

Explaining the pattern of using experiential marketing in building tourism dreams

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Abstract

The aim of the current research is to explain and investigate the pattern of using experiential marketing in building tourism dreams. In terms of purpose, this research is applied, in terms of data collection, it is descriptive-survey and quantitative research. The research community was formed by tourists visiting Khuzestan province during the years 2020-2021 (the last 10 years), whose number is unlimited and uncertain. The sample size based on Cochran's formula was 384 people who were selected by simple random method. Data collection was done through a closed questionnaire, and its reliability and validity were confirmed through the conducted tests. The mentioned questionnaire was prepared based on the results of data analysis related to the data obtained from interviews with experts in the design stage of the model. To test the model of using experiential marketing in the construction of tourism dreams, the structural equation model test was used, which was done through PLS software. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between the model variables. In such a way that the causal conditions have a positive effect on the central phenomenon; The central phenomenon, background conditions, and intervention conditions have a positive, positive, and negative effect on strategies, respectively; And finally, the strategies had a positive and significant effect on the results.

Keywords: tourism, experiential marketing, tourism dream
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1 Introduction

Tourism has become an important part of economic development. The progress of civilization and transformation in society has changed the lives of many people; People begin spiritual experience and life through understanding cultural customs and natural landscape, and they want to spend more time planning different tours and recreational activities to calm the mood and reduce pressure. Considering its various aspects (cultural, social, economic, etc.), tourism causes changes in both the host and the guest [11]. The development of the tourism industry, by stimulating the activities of related sectors and promoting import substitution, has a multiple impact on the economy of each region. The tourism industry can be used to improve the image of the industries as well as the areas where they

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are located [2]. The globalization of the market has a positive effect on the tourism industry. Economic stagnation, intense competition and the growth of new technologies bring many opportunities and threats. Researchers consider the tourism industry as one of the pioneers of adopting new technologies. The tourism industry uses these new technologies in a wide range of computer reservation systems to new methods of marketing and e-commerce [3]. Tourism marketing is rapidly changing with increasing demand, demands and expectations of tourists, and these changes benefit tourists by using new technologies (such as telephone, internet, etc.). In order to maximize the chances of attracting new tourists, marketers are under pressure to engage with their potential consumers and increase their interactions with tourists as early as possible in the process of deciding on a destination or product. Because it is the customer who can decide how and when to get their travel and tourism information [4]. Traditional marketing has been replaced by a new approach to experiential marketing. Experiential marketing is also known as "interaction marketing", "event marketing", "participation marketing" or "live marketing". Traditional marketing considers consumers as rational decision makers who value features and functional benefits. On the other hand, experiential marketing considers consumers as rational and emotional people who are concerned about achieving enjoyable experiences [6]. In the field of tourism, it can be said that experiential marketing, which is focused on consumer experiences with an innovative approach, has a high ability to use experiential tourism goods and services and a destination that provides integrated programs. Experiential marketing is accepted as a strategic marketing approach in tourism and leisure literature [7]. In general, experiential marketing in tourism helps tourists to communicate with goods and services through five parts: sensory, perceptible, cognitive, physical and identity, and it makes him make a conscious purchase of goods or services by making a smart decision, which ultimately brings customer satisfaction [9]. Experiences are special events of the tourist's reaction to various stimuli that he faces. Based on this, the role of experiential marketers in the tourism industry is to create the necessary arrangements to provide an environment that tourists can experience and live in [10]. Experiential marketing is very effective in influencing tourist behavior. Because according to the behavior of tourists, they travel in pursuit of positive emotions and fantasies. The effects of experiential marketing on tourists' behavior depend on the tourist's processing of mental images. Experiential marketers use sensory and symbolic stimuli to evoke imaginative and emotional responses during the decision-making process. Destination marketers promote tourism using commercial marketing stimuli such as tea ads, short films, stories, and websites [8].

