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Visitor's cultural-based perceptions of hospitality services in Tehran: an
exploratory study of mostly booked hotels

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Visitor's Cultural-based perception of hospitality services in Tehran:

An Exploratory study of mostly booked hotels

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Abstract

Implicit theories can be generalized in many issues of human-based subjects. They have never been used in researches of hospitality and tourism industry customers. As long as they can be attributed to individuals in the role of tourists who are travelling around the world like any other individual so for the purpose of this master thesis implicit theories and categorization theories that are related to implicit dimension of perception process in relation with different issues have been utilized in the first step.

The main research has been carried out in two most popular hotels of Tehran the capital of Iran. The results is considered to be beneficial for making the improvements in hospitality industry of Islamic republic of Iran and getting closer to International hospitality standards. Cluster analysis of different groups resulted in diverse satisfied or unsatisfied diverse featured groups. People can be similar in what they prefer and expect based on the implicit mindset that they might have.

Key words:

Hospitality industry, Iran, Tehran, Implicit theory

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Foreword

Two years have passed and I do not feel the same as the time I entered Norway. I had my best and worst days during this period I was studying at University of Stavanger. I gained a lot through these two years; I got lessons of life from what I have been through.

Professor Einar Marnburg is the nicest person I know from the whole complex he was actually the best person that could have guided me through writing this master thesis. So I would like to express my truest thanks to him for guiding me to do my best when I was doing my master thesis and in every single step.

I dedicate this master thesis to my mom and dad (Mina and Nasser) because I could not be me if they were not there for me supporting me emotionally and financially. I thank my dearest sister Zoya for giving me confidence and energy as if she was always by my side. I did this master thesis to aid people of my country that I respect deeply and who are working and operating in hospitality industry.

This was a step in my life from ladder of progress I still keep up doing my best to make my family and country proud of me.

Sara Jamshidi Dermenaki

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Chapter 1

1.Introduction

1.1.The research focus

Differences in groups of people have always been subject of interest in many studies. History shows that due to geographical and political borders, the national and social groups that people belong to, there exist clear differences between individuals (House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002). ‘‘Culture refers to a system of socially created and learned standards for perception and behaviour shared by members of a certain group ‘‘ (Tata, 2000).

People have an image of the world and what exists in it based on the descriptions and meanings that they keep in mind so that they fabricate mental models for every existing thing (Johnson-Laird, 2010). That is how people model different countries, their people and the culture they have. Human beings make implicit models of everything on the foundation of their memory, mind-set and experiences. Implicit theories mirror the individual's opinion and ideas that aid them build up a central vision to compare others whether they are individuals or groups (Wong-On-Wing & Lui, 2007).

Cultural differences should be taken into account when service providing because it augments the quality of services especially to travellers that have different behaviours based on their cultural diversity and as their cultural context has been shaped in various societies (Reisinger & Turner, 1998).

This study has focused on the cultural differences of diverse nationalities that use Iranian hospitality industry within their journey to Iran, precisely in the most luxurious hotels of Iran's capital, 'Tehran' that have been built after Islamic revolution. As long as Iran has an Islamic government and there are some set of rules that even tourists should obey and they are maintained in hospitality framework as well, so we have the assumption that multiple tourists might have dazzling differing ideas of how they grasp hotel services and how their comments reflect their differences or if there are any conflicts with Islamic issues that they may envisage while staying in hotels. Other thing we would like to find out is the reason that why they choose Iran as a travel destination based on which nationalities are mostly coming to Iran according to statistics.

1.2.The research background

Iran is a country located in central part of Middle East in Asia. Due to its geographical situation and various tourist attractions it has a great potential to be one of the most touristic countries in the region. Hospitality industry as the most important industry related to tourism ought to be settled and improved beside other tourism substructures. Iranian hospitality industry has had thousand of changes within history. Before Islamic revolution International hotel brands such as Hyatt, Hilton and Starwood were functioning in Iranian hospitality industry but after Islamic revolution these brands were asked to leave and other tragic events like Iran-Iraq war influenced the tourism and hospitality industry negatively (TRIGroup, 2015). Based on statistics in the year 2011 Iran had a total of 3282 accommodation unties (13 Luxury hotels, 21 5 star, 78 4

stars, 708 3 stars, 867 2 stars, 1360 1 star, 235 unclassified units) this number includes 81999 rooms and 221410 beds (Iran, 2011).

Iran is also one of the countries beside Persian Gulf, countries around the Persian Gulf have two third of world's oil and gas resources. In 1979 Islamic republic of Iran contended US about power of authority related to Persian Gulf therefore US set some sanction in response to hostile act of Iran and in April 1995 they increased the sanctions to foreign investment and trade (Torbat, 2005). Economic sanctions against Iran drove tourism industry as well as other industries to an unfavorable situation. Revitalization of tourism industry in Iran made a growth in number of tourists from 3.1 million in 2010 to 4.8 million in 2014 that most of them were from China, Korea and Germany (TRIGroup, 2015).

In line with agreements between Iran and United States in April 2015 and removal of sanction in 2016 a wave of business tourists and sightseers are expected to rush to Iran. Based on World Travel and Tourism Council Iran will have 6.9 percent growth in number of tourist by 2017 (WTTC, 2016). Table 1 (UNWTO, 2015) shows the nationalities that entered Iran since 2010 to 2014 by national borders. As it is clear the number of tourists has been increased every single year and Iran has visitors from all over the world but the number of visitors from each country have had fluctuation within each year.

Table 1. Arrivals of non-resident visitors at all national borders by nationality

