Investigating the Effect of Tourist Destination on Attracting Tourist: a Case study

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Abstract: Our goal of the present research is to study the impact of tourist destination on tourist attraction in East Azerbaijan province. To achieve this end, one main theory and three secondary hypotheses have been arranged for and for testing the hypotheses, a questionnaire including 12 questions related to the independent variables and 17 questions related to dependent variable were analyzed. After assessing the validity and reliability, the questionnaire was made available for the statistical population. Since the number of the statistical population is highly limited, our statistical sample volume is equal to the statistical population's volume. The statistical population has been estimated equal to 150 persons. Therefore total counting method has been used. Then, for analyzing the collected data the descriptive and inferential statistical methods (regression test for forecasting level of effect of each one of the independent variables on the dependent ones) were used. The results indicate that tourist destination influences the tourist attraction in East Azerbaijan's province.

1. Introduction

Global competitiveness and tourist concentration create numerous challenges and problems in the creation of consumer loyalty and sustainable competitive advantage in the tourist product market. The problems are evident in demand management and creation of unique image of a particular tourist destination. Involvement of a great number of different organizations in creation and marketing of tourist products of a tourist destination makes it difficult to align their different interests and aims. On the other side, these organizations enter different kinds of partnerships for the purpose of achieving individual and mutual effects. Balancing the strategic aims of stakeholders and increasing total economic benefits are the most important objectives of the strategic marketing of a destination. This involves value creation for all participating partners through development of integrated marketing that contributes to the creation and advancement of attraction and unique image of a destination (Stanković and Dukić, 2009). Tourist, as an economic activity, has a growing importance for the development of not only a particular region, but also national economy as a whole. This is an area of increasing development. According to UNWTO data (www.unwto.org) in the last 50 years tourist revenue increased with the average annual growth rate of 11%. The data according to which tourist has a ¼ share in the total service export indicates the importance of tourist for economic development. The data regarding the EU is also illustrated. Approximately 4% of the total number of employees in the EU works in the tourist sector. In the countries belonging to the group of 20 most developed, the percentage is higher and totals 5%. Employment growth in this sector is above average for the whole economy. The share of tourist in GDP is 4% (Brussels, 2006 and 2007; www.unwto.org). Tourist is the generator of economic development. The development and implementation of innovative marketing strategies of a tourist destination demand a change in its definition and understanding. Marketing and management literature is constantly enriched by new approaches to tourist destination as an integrated tourist product. The bases of this product comprise (Bakic, 2005, 2009):

- Destination attraction – the range of original factors that represent the basis for the image creation of a particular destination.
- Destination accessibility – measured by economic distance expressed in travel expenses,
- Conditions of visiting a destination – availability of objects for accommodation and other important contents of stay.

Tourist has gained recognition as a branch with a great potential and currently represents a growing segment within the tourist industry (Müller & Pettersson, 2001). Local culture, history, and nature became popular, well-sold products (Saarinen, 1997; Goeldner

and Ritchie, 2002). Successful cases from tourist industry show that the complicated constructs of culture, history, and nature can be effectively used to create and market a unique image of a tourist destination (Saarinen, 1997; Ooi, 2001).

2. Literature review

2.1 Dimensions of a tourist destination

Traditionally, marketing concentrates on increasing visits and treats tourist like any other commodity. This approach fails to recognise the unique needs and limitations of each destination as well as their particular geographical, environmental and socio-cultural characteristics (Buhalis, 2000). Buhalis (2000) addresses the destination concept from the strategic perspectives of destination marketing and management. Often, destinations are regarded as geographical areas: a country, an island or a town. However, "it is increasingly recognised that a destination can also be a perceptual concept, which can be interpreted subjectively by consumers, depending on their travel itinerary, cultural background, purpose of visit, educational level, and past experience" (Jafari, 2002). Often, destinations are artificially divided by geographical and political barriers, which fail to take into consideration consumer preferences or tourist industry functions (e.g., the Alps shared by France, Austria, Switzerland and Italy). Destinations are amalgams of tourist products, offering an integrated experience to the consumers. This amalgam of tourist products and services offered by a destination is consumed by tourists under the brand name of the destination during their period of stay. Therefore, a destination can be regarded as a combination (or even as a brand) of all products, services and ultimately, experiences provided locally (Eraqi, 2007). Balcar and Pearce (1996) analyzed destination characteristics, development, management, and patterns of demand through an element-by-element comparison of eight heritage sites on the West Coast of New Zealand. Silberberg (1995) provided a common pattern of cultural.heritage tourists by analyzing age, gender, income, and educational level. Formica and Uysal (1998) explored the existing markets of a unique annual event that blends internationally well-known cultural exhibitions with historical settings. Behavioral, motivational, and demographic characteristics of festival visitors were examined by using a posteriori market segmentation.

