A Sociological Study of Domestic Tourism and the Factors Influencing It

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Abstract. The purpose of this research was to examine the sociological aspects of domestic tourism and the factors that affect it in Sari City, Iran. The theoretical framework is built on Goffman's dramaturgical model, Parsons' social exchange theory, Homans's social exchange theory, Alfred Schütz's concepts of nostalgia and authenticity, and Jean Cazeneuve's concepts of communication and advertising. Accordingly, the relationship between domestic tourism and motivation, knowledge, revisit intentions, satisfaction, promotion, accommodation, natural/historical attractions, and education was examined. The population consisted of all the tourists visiting Sari in 2011 (N = 61614) of whom 397 were selected as the sample using cluster sampling and Cochran's formula. Data were collected from tourism databases and a questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the instrument were verified. Descriptive statistics, analysis of variance, Spearman and Pearson correlation, path analysis, and factor analysis were used to analyze the data. The results showed that all the variables except revisit intentions were significantly associated with domestic tourism. Moreover, the results of path analysis indicated that revisit intentions were significantly associated with promotion and satisfaction. That is, tourists are more likely to revisit the city if they are satisfied with their experience and if the city is well-advertised.

Keywords: Domestic tourism, multi-factor structure, tourist, tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

Increasing industrialization, urbanization, overpopulation, and heavy traffic cause constant stress to the body and mind of modern human beings. As a result, people are forced to find refuge in nature as a temporary escape from their mechanic life. Short trips in their current large scale are a recent phenomenon. In the past, people dedicated much of their leisure time to religious activities. The majority of travelers were also pilgrims. Later, with the advancement of medicine, traveling for medical treatment became prevalent. In the age of reason, cultural tourism became a central aspect of people's lives. Various factors such as beaches, games and sporting events, emporia, and natural scenery are effective in attracting domestic and international tourists (Bujosa and Rosselló, 2013).

In this research we try to address two issues that are related to sociology of tourism:

1. What is the effect of tourism on sociocultural structures and relations? What sociocultural changes does it ensue? What are the social, cultural, and political functions of tourism?
2. How does the society and its structures affect tourism? It is impossible to plan and analyze tourism without examining sociocultural factors. What are the effects of social structure, relations, groups, and institutions on tourism? How does tradition and lifestyles in a region affect tourism?

Tourism is a major driver of socioeconomic growth and development. Representing 5% of the world's GDP and 30% of the global exports of services at over US\$ 1 trillion, tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing economic sectors (UNWTO, 2010). Tourism is growing in most OECD countries, constituting 30% of international trade in services in the OECD area.

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In terms of revenues, OECD countries generate about 70% of world tourism activity while these countries represent about 75% of world international trade (Santana-Gallego et al., 2011). Tourism has also been shown to be effective against poverty and unemployment (UNWTO, 2010).

However, the history of tourism in Iran shows that factors such as post-revolution disturbances, misunderstanding of Iranian culture, and Iran-Iraq war were important factors that caused a downturn in this industry. Recently tourism in Iran has been growing, but it has been insignificant in comparison to the potential of the country (Sadr Mousavi, 2007).

There are various types of tourism (e.g. thanatourism or dark tourism, cultural, rural, science, industrial, and electronic tourism, hard tourism), but domestic tourism is a growing interest whose fast development goes back to the 1950s. Natural attractions, climate, and economic, social, and cultural structures of a region are important factors in formation of different tourist attractions for domestic tourists. For example, some cities of Russia that lack historical monuments and natural scenery have become tourist attractions because of their industrial sites, universities, and architecture (Gordin, 2011).

Considering Iran's vast potential in tourism and the little share of this industry in the country's GDP, it is necessary to identify the barriers to the development of tourism and the failure to attract foreign tourists (Ghamari, 2012). Tour is considered a good and tourism an industry that affects all the aspects of the society. Development of this industry requires improvement in factors that contribute to its dynamics, including accommodation which is a major concerns for tourists. The quality of accommodation services and vicinity of hotels to tourist attractions can significantly influence tourist behaviors, since accommodation makes up for more than 60 percent of tourism costs (Taheri et al., 2011).

The purpose of this research was to examine the factors that affect domestic tourism in an Iranian city with high tourism potential. Sari in Mazandaran Province is a major attraction for domestic tourists, but it has not been able to use the full potential of this industry. We investigate the effect of a number of factors on domestic tourism in this city, namely tourist motivation, knowledge, revisit intentions, satisfaction, promotion, accommodation, education, and natural/historical attractions.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Navabaksh and Rafifar (2010) used a SWOT approach to examine the socioeconomic effects of tourism in Gorgan Province of Iran. They argued that regional development in this city is a multidimensional process aiming to improve quality of life in vulnerable rural groups, with tourism being at the core of this process. Tourism is, in fact, a form of participation of the people in the development process.