With many historical and natural attractions, Khuzestan is one of the country's tourism hubs. Tourism is the field of creativity, speed in decision-making and continuous investment, but the situation in Khuzestan province does not reflect this creativity. It is important to show the impact of the tourism industry on the economic growth and development of countries. But unfortunately, Iran in general and Khuzestan province in particular have not been able to take advantage of the economic benefits of the tourism industry. Khuzestan province is very important in terms of history and public attractions. But despite the unique historical attractions and the registration of three world works (Chaghazanbil, Shush and Shushtar water structures) in Khuzestan, why has it been weak in attracting tourists? In today's world, the existence of natural or historical and unique attractions alone is not able to play a role in maximum attraction of tourists. The existence of facilities, services and benefiting from the necessary facilities and infrastructures along with the existing attractions encourages and motivates tourists from all over the world. Unfortunately, not much attention has been paid to this matter in Khuzestan, and this talented province, full of attraction and charm, has not been able to appear as a tourist province. Considering these issues, it is important to pay attention to new marketing methods. Understanding the expectations and feelings, wishes and experiences of tourists and providing high quality services that meet their expectations and needs is very important to maintain the advantage of tourism in the tourism market. The reason for the continuous growth in demand for experiential marketing in the tourism industry is that it can work for both the organization's brand and customers. Therefore, understanding the emotions, desires, and experiences of consumers is necessary to increase the competitive advantage of the tourism industry. Due to the lack of attention to tourism in Khuzestan province and due to the great capacities of this province in the field of tourism, it is necessary to carry out extensive and comprehensive research in this field. Therefore, the main goal of this research is to explain a comprehensive model related to the use of experiential marketing to build tourism dreams.

In this research, a comprehensive model for experiential marketing in the tourism industry was designed through a data-based analysis approach. At first, the researcher collected the required data by reviewing past studies and then interviewing experts. At this stage, the statistical population of the research was made up of 78 tourism experts from the tourism and cultural heritage organization of Khuzestan province, managers and marketers of companies providing tourism services; the researcher interviewed these people based on the principle of theoretical adequacy. Finally, by interviewing 11 experts, the required data was completed, and no new information was obtained from interviewing the following people. The result of these interviews was a set of primary themes that were collected during the open coding process and categories were extracted from them. Then, in the phase of axial coding, the link between these categories with the titles: "causal conditions, central phenomenon, strategies, background factors, intervening conditions and consequences of using experiential marketing in the construction of tourism dreams" was determined in the form of an

axial coding paradigm. In the following and in the selective coding stage, the course of the story was drawn. Due to the length of the coding process, in this section, we refrain from providing all the information and only the extracted pattern from this process is presented. Figure 1 is an experiential marketing model for creating tourism dreams.

