual knowledge, feelings and emotions, prejudices, imaginations (Kavoura, 2014); and, it depends on three concepts of emotional, cognitive, and overall image (Chi & Qu, 2008; Rajesh, 2013; Hashemi et al., 2015; Assaker et al., 2015; López-Guzmán et al., 2018). Cognitive image refers to believes and perceived awareness of a tourist about destination features. In fact, it includes what has been perceived by tourist regarding numerous destination features like attractions, infrastructure, environment, and quality of services (Coban, 2012). Emotional image has been stated as feelings and emotional reactions against different features of tourism destination. In fact, emotional experience like happiness and mental excitement is derived from desirable and/or undesirable destination image (Xu et al., 2018).

- Heritage Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction mostly has close relationship with tourist loyalty towards a tourism destination. In other words, tourists' satisfaction is based on expectations of tourist before visiting destination to be adapted with what they have experienced there; this shows consistency between previous image of tourist about destination and what he observes, feels, and remembers about it, in reality (Frangos et al., 2015). Accordingly, satisfaction means consumer's response to assessment made of the difference between his previous expectations (performance norm) and real performance of products as it is perceived, after using the product or tourism destination (Rajesh, 2013).

- Research Background

In relation to effect of variables of destination image and satisfaction on loyalty of historical tourists, the research performed by Frangos et al. (2015) can be referred to which has been performed based on views provided by visitors to the historical city of Athens. In the research, important role played by tourists' satisfaction with price in relation to their loyalty and revisiting tourism destination has been emphasized. Of course, this has to be acknowledged that in the research, effect of both variables of destination image and satisfaction on variable of tourist loyalty is significant and direct; and, probability of one variable playing mediating role (mediating variable) compared to direct role has not been studied. However, in 2014 and in a research performed by Romao et al. (2014), tourist satisfaction has been playing a mediating role between destination image and tourist loyalty; and, variables of age, awareness and knowledge about tourism region have been effective on tourist loyalty. This has been concluded by them that being satisfied with welfare facilities, environment, and overall image of destination are important elements having effect on deciding for revisit or proposing it to other people (oral advertising). The results from research performed by Leou et al.

(2015) on relationship between destination image and satisfaction of heritage tourists in Macao showed that destination image is different between heritage tourists; however, there is a significant relationship between destination image and being satisfied with tourism destination. In other words, effect of tourist satisfaction with what has been experience during travel on his loyalty to tourism destination has been significant. Also, there has been significant difference between destination image and variables of age, education level, income level, and gender. To analyze variable of heritage tourism destination image, such variables as cultural acceptance of local people against heritage tourists, destination emotional image, destination cognitive image, feeling secure, public services, costs and main demographic variables such as age, education level and average monthly income have been measured.

A model to attract tourists (loyalty variables and probability of revisiting tourism destination) has been analyzed and its reliability verified by Assaker et al. (2015). In the research model, three factors of tourism destination image, tourist satisfaction, and tourist loyalty has been formulated. It was shown by the research findings that destination image can be predictive of satisfaction level of tourists which can directly and indirectly (mediating variable) affect variable of tourist loyalty. According to the other findings, variable of age has had significant effect on tourist loyalty. In other words, younger people show less loyalty towards tourism destination, compared to older people. Heritage tourists' motivation, satisfaction, and loyalty towards visiting historical Cordoba city in Spain have been studied by López-Guzmán et al. (2018). According to the findings, tourist satisfaction leads to motivation increase for revisit and more loyalty of heritage tourists. Also, it has been concluded that the role played by cultural acceptance and existence of welfare facilities and services in tourism destination on satisfaction of tourists is of special importance. As suggested by most of respondents, they have had tendency towards revisiting Cordoba and to promote it through oral advertising, after their current experience. In total, this has to be acknowledged that systematic development of heritage tourism for the global historical collection of Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili and using many capabilities available in it to improve current status of heritage tourism requires development; and, needs, features and demands of tourists have to be taken into consideration, as demand-related factors related in relation to heritage tourism.

Taking destination image of tourists and factors effective on their satisfaction into consideration as a stimulant of heritage tourism attraction will lead to more heritage tourism boom in the collection and also the city; and, it will become a basis for designing infrastructures related to survival, revival, and maintenance of historical buildings in Ardebil province. In numerous scientific models related to tourist loyalty (such as models in researches performed by Frangos et al. (2015) and Rajesh (2013)), emphasis has been put on tourism destination image, satisfaction and direct and non-mediating role of these variables on tourist loyalty. However, probability of mediating role of satisfaction variable on occurrence or improvement of tourist loyalty has not been analyzed. So, the research is intended to explain a model to specify variables effective on attraction behavior of heritage tourism of the collection, in respect of sustainable tourism boom and protection of historical resources. Upon background study of many researches, initial conceptual model is presented in Figure 1. Main theories considered in designing conceptual model of the research are:

- The research results and models related to tourism attraction (Qu et al., 2011; Frangos et al., 2015; Rajesh, 2013; Hashemi et al., 2015) have been considered as the basis for designing conceptual model, in relation to identification and determination of the relationships between variables of destination image and satisfaction of heritage tourists, and their effects on loyalty of heritage tourists.

