

# Tourism Destination Image, Satisfaction and Loyalty: A Study of the Dead Sea in Jordanian curative tourism

Majed Alqurneh, Filzah MD Isa, and Abdul Rahim Othman  
University Utara Malaysia  
Email: majid\_qurneh@yahoo.com

## ABSTRACT

*The aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between three key variables, namely image, satisfaction and loyalty in curative tourism industry in Jordan. The seven dimensions of the tourism destination image employed in this study are travel environment, national attraction, accessibility, infrastructure, relaxation aspect, outdoor activities and price and value. 202 tourists visiting the Dead Sea in Jordan were used as the sample. The study demonstrates that tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between destination image and loyalty.*

**KEY WORDS:** *curative tourism, tourism destination image, satisfaction, and loyalty.*

## Introduction

The tourist destination concept is tied strongly to the geographical conditions of a place. The attraction of a tourist destination significantly depends on the natural resources and the climatic conditions of the geographical place in which it is located. These environmental factors are perceived by the tourist and help him or her to form a certain image of the tourist destination. From the tourist's view, the transmitted image is a fundamental element in the final decision taken. The previous studies have shown that image is a valuable concept for understanding the process of destination selection done by tourists (Echtner et al. 1991; Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Jenkins 1999; Gallarza et al. 2002; and Pike 2002). According to Bigñe and Andreu (2000), the competitive advantages will no longer lie in the quality of the visible attributes of products, but in those that are not easy to imitate, in intangible resources rather than tangible ones, and particularly, a large part of these intangible resources are centered on service and image.

Tourists, on the first visit to a destination, or on a repeat visit, will observe an image of the place that will enable them to have a more general perception, as the number of visits made and the time spent there substantially influence the formation of the image of the destination (Baloglu and Mangaloglu, 2001). Thus, the key objective in generating and commercializing a successful destination image is that tourists' perception of the destination should correspond to the one that the marketing managers have tried to project (Andreu et al., 2000). Tourism destination image is important because it is presumed to have direct consequences for variables such as the satisfaction felt by the tourist or loyalty to the tourism destination (Lobato et al., 2006).

Loyalty is a concept related closely to tourist satisfaction, and there is even a consensus that a high degree of satisfaction results in loyal customers. This makes loyalty the central concept of marketing and any discussion of it (loyalty) must take into account the elements involved in the process of its formation, such as customer satisfaction (Baker and Crompton 2000; Petrick and Backman 2002) and

brand image (Bigu e et al., 2001). Hence, the objective of this paper is to explore the influence of the tourism destination image, the satisfaction experienced by tourists and their loyalty to the destination. The influence of the affective image on both satisfaction and loyalty is studied in the present work. In addition, the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is considered. To achieve this objective, the literature on image, satisfaction and loyalty was reviewed first, together with where the hypotheses appear. Secondly, an empirical study was carried out at the Dead Sea, one of the tourism destinations integrally planned by the Jordan curative tourism. Finally, some conclusions and recommendations are proposed.

## **Literature Review**

### ***i. The Image of curative tourism***

Tourism destinations must know the image that they project in order to have elements allowing them to make strategic and marketing decisions. The image may be defined as a mental schema developed by a tourist on the basis of a few impressions selected from among a flood of all impressions (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991). The image of the tourism destination is a complex construct. A tourism destination is formed by a variety of elements, which makes it more difficult to measure. The literature review shows that the principal components of the measurement of this construct are travel environment, national attraction, accessibility, infrastructure, relaxation aspect, outdoor activities and price and value (Qu et al., 2008).

These dimensions are recognized by the classical view of the construct, which from our standpoint is only partial. Indeed, it is a cognitive approach, i.e. it focuses on the evaluations of the functional attributes of the destination, which refer to the beliefs and knowledge held by individuals with regard to the object evaluated. The contributions of Holbrook and his colleagues justify the need to incorporate affective elements of the image, i.e., the experiential view (Havlena and Holbrook 1986; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Oliver 1997). The interaction between the image and the effect has become a major line of research in recent years. The good image of information processing has predominated in studies of consumer behavior. The model proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) marked a line from where the consumer behavior school has expanded in recent decades. The different elements of leisure activities like tourism need to resort to fantasies, feelings and emotions to explain purchasing behavior. The tourism destination image is a mental schema developed by tourists s on the basis of impressions. Traditionally, this image has been associated with cognitive impressions. However, it is necessary to bear the affective image in mind to explain the tourism destination image completely (Lobato et al., 2006).