Rajesh (2013) developed a theoretical model of destination loyalty using tourist perception, destination image, and tourist satisfaction. Tourist Perception included historical and cultural attractions, destination affordability, travel environment, natural attractions, entertainments and infrastructure. Destination image included infrastructure and facilities, heritage attractions, natural made attractions, destination safety and cleanness, friendly local community and calm atmosphere, rejuvenation and service price and affordability. The satisfaction construct has been influenced by factors like entertainments, destination attractions and atmosphere, accommodation, food, transportation services and shopping. Destination loyalty included intentions to revisit, word of mouth promotion, and recommending to others. The result showed that tourist perception, destination image, and tourist satisfaction directly influence destination loyalty.

Coban (2012) examined the impact of the destination image on satisfaction and loyalty in a sample consists of tourists visiting Cappadocia. The results showed that cognitive and emotional

image (tourist attractions, basic facilities, cultural attractions, tourism substructures and transportation options, natural environment, variety and economic factors) affects satisfaction.

Kim et al. (2012) investigated the relationships between destination image, service quality, and perceived value. The results of empirical study indicated that destination image influences service quality and perceived value. Moreover, the findings revealed that perceived value has a significant effect on satisfaction and loyalty.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1. Tourism and the tourist

The sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction among tourists, business suppliers, host governments, host communities, origin governments, universities, community colleges, and non-governmental organizations, in the process of attracting, transporting, hosting and managing these tourists and other visitors (Weaver and Oppermann, 2000). In this research, a minimum of 24-hour stay by a non-resident is required to be considered tourism.

3.2. Domestic Tourism

In 1994, the United Nations identified three forms of tourism in its recommendations on Tourism Statistics:

- Domestic tourism, involving residents of the given country traveling only within this country
- Inbound tourism, involving non-residents traveling in the given country
- Outbound tourism, involving residents traveling in another country.

Domestic visitor describes "any person residing in a country, who travels to a place within the country, outside his/her usual environment for a period not exceeding 12 months and whose main purpose of visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited" (UN, 1994).

3.3. Accommodation

Accommodation is an important element in tourism. It includes hotels, motels, camps, inns, villas, coast and mountain cabins, and boarding houses.

3.4. Tourist Motivation

As an important indicator of tourist behavior, tourist motivation reveals a consumer's desires and aspirations when opting to visit a place within or outside their country. In this research, rest and relaxation, escape from daily routines, vacation, and visiting natural scenery were the most important motivations for tourism in Sari.

3.5. Knowledge

This construct pertains tourists' knowledge of the destination and whether they have any understanding or assumptions about the place they are traveling to; whether they have researched the place they are about to visit or they have chosen it randomly or by others' invitation.

3.6. Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is measured by the difference between their expectations and their perception of their visit.

3.7. Tourist Attraction

Tourist attraction is a place of interest that tourists visit for its natural or cultural value, historical significance, natural or built beauty, leisure, adventure, and amusement.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Design

The present research was a cross-sectional survey.

4.2. Population and Sample

The population consisted of all the tourists visiting Sari City in Iran in 2011 (about 61,614), of whom 397 were selected as the sample using Cochran's formula and random stratified sampling.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(d)^2} \Rightarrow n = \frac{61614}{1 + 61614 \times (0.05)^2} = 397$$

where N is the population size and d is the significance level.

4.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through document analysis (Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handcrafts, and Tourism Organization) and a 120-item questionnaire. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.762 was obtained for the questionnaire, indicating its adequate reliability.

$$\alpha = r_\alpha = \left(\frac{J}{J-1}\right)\left(1 - \frac{\sum sj^2}{S^2}\right)$$

where α is Cronbach's alpha, j is the number of items, $\sum sj^2$ is the sum of the variances of all the items, and S^2 variance of the total scores.

Table 1. Testing the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach's alpha.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items
0.73	0.762

4.4. Data Analysis

After collecting the data, the instrument was revised, the variables were coded, and the data were imported into SPSS 19. Pearson correlation and multivariate regression were used for data analysis.

5. FINDINGS

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

Respondents' Education

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of respondents' education.

Education	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Illiterate	2	0.5	0.5
Primary/Intermediate School	14	3.5	4
High School	46	11.5	15.5
Pre-university School	88	22	37.5
Associate Degree	45	11.3	48.8
Bachelor's Degree	73	18.3	67
Master's Degree	90	22.5	89.5
PhD	42	10.5	100
Total	400	100	

5.2. Tourist Motivation

The motivations of the sample tourists as reported in the questionnaires are provided in Table .2

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of tourist motivations.