- The research results and models related to tourist loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008; Qu et al., 2011; Frangos et al., 2015; Rajesh, 2013; Hashemi et al., 2015; Frangos et al., 2015; López-Guzmán et al., 2018) have been considered as a basis for designing conceptual model, in relation to components of variables of destination image, heritage tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty in two categories of revisit and word of mouth (providing advice and oral advertising to people around.

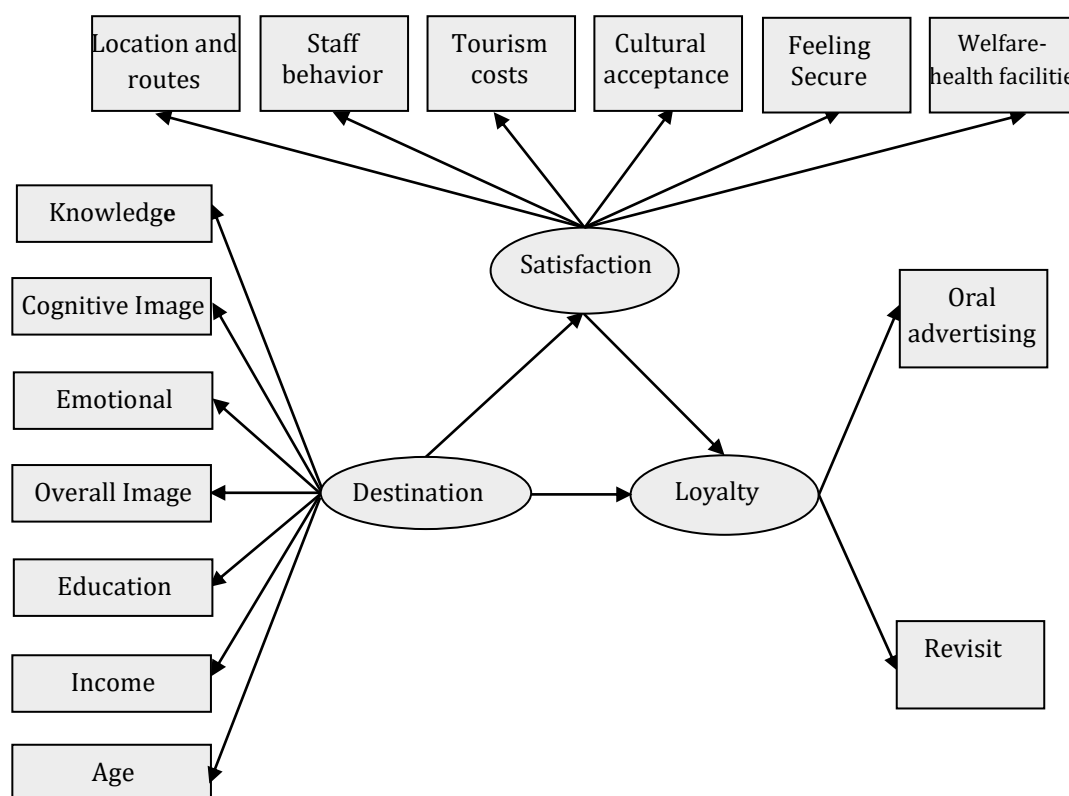


Figure 1. Conceptual model of research

In this respect and with consideration of research conceptual model (Figure 1), main research hypotheses can be stated as follows:

H1- Tourism destination image has significant effect on loyalty of heritage tourists.

H2- Tourism destination image has significant effect on satisfaction of heritage tourists.

H3- Satisfaction of heritage tourists has significant effect on loyalty of them.

H4- Destination image has significant effect on loyalty of heritage tourists with mediation role played by variable of satisfaction.

Research Methodology

- Global collection of Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili

Islamic-spiritual and global collection of Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili (Figure 2) is one of the most important historical buildings in Ardabil Province, experiencing a valuable process of Islamic History during and before the Safavid era (Esmi & Shahbazi Shiran, 2019). This Khanqah considered as a collection filled with rich Islamic architecture, Islamic tile works, marquetry, plaster works, beautiful inscriptions, wood carvings, silver and gold works, decorating walls in form of jugs, muqarnas, and etc. is related to historical period of 735 (AH) to 1038 (AH); and, it has been listed as a world heritage in 34th session of World Heritage Committee (UNESCO). In other words, this historical collection has been introduced as an important historical and global heritage in the World Heritage Center (under No. 1450), in 2011.

Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili collection has been constructed by his son Sadr Al-din Mousa after death of his father in 735 AH, where he has been buried in and known as “Allah Allah” dome (Shahbazi Shiran & Mammadova, 2014). Tomb of Shah Esmail the founder of Safavid dynasty, tomb of his wife (mother of Shah Tahmasb), and tombs of some of Safavid princes are also located inside the mausoleum. A part of the building has been used as graveyard for those people killed during Shiravan and Chaldoran Wars during Safavid era. The collection has been considered as one of the important sacred places visited by pilgrims since one century before Safavid era to the early periods of Qajar era; and, it was visited by many pilgrims from all around Iran, Asia Minor, and Caucasus (Jamaati-e-Somarin & Jamaati-e-Somarin, 2011).

The Khanqah is located at 38°14'52/5" northern latitude and 48°17'27/5" longitudinal, with 1365 m height above the sea level at the center of Ardabil City (Yousefi et al., 2013). The collection is located in old Alighapoo neighborhood (Ardabil City), with its main entrance located at Alighapoo Square. Main buildings related to Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili collection include entrance gate, large yard, small yard or roofless corridor, main open space, a building known as Jannat-Sara, Dar Al-Hadith, Shahidgah Cemetery, and Chelleh-Khane (a place used for 40 consecutive days of prayer). Also, according to Figure 3, main parts of collection include Dar Al-Hefaz Hall, Ghandil-Khaneh or prayer house, Shah-Neshin, tomb of Sheikh Safi (Allah Allah Dome), tomb of Shah Esmail Safavi, Haram-Khaneh and Chini-Khaneh (Esmi & Shahbazi Shiran, 2019; Shahbazi Shiran & Mammadova, 2014).



Figure 2. The Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili collection (Source: Esmi & Shahbazi Shiran, 2019)

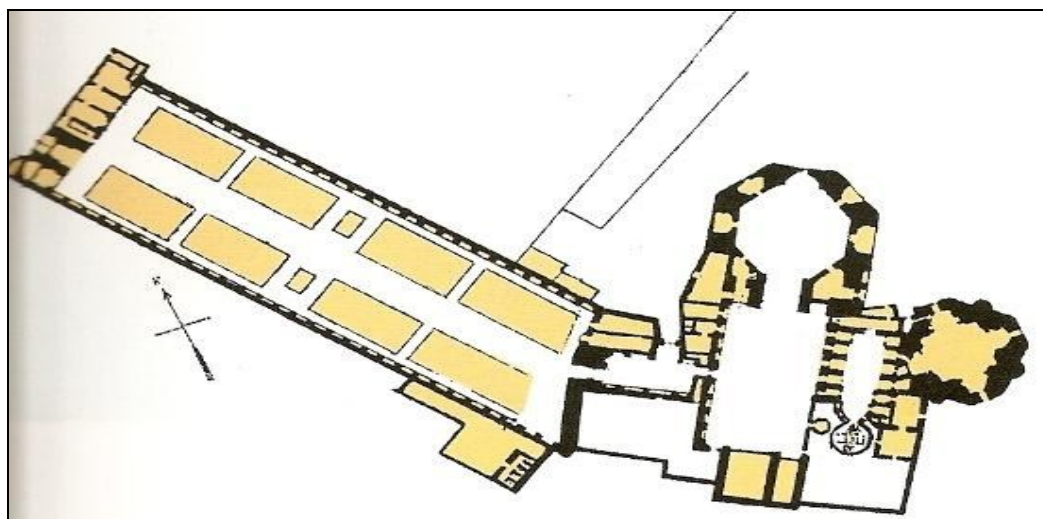


Figure 3. The map of Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili collection

(Source: Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, 2009)

- Sampling method and research tool, reliability and validity

This applied research in terms of objective performed during 2018-2019 is considered to be descriptive survey, as far as control level of field variables and data collection method is concerned. Considering variable of tourism destination image, data had to be collected from heritage tourists visiting Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili collection for the first time so that minimum error and deviation would be created in analyses. So, to calculate research sample size, population size has been considered as unknown. Here, to specify sample size, Cochran's Formula under condition of unknown population

size has been used based on calculation of variance of initial sample. For its calculation, primarily 30 questionnaires have been distributed among tourists visiting Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili collection for the first time and data have been collected. Then, variance of initial sample has been computed. In the formula, parameters of variance level (S^2) has been obtained equal to 0.2435 and error level (d) has been equal to 0.05, with consideration of 0.95 as confidence level; and, Z value has been considered equal to 1.96. So, sample size has been specified to include 375 persons:

$$n = \frac{Z_{\alpha}^2 * S^2}{d^2} = \frac{3.8416 * 0.2435}{0.0025} \cong 375$$

The method of convenience sampling has been applied. Data collection process concerned questioning the tourists about “whether they have been visiting the collection for the first time or not?” In case of positive answer, they have been given the questionnaire. A questionnaire including three main parts has been used as research tool; first part of which being related to demographic characteristics (education level, age, income, and etc.). Second part has been concerning the items related to variables of tourism destination image (including components of knowledge and awareness, emotional image, cognitive image, and overall image); as well as tourist satisfaction (including components of cultural acceptance, staff behavior, tourism costs, welfare-health facilities and services, feeling secure, location and routes). Third part of questionnaire has been allocated to variable of tourism loyalty in two categories of tendency of tourists towards revisit and promotion through oral advertising. Satisfaction, tourism destination image, and loyalty of tourists-related items have been formulated based on researches performed by Bigne Alcaniz et al. (2005), Chi & Qu (2008), Frangos et al. (2015), Rajesh (2013), Hashemi et al. (2015), Assaker et al. (2015) and López-Guzmán et al. (2018).