### ***ii. Satisfaction with the curative tourism***

As remarked earlier, satisfaction is a key variable in marketing. Identifying the elements that influence the satisfaction experienced by the tourist is a priority task. Oliver has proposed that ‘satisfaction is defined as pleasurable fulfillment’ (Oliver 1997, 1999). That is, the consumer senses that consumption fulfils some need, desire, goal or so forth and that this fulfillment is pleasurable. Satisfaction is the tourist’s sense that consumption provides outcomes against expectations and a standard of pleasure versus displeasure. In the case of satisfaction with a destination, tourists value the degree of pleasurable

fulfillment of their needs and wishes, including the full range of services and activities offered by the destination. Satisfaction depends on the experience of using the services. Satisfaction has been treated as a one-dimensional construct, which varies along a continuum from dissatisfaction to satisfaction. In this sense it has been found that the image is associated positively with tourist satisfaction at the Dead Sea. This indicates that a positive or negative image can affect the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the tourist to that destination site.

It is difficult to affect the attraction felt for a place for holiday-making, particularly when the tourists are satisfied with the destination (Vogt and Andereck, 2003). An aspect related to satisfaction is when an attempt is made to establish an emotional bond with tourists through the image of the destination, projecting 'emotional satisfaction' (Ekinici, 2003) and not only through the basic needs, such as food, rest or enjoyment (Chaudhary, 2000; Kandampully and Suartanto, 2000). Previous information and the fact that someone has visited the destination (previous experience) must be taken into consideration because that can cause tourists to have a different perception from those who have never visited it (Baloglu, 2001). It is therefore necessary to generate studies of image and its relation to the satisfaction obtained in order to know the visitors' intentions to return and to recommend the destination (Bigñe et al., 2001). Thus, to understand the relationship between image and satisfaction of tourist in Dead Sea, Jordan, a hypothesis is posted in the following terms:

H2: The good destination image influences tourist satisfaction for the Dead Sea curative tourism destination.

### *iii. Loyalty to the curative tourism*

Gaining the loyalty of customers today takes place in both product and services markets and is identified frequently with the retention of customers because both concepts refer to the repetition of the purchase of products or services from a single firm by customers over a prolonged period of time (Petrick 2004; Tsaour et al. 2002). Dick and Basu (1994) viewed customer loyalty as "the strength of the relationship between an individual's relative attitude towards an entity (brand, service, store, or vendor) and repeat patronage". From this perspective, loyalty can be measured directly, through purchasing behavior, through observation of a higher frequency of purchasing or the connection of a number of purchases of a product or service against others, and, indirectly by measuring the attitude or intention to repeat the purchase.

Customer loyalty is a stable source of revenue for firms, serving at the same time as an information channel that acts informally by recommending the product or service to family and friends (Reid and Reid, 1993). In relation to this, two hypotheses are formulated as below:

H3: The image of the tourist destination significantly influences loyalty towards the Dead Sea curative tourism destination.

H4: The tourist satisfaction significantly influences tourist loyalty towards the Dead Sea curative tourism destination.

## Methodology

### Sample

Respondents of the study consisted of Jordanian, Arab and international tourists who visited the Dead Sea in Jordan. The sample of this study consisted of 250 questionnaires distributed to tourist groups or individuals who visited the tourist resort. These sample units were selected as a judgment sampling. The final sample size was 202 tourists. The tourists filled in the questionnaire during the return trip.

The questionnaire consisted of four parts; Part one covered the tourist demographics, Part two contained destination image items (30 items), Part three was on tourist satisfaction (5 items), and Part four was about destination loyalty (7 items). All the questionnaires utilized a five-point scale ( interval scale) from 1 being highly dissatisfied to 5 being highly satisfied). Seven dimensions of the image were (1) Travel Environment (2) National Attraction (3) Accessibility, (4) Infrastructure (5) Relaxation Aspect (6) Outdoor Activities (7) Price and value. Although the questionnaire was written in English, the entire instrument was translated to Arabic for both local Jordanians and Arab respondents, and English language was used for foreign respondents. For these, different translators were used. The translator, who is very fluent in both Arabic and English, is a local English language supervisor at the Ministry of Education in Jordan.