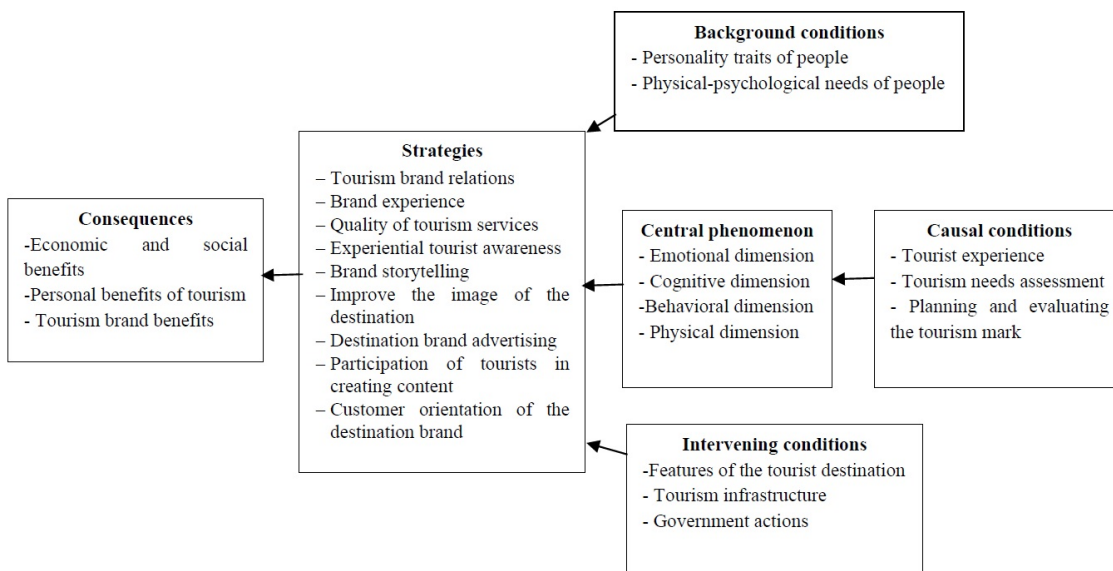


Figure 1: Paradigm model of experiential marketing for building tourism dreams based on the results of basic data analysis

2 Method

In terms of purpose, the present research is fundamental (due to the provision of new knowledge related to experiential marketing in tourism) and practical (due to the provision of practical solutions), in terms of the way of collecting information, descriptive-survey and in terms of time dimension. It is a cross-sectional study. In terms of being quantitative or qualitative, in the stages related to the design of the pattern of using experiential marketing to build tourism dreams, the method was qualitative. But in evaluating the model and investigating the relationship between research variables, which is the main goal of this article, the method is quantitative. Therefore, the research method is mixed. In order to explain the obtained model, based on the extracted components and variables during the coding process, a closed questionnaire was designed, which was provided to the research community. The statistical population of this stage of the research was made up of tourists visiting Khuzestan province during the years 1390-1400 (the last 10 years). In order to explain the obtained model, a questionnaire was designed based on the extracted components and variables, which was given to the target community either in person or through social media. In the case of tourists, due to the unknown and unlimited nature of these people, based on Cochran’s formula, the sample size was 384 people who were selected by simple random method. This questionnaire was given to people in person as well as through email and social media. After designing the closed questionnaire, the validity of the questionnaire was checked based on the results obtained from the basic data analysis test. The validity of the research questionnaire was checked by three management professors of Islamic Azad University through divergent and convergent validity, the results of which are given in the research findings section. Cornbrash’s alpha test was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire through SPSS software. The results obtained from the Cornbrash’s alpha test showed that the Cornbrash’s alpha value for causal factors, background factors, intervention factors, central phenomenon, strategies, and consequences are equal to 0.78, 0.81, 0.77, respectively. 0.83, 0.76 and it is 0.71, which is more than 0.7 and therefore the reliability of the research questionnaire is confirmed.

3 Findings

Before testing the relationships between the variables, it is necessary to check the normality of the variables. One of the methods of checking the claim of normality of the variable distribution is to use the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, whose formula is given below.

Formula (3.1): Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

$$D_n = \sup_x |\hat{F}_n(x) - F(x)| \tag{3.1}$$

The results of this test are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Normal distribution of variable

index	Kolmogorov Smirnov	Sig	Number
Causal conditions	0.111	0.000	384
Central phenomenon	0.187	0.000	384
Background conditions	0.134	0.000	384
Intervening conditions	0.104	0.000	384
Strategies	0.194	0.000	384
Consequences	0.154	0.000	384

The results of this test show that the significance level of the research variables is less than 0.05, so the null hypothesis that the variables are normal is not confirmed and the data are abnormal. Therefore, PLS software is used to check the research pattern due to the non-normality of the data.

The structural equation model includes the external model and the internal model. First, the outer model and then the inner model will be examined. In this research, the relationship of each obvious variable with its corresponding hidden variables is reflective. That is, each obvious variable is related to the latent variable with the help of a simple regression relationship. To evaluate the (external) measurement model, the validity and reliability of reflective structures should be checked. In the following section, the formulas for measuring divergent and convergent validity are given, and in table (3) the indicators of the external model of the research are given.