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Market share 2014	% Change 2014-2013
TOTAL	2,938,054	3,353,713	3,833,577	4,768,836	4,967,703	100.00	4.17
AFRICA	5,568	6,831	11,938	17,000	19,174	0.39	12.79
EAST AFRICA	946	1,979	2,991	4,482	5,376	0.11	19.95
Ethiopia	349	479	1,117	1,390	2,064	0.04	48.49
Kenya	309	352	426	625	871	0.02	39.36
Somalia	74	204	156	448	305	0.01	-31.92
Tanzania, United Republic of		795	867	1,668	1,698	0.03	1.80
Uganda	91	79	249	233	300	0.01	28.76
Zimbabwe	123	70	176	118	138	0.00	16.95
NORTH AFRICA	1,437	1,482	4,281	5,323	6,058	0.12	13.81
Algeria	422	280	662	735	836	0.02	13.74
Morocco	198	173	1,249	2,259	2,587	0.05	14.52
Sudan	530	608	1,358	1,248	1,265	0.03	1.36
Tunisia	287	421	1,012	1,081	1,370	0.03	26.73
WEST AFRICA	868	349	2,065	2,641	2,777	0.06	5.15
Gambia	17	6	27	15	42	0.00	180.00
Ghana	114	86	367	545	496	0.01	-8.99
Guinea	76	67	40	34	3	0.00	-91.18
Mali	53	70	124	92	134	0.00	45.65
Mauritania	52	21	89	84	96	0.00	14.29
Nigeria	383	38	1,298	1,729	1,865	0.04	7.87
Senegal	173	61	120	142	141	0.00	-0.70
OTHER AFRICA	2,317	3,021	2,601	4,554	4,963	0.10	8.98
Other countries of Africa	2,317	3,021	2,601	4,554	4,963	0.10	8.98
AMERICAS	7,146	6,463	5,913	6,866	9,083	0.18	32.29
CARIBBEAN	53	94	133	112	143	0.00	27.68
Bahamas	1		3	1	2	0.00	100.00
Cuba	26	74	83	73	92	0.00	26.03
Dominican Republic	26	20	47	38	49	0.00	28.95
CENTRAL AMERICA	17	20	32	46	88	0.00	91.30
Guatemala	1	15	10	17	24	0.00	41.18
Panama	16	5	22	29	64	0.00	120.69
NORTH AMERICA	4,336	4,287	2,529	3,415	5,547	0.11	62.43
Canada	2,540	2,506	2,150	1,392	1,831	0.04	31.54
Mexico	187	202	176	280	440	0.01	57.14
United States of America	1,609	1,579	203	1,743	3,276	0.07	87.95
SOUTH AMERICA	1,886	1,538	1,979	1,994	2,357	0.05	18.20
Argentina	193	214	344	305	356	0.01	16.72
Brazil	835	735	727	809	1,043	0.02	28.92
Chile	67	84	98	79	111	0.00	40.51
Colombia	116	109	162	167	188	0.00	12.57
Ecuador	92	97	186	143	201	0.00	40.56
Peru	43	41	56	54	64	0.00	18.52
Uruguay	35	40	27	30	45	0.00	50.00
Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of	305	218	379	407	349	0.01	-14.25
OTHER AMERICAS	1,054	524	1,240	1,299	948	0.02	-27.02
Other countries of the Americas	1,054	524	1,240	1,299	948	0.02	-27.02
EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC	33,624	52,596	92,218	124,699	146,922	2.96	17.82
NORTH-EAST ASIA	22,088	37,497	40,817	51,440	66,824	1.35	29.91
China	7,648	22,728	26,160	34,795	46,697	0.94	34.21
Japan	5,592	4,937	5,143	5,809	7,649	0.15	31.67
Korea, Democratic People's Republic of	77	108	328	470	605	0.01	28.72
Korea, Republic of	7,017	8,075	8,117	8,867	9,573	0.19	7.96
Mongolia	42	52	67	82	63	0.00	-23.17
Taiwan Province of China	1,712	1,597	1,002	1,417	2,237	0.05	57.87

Note. Derived from

<http://www.eunwto.org/doi/pdf/10.5555/unwtotfb0364012120102014201507>

1.3.The research objectives

This planned master thesis will be carried out in two sorts of chain hotels in Tehran, governmental and private. It aims to analyze the cultural differences among hotel guests, which services they focus on or the way they are similar to each other.

Other thing it may address is the important corner of conflicts that may happen in the Islamic context of Iranian government for foreign tourists when staying in hotels.

The problem that is going to be investigated is the main differences among various nationalities from all parts of world. The interesting thing is to figure out what nationalities comment on what kind of services in hotels on the other words which factors of hospitality services are important for each nationality. Finding out the differences will be possible through collecting data from private and governmental chain hotels' guests. Barriers of being a tourist in Iran as a non-Islamic person also will be interesting as long as tourists should obey rules when entering Iran (like wearing scarf for women and alcoholic drinks prohibition).

The variation of service requests by guests and how to provide better services to tourists from different parts of world is compelling to hotels. On the other hand finding out what do guests comment on hotel services in tourism websites is a kind of salient since word-of-mouth has a great effect on prospect guests and could aid hotels to improve the services that they offer.

This master thesis uses implicit theories to present how people model cultural differences, then by investigating online comments in tourism and hospitality website

on what aspects do tourists comment and where do they come from the questionnaire for interviews is shaped. There have not been studies about cultural differences of tourists and the host countries in hospitality industry. In addition there are not recent researches on Iranian hospitality industry and the expectation of different tourists of divers nationalities. Therefore following question will be answered:

- What kinds of tourists mostly travel to capital of Iran?
- On what kind of services offered by hotel they may comment?
- Are different nationalities expecting different things when staying in hotels?
- Do tourists comment on obstacles they have encountered because of Islamic government of Iran when staying in hotels?

1.4.The outline of research methodology

We have chosen two 5 star hotels in Tehran (capital of Iran) that have been built after Islamic revolution, one from governmental chain hotels (Parsian Chain) and the other one from private chain hotels (Espinass Chain). These hotels have been selected based on their parallel quality, stars, as they have been built in the same era of time and mostly they are hosting VIPs.

Espinass hotel is one of the branches of Iranian private hotel chains in the central part of Tehran due to its location and transportation facilities and since it is the first ranked hotel in tripadvisor.com among hotels of Tehran therefore it is well known and popular

worldwide. Whereas Iran is a cheap country for foreigners, tourists normally choose 5 star hotels to stay in whether they are business travelers or backpackers.

Parsian Azadi hotel is a branch of a governmental Iranian hotel chains which is located in Northern part of Tehran and it has a perfect view of the city. Tourists who are coming for conferences, exhibitions or seminars are normally staying in this hotel because it is located few meters from International Tehran fair and many conference and seminar saloons.

This study is done in an explorative design frame since there has not been any other research about the current subject, as far as it has been planned to be. The data have been collected from comments of tourists that have already stayed in these two hotels from high ranking global tourism and booking website Tripadvisor.com and also we have followed up a questionnaire to an interview-based data collection by the aid of Tripadvisor.com comments from the guests who are residing in the private and governmental chain hotels of Tehran to investigate whether are there any point mentioned by comments of current residents and those who have stayed and commented on hotel online. The data from unit of analysis is analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

1.5.The construct of thesis

This introduction will be pursued with 5 more chapters. Chapter 2 is the literature review of the utilized theories, implicit theories of personality and leadership and

categorization theory are going to be defined, explained and used to point out how people of different personalities from different cultures think in the way that they think, expect, behave and analyze different situations and people they encounter. The methodology is presented in chapter 3 in more precise form as it is taken into operation. In chapter 4 the results of qualitative and quantitative methods of the travel websites as the basis of analysis and the designed questionnaire will be revealed. Chapter 5 of this master thesis is where the main findings of the survey are going to be discussed based on what is found and by the last chapter (chapter 6) the thesis will be terminated by bringing about the conclusion, implications, limitations and future possible area of research. Appendixes are added as the last observable part to the end of this master thesis.

1.6. Contribution of research to hospitality and tourism industry

The result of this study will contribute the managers' decision-making procedure in hospitality industry of Iran. It aids toward a better understanding of guest needs and will also magnify on what aspects of accommodation and its related services guests will focus based on their nationality. Finally on what aspects guests aim to comment in online reviews of tourism websites. They may use the results to superior ways of marketing especially e-marketing by the means of e-word of mouth in hospitality and tourism websites, they can possibly personalize some hotel services based on cultural background of guests or even their nationality.