### Factor Analysis on Destination Image

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on image destination including 7 dimensions, namely, travel environment, national attraction, infrastructure, accessibility, relaxation aspect, outdoor activities, and price/value. Five items were used for travel environment, 7 items were used for national attraction, 3 items were used for infrastructure, 4 items were used for accessibility, 3 items were used for relaxation aspect, 4 items were used for outdoor activities, and 4 items were used for price/value. The results of factor analysis on Image are presented in Table (1). The table presents the factor loading of 7 dimensions of image items after deleting the items that show either low factor loading (<0.50), and the results indicate that the loadings of the remaining items were from 0.50.to 0.80. The factor analysis for 30 items of Image provided 4 dimensions with 14 items (3 dimensions with 16 items were deleted). The 4 dimensions remaining were travel environment with 2 items, national attraction with 5 items, accessibility with 3 items, and price/value with 4 items. Tourist satisfaction had 3 items, and loyalty had 4 items. The relative explanatory power (Eigenvalues) for each dimension was 9.039, 35.517, 15.410, 24.418, 2.433, and 2.617, respectively. These dimensions cumulatively captured 82.158 percent of variance in the data. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MAS) for all items for image was 0.743 , 0.687 for tourist satisfaction, and 0.684 for loyalty, which ranged within the acceptable level between 0.51 and 0.90. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, which indicates that there are a sufficient number of significant inter-correlations for factor analysis, and the assumptions of factor analysis were met. The Cronbach's Alpha of items is reliable. Table (1) concludes the findings of the accepted items. The table shows the reliability based on the Cronbach's alpha results.

Table (1):

*Summary of Factor and Reliability Analysis on Destination Image, Satisfaction, and Loyalty*

Name	Items	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	% Variance	$\alpha$
Travel Environment	Safe and secure environment	.876	9.039	84.384	0.911
	Clean and tidy environment	.929			
Price/Value	Reasonable price for food and accommodation	.902	24.418	59.935	0.898
	Good value for money	.799			
	Reasonable price for attractions and activities	.943			
	Good bargain shopping	.765			
Accessibility	Available parking downtown	.840	15.410	75.345	0.906
	Easy access to the area	.922			
	Easy-to-use and affordable trolley system	.953			
Natural Attraction	Gorgeous gardens and springs	.906	35.517	35.517	0.944
	Fabulous scenic drive	.894			
	Picturesque parks/lakes/streams (if applicable)	.893			
	Unspoiled wilderness and fascinating wildlife	.870			
	Spectacular caves and underground formations (if applicable)	.914			
Tourist Satisfaction	I am satisfied with my decision to visit Jordanian tourism sites	.891	2.433	81.103	0.883
	My choice to visit Jordan for tourism is a wise one	.943			
	I think I did the right thing by visiting Jordanian tourism sites	.866			
Loyalty	As long as the present service continues , I will visit Dead Sea	.760	2.617	65.428	0.815
	I will try to visit Jordan whenever I am going for tourism holiday	.908			
	When I need tourism destination, Jordan is my first choice	.892			
	I believe Jordan is my favourite tourism destination	.646			

Note: Items with factor loading less than 0.50 or double loading were deleted.

**Findings:** The findings of the study are reported through the regression analysis performed below

Table (2):

***Regression result of Destination Image with Tourist Satisfaction***

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
	B	Std. Error	Beta
(Constant)	2.319	.386	
Travel Environment	-.002	.081	-.002
National Attraction	.008	.077	.007
Accessibility	.177	.056	.206**
Price/Value	.361	.063	.395**
R	.495		
R <sup>2</sup>	.245		
Std. Error of the Estimate	.82162		

A Dependent Variable: tourist satisfaction

**The Examination of Destination Image that has More Impact on Tourist Satisfaction**

The largest beta coefficient is B = .395, which is price/value. This means that this dimension makes the stronger unique contribution in explaining the dependent variable. It has significant value less than .05 (p = .000). Consequently, this dimension makes a significant unique contribution to the prediction of the mediator variable (tourist satisfaction). Other dimensions are arranged according to stronger unique contribution as follows; the result shows that there was a significant relationship between destination image as travel environment (.000) with B=.002, national attraction (.000) with B=.007, accessibility (.000) with B=.206, and price/value (.000) with B=.395 and tourist satisfaction. This shows that the variation in the tourist satisfaction was statistically explained or accounted for by the regression equation. Table (2) below shows that 4 data dimensions, namely, Travel Environment, National Attraction, Accessibility, and Price/Value were found very significant and supportive of the hypotheses regression. The result shows that there was a significant relationship between Destination Image as follows: destination image (1.087), travel environment (+.261), national attraction (+.218), infrastructure (-.369), accessibility (+.187), outdoor activities (+.187), and price/value (+.295) with tourist satisfaction. The 4 predictor dimensions were observed to positively correlate with tourist satisfaction (the mediating variable) as indicated by the positive R-value of .495 in Table (2). A computed R-square value of .245 suggests that the variables are responsible for more than 38 per cent of the variance in the tourist satisfaction with a standard error of estimate of .82162. This result implies that tourist satisfaction in Jordan curative tourism has a significant relationship with destination image and value (Cresswell, 2003; Coake & Steed, 2007). The multiple regression analysis results are shown in Table (3).