2.2 The Tourist Destination Model

To incorporate the dimensions of tourist destination, culture, history and nature into the concept of a tourist destination, the following model can be proposed (WTO, 2012; Gouldner and Ritchie, 2008; and Müller and Pettersson, 2001) (Figure 1).
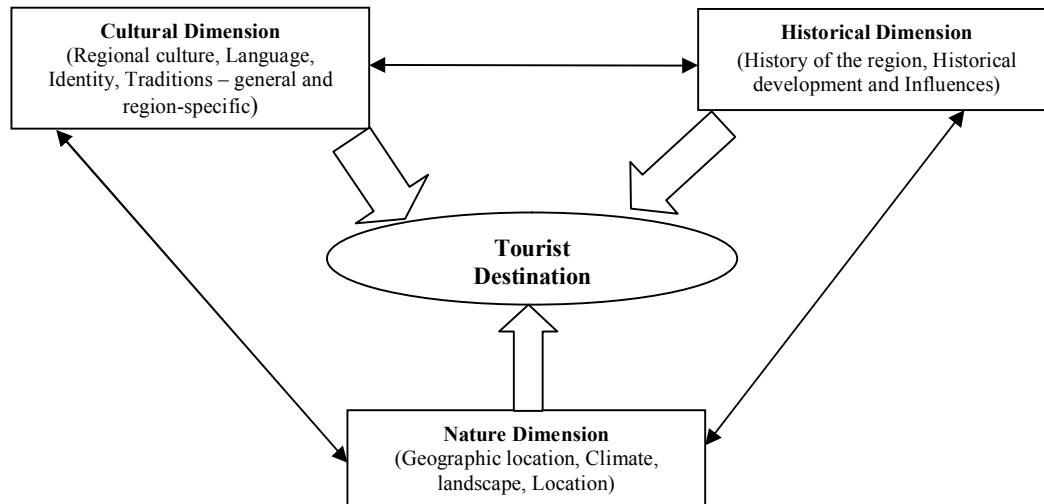
Figure 1: Tourist Destination's Dimensions. Source: See Chintagunta (1994), Chacko (1997) and Jonker (2004).

Dimensions of a tourist destination are DiMingo (1988), Bieger (2000), and Kotler et al. (2009):

- Cultural (regional culture, language, identity, traditions – general and region-specific, etc.)
- Historical (history of the region, historical development and influences, etc.)
- Nature (geographic location, climate, landscape, location, etc.).

Here, the concept of tourist destination is seen as a structure comprised of cultural, historical and nature dimensions. These are formations of local traditions, geographic location, landscape features, etc. These elements influence and create the unique traits characterising and differentiating each tourist destination (Bieger, 2000). It is necessary to look at the tourist destination as a marketing chain that

consists of a number of components such as awareness, information, booking, on-trip services, and post-trip relationship. This chain need to be managed well as a whole for the purpose of achieving the aims of positioning (Aaker and Shamsby, 1982; Bendixen and Cronson, 1996; Alford, 1998).

3. Population and Statistical Sample

The statistical population of the research consists of the tourist experts of cultural heritage and tourist organization of East Azerbaijan province who include the tourist guides who have been trained in the province and are considered as the tour guides and also the tourist destination experts of the province who are totally 150 people. Since the number of the society has been limited, our statistical sample volume is equivalent to the statistical population volume. Thus, the total enumeration method has been applied here.
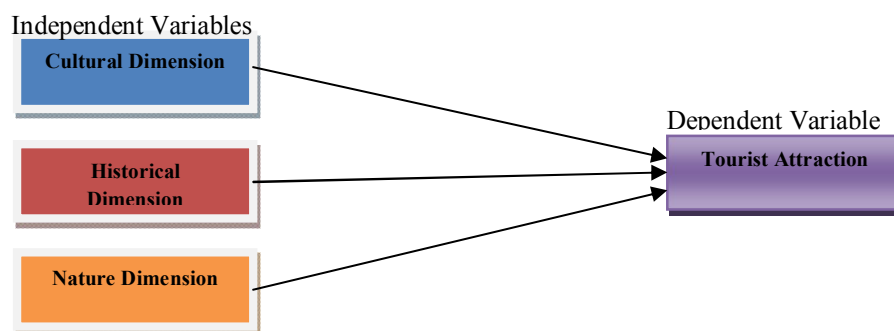