Chapter 2

2.Literature review

2.1.Implicit theories

People use traits to make categories, have better understanding of social surrounding, pay attention on the things they like and finally to forecast events on the basis of their expectations, but if the traits that individuals use to judge are not flexible enough, they may restrict thinking rather than make judgments easier for people (Erdley & Dweck, 1993). People may have a progressive or fixed view about others and it depends on how they implicitly visualize other people's personalities and the social situation that they are making their judgments (Erdley & Dweck, 1993). The 'implicit personality theory' has been used by Bruner and Tagiuri for the first time and it generally demonstrates the estimates about the reasons that people do different compartments (Schneider, 1973). Implicit theories refer to personal opinions and states that are being used to explain about diverse groups of people and individuals (Wong-On-Wing & Lui, 2007). Implicit theories have been widely used especially for differentiating people, like 'leaders' from 'non-leaders' by the means of traits. Frith and Frith (2008) mention that implicit procedures of human's mind makes it much easier for individuals to apportioning of information, sensations and activities.

In the academic field implicit theory refers and progresses to finding out urges and the compartments that are related to realm of an individual's understandings, well-being, work organization and operation, figuring out self-efficiency and other's proficiency, and finally consultation with others (Burnette & Pollack, 2013). Offermann, Kennedy, and Wirtz (1994) mentioned implicit theories as a cognitive tool that people use to specify the leaders and non-leaders, in addition they declared that leadership is a 'cognitive category in memory' so that individuals make hierarchies by how they observe leaders and how they realize others. In the part of memory, which contains the series of events and parts called 'episodic memory' the individual's own trials of incidents are recorded, concrete memories are registered in 'semantic memory' part, while rating different things people will refer more to episodic memory than semantic one, which is the category of more general things (Junker & van Dick, 2014). For example in hospitality settings when a tourist is staying in a hotel room will remember how he has received services and how well he was treated by hotel's personnel as he refers to his episodic memory and by remembering things that happened during his stay in the specific hotel and he may advert to his semantic memory to recollect physical and more general appearance of hotel building and furniture like how the rooms looked like, how was the lobby or what was the color of walls. People mostly make their judgments based on their episodic memory in relation with what the person remembers, that referees are the cautious remembrance of personal previous experiences that the individual matches them by the means of occasion and location regards (Shondrick, Dinh, & Lord, 2010). Jacoby, Kelley, Brown, and Jasechko (1989) declare a person's implicit mental model as 'unconscious' since the individual is unable to remember a

particular past experienced event and he only utilizes the data from it and it influences the behavior of the individual as long as he unconsciously resembles the occurring event to its similar happened one in the past that he can not recall it deliberately.

There exist two traditions about 'implicit personality theory', substandard influence in analyzing and making referee of others and the other one is circumstances that people are individually diverse, as they perceive differently (Schneider, 1973).

By utilizing implicit theories the observer deciphers and revitalizes overall data of a specified person or thing, on the basis of his own comportment expectations and sensation reflects (Shondrick et al., 2010). Different individuals judge diversely, if they have a general look on everything they try to similarize different social coming situations to what they have previously categorized relied on traits (Erdley & Dweck, 1993). On the other hand the implicit theories in various people's mind is not shaped just without any prior background but it is the result of what they have experienced gradually in different situations therefore prototypes aid individuals to identify and appropriately proportionate characteristics into their database categorizations (Offermann et al., 1994). Individuals are more eager to grasp behaviors on how they expect them to be not on how they really are so they may deny what is not consistent with their expectancy therefore they may not rely so much on their memory as well. On the other words the implicit performance theory or the prototypes that are formed in rater person's mind are the criterion for him to judge the occurring situation (Baltes & Parker, 2000). The data that we have about others, how we process them and the way that we sort people progress gradually, implicit theories in the matter of relationships is

stable and aids to make predictions as well, additionally it simplifies the data processing requirements involved with social exchanges (Engle & Lord, 1997). Except than traits which are one of the bases for judgmental classifications, Schneider (1973) also presents some non-trait aspects for implicit theories. Emotions and stereotypes are what he mentions as non-trait sight of implicit theories. Glancing moods such as emotions that are biased by physical things, facial first impressions effect on person's perception depending on how much cross-cultural realization is involved (Schneider, 1973). Former notions that people have made their personal verdicts by them is the root of behavioral ratings in individuals, these bases also include stereotypes, prototypes and the implicit performance theories (Baltes & Parker, 2000). Greenwald and Banaji (1995) mention 'attitudes' and 'stereotypes' as the main two classes of implicit social cognition. Implicit cognition may lead the person to react or response unconsciously in majority of situations (Frith & Frith, 2008).

Thoughts and features about members of a social classification, which are shared collectively among a society, are called stereotypes. Implicit stereotypes are the impacts of past events, which affect designation of ideas about a social classification (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Each social group of people have their own roles, which are crucial since they are the patterns by which other people fabricate their visual thoughts of them and their manners (Eagly & Kite, 1987). These images are stereotypes created for each category of people of a group.

Stereotyping can be about race, gender, nationalities and any other social categories. Nationality stereotyping may be produced via cultural functions such as different types of media, which is being assumed as 'indirect' and it can be made directly due to nearby geographical borders or presence of immigrants of a nationality in one's home country (Eagly & Kite, 1987). Nationality stereotypes are often based on features related to men living in a specific country as long as women are observed as minor group in power of any affairs (Eagly & Kite, 1987). When individual's mentality about other nationalities are majorly formed indirectly especially by the means of media they affect beliefs deeper and stronger. This can be much effective when government of a particular country has noticeable impact on the people of its society. For example in regards with United States policies toward Iran, Americans do not have good impression of Iranians even if they have not had any direct connections with Iranians but they consider them frequently as delinquents (Eagly & Kite, 1987).

A judgment or the implicit performance theory that is made by an individual previously and is also clearly reachable in his mind as long as it has been observed several times, will be the basis of person's ratings even if the memory information is more accessible (Baltes & Parker, 2000). Burnette and Pollack (2013) mention implicit theories as an inductive learning base that let the researchers to discover a lot of things about individuals such as 'affect, cognition and their behavior'. They also explain that implicit theories focus on how flexible beliefs are amalgamated with individual's steady character impacts one's self mind-sets, relations and understandings. Desirable and undesirable status of people concerning other individuals, locations and principals

are called attitudes, normally attitudes are being analyzed by the means of behaviors that individuals demonstrate toward different things. Implicit attitudes are the effect of past events that intervene impressions, mentality or manners against social matters (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

As Burnette and Pollack (2013) report job satisfaction in implicit theories of work appears when the job fits personal predicts of ideal job and beliefs, to relate implicit theories to hospitality context and what people think when staying in hotels, there is the possibility of assuming that people will be satisfied of hotel services as long as the services fit their expectations. Expectations are shaped by the means of their previous mind-sets and the 'meaning system' or in other words implicit theories that they have made about a specific hotel or any other thing. Therefore Burnette and Pollack (2013) suggested that cultural differences of individuals should also get taken into account when using implicit theories since culture is one the main aspects affecting the way that people think as It may also change the functional dimension of recognized speculation process of human mind.

