Destination Image, Political Stability, Tourist Trust and Loyalty in Jerusalem, Palestine: A Review

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Tourism is an extremely complex field and a highly competitive service sector in the world. Studies have shown that it is becoming more and more difficult for a destination to differentiate itself from competitors, relying solely on 'hard' as well as 'soft' factors. Based on the impressions, opinions and thoughts of tourists, many researchers have tried to determine to what extent the image of the destination they have visited has an impact on the loyalty they have towards that destination. The article also attempts to shed light on the importance of trust as a major contributor to repeat tourism, more specifically on the promulgation of trust as a composite of political stability and the perceived sense of security in the country under consideration. This article reviews previous studies related to destination image and tourist trust, and how political stability would influence tourist loyalty in Jerusalem, Palestine. This article offers an understanding of the process that determines tourists' destination choices and loyalty, and provides insightful implications for the government, tourism organisations and tourism operators to come up with effective marketing and image building strategies.

Key words: *Destination image, Tourist trust, Tourist loyalty, Political stability, Palestine.*

Introduction

Jerusalem, the land at the gates to heaven, is the land of the three monotheistic religions: Islam, Judaism and Christianity. Jerusalem is deemed as one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world. The history of the city started more than 5000 years ago, as indicated by archaeological diggings. It involves more than 220 historical and religious places such as Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, which were built in the seventh century. The city is also home of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which embraces Christ's tomb. Tourism in

Jerusalem has been awarded an increasing significance as a result of its religious and economic importance and the critical role it plays in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. For Palestinians it represents identity and the eternal capital of the Palestine state. However, Jerusalem, like many cities of the Middle East, remains extremely underrepresented in tourism literature. The primary source of Jerusalem's tourism is considered as religious pilgrimage, engaged in by those of the three primary monotheistic religions which originated in this region thousands of years ago. The West has known this place as a great and sacred site for pilgrimage through the travel book, Cook's handbook for Palestine and Syria (1876), which shows how the tourism collective was progressed around the pilgrimage sector in that period. The Israeli Ministry of Tourism and Central Bureau of Statistics indicate that there has been approximately 65 million tourist arrivals to Israel since the establishment of the state, with 85% of them in the period of the 1980s. Until the 1970s, the majority of these tourists had come from the United States, while later decades saw an increase in European visitors from the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, and France. Between 2000 and 2012, Israel received an annual average of two million international tourists, of which approximately a quarter identified themselves as Jewish (Hayat, 2013).

Jerusalem is considered a unique and splendid destination as a result of its long history, religious importance and its natural charm and beauty, which maks it a spectacular site to visit. The importance of Jerusalem stems from the fact that it is the residence of the three main sacred religions. Thus, Jerusalem attracts thousands of pilgrims, true believers and scholars who visit the sacred places every year, but secular tourists also visit Jerusalem to explore the ancient and historical places, Palestinian spiritual sites, the country side and natural reserves.

Whether for religious pilgrimage or secular tourism, Jerusalem has attracted a substantial number of visitors to the country. The ten most visited places in Jerusalem are the City of David, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Dome of Rock and the Temple of Mount, Israel Museum, the Western Wall, the Tower of David, Yad Vashem, Mount of Olives, the Ramparts Walk and the Dead Sea. The major challenge facing a tourist is the safety and security of any location, convenience for tourists, the service consumption experience, emotional attachment, trust and the perception of the destination image (Dai, Haried & Salam, 2011). The issues that influence Jerusalem as a tourism site are multi-dimensional just like for any tourism location. This article reviews how destination image and political stability are connected to tourist trust and loyalty in Jerusalem, Palestine.

Literature Review

Destination Image

According to Lopes (2011), the image can be characterised as "a set of opinions, ideas and perceptions that an individual has of a particular destination". However, Jenkins (1980) opposes this description by justifying that it is only applicable to individuals and entirely ignores other sides of images that are held jointly with other members of a specific set, which shape preferable market portions and development of convenient market techniques. The excellent image is considered as a high-value strategy tool for the organisation and used as a competitive advantage, due to the fact that it is difficult to imitate it, it needs a long time to build and it requires substantial financial and human investment (Akın & Demirel, 2011). Destination management organisations should ensure the removal of any negatives that may damage that image, and invest heavily to build a right image in the memory of stakeholders (Akın & Demirel, 2011; Hart & Rosenberger, 2004).

