European Tourist Perspective on Destination Satisfaction in Jordan's industries

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Abstract

Extant tourism literature reveals that the travelers' satisfaction from a tourist destination is a significant determinant of their post-holiday behaviors. The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of these variables on European tourist perspective and to examine the relationship between destination satisfaction and positive word of mouth of the tourists visiting Amman, Jordan. European travelers participated by filling out a self administered questionnaire. A sample of 208 tourists was collected through convenience sampling, at 3, 4 and 5 star hotels in Amman. The lodging and transportation dimensions were found to have an insignificant effect on destination satisfaction. Food and local cuisine, shopping and tourist attractions and environment and safety were found to have a significant effect on destination satisfaction. In spite of that lodging and restaurant facilities, transportation facilities and infrastructure were found to have insignificant effect on destination satisfaction.

Keywords: Destination satisfaction, European tourists, tourism, Jordan, positive word of mouth.

1. Introduction

Tourism has become one of the most booming sectors in todays world and has a far beyond impact on its economic and business aspects. Recent estimates by the World Travel and Tourism Council (2006) indicated that the tourism industry contributes around 10 percent of global gross domestic product and provides employment for about 215 million people worldwide.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2007) reported that over 846 million people traveled as international tourists in 2006 with Europe having a market share of 54.4%. According to the statistics, an additional 43 million arrivals was recorded over 2005's level marking a new record year for the industry and of these 43 million increase in the international tourist arrivals, Europe accounts for 22 million arrivals, thus showing how important is the continent contribution to international tourism.

Barring the escalation of recent disasters and crises, there is little doubt that tourism is on its way to become the largest industry in the world and is an increasingly important catalyst for globalization in terms of intensified economic, social and cultural relations across borders. With this increase each country promotes and tries to attract potential tourists for the gains associated with tourism, such as economic, social development, infrastructural growth and many more.

Jordan is a country bordering Saudi Arabia, Syria, Israel, West Bank, Iraq, and Egypt via the Red Sea. Jordan accounts mostly on tourism for its economy, in this respect tourism is one of the leading industries for the country's

economy. Jordanian hospitality is also well known by increasing number of Western tourists visiting the country. Swift increase in the number of tourists visiting Jordan resulted from the peace treaty signed with Israel in 1994 (Kelly 1998).

In addition to its historical sites, Jordan's health tourism has also become very popular. Jordan offers world-class hospitals to Jordanians and foreigners alike. Education tourism is also very popular in Jordan. Jordan's excellent education program is a favorite for westerners studying Arabic in the Middle East. As well as the students who can afford to study in Jordan's European and American universities.

Adventurers staying in Jordan can also rock-climb in Jordan's Wadi Rum and go for hikes in Jordan's northern mountainous region. Scuba divers can visit Aqaba's magnificent coral reefs. Pop-culture tourism is also very famous for Jordan because of the rising number of western films that have been filmed in Jordan.

Shopping tourism is popular in Amman, Irbid, and Aqaba. The number of pilgrimages is growing in Jordan. Mount Nebo and the Mosaic Map in Madaba are a popular place to Christian tourists. The Jordan River and the Dead Sea are also very popular. The numerous medieval mosques and churches are popular destinations for pilgrims.

The most frequented location in Jordan is the ancient Nabataeans city of Petra. Petra, a complete city carved in a mountain, is recognized as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. Leisure tourism in the Dead Sea area offer world-class spas to visitors. Medical tourism is an increasingly important sector of the Jordanian tourism industry.

Tourism is a very important sector of the Jordanian economy. In 1999, Jordan faced an aggressive economic reform plan which aimed to turn Jordan into a the regional hub for tourism. As a result of significant free market reforms in 2001, Jordan became a member of the World Trade Organization . Amman was transformed into a regional business center and one of the region's most desirable investment locations. Jordan's most competitive sectors turned to be tourism, real estate, and ICT sectors emerged during this period. Although in the first half of 2008 the country faced inflation up to 13% mark share, but this amount was far less than in neighbouring countries such as Egypt where the inflation crept up to around 23%.