Implicit cognition is the result of occurred trials even if the person cannot recall the past event by his/her own conscious mental processes. The social cognition will be appeared in the form of small shreds of the arisen past experience, which are parallel to the present occurrence (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

'Priming and context effects' in regards with implicit social cognition is the reaction and answer that an individual gives to a present motive by the means of previous occurred incidents effect. It works in the way that the involved person makes theories of those effects based on the functional aspect of the event in various categories then he

uses them for future judgments and manners to the similar situations (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

2.2.Categorization Theory

Categorization theory looks at the observer of an act as a person who is ready to engage the stimulus instead of being an unwilling person to just observe shallowly the scene, in addition both the features of the observer (perceiver) and the motivating action (stimulus) are important from social cognition viewpoint (Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984).

Categorization theory aids to understand how behaviors can be grasped by the means of social cognition processing of information and how they fit categories that are created in people's minds based on prototypes (first impression modeling) (Lord et al., 1984).

Application of categorization theory in the main core of hospitality industry, which are hotels, is possible through defining various services that a hotel can serve to guests and they may perceive and rate it based on different departments that exist in hotels as well as the way that they define good and bad service categorizations. In the other words, guests categorize hotel services on the basis of in which category they think the services are and they start to analyze the quality of them based on how they expect them to be or they may categorize Iranian hospitality sector as a third world hospitality industry or a middle eastern hotel type.

Prototypes may be used by people to percept diverse services in hotels relying on what people may know about hotel prior to residing in it. As it was discussed by Lord et al.

(1984) prototypically results on how people perceive, expect behaviors and how they attribute them to cause and effect in responsibility appraisal areas. Person-in-situation reveals more behavioral reactions rather than similarizing people by categorizing them (Lord et al., 1984). By having prototypes in mind Lord, Brown, Harvey, and Hall (2001) define categorization theory process in this way; categorization theory has two phases first the individual accords the current situation with a parallel prototype and then in the next phase he starts to evaluate the similarities of the running event with existing prototype that he have found.

Shondrick et al. (2010, p. 961) also explain categorization flow as following:

“Categorization is a pattern-matching process in which sufficiently good matches of social target's behaviors or characteristics to a pattern (prototype) which defines a category for perceivers, results in: a) a classification as a leader and b) a pattern-completion process through which unobserved but prototypical traits or behaviors are also associated with the categorized individual.”

Based on cognitive categorization pattern there is a procedure of facilitating data processing in individual's minds, the way it works is that the person compares the current situation with a past experience or in other words with an existing 'prototype' and he will relate it to an already shaped category in his mind. Due to equating of new stimuli with an existing category it is not required for the person to analyze the current

event with more details he will just tag it to an available classification in his mentality (Phillips, 1984).

Cornell (2006) suggests that the barriers that a client of a social work may encounter are under the impression of his false thoughts, which may impact his intrinsic experiences, and schemas of the existing problem.

Memory resolution from what people have seen is a doubtful thing because what they think that they have observed may be the result of wrong impression of false reasoning from other events which they have comprehended from prototypes (Lord et al., 1984). Thus false memory and false thoughts may impulse how implicit models are made among individuals. Translation of different events can be manipulated due to a person's lack of knowledge of what is going on, thus when a person is not aware of paralleling two things by the means of his blurry memory his judgments and behaviors will be biased so they will be different from when he is completely alert of the issue (Jacoby et al., 1989).

Mood is a vital aspect affecting memory; sensational feelings that are being evoked as they match a situation similar to a past event can aid the person to have a better recall of previous information parallel to present condition (Shondrick et al., 2010).

Chapter 3

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This master thesis is an explorative study of cultural differences of tourists from various nationalities on how they focus on hospitality services in hotels of Tehran the capital of Islamic Republic of Iran. This study came into research as long as tourism industry of Iran and as the most important part of it hospitality industry is now a growing industry since Iran had nuclear agreements with United States of America and started new stream of economical and business activities. Tehran as the capital of Iran is the pole of business agreements and almost all huge companies have their main office located in this city of Iran.

Companies like Airbus, Italy's state rail have decent economic agreement to cooperate with Iran (Spivack, 2016). This when many more companies like automobile companies and oil companies has also joined to collaborate with Iran economically. Melia Luxury brand in hospitality is going to establish new luxury hotel in Iran with collaboration of Accor and Rotana brands (Spivack, 2016).

Thus this research has been accomplished to aid Iranian hospitality section to have a better perspective of different nation's needs during their stay in Tehran. Therefore steps to final results will be described in details to describe data collection method (how the questionnaire has been made and how it was used it to gather data, sampling procedure) and measures.

3.2. Research design

This study has an explorative design because the cultural diversity studies in the context of hospitality industry and particularly in Iranian hospitality sector is a new idea in research and there are not any recent studies about this subject. Qualitative and quantitative analysis have been used to anatomize the collected data from the unit of analysis. In primary step comments of travelers in Espinas International hotel and Persian Azadi hotel have been read and decomposed comprehensively to take out mostly focused aspects of hotel services. Bizarre comments have been taken out for further discussion in the fifth chapter. Questionnaire has been constructed (it will be explained in details later in this chapter) to collect data about tourists' ideas over Iran, hotels in Iran and the hotel that they have chosen to stay in when they are in Tehran (whether Espinas international hotel or Persian Azadi hotel). Before data collection a pre-test have been carried out from 10 prospect guests to see whether there are any difficulties in understanding of questionnaire or not. Then data have been collected through interviews and finally after reliability and validity tests cluster analysis have been run for taking out the conclusive findings to answer research questions.

3.2.1. Tripadvisor as the basis of questionnaire construction

Utilizing and distributing comments over a production is becoming more and more rampant in between customers of a product (Filieri, 2015). Word-of-mouth in the electronic form can be distributed in a broad and vast masses especially when it comes to the form of internet, which has temporary soul then taking, excavating, translating and handling the data is happening from one customer to the other one (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). E-WOM or electronic word-of-mouth on the basis of findings is a deep influential data source that has much bouncing impact than normal databases (Filieri, 2015).

Comments that have a massive data amount are normally grasped to be more beneficial since the customer is getting more familiar about the product properties (Filieri, 2015). Studies in the field of tourism have shown that affirmative and negative word-of-mouth will influence a large-scale among various nations. Since Internet facilities have progressed vastly, tourists are more eager to seek data about travel destinations and purchasing their journeys online (Litvin et al., 2008). Hotel customers who are about to make their hotel choice may consider various things like the hotel's situational condition, the name of the brand it belongs to, hotel feasibilities, the modality of services they offer, cost, customer repurchasing plans and how previous hotel guests may talk about it (Cantalops & Salvi, 2014).

As Litvin et al. (2008) have suggested a novel procedure in interpersonal impact studies is to going online and analyzing the reviews therefore there is a possibility of

testing available theories and literature about social interactions. Also according to Cantalops and Salvi (2014), more researches on the base of electronic word-of-mouth can be consisted of comparisons in comportment of tourists; regarding nationality differences (how and on what attributes each nationality may comment?), revenue degree of traveler (does it effect on the review they make?), to which category the traveler belong to? (Is there any variety between two kind of travelers comments e.g. health seeker vs. culture seeker) and hotel departments (are they more focusing on one or more hotel sections based on their reviews?).

