

The formation of destination image of Khorezm region

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Abstract. This paper provides an analysis and conversation concerning the notion and assessment of destination image from a marketing perspective that encompasses various fields within the discipline. The main goal of the current study is to look at the structural relationships between destination image, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty, with a particular emphasis on the role that tourist satisfaction plays as an intermediary in the relationship between destination image and loyalty, particularly in the circumstances of cultural and historical tourism in the Khorezm region. The results show that the cognitive image directly influenced the affective image, affirming the process through which the destination image is formed. Furthermore, both cognitive and affective images had favorable impacts on satisfaction, which, in turn, emerged as a predictor of tourist loyalty. Moreover, Khiva's reputation as a tourist destination in Uzbekistan is mostly based on the city's extensive cultural history and allusions to prehistoric local practices.

1 Introduction

The significance of tourism in Uzbekistan is exemplified through the considerable quantity of inbound international tourists; as per information aggregated by the Statistics agency operating under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, this metric has exceeded 5.2 million in the year 2022, signifying a threefold augmentation subsequent to the epidemic. Nonetheless, the surge in tourist visits primarily pertains to Uzbekistan's cultural and heritage tourism. The progression of this variant of tourism, predominantly heritage tourism, has been prosperous within the regional boundaries of this nation. Tourist hotspots such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva have particularly gained significant levels of achievement. However, notwithstanding the fact that the nation boasts a plethora of historical and cultural landmarks, the focal point remains on locations devoted to soaking up the sun and experiencing agricultural tourism. In recent years, there has been a significant surge in international tourism, leading to heightened competition among various destinations. This trend has generated a keen interest in the improvement, administration, and portrayal of a favorable destination image. The present study aims to investigate the perceptions of foreign tourists towards Uzbekistan, with a particular emphasis on Khiva, and further explore ways to effectively shape Khiva's destination image for the global audience. In the context of an

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archaeological heritage site, an in-depth analysis of the tourists' formed image and its impact on their satisfaction after visitation appears to be of significant importance. This facilitates the enhancement of the features that serve as a drawcard for a global audience on such web pages. In the present era of cut-throat competition among travel destinations, establishing a unique and recognizable destination image has taken on a heightened level of significance [1]. This emphasis on image creation stems from the necessity of effectively differentiating oneself in an increasingly crowded global marketplace. The conception of a destination held by tourists has significant implications for their decision-making processes pertaining to travel. Accordingly, the destination image is a pivotal aspect in the selection of a tourist destination. In the present context, the term "picture" refers to a cognitive construct that has emerged from a composite of impressions garnered through various sensory experiences. The formation of destination images among tourists is marked by a cognitive component that is contingent upon the availability, in adequate measure and quality, of pertinent information. On the contrary, the affective component of the image is generated based on the peculiarities of each individual [3]. An examination of both the cognitive and affective aspects of the image is crucial in enabling tourists to form an overall evaluation of a destination. This process involves consideration of the tourist's pre-existing knowledge and beliefs about the location, in conjunction with their emotional responses to it [4].

2 Materials and methods

The current research paper employs qualitative research methods. The secondary data was used to develop the formation of the destination image and its relationships with tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty. The sources for the study of relevant articles came from four databases: EBSCO host, Web of Science, Scopus, and Emerald. This research paper depicts how tourists estimate the heritage tourism of the destination how satisfied they are, and their influences on perceived destination image and tourist loyalty [15].

3 Results

3.1 Destination image

Destination image stands as a crucial factor influencing tourists' decisions and travel behaviors before, during, and after their visit [4, 5]. Definitions of destination image primarily revolve around an individual's holistic perception of a place [6]. In more recent terms, the destination image is described as "a collection of beliefs and impressions formed through the processing of information from various sources over time, resulting in a mental representation of a destination's attributes, benefits, and distinctive appeal" [7]. This definition acknowledges not only the multiplicity of components, including cognitive and affective elements but also underscores the formation process of a destination image through the interplay of these components. Traditionally, destination image assessment focused solely on the cognitive aspect. However, recent studies have recognized the importance of considering both cognitive and affective dimensions when evaluating destination image. Researchers argue that the coexistence of these two components can offer a more comprehensive understanding of destination image [5]. The cognitive component pertains to an individual's beliefs or knowledge concerning the characteristics and attributes of a tourist destination [8]. On the other hand, the affective dimension relates to an individual's emotions and feelings towards the tourist destination [9].