Formula (3.2): Cronbach’s Alpha Test

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k - 1} \left[1 - \frac{\sum S_i^2}{S_x^2} \right] \tag{3.2}$$

Formula (3.3): Combined alpha test

$$CR = \frac{(\sum \lambda_i^2)^2}{(\sum \lambda_i^2)^2 + (\sum \varepsilon_2)} \tag{3.3}$$

Formula (3.4): Extracted average variance test

$$AVE = CR = \frac{\sum \lambda_i^2}{n} \tag{3.4}$$

Formula (3.5): Correlation coefficient test

$$r = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}} \tag{3.5}$$

Formula (3.6): Combined alpha test

$$R_{adjusted}^2 = 1 - \frac{(1 - R^2)(N - 1)}{N - P - 1} \tag{3.6}$$

Formula (3.7): subscription index test

$$Communality = \frac{1}{P_q} \sum_{p=1}^{pq} Cor^2(x_{pq}, \xi_p), p_q > 1 \tag{3.7}$$

Formula (3.8): Redundancy index test

$$Redundancy_j = Communality_j \times R^2(\xi_j, \xi'_j) \tag{3.8}$$

Formula (3.9) goodness of fit index test

$$GOF = \sqrt{Communalit\ y \times \overline{R^2}} \tag{3.9}$$

Table 2: Validity and reliability of the measurement model and overall model fit

Variables	objects	factor load	Cronbach's alpha	composite reliability	AVE	subscription index	redundancy index	GOF
Causal conditions	Tourist empiricism	0.875498	0.708627	0.829315	0.628817	0.628817	exogenous	0.688
	Tourism needs assessment	0.909546						
	Planning and evaluating the tourism market	0.540998						
Central phenomenon	Emotional dimension	0.923963	0.878302	0.918874	0.742342	0.742342	0.386378	
	Cognitive dimension	0.658800						
	Behavioral dimension	0.910606						
	Physical dimension	0.923277						
Background conditions	Personality traits of people	0.918600	0.717816	0.892530	0.660798	0.660798	exogenous	
	Physical-psychological needs of people	0.691209						
Intervening conditions	Features of the tourist destination	0.931726	0.924891	0.952388	0.869620	0.869620	exogenous	
	Tourism infrastructure	0.911956						
	Government actions	0.953459						
Strategies	Tourism brand relations	0.826366	0.933521	0.945033	0.659290	0.659290	0.302741	
	Brand experience	0.801649						
	Quality of tourism services	0.842563						
	Experiential tourist awareness	0.920122						
	Brand storytelling	0.819120						
	Improve the image of the destination	0.847567						
	Destination brand advertising	0.564610						
	Participation of tourists in creating content	0.803336						
	Customer orientation of the destination brand	0.835519						
Consequences	Socio-economic benefits	0.936147	0.917124	0.947657	0.857859	0.857859	0.453174	
	Personal benefits of tourism	0.921202						
	Tourism brand benefits	0.921191						

As can be seen in table 2, the values obtained for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are more than 0.70, which indicates the favorable reliability of the research variables. Therefore, the measurement model has good reliability. Also, all the factor loadings are in the acceptable range (more than 0.4) and therefore their construct validity is confirmed. The value of AVE for the present variables is higher than 0.5. Therefore, it can be said that the convergent validity of measurement models is favorable. The GOF index is used to check the fit of the research model. This index itself is divided into two parts: subscription index and redundancy index. Being positive indicates the desired quality of the measurement model and the desired quality of the structural equation model, respectively. Because the GOF value for the research model is equal to 0.688, therefore the research model has a good fit. After testing the external model and verifying the validity and reliability of the internal model (research measurement models), the internal model or the structural model of the research is evaluated for the study hypotheses. By using the internal model, the research hypotheses can be examined. The internal model of the research was done using SMART-PLS Graph software. To test the significance of the hypotheses, the partial index of the T-value (T-value) was used. In this regard, if the value of T is greater than 1.96, it can be said that the effect between the variables is significant at the 95% level. Also, factor loading is used to determine the influence of independent variables on dependent variables. According to what was said, results of table No. 3 show that the causal conditions have a positive and significant effect on the central phenomenon, the central phenomenon on the strategies, the intervening conditions on the strategies, the background conditions on the strategies, and the strategies on the outcomes.