The information available in online websites such as tripadvisor.com are feasible to reach but hard to analyze and grasp (Lee, Law, & Murphy, 2011). Thus for helping hoteliers to have a deeper understanding of their customers it has been decided to read travelers comment through tripadvisor.com from the two hotels that have been selected for this study and to take out the most vital issues and hotel aspects that guests have already focused and commented on them.

Tripadvisor.com is the most major travel website in the world, which gains 340 millions of visiting members each month and it contains 350 millions of comments over 6 and half million residential place monthly (Tripadvisor, 2016b). Travelers around the world go through the reviews of accommodations (different classes and types), activities, shopping centers, tourist sights, flights, restaurants, travel guides and any other necessary information, which is essential about a travel destinations around the planet that you may need to know. Tripadvisor.com is built on the foundation of previous traveler's comments that have already visited a specified place

or have stayed in a particular accommodation so that they have revealed their opinions about it through posting reviews.

The questionnaire of this study has been built on the basis of comments and reviews of travelers that have already visited Iran. There are some aspects that are considerable when reading comments. Those aspects cannot be revealed by Tripadvisor.com ratings as these ratings are simplified. As long as people of today's are using Internet and choose their accommodation and they normally surf through what others have revealed about a specific accommodation Tripadvisor.com was selected as the guide for the questionnaire fabrication of this study. Cultural shocks, traveler's point of views about Iran and what they have experienced when residing in hotels can be more touched through their ideas. That is the way that hotel aspects like cleanness of rooms, room equipment such as TV and bathrooms, dining facilities like restaurants and what room service offers to guests, quality of cuisine, location situation, transportation and may other things like staff behavior have been taken into account when the questionnaire was being constructed.

3.2.2. Questionnaire construction

Like any other questionnaire demographic questions were the first things that have been asked to help this study have a profile of interview participants. Nationality, gender, age data of each participant was gathered. In the second part travelers were asked about how did they first get the idea to visit Iran? If it is their first time visiting the country, how long they have planned to stay, Is it only Tehran they are visiting or

they are also going to visit other cities as well, what is the reason of their travel and finally how did they book their room. Since it is a study of cultural differences among various nationalities then is desirable to have more queries over some personal features and the process, which influenced each traveler to come over Iran and what is the path they have gone through to finally arrive to their hotel room.

There exist some observable problems with Tripadvisor.com questionnaire. The first one is that it has mixed the way the guest travels (in group or individually) with the aim of traveling (Business tourists also can travel in group or individually, this group can be their family or colleagues) which is shown in figure 1. This barrier have been considered and edited in the questionnaire of this study.



Figure 1. Tripadvisor.com

Motivations of tourists are also vital as they are the premier basis of later behaviors and behaviors stem from the expectations tourists have (Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991), therefore travelers were asked to say their reason that motivated them to visit Iran in condition that Iran is not a favorable tourist destination especially in western countries due to negative commercials and the limitations that exist for tourists (that will be discussed more in the following paragraphs).

The length of stay may also change the mind of traveler over the whole country and where they reside as some review revealed in Tripadvisor.com.

For example, a traveler posted the following comment about Espinas hotel:

'' We were very happy to be in a modern hotel after our experience in the rest of the country, Hotels in the rest of the country were very mixed so we were relieved to finally be in a hotel where our basic needs were met. ''

Normally individuals have good feelings when they are traveling on the purpose of holidays but they change mood from the first day to day and during the trip (Nawijn, 2010). Thus date of interview has been recorded and the date that shows when did the guest arrive to hotel has also been asked so that there might be an opportunity to analyze whether they are happier and more satisfied with the hotel services or they are sad and displeased during different periods of the trip.

That is also the reason that tourists were asked if their trip is only in Tehran or they are also experiencing other cities as well because experiencing other hotels and interacting with people of other provinces may change the whole idea about country and the residing hotels as long as people of various cities are the collection of cultures as they have their own language and lifestyle.

Nowadays it is so common to utilize grading measures in social marketing studies (Garland, 1991).

As it is observable Tripadvisor.com also uses some minor scales for rating few and general hotel aspects (figure 2).

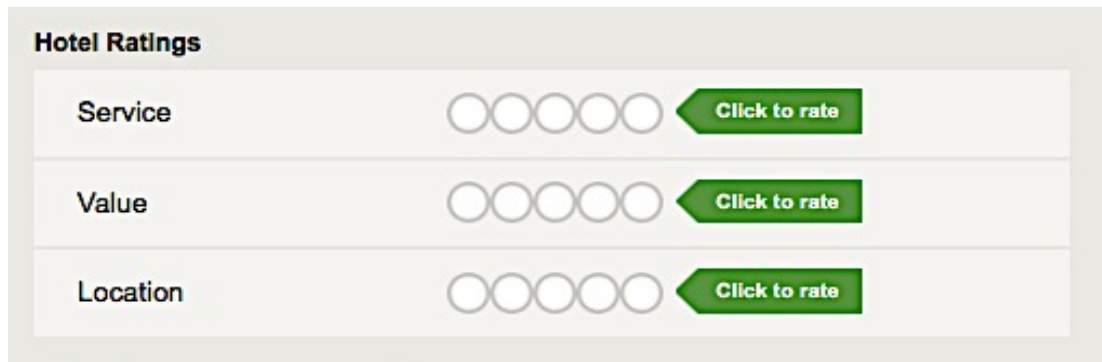


Figure 2. Tripadvisor.com hotel ratings

The questionnaire that have been built for the purpose of this master thesis the options for service, location and cleanness have been developed by asking follow up questions regarding different departments of hotel by the help of travelers comments on Tripadvisor.com.

The first range of Likert like questions asked participants to rate their ideas about Iran and what do they think people in their home country thought over Iran usually. The second part is the section that asked guests who are participating the interview to rate their ideas about what tourists normally think about hotels in Iran and finally last part of questionnaire was attributed to the current hotel that they were staying in which in this study Espinas International hotel and Persian Azadi hotel guests were chosen to be interviewed because these two hotels have the highest occupancy rate among hotels of Tehran and wide range of travelers from backpackers to political VIP's are residing in these two hotels. Normally other Tehran hotels have only guests

from Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey and Iraq and few other non-Asian countries (Iran, 2016).

Difficulties that exist for non-Muslim tourists coming to Islamic country of Iran such as Hijab (covering hair and body by women) for women travelers and the prohibition of alcoholic drink consumption. Therefore a question also have been set to ask travelers if they had any problem facing these difficulties but since their comments over hotel services is the aim of study so it has been asked whether they had any problem that hotel did not serve alcoholic beverages or not.

While travelers are writing reviews about a certain hotel Tripadvisor.com has a field of questions by the title of ‘Hotel Style and Amenities’ (Figure 3). In this field they ask about the existence of hotel laundry, Spa, baby-sitting service, banquet room, conference facilities and whether the hotel has common room for families.