Figure 2: Conceptual Model

3.1. Research Hypothesis

3.1.1. Main Hypothesis

1. Tourist destination (X) affects on tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.

3.1.2. Secondary Hypothesis

1. Natural Dimension of tourist destination (X_1) affects on the tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.

2. Cultural dimension of tourist destination (X_2) affects on tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.

3. The historical aspects of the tourist destination (X_3) affects on tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.
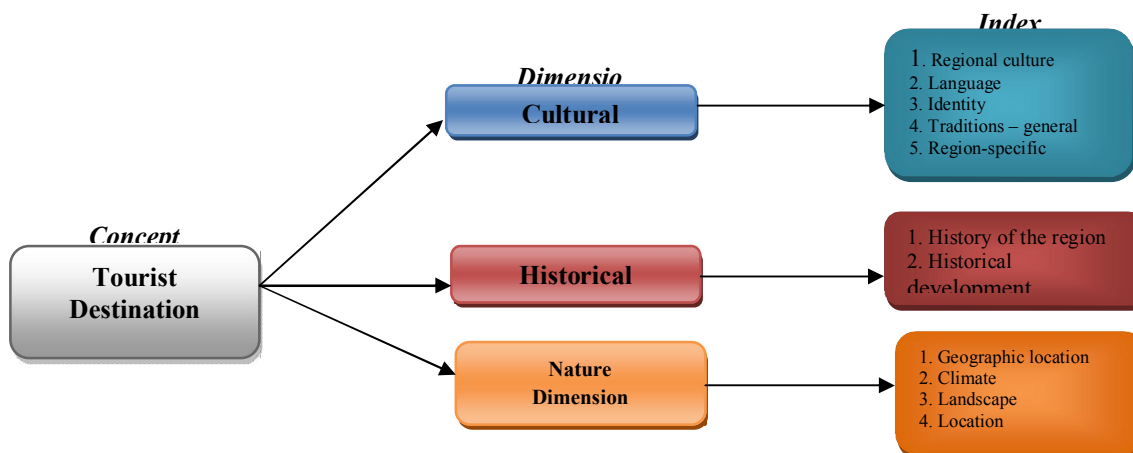
Figure 3: Operational Model

To estimate the questionnaire's reliability, the Cronbach's alpha method has been used. According to this method, using the SPSS statistical software, 0.928 value was achieved as the test's reliability level. By considering the obtained figure, it can be said that:

Firstly, the questionnaire's questions have a high correlation with each other and secondly, the study enjoys a high level of reliability.

Reliability Statistics for Independent Variable

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.928	12

Reliability Statistics for Dependent Variable

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.878	17

4. Results

All the data's which obtained through collected questionnaires were analyzed using two methods of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics for independent and dependent variables are shown in table 1 and table 2.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables

Variable	Mean[*]	Standard Deviation
Regional culture	4.17	0.624
Language	4.03	1.086
Identity	4.22	0.834
Traditions – general	3.94	0.971
Region-specific	4.17	0.838
History of the region	3.28	0.620
Historical development	3.247	1.249
Influences	3.97	1.247
Geographic location	3.38	1.281
Climate	3.43	1.225
Landscape	3.80	0.879
Location	4.07	0.672
Cultural Dimension	4.10	0.151
Historical Dimension	3.39	0.723
Nature Dimension	3.65	0.586
Tourist Destination	3.71	0.463

* (1= Quite trivial… and 5= Quite important)

According to table 1, it can be observed that among Tourist Destination indexes, the highest average refer to regional culture. It means that this index is the most important index.

The rate of visiting tourists of each place, as shown in table 2, has been investigated and it has been observed that the most average (4.01) belong to Saint Stepanos Monastery. This means that large amount of tourists has visited this place and the lowest average belongs to Museum of Azerbaijani Tribes.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables

Variable	Mean[*]	Standard Deviation
Red Dome (Gonbad-e-Sorkh in Persian)	2.91	1.264
Saint Stepanos Monastery	4.01	0.896
Maragheh Observatory (Rasadkhane Maragheh in Persian)	3.89	1.44
Azerbaijan Museum	3.96	1.219
Amir Nezam House (Khaneh-e Amir Nezām in Persian) or The Qajar Museum	3.08	1.244
Kandovan	3.02	1.255
Qur'an scribe Museum	2.97	1.248
Literature and Mysticism Museum	3.62	0.755
Constitutional Home (Khaneh-e Amir Mashroteh-e in Persian)	3.06	1.218
Blue Mosque (Masjed-e Kabūd in Persian)	3.07	1.308
Museum of Azerbaijani Tribes (Ashayer in Persian)	2.82	1.208
Babak Fort	3.61	0.999
Sharafkhane port	3.19	1.247
Anthropology Museum of Bonab	3.19	1.302
Ilkhanate Museum (Selsele-ye ilkhāni in Persian)	4.00	0.872
Mehr Temple of Maragheh	3.39	0.691
Stone Museum of Maragheh	3.82	0.691
Tourist Attraction	3.40	0.482

* (1= a few … and 5= a lot)

4.1. Testing the Effect of Natural Dimension on Tourist Attraction:

H_1: Natural dimension of tourist destination (X_1) effects on the tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.