Many researchers (Kandampully & Hu, 2007; Kuo & Ye, 2009; Nguyen, 2006) point out that there are two main components to formulate the image of the organisation: the functional and the emotional components. The functional component is linked with the physical dimensions of the organisation; however, the emotional component is linked with psychological dimensions such as emotions, behaviours and attitudes towards the organisation. Moreover, Durrah, Allil, and Kahwaji (2015) confirmed that the organisation image is personal and subjective, and each person has a perception within the same group as long as they are based on feelings, knowledge and past experiences.

According to Dhillon (2013), image is a crucial factor for a destination like Jerusalem, where the destination brand constitutes the essential ingredient of services, which covers perishability, inseparability, tangibility and heterogeneity. The brand image reflects a brand harboured by the memory of the consumer, which is basically what consumers think when the brand enters their mind (Saleem & Raja, 2014). This shows that when consumers assess a brand name, they think of the brand's features.

Tourism and marketing scholars propose that destination image is significant with respect to the process of destination selection, and the personal realisation of tourists, as well as affecting the following assessment of the journey and their future journey intent (Hsu, Huang & Swanson, 2010; Lin, Morais, Kerstetter & Hou, 2007; Mansfeld, 1992; Ryu, Han, & Kim, 2008). Many research studies support that destination image is one of the most critical elements which encourages tourists to visit or return to a destination like Jerusalem.

Tourist Trust

The concept of trust has been widely researched, and its roots can be traced to some scientific disciplines and different schools of thoughts such as philosophy, psychology, law of contract, economics and marketing research (Yee, Yeung, & Cheng, 2010). These schools of thought have different perspectives with regards to what constitutes trust. Accordingly, Yee et al., 2010; Castelfranchi and Falcone (2010) have specified three critical notions of certainty or trust which extant scholars have recognised, and this includes a mental position, a decision to rely upon the other, and a behaviour based on a purposed act of trusting. Trust has also been regarded a critical variable in commitment-trust theory or service; Morgan and Hunt (1994) reveal that trust is pivotal to any successful relationship marketing. Importantly, the concept of loyalty to a service provider or a brand implies that the brand provider can be trusted (Thakur, 2013).

According to Moorman et al. (1993), trust is considered as "the desire and readiness to depend on an interchange partner in whom one has faith". Furthermore, Calonius (1988) confirmed that the concept of promise is an essential factor in the relationship marketing trend. The treachery of this confidence by the provider or service supplier could drive customer defection. Schurr and Ozanne (1985) describe this concept as a faith that the promise of the partner is credible and trustworthy, and that the other party will accomplish their commitment in the relationship. Reflecting on this situation, other researchers such as Gremler and Brown (1996) suggest confidence or trust as a conceptual predecessor of client retention. Trust has also been regarded as an essential precursor in many relationship marketing models with satisfaction or loyalty as dependent variables (Schaupp & Bélanger, 2005; Verhagen, Meents & Tan, 2006).

Trust is considered as a primary demand for human interaction and quality of exchange. Consumers connect trust with service suppliers whose service staff are credible, trustworthy, and supportive. Consequently, they feel relaxed and comfortable to supply the data, propositions and their expectancy for the service task to be accomplished (Li, Luk & Liu, 2016). Nunkoo, Ramkissoon and Gursoy (2012) suggest that public trust in tourism institutions is a good predictor of residents' support for tourism. Citizens' trust in institutions is a promising construct. In this context, the reputation and cognitive and affective evaluation of a destination are relevant antecedents of trust. Trust towards a tourist destination is understood as a multidimensional construct, including local inhabitants and public and private institutions that are honest, benevolent and competent. (Marinao Artigas, E., Yrigoyen, C. C., Moraga, E. T. & Villalón, C. B, 2017). Likewise, in the travel agent service, confidence and trust-in-agent imply the degree with which the customer feels that the agent is competent, credible and honest.