Table (3)

***Regression result of Destination Image with Tourist Loyalty***

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
	B	Std. Error	Beta
(Constant)	1.286	.387	
Travel Environment	.424	.081	.378**
National Attraction	.017	.077	.015
Accessibility	-.020	.056	-.024
Price/Value	.148	.063	.165**
R	.465		
R <sup>2</sup>	.216		
Std. Error of the Estimate	.82349		

A Dependent Variable: tourist loyalty

The results showed that the regression equation explains more than 46.5 % of the variability in tourist satisfaction. This is an acceptable level for R<sup>2</sup> in explaining the variability of tourist satisfaction. The R<sup>2</sup> for regression model indicates that 21.6 % of the variability of tourist satisfaction tests the hypotheses.

**Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between destination image and loyalty**

According to McKinnon et al. (1995), mediation is generally present when:

1. The independent variable (IV) significantly affects the Mediator variable(MV),
2. The IV significantly affects the dependent variable (DV) in the absence of the MV,
3. The MV has a significant unique effect on the DV, and
4. The effect of the IV on the DV shrinks upon the addition of the MV to the model.

The regression results show that the image and the mediating variable, tourist satisfaction, have a positive and significant effect on loyalty. Table (4) below provides a summary of the beta value for the image on loyalty before and after including the tourist satisfaction variable in the regression analysis.

Table (4)

*Summary of the Beta Value on the Relationship of Tourist Satisfaction between Image and Loyalty*

Variable	Criterion Variable Destination Loyalty		
	Without	With	Result
Travel Environment	.378**	.379**	P
Natural Attraction	.015	.013**	F
Accessibility	.024	.074	P
Price/Value	.165**	.069	P

Note: F = Full mediator

P = Partial mediator

\*\*P < 0.01

The table above indicates that there is a weaker relationship, but still significant, between travel environment (b=.379, p<0.01), although accessibility (b=.074, p<0.01), and price/value (b=.069, p<0.01), with loyalty being a partial mediator, but not significant. However, the natural attraction variable has a full mediator relationship and is significant at b=.013, p<0.01, with loyalty.

## Conclusion

The study shows a strong relationship among the image, satisfaction and loyalty to the Dead Sea in Jordan as a curative tourism destination. The contribution of the present study lies in empirically stating the importance of the emotions behind the people's intention to return to a tourist destination, and tourist satisfaction as a mediator between image and loyalty in Jordan curative tourism. At the level of business implications, the study calls attention to the need to study the impressions that tourists take away with them after their stay in a tourism destination. A destination must have an adequate travel environment and national attraction, accessibility, travel infrastructure, relaxation aspect, outdoor activities and price/value, but everything must be adapted to tourists' expectations. To achieve tourists' loyalty to a tourism destination, tourists must be assured of a pleasant, relaxing and cheerful stay. To manage these emotional elements the traditional tools of creating infrastructures, offering quality service and a varied offer of entertainment is not enough. Along with this, which can be considered a necessary condition, the different agents that make up a tourism destination should co-ordinate and orientate themselves towards the tourists' needs. They should analyze how they can ensure that tourists visiting a certain destination take away with them a very positive affective image. This is the basis on which these tourists will repeat the visit and become loyal. Nevertheless, it is necessary to be aware of the limitations of this study. First, the empirical study has focused on a particular destination - the Dead Sea, Jordan, for a particular type of tourism. In the future the study will have to be extended to other models of tourism destinations and to other typologies of tourists or to a cognitive image of tourism destinations on attitudinal loyalty. Secondly, the size of the sample is not very large, posing problems with sample error.



Finally, with the aim of overcoming the latter limitation and also to broaden the research, this same study could be carried out in consecutive periods in order to construct temporal series for each variable. This would permit dynamic analyses.