H_0: The natural dimension of the tourist destination (X_1) does not effect on tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.

For this purpose, using the linear regression test, we will achieve the natural and environmental impact of the tourist attraction on tourist's attraction in East Azerbaijan province.

Table 3: Variance Analysis of Effecting Natural Dimension on Tourist Attraction Regression Model

R		Determination Coefficient (R^2)	Adjusted Determination Coefficient		Standard Error	
0.991		0.981	0.981		1.06630	
Resources of Changes	Degree of Freedom	Total of the Squares	Squares Mean	F	Confidence Level	Significance Level
Regression	1	8879.788	8879.788		0.99	0.000
Residual	148	168.277	1.137	7809.801	Test Result: Rejecting the H_0 hypothesis	
Total	145	9048.65	------			

Since the significance level of the related test is equal to 0.000, it may be claimed that the above test is significant with 0.01 error or 0.99 confidence level. Additionally, the R^2 determination coefficient includes the ratio of the variations explained by variable of **x** to the total variation. It could be stated that about 98 percent of the dependent variable changes (Y) is justifiable by the changes in the independent variable (X).

Table 4: Analyzing the Effect of Natural Dimension on Tourist Attraction

Name of the Variable	β Curved Line	Estimated t	Significance L	Test Result
Natural Dimension	1.640	88.373	0.000	H_0 hypothesis rejection
Width from the destination	3.436	8.036	0.000	H_0 hypothesis rejection

Thus, the mathematical relation between natural dimension and tourist attraction will be as follows:

$Y= 3.436 + 1.640 \ X_1$

Therefore, it can be stated that one unit of increase in X_1 variable will lead to an increase of 1.640 in the tourist attraction variable. Thus, it can be concluded that the regression model of this test is statistically significant.

4.2. Testing the Effect of Cultural Dimension on Tourist Attraction:

H_1: Cultural dimension of tourist destination (X_1) affects on tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.

H_0: The cultural dimension of tourist destination (X_2) does not affect on tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.

To achieve this end, using the linear regression test, we obtain the impact of the culture dimensions of tourist destinations on tourist attraction in East Azerbaijan province.

Table 5: Variance Analysis of Effecting Cultural Dimension on Tourist Attraction Regression Model

R		Adjusted Determination Coefficient		Determination Coefficient (R^2)	Standard Error	
0.998		0.976		0.976	1.21024	
Variation Source	Degree of Freedom	Total or sum of squares	Squares Mean	F	Confidence Level	Significance Level
Regression	1	8831.293	8831.293		0.99	0.000
Residual	148	216.771	1.465	602.546	Result of test:	
Total	149	9048.065	---------		Rejecting H_0 hypothesis	

Since the significance level of the related test is equal to 0.000, it can be stated that the above test is significant with 0.01 errors or 0.99 of the confidence level. In addition, the R^2 determination coefficient includes the ratio of the explained variations by variable of x to the total of variations. It can be stated that about 97 percent of the variations of the dependent variable (Y) can be justified by the variations made in the independent variable of (X).

Thus, the mathematical relationship between the cultural dimensions and tourist attraction will be as follows:

$Y= 10.897 + 2.236 \ X_2$

Therefore, it can be stated that one unit of increase in X_2 variable will lead to 2.326 increase the tourist attraction variable. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model of this test is statistically significant.

Table 6: Analyzing the Effect of Cultural Dimension on Tourist Attraction

The title of the variable	B of curved line	Estimated t	Significant Level	Test Result
Cultural Dimension	2.236	77.650	0.000	H_0 hypothesis rejection
Width from Destination	10.897	27.736	0.000	H_0 hypothesis Rejection

4.3. Testing the Effect of Historical Dimension on Tourist Attraction:

H_1: The historical dimension of the tourist destination (X_3) affects on tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.

H_0: The historical dimension of tourist destination (X_3) does not affect on tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.