Political Stability

Several eminent researchers such as Mathews (1975), Richter and Waugh Jr (1986) and Matthews and Richter (1991), have conducted and performed research studies to examine and study the connection between (in)stability and tourism. These studies have inspired many researchers. Political stability is regarded as involving three main features: physical risk, destination risk and vacation risk (Roehl and Fesenmaier, 1992). Fuchs and Reichel (2006) examined the concept of destination risk and distinguished six destination risk features. The political and safety risk is deemed to be as one of these six aspects.

According to Henderson (2000), tourism is influenced by the political situation which surpasses the scope of conventional processes of government and structure, and hence, it is considered an indirect and hidden force in many studies of tourism. Consequently, the current study investigates the characterisation of political stability and its impact on the image of a destination. Many practitioners and stakeholders have examined political stability and tourism from their point of view. For instance, Cavlek (2006) conducted a study on travel agents and their effect on the flexibility of a destination in confronting the instability, and the tourists and their perspectives of destinations that are politically stable. There are also Altinay and Bowen's (2006) study on public institutions, local governments and their tourism actions, and Katircioglu's (2009) take on universal tourism and economic growth and how it could enhance economic sector.

Despite the various political factors of tourism, the correlation between political stability and tourism are inadequately investigated and studied. According to Murphy, Pritchard and Smith (2000), previous studies have confirmed that political variables have a considerable influence on the nature of the destination and the process of tourism in the community. Teye (1988) indicates that political elements might affect the shape and kind of destination competitiveness. According to Sönmez and Graefe (1998), safety anxiety and danger have been recognised as robust drivers for not visiting a particular destination. Eilat and Einav (2004) point out that political unsteadiness has a negative impact on tourism demand in developed as well as developing communities. In the same context, political unsteadiness is incompatible with the growth, planning and administration of sustainable tourism. Other researchers such as Walters, Walli, and Hartley (2019) state that tourists changing or cancelling destinations associated with terrorism attack has a negative impact for the host society, and it can bring crucial losses to the particular state's government.

Tourist Loyalty

The concept of loyalty refers to a positive attitude and behaviour that leads to repurchasing and a long-term commitment from a consumer (Kotler & Keller, 2013) towards a specific

product, service or business. Through this sense of loyalty, the consumer continues to purchase the required needs from the same brand and recommends it to other consumers. Loyalty is a concept which includes not only behavioural reactions but also attitudes (Hill & Alexander, 2017). The approaches to measuring loyalty are divided into two parts: behavioural and attitudinal (Kumari & Chahal, 2017; Tosyali, Sütcü & Tosyali, 2019).

According to Zhou, Wan, Liu, Feng and Shang (2017), behavioural loyalty refers to the act of repurchasing; however, attitudinal loyalty refers to the sense of commitment which directs behaviour towards the brand or the business. Attitudinal loyalty refers to the consumer's emotional loyalty towards the brand, so that even if the consumer does not purchase it, he or she may recommend the brand to other consumers (Barksdale, Johnson & Suh, 1997). This demonstrates positive reactions associated with the positive commitment (Khan & Fasih, 2014) due to positive emotions that are felt towards that brand.

Ghaith, Zukim, and Safizal, (2016) indicate that loyalty is conferred by an individual towards an object of loyalty or obligation to clients to a brand or provisioner which depends mainly on a positive behaviour that is mirrored in the repeated processes of purchasing. Regarding client loyalty in marketing services, Ghaith, Mohd and Aseel (2016) describe it as a response associated and connected with the commitment and promise to support the obligation of the fundamental continuity of the relationship, and is generally mirrored in the continuity of purchasing from suppliers of comparable services on the grounds of devotion and practical restrictions. Loyal consumers usually tend to repurchase and support by positive and favourable words.