Hotel Style & Amenities			
Does this hotel have laundry service ?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does this hotel have a spa ?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does this hotel offer babysitting services ?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Is there a banquet room at this hotel?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does this hotel offer Conference Facilities ?	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does this hotel have a common room for families ?	Yes	No	Not Sure

Figure 3. Hotel Style & Amenities question field in Tripadvisor.com

The problem over this range of questions is that there is nothing about the quality of named services but only their presence and based on travelers' opinions on Tripadvisor.com there has not been any comments explaining a problem or even mentioning such services except few words on Spa. Therefore in the questionnaire construction of this study these services have not been considered since travelers' ideas about room and services related to room were more crucial for final results and since there were not any focus about them in the travelers' reviews in Tripadvisor.com.

The last question asked the hotel guests to rate their overall impression over the hotel they are staying at.

3.3. Data collection and sampling

Interviewer-completion questionnaire have been used to collect data to provide further information or explanation about questions for participants while they were from different nationalities and they might have had weakness in English language. Interviewer-completion questionnaire surveys have more precision, they have much more amount of responses, and you might get much consistent answers (Veal, 2006, p. 260).

The interview were taking place within 30 days from 12th of March to 11th of April (this period is considered as the beginning of high-season in Tehran) among the

tourist guests who were staying In Espinas International hotel and Persian Azadi hotel while they were in lobby or in hotel's coffee shop or on waiting couch for taxi. The aimed sample were a wide range of nationalities as diverse as possible to aid having better findings. 195 tourists have been interviewed from 40 nationalities. The sample description and other descriptive results will be explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Sample description

195 interviews have been done to collect data for the purpose of this study. Almost all interviews were useful for the analysis. Among interviewees 118 were men (60.5%) and 77 were women (39.5%). The maximum age was 83 years old and the minimum age was 17 years old and the mean age was 42 years old. The most frequent ages were 39 years old (13 people, 6.7%), 42 years old (11 people, 5.6%), 45 years old (10 people, 5.1%), 54 years old (10 people, 5.1%). Interviewees were from 40 different countries (Europe: France, Germany, Austria, UK, Switzerland, Italy, Netherlands, Hungary, Greece, Poland, Spain, Finland, Belgium, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Scotland, Portugal, Asia: Indonesia, China, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Iran, India, Russia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Singapore, Qatar, America: USA, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, Africa: South Africa, Morocco, Australia: Australia). French (14), German (13), Indonesian and Indian (11), American, Austrian and Turkish (10) were the most frequent nationalities.

4.1.2. Other descriptive statistics

There have ten different categories for travelers in what way they got the idea to travel to Iran (I already knew it, Internet, Media, Friends, Travel agency, School or university, Relatives, Books and guides, Fairs or Exhibitions and other). Among all travelers 50 already knew the idea to travel to Iran, 20 got the idea from Internet, 30

from media, 41 from their friends, 6 got the idea from travel agency, 8 knew it from school or university, 13 from their relatives, 20 had got the idea from books and guides, 6 from exhibitions and 1 from other source. That was the first time traveling to Iran for 79 percent of interviewees (154 people) and the rest (41 people, 21%) had traveled to Iran previously.

Interviewees were traveling to Iran because of different things. Here 10 categories were selected to be asked (Rest and relaxation, Business reasons, Culture and history discovery, Sports and recreation, Religious reasons, visiting relatives and friends, Attending a conference, congress, seminar or exhibition, Fun, Health and other).

130 of the interviewees (66.7%) had a round trip to Tehran and other cities but 65 of them were only traveling to Tehran (33.3%). 53.3% of interviewees (104 people) were traveling in a group and the rest (46.7%, 91 people) were traveling individually. Regarding length of stay most of travelers (44.6%, 87 people) were staying two weeks or more, the other tourists were staying one night (2.1%, 4 people), two nights (1%, 2 people), three nights (2.1%, 4 people), Four nights (4.1%, 8 people), five nights (12.3%, 24 people), six nights (9.7%, 19 people) and one week (24.1%, 47 people).

Interviewees booked their room in four various ways. 34 of interviewees (17.4%) booked the room directly from hotel, 50 of them (25.6%) booked the hotel room using online booking websites, 78 of Interviewees (40%) booked their room by the aid of travel agency and finally 33 people (16.9%) did their booking by the means of somebody they knew in Iran.

There exist some outliers according to Skewness (Positive Skewness shows that scores are grouped to the left, contrastingly Negative Skewness shows accumulation of clusters to the right (Pallant, 2013, p. 51)) and Kurtosis (Positive Kurtosis demonstrates that distribution of variables shaped a peak but negative kurtosis shows rather a flat shaped distribution (Pallant, 2013, p. 52)). By looking at table 2, table 3 and in table 4 the valid number of cases is observable that all 195 interviewees data were valid. Accordingly the outliers did not affect number of valid results seemingly.

4.2. Measurement tools

4.2.1. Reliability Test

The reliability test is the first essential step in measurement. The Chronbach's Alpha has been used for reliability test. Cronabach's Alpha shows interior strength and stability of items that are measuring a certain construct so that a low scores of items show that they are not reliable therefore they have to be omitted from subsequent analysis (Churchill Jr, 1979). Based on Nunnally (As cited in Churchill Jr, 1979) the aim of research is very important for considering low scores but he suggests that reliability of items with Chronbach's Alpha score of .50 to .60 normally is adequate.

The Chronbach's Alpha reliability test results for perception of travelers about Iran, their mental image of hotels in Iran and their idea about the current hotel that they are staying (Espinass International hotel or Persian Azadi hotel) is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Reliability Test Results

Variable Name	Items	Chronbach Alpha	Mean inter-item correlation
Traveler's perception about Iran	a1	.741	.589
	a2		.586
Traveler's mental image of hotels in Iran	b1	.565	.395
	b2		.385
Traveler's idea about current hotel	c1	.933	.439
	c2		.402
	c3		.542
	c4		.627
	c5		.490
	c6		.677
	c7		.517
	c8		.664
	c9		.635
	c10		.531
	c11		.531
	c12		.595
	c13		.526
	c14		.421
	c15		.501
	c16		.561
	c17		.614
	c18		.660
	c19		.594
	c20		.613
	c21		.640
	c22		.566
	c23		.586
	c24		.537
	c25		.631
	c27		.498
	c28		.512
	c29		.610

Based on the first time test 6 items have been deleted from analysis due to unreliability. These 6 items were decreasing the total Chronbach's Alpha. Items a1,a2,a3 and a4 for perception of travelers about Iran have been put into reliability test and items a2 and a4 have been deleted as they were increasing the Chronbach's alpha. The item a2 was deleted in the first turn (total first Chronbach's alpha = .690 Chronbach's alpha when item was deleted = .699) and in the second turn test run a4 have been erased (Chronbach's alpha = .699 Chronbach's alpha when item was deleted = .741) the total final Chronbach's alpha for the variable named perception of travelers about Iran is .741 the mean inter-item correlation table also seemed to be reasonable as they were all above .3 in the final test on the basis of Briggs and Cheek (as cited in Pallant, 2013, p. 90) mean inter-item correlations of .2 to .4 are reasonable. Therefore internal consistency of perception of travelers about Iran was improved to a satisfying state in the final test.