Questions related to research variables have been of special order and equal weights within a five point Likert Scale (1 = very low, 2= low, 3 = average, 4 = high, 5 = very high). To group different levels of satisfaction variable among heritage tourists, interval of standard deviation from the mean (ISDM) has been used (Shiri et al., 2013; Gangadharappa et al., 2007):

- Low: $\text{Min} \leq A < \text{Mean}-\text{SD}$
- Medium: $\text{Mean}-\text{SD} \leq B < \text{Mean}$
- High: $\text{Mean} \leq C < \text{Mean}+\text{SD}$
- Very High: $\text{Mean}+\text{SD} \leq D < \text{Max}$

In the research, content domain of tourist loyalty as a variable has been considered based on two indicators of (tendency towards revisiting Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili collection and oral advertising). Mediating variable in the research also is satisfaction level of heritage tourists visiting the collection (Bigne Alcaniz et al., 2005; Chi & Qu, 2008; Rajesh, 2013; Hashemi et al., 2015; Assaker et al., 2015; López-Guzmán et al., 2018).

- Structural Equation Model

To specify effectiveness level of research variables on variable of heritage tourist attraction behavior with consideration of latent variables available as well as mediating variable, structural equation modeling analysis has been used, via AMOS software. With consideration of causal relationships between variables, causal models would be tested through linear equation by structural equation modeling; and, testing theoretical relationships available under an assumed situation, causal relationships between latent variables (not observed), and those between obvious variables (observed) can be estimated (Vieira, 2011).

Research tool validity has been verified upon face validity, based on consensus of a group of faculty members and experts. Also, for convergent validity based on three criteria of factor loadings equal to and bigger than 0.5, average variance extracted (AVE) has been obtained equal to and bigger than 0.5; and, composite reliability (CR) has been equal to and bigger than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). Convergence of research tool has been considered to be desirable, after applying technical views required. In relation to diagnostic validity and with consideration of the point that AVE for each latent variable in measurement models has been higher than squared mean of covariance and maximum squared covariance among all latent variables; research tool has been of desirable diagnostic validity. In relation to reliability of measurement model based on three criteria of factor loading equal to or bigger than 0.5, Cronbach's alpha equal to or bigger than 0.7, and CR of equal to or bigger than 0.5, reliabilities of all measurement variables evaluated have been at appropriate levels (Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability and validity in the structural equation model

Research variables		Number of Items	Example of items	Abbreviations in SEM	CR	AVE	Cronbach's alpha
Destination image	Emotional image	6	-Visiting the collection has been spiritual and tranquilizing to me; and etc.	Emotional.I	0.78	0.63	0.74
	Cognitive image	8	-Observing traditional texture here and recognition of cultural traditions is attractive to me; and etc.	Cognitive.I	0.76	0.62	0.73
	Overall image	4	-In addition to historical and mystical attraction, destination is of good climate; and etc.	Overall.I	0.83	0.67	0.78
	Knowledge and	7	-Familiarity with historical	Knowledge	0.75	0.62	0.71

	awareness		record of buildings constructed; and etc.				
Satisfaction	Feeling of secure	8	-Availability of police stations and health centers in destination; and etc.	Feeling.S	0.80	0.63	0.77
	Facilities and Services	8	-Being close to welfare places (parking, hotel, restaurant, residential); and etc.	Facilities	0.77	0.64	0.73
	Costs of tourism	5	Appropriateness of ticket prices compared to other historical places; and etc.	Costs	0.80	0.67	0.75
	Location and routes	7	-Location of tourism region (not being far from the city); and etc.	Location	0.75	0.62	0.73
	Staff behavior	5	-Desirable information provided by employees; and etc.	Staff .B	0.84	0.70	0.79
	Cultural acceptance	5	-Feeling language and / or cultural difference in tourism destination; and etc.	Cultural.A	0.74	0.61	0.70
Loyalty	Tendency to revisit	5	-How much you are tendency to make a revisit to Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili collection; and etc.	Revisit	0.79	0.65	0.75
	Oral advertising	3	-I recommend visiting Sheikh Safi Al-din Ardabili collection to my friends.	Oral.adver	0.91	0.78	0.85

Research Findings

- Personal and professional characteristics of respondents

According to the findings, most of respondents (31.20%) have been between 36 to 45 years old. 70.7% of statistical population included men and 29.3% of it included women. Highest frequency of education level has been related to Bachelor's Degree (33.3%); and, highest average income level (43.7%) has been within the range of 30.1 to 40 million Iranian rials (IRR). Complementary information is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Statistical summarization of demographic characteristics among respondents