Motivation	Personal reasons		Mental image		Tourist attractions		Vacation		Escape		Rest and relaxation	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Totally Agree	169	42.3	98	24.5	166	41.5	13	3.3	310	77.5	221	55.3
Agree	101	25.3	112	28	126	31.5	25	6.3	67	16.8	120	30.0
Neutral	67	16.8	74	18.5	96	24.0	94	23.5	16	4.0	41	10.3
Disagree	63	15.8	76	19.0	9	2.3	176	44	7	1.8	8	2.0
Totally Disagree	0	0	40	10	3	0.8	92	23	0	0	10	2.5
Total	400	100	400	100	400	100	400	100	400	100	400	100

The results indicate that the majority of the respondents traveled to Sari in order to escape from daily routines (77.5%) and/or for rest and relaxation (55.3%).

5.3. Revisit Intentions

Table 4 provides the data related to revisit intentions of the respondents.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage of revisit intentions.

Revisit Intentions	Frequent visits		Visiting other parts of Iran		One or two visits is insufficient		Others' recommendation		Hype	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Totally Agree	50	12.5	123	30.8	51	12.8	256	64	40	10
Agree	119	29.8	152	38.0	91	22.8	94	23.5	38	9.5
Neutral	79	19.8	67	16.8	101	25.3	23	5.8	57	14.3
Disagree	69	17.3	52	13	108	27	14	3.5	152	38
Totally Disagree	83	20.8	6	1.5	49	12.3	13	3.3	113	28.3
Total	400	100	400	100	400	100	400	100	400	100

The results indicate that the majority of the participants (64%) tend to revisit Sari because of others' recommendation, while a large number of the respondents (30.8%) are willing to visit other parts of Iran instead of revisiting Sari. 38.1% of the tourists disagreed to revisiting Sari, while 42.3% responded otherwise. It must be noted that 66.3% of the respondents did not believe that the hype around Sari is a factor in their revisit intentions, implying that this city has lived up to their expectations. Overall, it can be inferred from the responses that the tourists' travel to Sari has been enjoyable, but they may prefer to visit another part of the country if they can afford it. They generally recommended traveling to Sari.

5.4. Tourist Satisfaction

The following table provides the data related to tourist satisfaction variables.

Table 5. Frequency and percentage of tourist satisfaction.

Tourist satisfaction	People's assessment of my expectations		Realization of Expectations		Feeling of Safety and Peace		Satisfaction with people's behavior		Satisfaction with accommodation services	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Very High	85	21.2	60	15	139	34.8	113	28.1	18	4.3
High	128	32	112	28	155	38.8	120	30	32	8
Moderate	87	21.8	114	28.5	69	17.3	75	18.9	117	29.3
Low	55	13.8	75	18.8	27	6.8	60	15	109	27.4
Very Low	45	11.3	39	9.8	10	2.5	32	8	124	31
Total	400	100	400	100	400	100	400	100	400	100

According to 213 respondents, others believe that they have high expectations of their travel to Sari. 172 respondents were satisfied with their experience in Sari. The majority of respondents (73.6%) felt safe and at peace during their stay. 58.1% were satisfied with the behavior of Sari's residents. It is noteworthy that 233 respondents (58.4%) reported low or very low satisfaction with accommodation and hospitality services. Lack of clean bathrooms, expensive hotels and resorts, lack of quality control in markets, and lack of accessible parking lots were considered the main weaknesses of tourism in Sari.

6. INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

The assumption was that there is a significant relationship between tourist motivation and domestic tourism. This relationship was examined using Pearson correlation.

Table 6. Correlation between tourist motivation and domestic tourism.

		Tourist Motivation	Domestic Tourism
Tourist Motivation	Pearson correlation	1	0.279
	Sig.		0.000
	N	400	400
Domestic Tourism	Pearson correlation	0.279	1
	Sig.	0.000	
	N	400	400

Since the significance level of the test is less than 0.05 (0.000), there is a significant positive correlation between tourist motivation and domestic tourism (r = 0.27).

7. PATH ANALYSIS

Table 6. Regression coefficients between domestic tourism and structural factors.

	Non-Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Residual	-1.549	0.491		-3.152	0.002
Education	-0.052	0.019	-0.101	-2.777	0.006
Motivation	0.203	0.071	0.112	2.844	0.005
Knowledge	0.397	0.060	0.266	6.611	0.000
Satisfaction	0.424	0.047	0.366	9.053	0.000
Promotion	0.161	0.048	0.129	3.334	0.001
Accommodation	0.353	0.073	0.185	4.860	0.000
Attractions	0.346	0.077	0.168	0.450	0.043

The results of path analysis show that all the variables except revisit intentions and gender have a significant positive effect on domestic tourism. There is a significant relationship between revisit intentions, promotion, and satisfaction, meaning that high satisfaction and good promotion can increase the chances of revisiting Sari.