Table 3: The results of study paths

Row	Direction	Standard	Meaningful	Result
1	Causal conditions have a positive and significant effect on the central phenomenon	0.723	26.739	confirmation
2	The central phenomenon has a positive and significant effect on strategies	0.321	4.916	confirmation
3	Intervening conditions have a positive and significant effect on strategies	0.556	8.724	confirmation
4	Background conditions have a positive and significant effect on strategies	0.112	2.525	confirmation
5	Strategies have a positive and significant effect on outcomes	0.727	17.800	confirmation

4 Conclusion

The present research explained the pattern of using experiential marketing to create tourism dreams. Experiential marketing for the construction of tourism dreams, which was designed by using the foundation's data approach and based on the data obtained from past studies and interviews with experts in the field of tourism in Khuzestan province. The results showed that the causal conditions have a significant effect on the central phenomenon in the experiential marketing model in the construction of tourism dreams, and the extent of this effect is 0.72 according to the regression coefficient in the standard mode. This finding is in line with the studies of Le et al. (2019) [7] and Parasati et al. (2020) [9]. Experiential marketing is a type of marketing strategy in which customers are attracted and interested by creating real-life experiences. The emphasis of this type of marketing is on the issue that the customer can experience the brand and have a good and lasting memory from this experience. A memory that he can remember even long after. Factors that can affect experiential marketing can be caused by the desire of customers (especially in the tourism industry) for new and enjoyable experiences, and can also be the actions of the company or brand in question. Especially in the tourism industry, having proper planning and examining the needs of tourists through predicting these needs, knowing potential and actual tourists, knowing the characteristics of tourists, etc. can help to create the phenomenon of experiential marketing [3].

Also, the results of this study showed that the central phenomenon has a significant effect on the strategy in the experiential marketing model in the construction of tourism dreams, and the extent of this effect is 0.32 according to the regression coefficient in the standard mode. The result of this hypothesis is in line with the study of Rader (2020) [10]. The main goal of experiential marketing is to provide an experience and sense of brand to its audience. One of the best achievements of experiential marketing is attracting the audience and engaging them with the brand and product. In order to implement experiential marketing, especially in the tourism industry, in addition to the old and traditional methods, new methods should also be used; Because it is the essence of marketing to always invent new methods that are compatible with customers' tastes and this issue can be generalized in connection with experiential marketing. In addition to using traditional advertisements (print, etc.), creating two-way interaction between the audience and the brand can help create positive experiences in the field of tourism. When the relationship between the brand and the tourists expands, it can be expected that the communication will improve and as a result, the tourists will gain new experiences that are enjoyable for them [2]. In addition to improving interactions, increasing the quality level of tourism products and making tourists aware of the tourism brand and its benefits have very positive effects on the implementation of tourism marketing. Tourist places can be unique dreams that are visualized in the minds of tourists, and the brands of tourist destinations can establish these images in the minds of tourists by presenting beautiful stories, interesting documentaries, various films, etc. [7].

Also, the findings of this study showed that background factors have a significant effect on the strategy in the experiential marketing model in the construction of tourism dreams, and the amount of this effect is 0.55 according to the regression coefficient in the standard mode. The result of this hypothesis is in line with the studies of Lin and colleagues (2019) [8]. Background factors of specific conditions that affect strategies. People's personality traits, such as their risk tolerance, willingness to gain new experiences, excitement, etc., along with their physical and mental needs, such as the need for relaxation, stress reduction, etc. It can influence the actions of a brand to implement experiential marketing in that area. Experiential marketing in tourism is based on interaction, participation and brand communication with tourists, and these are the people who must accept or reject this strategy. Therefore, individual-based characteristics can influence the organization's strategies [2].