Variables	Items	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	274	73.1
	Female	101	26.9
Marital status	Single	110	29.3
	Married	265	70.7
Age	≤ 35 years old	105	28.00
	36-45 years old	117	31.20
	46-55 years old	98	26.13
	≥ 56 years old	55	14.67
Education level	High School and lower	50	13.3
	Diploma	95	25.3
	Bachelor	125	33.3
	Postgraduate	105	28.0
Average monthly income (million IRR ¹)	≤ 30 million IRR	153	40.8
	30.1-40 million IRR	164	43.7
	40.1-50 million IRR	23	6.1
	≥ 50.1 million IRR	35	9.3

1. 1 US dollar ≈ 130,000 Iranian rials (IRR).

Specifying different levels of satisfaction variable among respondents

Considering the results provided in Table 3, tourists have been divided into four groups based on their satisfaction levels, including desirable level of satisfaction (14.4%), relatively desirable (36%), relatively undesirable (33.3%), and undesirable (16.3%). Therefore, most of respondents have been relatively satisfied with touring Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili collection.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of satisfaction levels among respondents

Variable	Satisfaction levels	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Tourists satisfaction	Desirable	54	14.4	14.4
	Relatively desirable	135	36.0	50.4
	Relatively undesirable	125	33.3	83.7
	Undesirable	61	16.3	100.0
	Sum	375	100.0	-

The results from structural equation modeling

- Measurement model fit

To study reliability or validity of structural equation model, CR and convergent validity have been applied. CR is due to the point that reliabilities of structures are computed with consideration of correlation between their structures, not in absolute form. Convergent validity (by AVE) is another criterion used to fit measurement models in structural equation modeling method. As for convergent validity based on three criteria of factor loadings equal to and bigger than 0.5, AVE equal to and bigger than 0.5, and CR of equal to and bigger than 0.7 (Hier et al., 2010); convergence of research tool has been shown to be desirable after applying technical views required and omission of inappropriate items. Also, all of the latent variables have had desirable values of combined reliabilities, after the end of stages related to explaining validity of questionnaire. Also, AVE for latent variables have been higher than 0.5; so, convergent validity of measurement model has been also desirable. The results are provided in Table 1.

- Indices of goodness of fit for the model

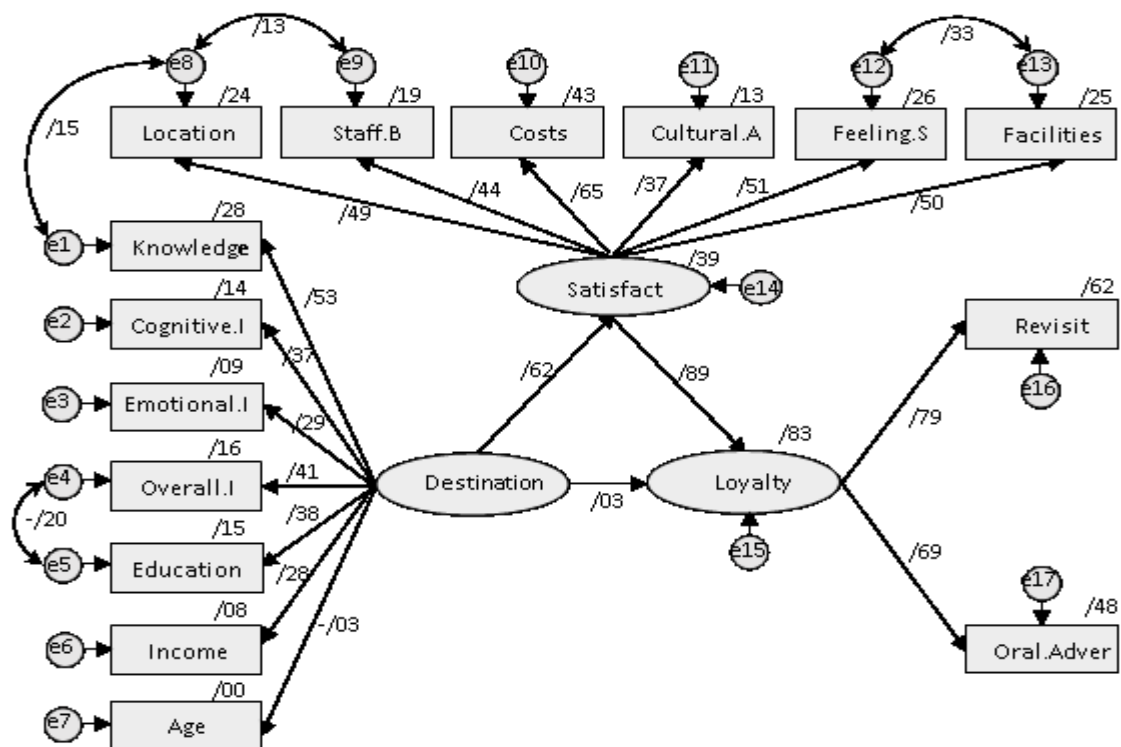
Fit indices in model analysis will be studied to determine goodness of fit of model in structural equation modeling; and, its main indices based on different researches include the following items: Cmin/df; Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA); Root Mean Square Residual (RMR); Incremental Fit Index (IFI); Normed Fit Index (NFI); Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI). The results obtained in Table 4 shows desirable fit of most indices. Therefore, based on the results obtained from structural model analysis in Table 5, chi-square value to judge about linearity of the relationship between latent structures has been equal to 335.643, at significance level of 1%. Based on desirable criterion of model fit, index of ratio of chi-square to degree of freedom has to be smaller than 5; and, the value of ratio obtained has been equal to 2.944. With consideration of ratio obtained, data achieved have been desirably consistent with research model, i.e., the model is confirmed. Also, root mean square error of approximation has been also equal to 0.072. Considering desirable criterion being lower than 0.08; the fit index has been acceptable. Other IFI, NFI, CFI, and AGFI indices each of which showing an aspect of structural model's fit are presented in Table 4. Considering evaluation indicators of overall fit of the model, it can be concluded that final model has desirable fit for research model analysis.