Underpinning Theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social exchange theory (SET) has been used in various disciplines to describe the interdependence of exchange partners. Social exchange theory (SET) was initially conceptualised in sociology and the social psychology discipline, and their scholars were responsible for the development of this theory (Emerson, 1976). The main objective of social exchange theory (SET) is to describe the role of relationship developed from the behaviour of actors that are involved in an exchange process within the community. In line with that, Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels and Hall (2017) point out that social exchange theory (SET) describes social behaviour in an exchange approach that involves a sequence of interdependent interaction resulting in the obligation of the parties involved in a high-quality relationship.

Borrowing the idea from Cropanzano et al. (2017), the parties that interact in an evolving relationship are subject to the rules of exchange such as reciprocity. The reciprocity, which describes interdependence in social exchange, requires two-direction transactions which

involve 'giving' and at the same time expect something in return as reward. Both parties interacting in the relationship will give more when they receive many rewards from others, and when they give much, they will tend to get more from others to reciprocate the exchange. Relatedly, relational factors still dominate the material exchange when the buyer is looking beyond the immediate comparison between cost and benefit but expecting rewards from the relationship (Barry & Doney, 2011). This process will lead to a high-quality interaction in a balanced relationship called equilibrium, which refers to balance in successful relational exchange (Homans, 1958).

The chosen theoretical model for the current study was derived from the Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958) which suggests that the entire human relationships are shaped by utilising cost-benefit analysis and comparison of choices. This theory tries to demonstrate the nature and essence of the relationship between trust, image, political stability and loyalty. It suggests that persons are ready and desire to preserve the relationships since they anticipate that doing so will be rewarding. Persons willingly sacrifice their self-benefits and pass on these benefits to other persons, with the anticipation for more future earnings. Thibaut (2017) suggests that if the person preserves a relationship with another, one relies on the comparison between the present relationship, prior experience and probable options. The continual comparison of social and economic results between a group of interactions with the present partners and obtainable choices identifies the degree of an individual's obligation to the existing relationship. Based on the preceding justification, this study which is governed by the tourist-service provider relationship has chosen the social exchange theory (SET) as the underpinning theory to illustrate and demonstrate the study's conceptual model. The following section describes relationship marketing theory and the proposed conceptual model.

Relationship Marketing Theory

According to Herington (2003), the definitions of this theory by Grönroos (1990), Morgan and Hunt (1994), and Gummesson (1996) stand out and are preferred by relationship marketing studies owing to their frequent adoption. Based on seven conceptual relationship marketing categories: progress, maintenance, time, birth, interaction, product and sentimental content, Harker (1999) reached the conclusion that Grönroos' (1994, 1995) definition is the most suitable, as it encapsulates the underlying concepts of relationship marketing as well as its acceptability via the marketing community. Grönroos (1994) claimed that relationship marketing is determination and foundation, maintenance, improvement, and termination of the relationships between clients and stakeholders, when vital, at a profit through which the party's goals are satisfied through the mutual exchange and promise fulfilment. His definition is suitable to be adopted in this study, owing to its frequent use in literature and its inclusion of the entire aspects of long-term service provider-customer relationships.

It is worth mentioning that there has been no general agreement among researchers and scholars to adopt a specific definition of relationship marketing. The different suggested definitions state various evolutionary phases of the notion as a result of controversy among practitioners, scholars, and researchers, as to what relationship marketing is. According to Harwood and Garry (2006), when it is possible to reach to a specific definition, it should be emphasised who should be considered in this relationship and when such a relationship exists among parties. However, the mentioned authors have generally identified the objective behind relationship marketing through their works. Conciseness is noted in Grönroos' (1994) definition, and its inclusion of the entire aspects of the service provider-customer relationship thus make it the most suitable definition to use.