3.2 Tourism satisfaction

Satisfaction has been extensively studied in the field of tourism. It can be defined as a tourist's assessment of a destination after their visit [10]. In tourism research, [11] emphasized that satisfaction doesn't only pertain to the enjoyment of the travel experience but also includes an evaluation of whether the experience met or exceeded the traveler's initial expectations. In other words, satisfaction arises when travelers compare their initial expectations with their actual perceptions. When the perceived experience surpasses their expectations, the traveler experiences satisfaction [8]. Prior research has highlighted the significant role that a destination's image plays in shaping tourists' satisfaction levels [9]. Generally, previous studies have suggested that a destination's image directly impacts satisfaction, and there is a consensus that a more favorable destination image tends to result in higher levels of tourist satisfaction [10, 11]. However, much of the existing research has primarily focused on the influence of the cognitive aspect of destination image on satisfaction while overlooking the broader impact of destination image, which includes both cognitive and emotional aspects, on tourists' overall satisfaction.

3.3 Tourist loyalty

As per Oliver's definition in 1999 (p. 34), tourist loyalty can be understood as a strong and enduring commitment to consistently choose and use a preferred product or service in the future. This commitment leads to repetitive purchasing of the same brand or set of brands, even when external factors and marketing initiatives could potentially tempt the customer to switch to other options. For destination marketers, tourist loyalty holds immense significance because it is more advantageous and cost-effective to keep existing tourists returning than to focus on attracting new ones [12]. Tourists who exhibit a strong sense of loyalty constitute a valuable market segment for numerous tourism destinations. These loyal travelers are inclined to extend their stays at a destination compared to first-time visitors. Additionally, they often engage in word-of-mouth promotion, sharing positive information about their experiences, and participate more actively in spending on various activities [14]. Furthermore, these repeat visitors can be advantageous for destinations in terms of cost savings since it is generally less expensive to retain them than it is to attract new, first-time visitors [15].

3.4 Model for Tourism Destination Image Formation

In recent years, there has been significant growth in the body of literature concerning destination image. This expanding field was thoroughly examined by a review conducted by [4], which analyzed 142 scholarly papers. According to the assertion made by [3], the existing literature has primarily focused on examining the static framework of this phenomenon. This has been accomplished by exploring the relationship between imagery and behavior, with an emphasis on construct measurement. Research in this area has predominantly concentrated on investigating the connection between destination image and various factors. These factors include destination preference and intention to visit, familiarity with the destination and the impact of previous visits, the geographical location of tourists, the purpose of the trip, situational or temporal influences, the image projected by the destination itself, and the sociodemographic characteristics of tourists.