Another finding of this research is that the intervention factors have a significant effect on the strategy in the experiential marketing model in building tourism dreams, and the amount of this effect is 0.11 according to the

regression coefficient in the standard mode. The result of this finding is in line with the study of Yeh and colleagues (2019) [13]. Intervening factors lead to progress or regression in a certain field. In the field of tourism, for the implementation of experiential marketing strategies, in addition to the existence of special conditions, general platforms are also necessary. These platforms, as obtained from the results of the research, are caused by the actions of the government in the field of tourism, the existence of inherent attractions in a destination, as well as the infrastructure and human facilities built in that destination which can help to improve tourism and implement different strategies in this area. In the fifth hypothesis, the influence of the strategy on the results in the model of experiential marketing in the construction of tourism dreams was investigated [8].

Another finding of this study is that the strategies have a significant effect on the results in the experiential marketing model in the construction of tourism dreams, and the amount of this effect is 0.72 according to the regression coefficient in the standard mode. This finding is in line with the study of Rather (2020) [10]. Experiential marketing is considered as one of the main pillars in all types of marketing. Marketers are always trying to find new ways in this regard in order to gain the loyalty and satisfaction of customers. Experiential marketing is a marketing strategy that immerses or deeply engages tourists in a tourism product. In short, experiential marketing allows consumers to not only buy products or services from a brand, but actually experience that brand. Experiential marketing is a great way to attract current and potential customers and make an emotional connection with them. The benefits of experiential marketing in the field of tourism are not only limited to the destination that provides it, but with the boom of tourism through the implementation of this type of marketing, the society also benefits from its long-term benefits. But most of all, the benefits of creating a beautiful dream of a tourist destination for tourists, which is based on memorable memories, acquiring pleasant feelings, positive emotions, pleasant images, etc., can be considered the main advantage of experiential marketing [13]. According to the results obtained from the research and in line with these results, the following practical suggestions are presented: The most important element in experiential marketing is establishing constructive communication with tourists; considering this issue, tourism marketers should create interaction with tourists, improve social relations and create two-way and sincere communication with tourists [5]. In general, people who have already traveled to a destination usually talk about their travel experiences with others. These experiences and their history of traveling to a destination can be much more acceptable than other sources of information. Tourism planners should try to provide suitable tangible products to tourists and leave a good memory for them. This good experience will serve as a positive advertisement and create a suitable image in the minds of tourists [1]. Use of information technology, creating a website with the aim of providing better and more effective information to the target markets, providing information needed by potential tourists, the creation of websites by travel companies to express the opinions and views of customers about the services provided at the destination in order to be aware of the existing weaknesses and to fix them and to encourage customers to use virtual environments about the destination and its services talk to others, this will convey a favorable image of the destination among tourists. Preparation and presentation of tourist manuals that represent the tourist places of the desired region, and presenting them to tourists so that they can use the information and can use it to introduce the desired destination to their friends, relatives and acquaintances seems to be useful and necessary [12]. Tourism destinations should use branding strategies to create a competitive advantage for themselves. The personality of the brand is one of the long-term effective factors in the formation of the special value of the brand. Therefore, destinations should consider these factors when formulating their business strategies so that they can create a suitable character of the destination in the minds of tourists. It is suggested that in order to increase trust in the desired destination brand, marketers should fulfill the commitments that they have conveyed to the minds of customers through advertising and brand stabilization activities. Otherwise, the credibility of the advertised messages, the created image, and also the consumers' trust in the brand name will decrease. Providing promised services to customers and hiring people who best meet customers' needs leads to the formation of trust in the destination. Tourism policy makers should always keep in mind that one of the reasons for choosing tourist destinations by tourists is to gain new experiences and adventures as well as enjoy them. Therefore, it is expected that tourism organizations, using management sciences and modern innovations, provide ideal and new conditions for tourists to gain experiences so that they can respond to such needs and that to satisfy [14]. Considering the difference in taste and character (part of which is related to the geographical environment), people certainly have different needs and characteristics. Referring to this issue, tourism organizations are not excluded from this category; In order to be ready to respond to the different needs of tourists, these organizations must identify and predict the needs of the general public of tourists, potential and actual tourists, the characteristics of tourists, feelings and emotions, as well as the attractions of tourists and by getting detailed information from tourists to make the necessary plans to respond to each of them [13].

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