Items b1, b2, b3, b4 and b5 for measuring travelers mental image of hotels in Iran as the other variable were tested. In the first turn item b4 was eliminated (Chronbach's alpha = .416 Chronbach's alpha when item was deleted = .466) and in the next turn item b3 has been omitted (Chronbach's alpha = .466 Chronbach's alpha when item was deleted = .531). The final reliable Chronbach's alpha was .565 as item b5 was also deleted. Mean inter-item correlation values also were above .3, which is reliable.

The only item that was deleted from items of variable named idea about the current hotel (Espinass International hotel or Persian Azadi hotel) was item c26 among 29 items related to this variable (items started from c1 to c29). Thus the total Chronbach's alpha which was reliable after deletion of item c26 (Chronbach's alpha =

.932 Chronbach's alpha when item deleted = .933) So the final Chronbach's alpha was .933. Mean inter-item correlation also was all above .3 that confirms the reliability of items.

4.2.2 Validity test

4.2.2.1. Pearson correlation

Pearson correlation is a test that is done to analyze the relationship between two continuous variables, in fact it shows that how to variables correlate each other and how powerful is their relationship (Allen & Bennett, 2010; Huizingh, 2007; Pallant, 2013, p. 95). Normally there are three different conditions in between two items regarding correlation:

- Positive correlation
- Negative correlation
- No correlation

Perfect correlations between two variables should range from -1 to +1 ($-1 \leq r \leq +1$) (Ahlgren, Jarneving, & Rousseau, 2003; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2016). The effective size of correlation according to Cohen (1974) is small when r is near .1, It is medium when r is .3 and the correlation is considered to be large when r is .5.

4.2.2.2 Convergent validity test

Convergent validity is the matter of inter-correlation between measuring items of one construct (Guo, Aveyard, Fielding, & Sutton, 2008).

Table 6. Correlations for Traveler's perception about Iran

		a1	a2	a3	a4
a1	Pearson Correlation	1	.289**	.589**	.418**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	195	195	195	195
a2	Pearson Correlation	.289**	1	.135	.397**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.061	.000
	N	195	195	195	195
a3	Pearson Correlation	.589**	.135	1	.288**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.061		.000
	N	195	195	195	195
a4	Pearson Correlation	.418**	.397**	.288**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	195	195	195	195

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In table 6 correlations for Traveler's perception about Iran are shown. Except for the intersection between item a2 and a3 other items seem to correlate. These two items do not also have significant correlation as correlations are significant at $p < 0.01$ (according to table significance level) it is observable that .061 is bigger than .01.

Most of items have nearly medium correlation with each other ($r_{a1, a2} = .289$, $r_{a2, a4} = .397$, $r_{a3, a4} = .288$) and there is a approximately large correlation between a1 and a4 ($r_{a1, a4} = .418$). There is a large correlation between a1 and a3 ($r_{a1, a3} = .589$). Thus there is nearly good correlation among items of traveler's perception about Iran.

Table 7. Correlations for Traveler's mental image of hotels in Iran

		b1	b2	b3	b4	b5
b1	Pearson Correlation	1	.395**	.196**	-.051	.272**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.006	.478	.000
	N	195	195	195	195	195
b2	Pearson Correlation	.395**	1	-.090	.215**	.162*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.209	.003	.024
	N	195	195	195	195	195
b3	Pearson Correlation	.196**	-.090	1	.222**	.141*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.209		.002	.049
	N	195	195	195	195	195
b4	Pearson Correlation	-.051	.215**	.222**	1	-.160*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.478	.003	.002		.025
	N	195	195	195	195	195
b5	Pearson Correlation	.272**	.162*	.141*	-.160*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.024	.049	.025	
	N	195	195	195	195	195

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 displays the correlations for traveler's mental image of hotels in Iran based on the table some items are significant at 0.01 and some at 0.05. Items b1 and b4, b2 and b3 are not correlated since their correlation is not significant ($r_{b1, b4} = .4778$ & $r_{b2, b3} = .209$). Items b4 and b5 are negatively correlated ($r_{b4, b5} = -.160$ and $p = .25$). The other items seem to have significant, small to medium correlations.

Correlations table for idea about current hotel due to large size has not been inserted here. Items were significant at .01 and .05. Based on the significant level except 10 items ($r_{c2, c26}=0,113$ $p=0,115$, $r_{c5, c12}=0,127$ $p=0,077$, $r_{c3, c14}=0,116$ $p=0,0106$, $r_{c7, c14}=0,086$ $p=0,234$, $r_{c9, c26}=0,131$ $p=0,067$, $r_{c10, c28}=0,103$ $p=0,151$, $r_{c14, c26}=0,116$ $p=0,106$, $r_{c14, c22}=0,122$ $p=0,09$, $r_{c15, c16}=0,133$ $p=0,064$, $r_{c5, c23}=0,122$ $p=0,089$) the others correlated each other positively and mostly at a medium or large correlation size.

4.2.2.3. Discriminant validity

Before running correlation analysis it is suggested to check the distribution of variables to see outliers (since outliers can have impressive influence on amount of correlations (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2016), distribution of data points and orientation of variables to each other (Pallant, 2013, pp. 123-124).

Table 8 as well as other correlation coefficients among variables of the three constructs of this study (which are too large to be displayed due to numerous variables) fortunately showed lower correlations between variables of two different constructs than inter-correlations among variables of the same construct. Therefore discriminant validity of continuous variables is considered to be proved on the ground of correlation coefficient.

Table 8. Correlation coefficient between itesm of Traveler's percetion about Iran and Traveler's mental image about hotels in Iran

		b1	b2	b3	b4	b5	a1	a2	a3	a4
b1	Pearson Correlation	1	.395**	.196**	-.051	.272**	.124	.090	.169*	.154*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.006	.478	.000	.084	.209	.018	.032
	N	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195
b2	Pearson Correlation	.395**	1	-.090	.215**	.162*	.222**	.133	.295**	.283**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.209	.003	.024	.002	.063	.000	.000
	N	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195
b3	Pearson Correlation	.196**	-.090	1	.222**	.141*	-.008	.132	.054	.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.209		.002	.049	.911	.067	.452	.831
	N	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195
b4	Pearson Correlation	-.051	.215**	.222**	1	-.160*	.140	.286**	.111	.143*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.478	.003	.002		.025	.051	.000	.123	.046
	N	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195
b5	Pearson Correlation	.272**	.162*	.141*	-.160*	1	.028	.014	.105	.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.024	.049	.025		.696	.846	.143	.335
	N	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195
a1	Pearson Correlation	.124	.222**	-.008	.140	.028	1	.289**	.589**	.418**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.084	.002	.911	.051	.696		.000	.000	.000
	N	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195
a2	Pearson Correlation	.090	.133	.132	.286**	.014	.289**	1	.135	.397**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.209	.063	.067	.000	.846	.000		.061	.000
	N	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195
a3	Pearson Correlation	.169*	.295**	.054	.111	.105	.589**	.135	1	.288**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	.000	.452	.123	.143	.000	.061		.000
	N	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195
a4	Pearson Correlation	.154*	.283**	.015	.143*	.069	.418**	.397**	.288**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	.000	.831	.046	.335	.000	.000	.000	
	N	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195	195

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.2.2.4. Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a confirmatory process followed by reliability test to decide which aspects should remain in the main analysis (Churchill Jr, 1979). Expletory factor analysis is vastly availed statistical tool in the area of social science and it has multiple steps, the best way to apply this method is to use principle component analysis (Osborne, 2014).