More than 70 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2004 was devoted to services industries. The sector employed nearly 75 percent of the labor force in 2002. The banking sector was widely regarded as advanced by both regional and international terms. The overall results for Jordan's banking sector in 2007 were good, with the total profits of the 15 listed banks up 14.89% to JD640m ($909m). Jordan's strong growth of 6% in 2007 was reflected in a 20.57% expansion in net credit to JD17.9bn ($25.4bn) by the end of the year. Trade, construction and industry saw most improvement. Many banks suffered from the sharp correction in the Amman Stock Market in 2006, encouraging them to focus on core banking business in 2007, and this was reflected in a 16.65% rise in net interest and commission income to JD1.32bn ($1.87bn). They were fortunate, however, that the stock market also picked up in 2007 and total portfolio income losses decreased. Also, although Jordan's banking sector is small by global standards, it has attracted strong interest from regional investors in Lebanon and the GCC. New regulations introduced by the CBJ, in addition to historical political stability, have helped to create a favourable investment environment. High demand for low-income housing, as well as infrastructure improvement, should mean a positive outlook for Jordan's banking sector. Its conservative policies helped Jordan avoid the global financial crisis of 2009, Jordanian banks was one of the only countries that posted a profit in 2009.

Although in 2007 Jordan's economy was under some pressure, but there were still a number of sectors that have performed well during this year including tourism, pharmaceuticals and minerals. More than 3 million tourists visited Jordan in 2007. Its major tourist activities include visiting ancient sites and unpolluted natural locations, as well as observing cultural and religious sites and traditions (Wikipedia).

A review of relevant tourism literature indicated that the travelers' satisfaction from a tourist destination is an important determinant of their post-holiday behaviors. There are various factors affecting the travelers' perceptions of destination satisfaction such as environment and safety, lodging and restaurant facilities, shopping and tourist attractions, transportation facilities and local cuisine which are researched by many scholars (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2007; Geng-Qing Chia and Qu, 2008; Bosque and Martin, 2008; Kozak, 2001; Sarikaya and Woodside, 2005; Yoon and Uysal, 2005; Thompson and Schofield, 2007).

From the above findings, this article aims to investigate the effects of variables such as safety, lodging and restaurant facilities, shopping and tourist attractions, transportation facilities and local cuisine on European

travelers' perceptions of destination satisfaction in Jordan. In addition, to examine the impacts of tourists' destination satisfaction on their positive word of mouth.

2.Literature Review

Destination satisfaction is explained by Ibrahim and Gill as the emotional state of tourists after experiencing the destination (Ibrahim and Gill, 2005). Ryan also describes destination satisfaction by mentioning the degree of satisfaction gained by the tourist which is related to the degree of expectation of the tourists, the reality on which the expectations are based, the ability of the tourist to adjust the observed realities and the nature of the serious encounter that shape the reality (Ryan, 1991).

A review of the tourism literature revealed that the travelers' satisfaction from a tourist destination is an important determinant of their post-holiday behaviors. Tourist satisfaction with a destination may be seen as the tourist's assessment of the destination characteristics. As it is mentioned in various studies, there is no doubt that if tourists are satisfied with their holiday experience, it is expected that they will be more likely to continue to return to a destination and recommend it to others (Kozak and Rimmington, 1998; Oppermann, 1999).

In a demanding competitive environment there are some factors that play a crucial role in the success of service organizations that are prerequisites of high levels of service quality, achieving customer satisfaction and increasing customer retention rates (Lovelock and Wright, 1999; Kotler and Armstrong, 2006).

To sum up, there are many different factors affecting the tourist's perception about the destination. Lodging, restaurants, shopping, tourist attractions, transportation facilities, local cuisine and environment and safety are the important determinants for destination satisfaction as mentioned by many researchers (Choi,Chan and Wu, 1999; Heung, 2000; Weiemair, 2000; Rittichainuwat, Qu and Mongknonvanit 2002; Pawirta and Tan, 2003; Beerli and Martin,2004; Hankinson, 2004; Sarikaya and Woodside,2005; Poon and Low, 2005; Erdogan H, Ekiz (2006). The behavioral outcome gained from destination satisfaction is the recommendation made by tourists to other people that indicate the results in repeated purchase and also positive word of mouth (Oliver, 1980; Taylor and Baker, 1994; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1985, and Heung, 2000).

Lodging is one of the dimensions in destination satisfaction. Chen and Gursoy (2001) mentioned the importance of satisfaction with lodging experience and restaurant meal that are the main determinants of total destination satisfaction, since the tourists spend most of their times in their hotels or in the restaurants (Chen and Gursoy, 2001). Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) diagnosed the hotel image and customer loyalty in New Zealand hotel chains and found a positive correlation between customer loyalty and satisfaction with housekeeping services, reception, food and beverage and price (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000).

Poon and Low (2005) stated that the destination satisfaction of Western and Asian travelers was mostly based on the hospitality of staff within hotels (Poon and Low, 2005). In a study by Gyimothy (2000), he stated that more than half of the tourist respondents pointed out the importance of restaurant facilities as an essential part of visiting a destination (Gyimothy, 2000). Soriano (2002) claimed significance of fresh ingredients as well as the cost of food in the customer satisfaction and a reason for customers to repurchase. The other study was contributed in the Australian restaurant sector by Sparks (2003) who found that restaurants make a considerable contribution to a tourist destination's attractiveness that influence customer choice in choosing a destination to travel (Sparks, Bowen and Klag, 2003).