Relationship marketing is essential in light of the advantages that both parties (service supplier and client) are recipients of – benefits that are considered in the present section to determine the factors that direct tourism to enter into relationships with the service providers (i.e., religious places). Although some researchers have queried whether or not the relationship marketing practice indicates reciprocity of benefits for both parties (Sheth & Parvatlyar, 1995), empirical results have provided advantages for both. In particular, Palmer and Bejou (1994) state that relationship marketing could enable the buyer and seller to cooperate in solving a problem, wherein the seller solves the buyer's need to specify several aspects in the purchase needs. For instance, from the service provider's point of view, improving a relationship with a customer enables the firm to maintain its competitiveness (Leventhal & Zineldin, 2006; Rashid, 2003). Maintaining a current customer has been extensively acknowledged to be five to ten times more profitable compared to attracting and obtaining a new one. For instance, based on an analysis of over 100 companies in 24 industries, it was revealed that companies could enhance their profitability from two to eight per cent if they minimise their customer defects by five per cent (Reichheld & Sasser Jr, 1990). The findings in the hospitality context are supported strongly by eminent researchers like Kim and Cha (2002) who found that the longer a customer is loyal, the more profit the religious places obtains from the relationship with such tourism.

Conclusion

This article is part of research to investigate the influence of destination image and tourist trust as independent variables on tourist loyalty, and examines how they are mediated by political stability in Jerusalem, Palestine, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model
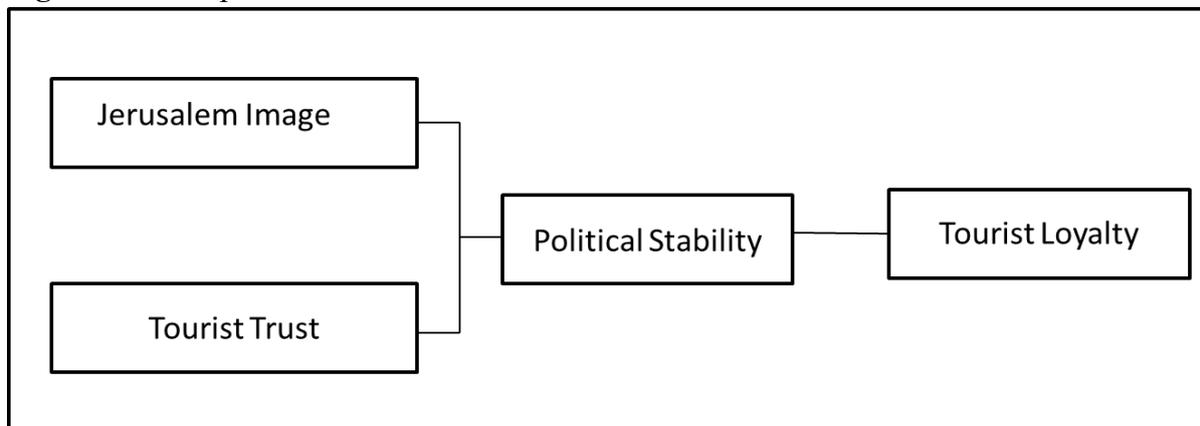
Many studies argue that destination image is one of the most important antecedents of tourists' pre-, in situ and post-purchase decisions and travel behaviours. Image is also the mental reflections of a destination's people, products, culture and national symbols. Researchers have suggested that tourist behaviours related to loyalty (i.e. intention to revisit and willingness to recommend) can be influenced by the image they perceive of the destination, and there is no exception to Jerusalem in Palestine. The view or impression that tourists have of Jerusalem as a destination is based on the country's economic situation, political system, culture, relation with other countries, and environmental aspects, as argued by Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999). The ongoing human-caused disasters resulting from internal conflict, the threat that accompanies political instability does have the propensity to severely frighten potential tourists.

In this regard, the link between trust, image and loyalty as influenced by the political situation is still inconclusive. While this linkage is still tenuous, it can only be confirmed if future studies focus on larger destination areas in other conflict zones in different parts of the world. As tourism is very prone to crises and disasters, it is paramount for this study to investigate the persuasive factor of destination image in the decision-making process of tourists and then tourists' attitudes. Furthermore, the image of destinations in tourist generating or tourist receiving regions is highly influenced by the political stability and political relations.

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