8. FACTOR ANALYSIS

Table 7 provides the mean and standard deviation of the variables used in factor analysis.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of the variables used in factor analysis.

Variables	Mean	SD	N
Gender	1.59	0.493	400
Education	5.37	1.724	400
Motivation	3.79	0.489	400
Knowledge	4.02	0.595	400
Revisit intentions	3.32	0.659	400
Satisfaction	2.86	0.766	400
Promotion	3.53	0.710	400
Accommodation	3.04	0.465	400
Natural/historical attractions	3.1454	0.43083	400

The correlation matrix is provided in Table 8.

Table 8. Correlation matrix.

Variables	Gender	Education	Motivation	Knowledge	Revisit	Satisfaction	Promotion	Accommodation	Attractions
Gender	1.000	-0.039	-0.034	-0.037	0.035	-0.014	0.045	0.007	0.060
Education	-0.039	1.000	-0.037	-0.003	-0.057	-0.049	0.001	-0.013	0.018
Motivation	-0.034	-0.037	1.000	0.295	0.161	0.242	0.111	-0.006	-0.203
Knowledge	-0.037	-0.003	0.295	1.000	0.276	0.322	0.250	0.095	-0.115
Revisit	0.035	-0.057	0.161	0.276	1.000	0.425	0.346	-0.046	-0.090
Satisfaction	-0.014	-0.049	0.242	0.322	0.425	1.000	0.246	0.226	0.000
Promotion	0.045	0.001	0.111	0.250	0.346	0.246	1.000	0.218	-0.044
Accommodation	0.007	-0.13	-0.006	0.095	-0.046	0.226	0.218	1.000	-0.057
Attractions	0.060	0.018	-0.203	-0.115	-0.090	0.000	-0.044	-0.057	1.000
Significance									
Gender		0.220	0.250	0.232	0.241	0.388	0.184	0.445	0.114
Education	0.220		0.230	0.476	0.129	0.162	0.491	0.398	0.360
Motivation	0.250	0.230		0.000	0.001	0.000	0.013	0.456	0.000
Knowledge	0.232	0.476	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.028	0.011
Revisit	0.241	0.129	0.001	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.181	0.037
Satisfaction	0.388	0.162	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.497
Promotion	0.184	0.491	0.013	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.188
Accommodation	0.445	0.398	0.456	0.028	0.181	0.000	0.000		0.126
Attractions	0.114	0.360	0.000	0.01	0.037	0.497	0.188	0.126	

The results of KMO and Bartlett's test shows that the factor analysis is acceptable and the results can be generalized to the population.

Table 9. Testing the appropriateness of the factor analysis.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.616	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	330.32
	df	36
	Sig.	0.000

The table below provides the communalities of the variables, i.e. the proportion of each variable's variance that can be explained by the factors. Accordingly, accommodation (0.89), education (0.77), revisit intentions (0.65), natural/historical attractions (0.59), satisfaction (0.55), and motivation (0.53) were respectively the strongest predictors of domestic tourism. The 'initial' column indicates communalities before extraction and all the values are 1.

Table 10. Communalities of the variables.

Variables	Initial	Extraction
Gender	1	0.447
Education	1	0.774
Motivation	1	0.534
Knowledge	1	0.475
Revisit intentions	1	0.650
Satisfaction	1	0.552
Promotion	1	0.497
Accommodation	1	0.899
Natural/historical attractions	1	5.92

9. CONCLUSION

Our findings showed that education, motivation, knowledge, satisfaction, promotion, accommodation, and natural/historical attractions were positively related to domestic tourism, while no significant relationship was observed between revisit intentions, gender, and domestic tourism. Promotion and satisfaction were positively associated with revisit intentions, meaning that high satisfaction and good promotion increases the chances of revisiting Sari.

Moreover, the results of factor analysis showed that accommodation, education, revisit intentions, natural/historical attractions, satisfaction, and motivation were respectively the strongest predictors of domestic tourism.

10.RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the importance of accommodation and hospitality, the following suggestions can be helpful in developing domestic tourism in Sari:

- Appropriate promotion based on surveys among tourists;
- Holding tourism festivals and introducing the tourist attractions of the city;
- Welcoming creative ideas for improvement of services;
- Managing costs;
- Preserving historical and religious buildings and sites;
- Collaborating with arts and architecture faculties to preserve and renovate these buildings and sites;
- Systematic, integrated planning at all management levels to develop and enhance infrastructures;
- Establishing specialized NGOs for hospitality, restaurants, handicrafts, resorts, and the like.

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