Table 4. Indices of goodness of fit for the SEM

Fit indices	Cmin/df	P	AGFI	GFI	CFI	IFI	NFI	RMSEA
Reported value	2.944	0.00	0.874	0.906	0.901	0.889	0.910	0.072
Optimum value	5<	0.05 >	> 0.80	> 0.80	> 0.90	> 0.80	> 0.90	0.08<
References: Byrne, 2013; Ping, 2004; Hair et al., 2010								

Studying impact factors obtained in structural equation model

The results from Figure 4 shows impact factors obtained to analyze research model. For latent structure of tourism destination image and as shown by the results, the most effective variable is related to knowledge and awareness ($\beta=0.53^{**}$) and then, overall destination image ($\beta=0.41^{**}$); whereas, age variable (-0.03^{ns}) as an explanatory variable of destination image has not been significant. For latent structure of satisfaction, the most effective variable is related to variable of tourism costs ($\beta=0.65^{**}$) and then variable of feeling secure ($\beta=0.51^{**}$). Also, for latent structure of loyalty, the most effective variable has been related to revisit of tourists from collection ($\beta=0.79^{**}$). Other estimates obtained from the model and related to causal relationships between latent variables have been defined in respect of research hypotheses. Details from findings are briefly provided in Table 5.



(Cmin= 335.643, df= 114, P-value= 0.000, RMSEA= 0.072)

Figure 3. Standardized coefficients for the SEM (t-value of significance)

Interpreting hypotheses results in structural equation model:

Interpretation of test results related to each of analyses concerning main hypotheses of structural equation model are provided in Table 6 as follows:

Table 6. Summary of the test based on the research model

Hypotheses and relations	Estimates	S.E.	CR	P Value	Result
H1. Destination image → Satisfaction	0.622	0.051	15.365	**	Accept
H2. Destination image → Loyalty	0.031	0.072	0.556	0.579	Reject
H3. Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.893	0.066	12.162	**	Accept

** show significance at the 1% levels.

First hypothesis: Tourism destination image has significant effect on tourist satisfaction: with consideration of path coefficient estimated value of 0.62 and significance of P statistic, the hypothesis is confirmed.

Second hypothesis: Tourism destination image has significant effect on tourist loyalty: with consideration of path coefficient estimated value of 0.03 and lack of significance of P statistic, the hypothesis is rejected.

Third hypothesis: Tourist satisfaction has significant effect on tourist loyalty: with consideration of path coefficient estimated value of 0.89 and significance of P statistic, the hypothesis is confirmed.

- Specifying overall effects in the model

Significant path coefficients related to latent structures in structural equation model are provided in Table 7. According to the results, maximum overall effect on tourist loyalty from among overall direct and indirect effects is related to the path of satisfaction to tourist loyalty.

Table 7. Significant coefficients of path analysis, relating to the latent structures in the structural model

The main paths of model	Direct effects	Indirect paths	Indirect effects	Overall effects
1. Destination image → Satisfaction	0.622	-	0	0.622
2. Destination image → Loyalty	0.031	Destination image → Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.555	0.586
3. Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.893	-	0	0.893

Fourth hypothesis: Destination image has significant effect on tourist loyalty due to mediating role played by satisfaction variable: if role of destination image variable would be taken into consideration; destination image can significantly affect tourist loyalty as a variable, with the help of satisfaction variable; and, the variable by itself has no direct and significant effect on tourist loyalty. In other words, satisfaction variable in the model plays role of an effective mediating variable on tourist loyalty.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research is mainly aimed at explaining and analyzing effects of destination image and satisfaction of heritage tourists' loyalty in Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili collection located in Ardabil city (northwest of Iran). According to the research results, most of respondents have been relatively satisfied with touring the collection. In other words, with no consideration of effect of destination image variable, if more heritage tourists can be attracted to aforementioned collection, the heritage tourism region will have relatively good capability to satisfy heritage tourists; and, this will finally lead to improvement of tourist loyalty. In other words, since the collection is known as an important historical and global heritage and has considerable historical and cultural attractions; so, if tourism loyalty is favorable, there will be a great boom in heritage tourism development in the region under study. The issue seems to be dependent on creation of correct image of tourism destination.