Transportation service is one other dimension of the destination satisfaction. Transportation service offered to a tourist both to and from destination is all perceived and evaluated by tourist as an important factor in destination satisfaction (Weiermair, 2000). One other researcher who conducted his research on the transportation issue is Hankinson (2004). By conducting his study under the accessibility dimension, he stated that transportation is one of the major factors that lure tourists choose a specific destination to travel. The other important dimension of transportation that makes this service important in destination satisfaction are the ease of access, quality of the service, closeness of the airport and the motorways (Hankinson, 2004).

Environment is the other dimension of destination satisfaction, since environment is an influential catch element; it is a vital factor in the tourism products. Kaynak, Bloom and Leibold (1994) examined the environment by classifying it as natural and artificial environment. They concluded that to improve the travelers' destination satisfaction, both classifications of environments must be carefully planned, promoted and preserved. Peace and tourism is an important topic today in tourism literature. The need for safety and achieving a safe environment is one

of the fundamental conditions to guarantee tourism. Tourism flourishes in a peaceful environment and prosperity and likewise extremely vulnerable to perceived political instability and lack of safety. For Western travelers, the security and safety factor is outweights the other factors in explaining customer satisfaction, especially after September 11th(Poon and Low, 2005).

The next influential element in the destination satisfaction is shopping opportunities and the development of local handicrafts that also play an essential role in the development of a new market for tourism (Costa and Ferrone, 1995). Souvenirs or symbols of a certain culture can remind the tourist about a particular place its culture or religion. Shopping is a very important part of the travelers' part in countries like Japan. Cultural obligation says that the Japanese must take home souvenirs for families and relatives (Reisinger and Waryszak, 1994).
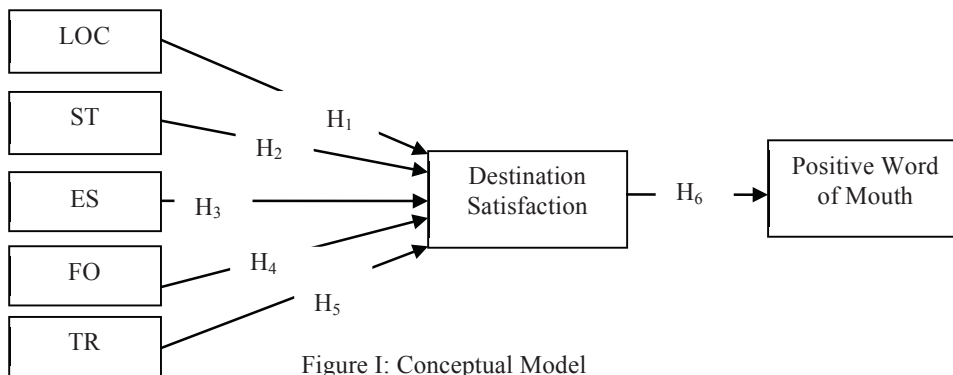

Figure I: Conceptual Model

3.The Hypotheised Relationships
In view of the above findings, the following hypothesises are proposed:

H_1:   Lodging and restaurant facilities in Jordan have a direct significant effect on   European tourists` satisfaction from the tourist destination.

H_2:   Shopping and tourist attractions in Jordan have a direct significant effect on   European tourists' satisfaction from the tourist destination.

H_3:   Environment and safety in Jordan have a direct significant effect on European   tourists' satisfaction from the tourist destination.

H_4: Jordanian Cuisine (food) has a direct significant effect on European tourists'   satisfaction   from   the tourist destination.

H_5:   The transportation facilities and infrastructure in Jordan have a direct significant   effect   on European tourists' satisfaction from the tourist destination.

H_6:   Destination satisfaction in Jordan has a direct significant impact on positive word of mouth.

4. Methodology
4.1.Setting and Sample
The sample used in this study was based on the European tourists from Italy, Spain and France; who had spent their holidays in the capital city of Jordan, Amman. The sample was collected from 3, 4 and 5 star hotels of Amman, from the non native tourists. The method used in the study was convenience sampling method and the questionnaires were filled out by a self-administered manner.

