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Recognizing and Measurement of Effective Driver Key Factors on Tourism Destination's Sense of Place - Case Study: the City of Isfahan

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Extended Abstract

Tourism destinations as a place, while providing communication between tourists and the surrounding environment, create different meanings and ideas in their minds. These meanings and mental imagery give an identity to the place and create the sense of place. According to the review of literature, the identity of a place affects the quality of the human-place relationship and the formation of a desirable sense of place and subsequently an individual's identity. Because the identity of a place originates from individual and community values which over time, deepens, expands and changes. Tourism destinations aim to achieve this feature to create a unique tourist experience.

Introduction

The world is moving ahead with the increasing homogeneity of technology and the process of globalization. Hence, in order to achieve the advantage of a competitive economy, having a distinctive sense of place is more important for cities and countries. Because a destination brand must transfer its sense of place and establish an emotional bond with its audience. There is a sense of place both in the perceptions of foreigners and in the feelings of the inhabitants of that

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place. If these two inferences are not in relative harmony, the economic performance of that location will not be optimal. Creating a distinction in services and products is one of the key marketing strategies. This will attract consumers and build a long-lasting relationship between the consumer and the brand. Brands play an important role in marketing strategies for tourism destinations and are considered as valuable assets and resources of distinction. In fact, tourism destinations, are trying to find a distinct sense of space to attract maximum number of tourists.

Materials and Methods

This applied research consists of two steps: the first step is considered as the ground for the second stage analysis. In the first step, two actions were taken. First, using the library methodology and documentary studies, the key driver factors for determining the sense of place were extracted from the results of other previous researchers. As the second action of the first step of the study a questionnaire was designed with open-ended questions about the key driver factors of determining the sense of place of the city of Isfahan as a tourism destination. This questionnaire was conducted using the Delphi method and asking experts and the research team to answer three open-ended questions. The experts of this study included 31 qualified academic and executive staff with relevant education and experience. After completing the two rounds of going through the questionnaires, a total of 16 components in three dimensions were agreed upon by the experts and the research team. In the second step, the cross-effects table, consisting of 16 key driver factors was determined as the result of the first round questionnaire analysis. Measuring the impact and effectiveness of all the key driver factors in determining the sense of place related to Isfahan City as a tourism destination was carried out by re-scrutinizing the same community of experts.

Discussion and Results

The "Handicrafts and traditional arts" are of the highest importance among the 16 key driver factors identified in the city of Isfahan. This means that this factor will have the greatest impact and is also affected the most among other factors. Other factors such as "historical attractions", "historical and civilization history", "local culture", "held- events "and "celebrities and devotees attributed to Isfahan" are ranked second to sixth respectively, and have a higher impact among the 16 factors identified.

On the other hand, the drivers such as modern attractions and destination management and planning have a relatively small impact on other factors of their group, which reflects the fact that, creating new attractions in Isfahan as a tourism destination and even a planning system against other factors have less power to create a sense of place for residents and visitors due to its very high historical and cultural importance.

Conclusions

The sense of place inherent to the city of Isfahan as a tourism destination, which represents the unique idea of the residents and visitors about this city, consists of three groups of physical, activity and meaningful factors. The recognition of the importance and priority of the sense of place determinants is the most important task of the destination management organizations in the process of branding the destination. Recognizing the right drivers can be a great guide for destination management organizations in destination positioning, and on the other hand, the destination management organization, should not only care about preserving and introducing these key drivers in the destination, but also observe and monitor the impact of these key drivers and how much they are influenced by other drivers.

Keywords: Sense of Place, Tourism Destination, Mic Mac, Isfahan City

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