The research findings in relation to the first hypothesis showed that consistent with the findings from research performed by Leou et al. (2015), Frangos et al. (2015) and Rajesh (2013); heritage tourism destination image has significant effect on tourist satisfaction. According to the research findings, variables of knowledge and awareness have been the most important variables related to tourism destination image; so, tourism marketing role played through informational tools and process of creating interest in history of Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili, as well as introduction of historical background of the collection to the extent possible, in addition to related historical tales seem to have more effective role on optimizing heritage tourism image among tourists. In this respect, the role played by media in promotional programs of heritage tourism and especially planning for optimum usage to be made of social networks for more attractive introduction of historical collection of the Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili can play considerable role in emersion of more positive tourism destination image among heritage tourists.

Research findings in relation to the second research hypothesis showed that tourism destination image has no direct effect on tourist loyalty which is contrary to the results obtained by Frangos et al. (2015) and Rajesh (2013). It seems that for heritage tourists in this respect compared to other types of tourists (recreational, health, food tourism and etc.), advertising tourism by itself has no significant effect on tourist loyalty; because, some kind of personal knowledge and awareness in addition to familiarity with heritage tourism region creates the ground for these types of tourists to be attracted. In this respect, tourists already having destination image may not be satisfied as expected, when facing with real condition of historical site; and, sometimes they may have inconsistent expectations due to wrong destination image. This sometimes is not consistent with tourist loyalty. In relation to the third research hypothesis, it was shown by the research findings that tourist satisfaction has significant effect on tourist loyalty; so, existence of a mediating variable to create proper balance between tourism destination image and behavior of attracting tourist seems necessary. According to the findings, this variable is tourist satisfaction, so that appropriate path would be created from tourism destination image and tourist loyalty will be occurred. In other words, consistent with the results from research performed by Rajesh (2013), Romao et al. (2014), Hashemi et al. (2015) and Assaker et al. (2015), it is shown by present research that heritage tourist satisfaction can play a strong mediating role on occurrence of

tourist attraction behavior; so, appropriate training strategies have to be formulated for tour leaders, hoteliers, and tourism stations providing information so that tourist satisfaction would be promoted; and, their performance has to be continuously supervised. In this respect and with consideration of research findings in relation to latent structure of satisfaction, the most effective variables are costs of tourism ($\beta=0.65^{**}$), and then feeling secure ($\beta=0.51^{**}$) (consistent with research performed by Frangos et al. (2015)). So, upon coordination created between different organizations such as Police Force, municipality, as well as Administration of Cultural Heritage in respect of correct management of tourism costs; creation of more desirable socio-psychological and physical security is proposed in heritage tourism region. Generally, based on the research findings, heritage tourism development in Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili collection requires investments in training, management, infrastructural, and advertisement fields.

In this respect and to create more attractive image of tourism destination, revival of certain festivals and traditions within the tourism region, as well as representation of life style related to historical background of the collection can optimize tourism destination image and tourist satisfaction; and, it will lead to their awareness and knowledge so that the ground would be paved for attraction behavior more than ever. In this respect, preparation and distribution of free brochures, creation of tourism informational offices of the collection at city entrances and/or or temporary residences or gathering places of tourists in relation to historical attractions of the collection, as well as advertisement in social networks can have positive effect on improvement of tourist attraction behavior in relation to Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili collection.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Assaker, G., Hallak, R. G., Assaf, A., & Assad, T. (2015). Validating a structural model of destination image, satisfaction, and loyalty across gender and age: multi group analysis with PLS-SEM. *Tourism Analysis*, 20, 577–591.
- [2]. Atikahambar, Y., Zainal, A., Rahayu, M., & Mokhtar, R. (2018). Quality of Food and Tourists' Satisfaction of Penang Delicacies in Predicting Tourists' Revisit Intention. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(12), 1606–1618.
- [3]. Bigne Alcaniz, E., Sanchez Garcia, I. & Sanz Blas, S. (2005). Relationship among residents' image, evaluation of the stay and post purchase behavior, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 11 (4), 291-302.
- [4]. Byrne, B.M., 2013. *Structural Equation Modeling with LISREL, PRELIS, and SIMPLIS: Basic Concepts, Applications, and Programming*. Psychology Press, London, UK.
- [5]. Chi, C. G. Q., & Qu, H. (2008). Examining the structural relationships of destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated approach, *Tourism Management*, 29, 624-636.
- [6]. Chao, W. Z. (2005). *Marketing tools as factors in destination image formation*. Master of Science Dissertation, USA, San Jose state university.
- [7]. Coban, S. (2012). *The Effects of the Image of Destination on Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty: The Case of Cappadocia*. *European Journal of Social Science*, 29 (2), 222-232.