Specifically, 300 questionnaires were distributed to the travelers. By the cutoff date for data collection, 208 usable questionnaires were received for a response rate of 69 %. The questionnaires consisted of four parts and the respondents were asked to indicate on a 5 point Likert scale about their perceptions of Jordan. The questions were divided for each of the

influential dimensions on destination satisfaction that were accommodation, lodging, cuisine, shopping, transportation and safety. The questions also asked their reasons and frequency of their visit to Jordan. The demographic questions were also asked at the end of the questionnaires.

Deductive approach was used, that is to make and test deductions from constructs, also descriptive statistics for measures and frequencies for the demographic variables were presented. The hypothesized relationships were tested through regression analysis using SPSS 21.0.

4.2. Measurement

To measure destination satisfaction a questionnaire was adopted from Qu and Li (1997) which was modified and applied by Rittichainuwat, Qu and Mongknonvanit (2002). The questionnaires consisted of four parts. The first part contained 38 questions which covered tourist's perceptions about different aspects of Amman as a tourist destination, such as accommodation, cuisine, transportation and safety. For each item, respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of Amman on a 5 point Likert scale.

5. Results and findings
5.1. Respondents' profile

Out of 300 questionnaires that were distributed, 208 usable ones were returned with a response rate of 69%. The research model has been designed and multiple regression analysis in SPSS 13.0 has been used for the measurement of the hypothesized relationships.

As it is mentioned in the demographic chart, the majority of the respondents (63.5%) were female; the largest number of tourist were from Spain 86 (41.34%), France 82(39.42) and Italy 40 (19.23%). Approximately, 33% of the tourists had four   years university and vocational education, (95%) were from high school and 20%   had M.A and doctorate degrees. The majority (65%) of the respondents was married and the minority (32%) of them was single. (49%) of the respondents did not make any vacations in the previous year, whereas (87%) of the respondents had visited Egypt and Israel besides Jordan. Total number of the respondents (100%) visited Amman, Petra, and Aqaba, and the majority of these tourists were from Spain (41%).

5.2. Variance, Correlation and Reliability Scores of the Scales

Reliability coefficients for each variable of the study at the aggregate level were computed, which is represented by the alpha coefficient, that in our case is 0.90, meaning each reliability coefficient is adequate and usable for further analysis. In particular, the reliability coefficients ranged from 0.70 to 0.90. In the end, each coefficient surpasses the necessary requirement value 0.70 (Nunnally 1978).

Table I: Variance, Correlation and reliability

Scale Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlations	Cronbach Alpha	Variance Explained
Shopping and Tourist Attractions (ST)		0.94	21.0%
Price of shopping items	0.96		
Quality of shopping products	0.94		
Type of shopping products	0.92		
Service in stores	0.89		
Service at tourist attractions	0.86		
Type of tourist attractions	0.75		
Price of traveling in	0.72		
Food (FO)		0.90	11.9%
Quality of foods	0.90		
Type of foods	0.88		
Food prices	0.86		

Lodging and restaurants (LOC)		0.82	8.1%
Quality of lodging facility	0.84		
Service in hotel or guest house	0.79		
Price of hotel or guest house	0.76		
Service in restaurants	0.74		
Type of lodging	0.70		
Environment and Safety (ES)		0.78	7.0%
Environment	0.77		
Cleanliness and hygiene	0.74		
Attitude of Domestic people toward tourists	0.72		
A safe place for tourists	0.64		
Transportation (TR)		0.74	3.4%
Service of transporters	0.70		
Price of the local transportation fares	0.67		
Convenience of local transportation system	0.65		
Types of local transportation system	0.60		

Notes: Each item is measured on a five point Likert – scale. Coefficient alphas for all dimensions exceed 0.70. Total scale reliability is 0.90.

5.3.Test results

$$Y= 0.477 + 0.040(LOC) + 0.182 (ST) + 0.169(ES) + 0.352 (FO) + 0.062(TR)$$

Multiple R =0.497[a] $R^2 = 0.458$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.224$ Standard error =0.48619
F = 10.439   P<0.000[a]

Independent variables: Lodging and Restaurant facilities (LOC), Shopping and Tourist attractions (ST), Food (FO) and Environment and Safety (ES), Transportation facilities (TR)

Table II

Independent variable	Beta[a]	t-value	p[b]
Intercept	0.477		
Lodging and restaurant facilities (LOC)	0.040	0.728	0.490
Shopping and tourist attractions (ST)	0.182	2.395	0.020
Environment and safety (ES)	0.169	2.254	0.037
Foods (FO)	0.352	5.131	0.000
Transportation facilities (R)	0.062	0.750	0.476

Note: [a] Standardized coefficient, [b] p<0.05
Assumptions: Normality: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistics 0.10 < 0.12 at a significant level of 0.001 where error terms (residuals) are normally distributed.
Linearity: Confirmed by the analysis of partial regression plots where error terms of regression models are identical (homoscedastic).
Homoscedasticity: Confirmed by the analysis of partial regression plots
Independence of Residuals: Durbin-Watson test, score = 1.573.