## References

- Andreu, L., Bigñe, E. & Cooper, C. (2000) Projected and perceived Image of Spain seize to Tourist Destination for British Travelers, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 9(4), pp. 47–66.
- Baker, D. A. & Crompton, D. L. (2000) Quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(3), pp. 785–804.
- Baloglu, S. (2001) Image variations of Turkey by familiarity index: informational and experiential dimensions, *Tourism Management*, 22, pp. 127–133.
- Baloglu, S. & Mangaloglu, M. (2001) Tourism destination images of Turkey, Egypt, Greece, and Italy seize perceived by US-based tour operator and travel agents, *Tourism Management*, 22, pp. 1–9.
- Baloglu, S. & McCleary, K. (1999) I shape for the formation of the image of a destiny, *Annals of Tourism Research in Spanish*, 1(2), pp. 325–355.
- Bigñe, E. & Andreu, L. (2000) The chain of the marketing of the tourist product, in J. E. Bigñe & D.López (Eds) *Territorial Planning and Tourist Marketing*, pp. 113–132 (Castellon de la Plana, Spain:Universitat Jaume I).
- Bigñe, E., Sanchez, M. I. & Sanchez, J. (2001) Tourism image, evaluation variables and after purchase behaviour: Inter-relationship, *Tourism Management*, 22, pp. 607–616.
- Coakes, S. J., & Steed, L. (2007). *SPSS version 14.0 for Windows: Analysis without anguish*: Wiley.
- Chaudhary, M. (2000) India's Image seize Tourist Destination – to perspective of foreign tourists, *Tourism Management*, 21, pp. 293–297.
- 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.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: Sage Publisher.s
- Dick, A. S., & Basu, K. (1994). Customer loyalty :Toward an integrated conceptual framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 22(2), 99-113.
- Echtner, C., Ritchie, M. & Brent, J. R. (1991). The Meaning and Measurement of Destination Image, *The Journal of Tourism Studies*, 2(2), pp. 2–12.
- Ekinci, Y. (2003). From destination image to destination branding: An emerging area of research, *Review of Tourism Research*, 1(2), pp. 1–4.
- Lobato, L. H., Magdalena, M., Radilla, S., Tena, M. A. M., & Garcia, J. S. (2006). Tourism destination image, satisfaction and loyalty: A study in Ixtapa-zihuatanejo, Mexico.
- Fakeye, P. C. & Crompton, J. L. (1991) Image Differences Between Prospective, First-Time, and Repeat Visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, *Journal of Travel Research*, 30(2), pp. 10–16.
- Fishbein, M. & Ajzen, I. (1975) *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley).
- Gallarza, M.G., Gil, I. & Calderón, H. (2002) Image of the Destiny, Towards a Conceptual Frame, *Annals of Tourism Research in Spanish*, 4(1), pp. 37–62.

- Havlena, W. J. & Holbrook, M. B. (1986) The Varieties of Consumption Experience: Comparing Two Typologies of Emotion in Consumer Behavior, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(3), pp. 394–404.
- Holbrook, M. B. & Hirschman, E. (1982). The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2), pp. 132–140.
- Janesick, V. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design: Metaphor, **methodolatry**, and meaning. California: Sage Publications.
- Jenkins, O. H. (1999) Understanding and Measuring Tourist Destination Images, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 1, pp. 1–15.
- Kandampully, J. & Suaranto, D. (2000) Customer loyalty in the hotel industry: the role of customer satisfaction and image, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 12(6), pp. 346–351.
- MacKinnon, D. P., Warsi, G., & Dwyer, J. H. (1995). A simulation study of mediated effect measures. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 30(1), 41–62
- Oliver, R. L. (1997) *Satisfaction: A Behavioral Perspective on the Customer* (New York, NY, USA.: McGraw-Hill).
- Oliver, R. L. (1999) Whence consumer Loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 63 (special issue), pp. 33–45.
- Petrick, F. J. (2004) Loyal ploughs visitors desired visitors, *Tourism Management*, 25(4), pp. 463–470.
- Petrick, F. J. & Backman, J. S. (2002) An examination of the construct of perceived value for the prediction of golf travelers' intentions to revisit, *Journal of Travel Research*, 41(1), pp. 38–45.
- Pike, S. (2002) Destination image analysis – a review of 142 papers from 1973 to 2000, *Tourism Management*, 23, pp. 541–549.
- Reid, L. J. & Reid, S. D. (1993) Communicating Tourism suppliers: Services building repeat visitors relationships, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 2(2/3), pp. 3–20.
- Tsaur, S., Chiu, Y. & Huang, C. (2002) Determinants of guest loyalty to international tourist hotels – a neural network approach, *Tourism Management*, 23, pp. 397–405.
- Vogt, C. A. & Andereck, K. L. (2003) Destination Perceptions across to Vacation, *Journal of Travel Research*, 41, pp. 348–354.