- [8]. Esmi, R. & Shahbazi Shiran, H. (2019). Heritage Tourism Boom: Tourists' Tendency to Revisit Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili Collection. *Journal of Organizational Behavior Research*, 4 (2), 1-14.
- [9]. Frangos, C.C., Karapistolis, D., Stalidis, G., Fragkos, C., Sotiropoulos, I., & Manolopoulos, I. (2015). Tourist Loyalty is All about Prices, Culture and the Sun: A Multinomial Logistic Regression of Tourists Visiting Athens. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 175, 32- 38.
- [10]. Gangadharappa, H. V., Pramod, K.T.M. & Shiva, K.H.G. (2007). Gastric Floating Drug Delivery Systems: A review. *An Official Journal of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists*, 41, 295-305.
- [11]. Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis*. USA, United States of America Pearson prentice hall.
- [12]. Hashemi. S.M., Jusoh, J., Kiumarsi, S. & Mohammadi, S. (2015). Influence factors of spa and wellness tourism on revisit intention: the mediating role of international tourist motivation and tourist satisfaction. *International Journal of Research*, 3(7), 1-11.
- [13]. Jamaati-e-Somarin, B., & Jamaati-e-Somarin, R. (2011). Tomb of Sheikh Sfyaldyn Ardabil, Iran Eleventh World Heritage, *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 5(8), 320-330.
- [14]. Jayaraman, K., Lin, S. K., Guat, C. L., & Ong, W. L. (2010). Does Malaysian Tourism Attract Singaporeans to Revisit Malaysia? *Journal of Business and Policy Research*, 5(2), 159-179.
- [15]. Kavoura, A. (2014). A conceptual communication model for nation branding in the Greek Framework. *Implications for Strategic Advertising Policy*, *Procedia*, 148, 32-39.
- [16]. Leou, C. H., Wang, X., & Hsiao, C. H. (2015). The relationship between destination image and satisfaction: visits to Macao World Heritage as a moderator, *Sustainable Development*, 2, 795- 806.
- [17]. López-Guzmán, T., Claudio, J., Gálvez, P., & Muñoz-Fernández G. A. (2018). Satisfaction, motivation, loyalty and segmentation of tourists in World Heritage cities. *Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 16 (1), 73-86.
- [18]. Parmawati, R., Agung, S., Kurnianto, K. A, Cholis, A. F., Hidayat, H., & Aluf, W. (2018). Analysis of ecotourism development of sembilang beach: characters, factors, and challenges. *International Journal of Applied Sciences in Tourism and Events*, 2 (1), 59-69.
- [19]. Ping, J. R. A. (2004). On assuring valid measures for theoretical models using survey data. *Journal of Business Research*, 57, 125-141.
- [20]. Qu, H., Kim, H., Hyunjung, L., & Holly, I. (2011). A model of destination branding: Integrating the concepts of the branding and destination image. *Tourism Management*, 32, 465-476.
- [21]. Rajesh, R. (2013). Impact of Tourist Perceptions, Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction on Destination Loyalty: A Conceptual Model Pondicherry University, Puducherry, India. *Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 11 (3), 67-78.
- [22]. Romao, J., Neuts, B., Nijkamp, P., & Shikida, A. (2014). Determinants of trip choice, satisfaction and loyalty in an eco-tourism destination: a modelling study on the Shiretoko Peninsula, Japan. *Ecological Economics*, 107, 195-205.

- [23]. Shahbazi Shiran, H., & Mammadova, I. (2014). Archaeology, Art and Architecture "Chini Khaneh" and "Haram Khana". *Journal of Multidisciplinary Engineering Science and Technology (JMEST)*, 1 (5), 126-134.
- [24]. Shiri, N., Alibaygi, A., & Faghiri, M. (2013). Factors Affecting Entrepreneurial Motivation of Agricultural Students at Razi University. *International Journal of Agricultural Management and Development (IJAMAD)*, 3 (3), 175-180.
- [25]. Shoemaker, S., & Lewis, R. C. (1999). Customer loyalty: the future of hospitality marketing. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 18, 345-370.
- [26]. Vieira, A. L. (2011). *Interactive LISREL in Practice: Getting Started with a SIMPLIS Approach*. New York, NY: Springer.
- [27]. Xu, F., Lin, X., Li, S., & Niu, W. (2018). Is Southern Xinjiang Really Unsafe? *Sustainability*, 10 (4639), 1-21.
- [28]. Yousefi, H., Alizadeh Sola, M., & Tavousi, M. (2013). Reconsidering the Architecture of Shaikh Safi Al-din Ardabili's Shrine: New Findings in Archeological Excavations at Janat Sara Site. *The International Journal of Humanities*, 20 (1), 49-67.