Table 7: Variance Analysis of Effecting Historical Dimension on Tourist Attraction Regression Model

R		Adjusted Determination Coefficient		Determination Coefficient (R^2)	Standard Error	
0.983		0.981		0.981	1.43657	
Variation Source	Degree of Freedom	Total or sum of squares	Square Mean	F	Confidence Level	Significance Level
Regression	1	874.623	8742.62		0.99	0.000
Residual	148	305.432	2.064	4236.320	Result of test: H_0 hypothesis is	
Total	149	9048.065	---------		rejected	

Since the significance level of the mentioned test is equal to 0.000 therefore, it can be claimed that the above test with 0.01 error or 0.99 confidence level is significant. Besides, the R^2 determination coefficient which includes ratio of the variations explained by variable of x to total of the variations, so it can be stated that about 98 percent of the variations of dependent variable (Y) is justified by the variations of independent variable of (X).

Table 8: Analyzing the Effect of Historical Dimension on Tourist Attraction

The title of the variable	B of curved line	Estimated t	Significant level	Test Result
Historical Dimensions	65.087	3.373	0.000	H_0 Hypothesis Rejection
Width from Destination	5.516	10.047	0.000	H_0 Hypothesis Rejection

Therefore, the mathematical relationship between the historical aspects and the tourist's attraction will be as follows:

$Y = 5.516 + 3.373 X_3$

Then, it can be stated that a unit of increase in X_3 variable will lead to 3.373 increases in the variable of tourist attraction. Thus, it can be concluded that the regression model of this test is statistically significant.

4.4. Testing the Effect of Tourist Destination on Tourist Attraction

H_1: Tourist destination (X) affects on tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.

H_0: Tourist destination (X) does not affect on tourist attraction (Y) in East Azerbaijan province.

For this purpose, using multi-linear regression test, we obtain the effect of tourist destination (natural, cultural, historical) on tourist attraction in East Azerbaijan province.

Table 9: Variance Analysis of Effecting Tourist Destination on Tourist Attraction Regression Model

R		Determination Coefficient (R^2)	Adjusted Determination Coefficient		Standard Error	
0.995		0.991	0.991		0.75829	
Source of Variations	Degree of Freedom	Total of Squares	Square Mean	F	Confidence Level	Significance Level
regression	1	8965.264	1793.53	3118.326	0.99	0.000
Residual	148	82.801	0.575		Test result: H_0 hypothesis is rejected	
Total	149	9048.065	_____			

Since the significance level of the test is equal to 0.000, then H_0 hypothesis is rejected with one percent of error or 99 percent of confidence. Therefore, considering the determination of R^2 in the above regression model consisting of the ratio of the variations explained by the independent variable (X) to total of the variations. It can be expressed that about 99 percent of the variations of the dependent variable (Y) is justified by the variations of the independent variable of (X). Also, considering the value of parameter F=3118.236 which is significant at 99 percent of confidence level, it can be concluded that the estimated regression model has been significant and the effect of independent variable (Natural, Cultural and Historical destination) on the dependent variable (tourist attraction).

Table 10: Analyzing the Effect of Tourist Destination on Tourist Attraction

Name of Variable	B Curved Line	Estimated T	Significance Level
Natural	0.671	6.739	0.000
Cultural	0.816	0.596	0.000
Historical	0.300	1.758	0.000

Thus, the mathematical relationship between tourist destination (the natural, cultural, historical, aspects) and attraction of tourist will be as follows:

$Y = 4.285 + 0.671 X_1 + 0.816 X_2 + 0.3 X_3$

5. Conclusions

As was observed the highest mean belongs to cultural dimension .it means that cultural dimension is the most important dimension of tourist destination. According to means extracted we see cultural and historical sites have attracted the largest number of tourists. The analysis was done according to the research hypotheses, most of the dependent variable changes (Tourists Attracting) by changes in independent variables, respectively, in the cultural, historical and natural are justified. It can be expressed that independent variable in the regression model (Historical Dimension) has the least effect in attracting tourists. Thus, it can be stated that one unit of increase in X_1 variable will lead to 0.671 unit of increase in tourist attraction variable and one unit of increase in X_2 variable will lead to 0.816 unit of increase in tourist attraction variable, and one unit of increase in X_3 variable will lead to 0.3 unit increase in tourist attraction variable. The main conclusions of the study which accomplished with the following title: *Egypt as a macro-tourist destination: tourist services quality and positioning* (Eraqi, 2007) can be

summarized as follows: based on the Likert scale, most of the tourist quality measures/variables were rated Very Good and Good. The most important variable was the friendliness of people, which was rated Excellent. According to averages that we gained in this study, it can be observed that the highest rate of average refers to Regional culture, Region specific and identity variables. This means that above mentioned variable has top importance. Therefor the results of prior study confirm the results of current study.

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