Table III: Multicollinearity Statistics

Dimensions	Condition		Variable Proportions				
	Index	Constant	LOC	ST	ES	FO	TR
1	1.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	18.023	0.00	0.23	0.04	0.00	0.53	0.08
3	24.150	0.00	0.58	0.11	0.06	0.29	0.18

4	24.427	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.24	0.14	0.67
5	27.704	0.00	0.05	0.59	0.38	0.08	0.05
6	48.526	0.98	0.14	0.33	0.35	0.02	0.08

Notes: There is no evidence of multicollinearity problem since each conditioning index is lower than 30, and at least two variance proportions are lower than 0.50 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996, p. 87).

Table IV: Regression model for customers overall satisfaction and positive-word-of mouth

Variables	**Coefficient**	**t-statistic**
PWM= $b_o + b_1(S) + e_t$		
b_o	1.763	7.032
b_1	0.503	
R^2	0.30	
F Statistic	67.62	

5.4. Reliability and Validity

The study results were accepted reliable and valid. Since all reliability coefficients of 5 dimensions were higher than the cut-off value of 0.70 (Nunnally 1978). Factors analysis Validity were used and each item was found above 0.50 (Nunnally 1978). Face validity of the questionnaire were found appropriate.

6. Findings and Discussion

This paper aimed to examine the effects of environment and safety, lodging, restaurant facilities, shopping and tourist attractions, transportation facilities on European travelers' satisfaction perceptions from Jordan as a tourist destination. In addition it examined the relationship between destination satisfaction and positive word of mouth of the tourist visiting Amman, Jordan. All tourists spent their time in the capital Amman or also visited both Petra and Aqaba which are other tourist cities in Jordan. Most of the respondents who had been in Amman more than once were approximately 58% and they visited for holiday purposes.

The six hypotheses tested in this study were accepted except for lodging and restaurant facilities and also transportation facilities and infrastructure, which were rejected. A positive significant relationship was also found between destination satisfaction and positive word of mouth.

The results of the regression analysis revealed that local cuisine was the most important factor influencing tourists' satisfaction with Amman as a tourist destination. The existing literature in this field states that there is an important connection between local cuisine and tourists' satisfaction with a destination (Sparks, Bowen and Klag, 2003). Local cuisine was favored because of the quality, price and type of food.

Shopping and tourist attractions were found to be the second most significant dimension of a tourists' satisfaction within Jordan as a travel destination. Shopping opportunities available to tourist in Jordan and what attitudes businesses have towards tourists were also stated in this article that would also be the second most important determinant of this study as well.

Environment and safety viewed as the third important criteria for the destination choice (Baloglu and Uysal, 1996), because of the political stability, friendliness of culture, preservation of environment and cleanliness of the city.

This study has determine d that three out of five dimensions had an effect on destination satisfaction from the perspective of European tourists in Amman in Jordan. The fourth dimension was positive word of mouth, which was gained through the satisfied tourists who left the country.

7. Managerial implications

The major findings of this study have significant managerial implications for tourism and hospitality managers and also marketers. Destination managers should strive to create a positive image continuously and

consistently if they are to compete successfully in the competitive holiday market because once an image is formed, it is difficult to change, and tourists are very sensitive to this particular point. Achieving positive image could be informed by advertising and promoting tourist attractions, organizing cultural events that appeal to tourists, administering service quality provided by tourism infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants, tourist centers and retail establishments.

The government and organizations within the tourism industry should concentrate their efforts and take measures in order to support tour operators and hoteliers financially. They also should take a more active role in European tourism fairs and provide tourism promotional items. Preparing comprehensive training programs for people employed in the hospitality sector can be a good solution to the existing problems. The Jordanian government should also streamline entry rules and regulations into the country, making it more accessible for the average tourist.

The study has been conducted in the capital city of Jordan. However, it cannot be claimed that, Amman can be representative of the other cities. In future studies, the same questionnaire should also be distributed in other cities throughout Jordan in order to collect broader data. Replication studies with large sample size elsewhere would be fruitful for further generalizations of the study findings.

The overall increased and sustained growth in tourism industry generally over theses years has really generated a stiff competition between tourist destinations that has resulted in the appearance of new points. Tourism is one of the incredibly important industries for developing countries due to its contribution to the economy, job creations and foreign exchange earnings. Jordan is a country rich in history and culture, a country that can offer a very pulsating traveling experience for today's tourists, if marketed correctly.

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