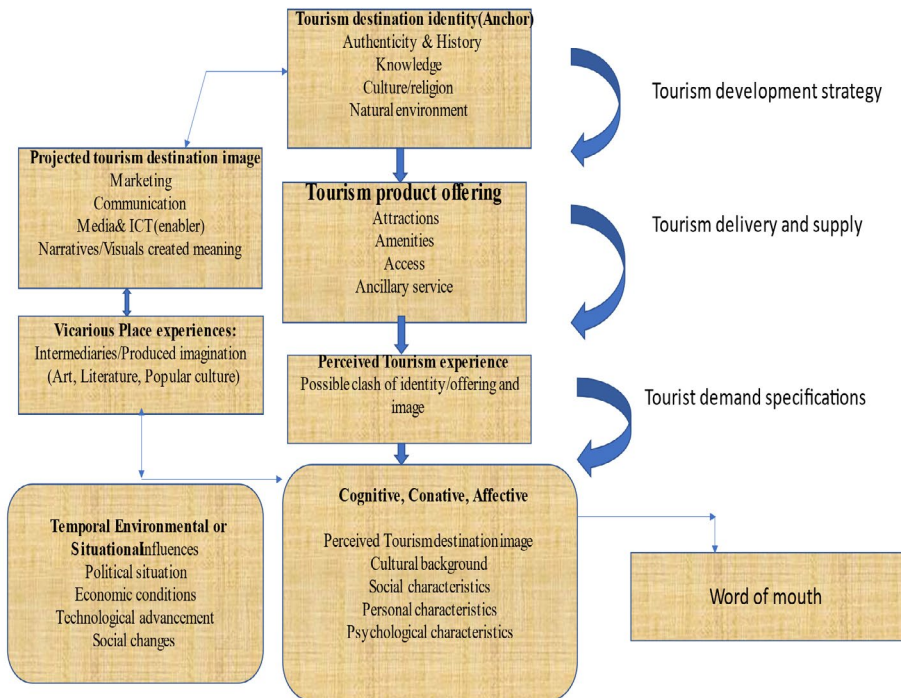


Fig. 1. Tourism destination image formation model

The present study presents an illustration in the form of Figure 1, which outlines the formation model of the image imparted by the destination. The graphic clearly depicts the various components that exert a significant impact on the manner in which the perceived image of the destination takes shape in the mind of the consumer. This conceptual framework embodies the fundamental basis for a comprehensive analysis of the destination image paradigm. The present discourse delves into a 3-TDS (tourism development strategy, tourism delivery and supply, and tourism demand specifications) gap perspective, drawing from the tenets of the 5-gap service quality analysis model proposed by [7], while also incorporating key insights gleaned from [1], [5] explores this framework in detail. In summation, it is imperative that a genuine destination identity serves as a significant basis for any projected destination image or tourism promotion implemented by the local tourism industry [8, 9].

This paper sets forth a tourism development strategy that involves the creation of a distinct "product" in the tourism industry. The strategy emphasizes the commercialization of this product using the unique identity of the destination, which may be either artificially constructed or derived from the authentic character of the locale. This approach is supported by reference to existing literature on the topic [10]. The employment of intentional marketing techniques and the facilitation of vicarious experiences contributes to a forecasted image of a tourist destination.

4 Discussion

While many research studies have explored the influence of destination image on tourist behaviors, this particular study takes a unique approach by considering both cognitive and affective dimensions of destination image. It aims to investigate how these two aspects individually impact the satisfaction and loyalty of foreign tourists in the context of Khiva.

The study has developed a framework to analyze the connections between cognitive image, affective image, tourist satisfaction, and tourist loyalty. Based on the research findings, the following observations can be drawn: Our research findings have revealed a sequential relationship in which the cognitive image precedes the affective image, which is consistent with the outcomes of previous qualitative and quantitative studies [3, 8, 9, 11]. The cognitive dimension of a destination's image relates to how tourists perceive various attributes of the destination, encompassing both functional and tangible aspects (such as accommodations and cultural attractions) and psychological and abstract facets (like the perceived friendliness of the atmosphere). The formation process indicates that an individual's beliefs about a destination (referred to as cognitive image) influence their emotional response to that destination (known as affective image). It's important to note that in this study, we have identified the formation of a destination image, but it's essential to recognize that the relationship between cognitive and affective image is considered causal rather than merely temporal.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated a significant relationship between tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty. This finding is consistent with prior research in the literature [12, 16]. It underscores the pivotal role of satisfaction in shaping tourist behaviors associated with loyalty, which encompasses revisiting a destination and engaging in positive word-of-mouth promotion. The empirical evidence provided by this study supports the notion that satisfaction has a direct and positive impact on tourist loyalty. Therefore, as levels of satisfaction increase, so does the likelihood of tourists returning to the destination and recommending it to others, all of which are crucial components of building and sustaining loyalty.

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