4.2.2.4.1. Step 1

The first step was checking the correlation matrix box (for items above .3), Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) (values should be .6 or more) and The Barlett’s Test of Sphericity value (to see whether test is significant or not, values should be smaller than .05) (Pallant, 2013, p. 182).

Traveler’s perception about Iran

Factor analysis for Traveler’s perception about Iran resulted a correlation matrix as table 9. Most of items seem to have good correlations except some of them, which are below .3.

Table 9. Correlation Matrix Traveler’s perception about Iran

		a1	a2	a3	a4
Correlation	a1	1.000	.289	.589	.418
	a2	.289	1.000	.135	.397
	a3	.589	.135	1.000	.288
	a4	.418	.397	.288	1.000

Table 10. KMO and Bartlett's Test for Traveler's perception about Iran

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.636
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	157.206
	df	6
	Sig.	.000

KMO of traveler’s perception about Iran is above .6 (table 10) so it is reasonable and according to Bartlett's Test of Sphericity it is significant ($p = .000$).

Traveler’s mental image of hotels in Iran

Table 11 Matrix is not showing a good correlation among items of mental image of travelers about hotels in Iran even in some items negative numbers are visible except for items b1 and b2 that have a correlation above .3. Therefore there is not a good internal consistency within items of this construct.

Table 11. Correlation Matrix for Traveler's metnal image of hotels in Iran

	b1	b2	b3	b4	b5
b1	1.000	.394	.199	-.055	.273
b2	.394	1.000	-.090	.211	.162
b3	.199	-.090	1.000	.220	.141
b4	-.055	.211	.220	1.000	-.161
b5	.273	.162	.141	-.161	1.000

KMO based on table 12 is lower than acceptable amount ($.385 < .6$) but the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant ($p = .000$).

Table 12. KMO and Barlett's Test for Traveler's mental image of hotels in Iran

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.385
	Approx. Chi-Square	103.801
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	10
	Sig.	.000

Traveler’s idea about current hotel

The correlation matrix for traveler’s idea about current hotel showed very high correlations among items (mostly items were higher than .3), the KMO of .878 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity with the value of $p = .000$ ($p < .005$) confirms a good internal consistency between items (table 13).

Table 13.KMO and Barlett's Test for Traveler's idea about current hotel

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.878
	Approx. Chi-Square	2908.252
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	406
	Sig.	.000

4.2.2.4.2. Step 2

In the second step we need to use Kaiser’s criterion to decide how many factors is possible to extract for each variable, thus it is essential to take a look at Total Variance Explained table (Pallant, 2013, p. 183). Factors that explain the highest variance are going to be extracted for the final analysis.

Table 14. Total Variance Explained for Traveler's perception about Iran

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.079	51.971	51.971	2.079	51.971	51.971
2	.965	24.135	76.106			
3	.572	14.293	90.398			
4	.384	9.602	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Based on table 14 one component is showing 51.971 percent of variance and it has a eigenvalue of 2.079 (eigenvalues higher than 1 confront with the desired point for a component to be extracted for the final analysis (Pallant, 2013, p. 187). Then only one component will be extracted for the final analysis.

Table 15. Total Variance Explained for Traveler's Mental Image of Hotels in Iran

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.606	32.123	32.123	1.606	32.123	32.123
2	1.224	24.478	56.600	1.224	24.478	56.600
3	1.087	21.733	78.333	1.087	21.733	78.333
4	.692	13.846	92.180			
5	.391	7.820	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

According to table 15 three first components by showing 78.333 percent of total variance and eigenvalues above 1 are being extracted to go for further analysis. Table 16 is displaying that among 29 components 7 components of traveler's idea about current hotel by covering 65.072 of the total variance and eigenvalues more than 1 have been extracted for the final analysis.

Table 16. Total Variance Explained for Traveler's Idea about Current hotel

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.619	36.616	36.616	10.619	36.616	36.616
2	1.728	5.959	42.575	1.728	5.959	42.575
3	1.592	5.490	48.065	1.592	5.490	48.065
4	1.420	4.897	52.962	1.420	4.897	52.962
5	1.300	4.483	57.445	1.300	4.483	57.445
6	1.157	3.989	61.434	1.157	3.989	61.434
7	1.055	3.638	65.072	1.055	3.638	65.072
8	.952	3.282	68.354			
9	.883	3.044	71.398			
10	.827	2.853	74.251			
11	.728	2.511	76.762			
12	.670	2.310	79.072			
13	.624	2.151	81.223			
14	.586	2.020	83.244			
15	.550	1.898	85.141			
16	.522	1.801	86.942			
17	.462	1.593	88.535			
18	.447	1.542	90.077			
19	.397	1.368	91.445			
20	.364	1.254	92.699			
21	.361	1.246	93.945			
22	.318	1.098	95.042			
23	.308	1.063	96.106			
24	.258	.888	96.994			
25	.238	.820	97.814			
26	.190	.654	98.468			
27	.171	.589	99.057			
28	.137	.474	99.531			
29	.136	.469	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

4.2.2.4.3. Step 3

In this step the extracted items (with eigenvalues above 1) were put into rotation process. The result of rotation is vital to know the inter-correlation strength between items. In the Rotated Component Matrix it is possible to find out the situation of each item based on the loadings that is displayed by components therefore it is necessary to look for higher loadings (Pallant, 2013, p. 187). Constructs with more than two factors have been rotated using Varimax rotation process for clearer results.

Going back to table 11 and table 12 it was obvious that there were not a correlation among items of Traveler’s mental image about hotels in Iran and not a good KMO (.385) and table 15 showed that three components were extracted that showed eigenvalues higher than 1. Therefore Varimax rotation was run for this construct to if there is a possibility to get better result. In table 17 it is essential to look for loadings higher than .4 to see, which variables are proper to be taken out for the final analysis.

Table 17. Rotated Component Matrix for Traveler's mental image about hotels in Iran

	1	2	3
b2	.856	.270	-.236
b1	.760	-.193	.238
b4	.139	.873	.251
b5	.449	-.570	.332
b3	.013	.116	.943

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 12 iterations.

Among all variables, item b5 has the lowest loading and it only has a fair loading with component 1. To increase validity we omit item b5 and run the factor analysis for the second time for this construct.

Deletion of item b5 changed the number of components from 3 to 2 but it decreased KMO. Thus this construct is not considered to be appropriate for the final analysis.

Table 18. KMO and Barlett's test for Traveler's Mental image about hotels in Iran

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.328
Approx. Chi-Square		78.398
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	6
	Sig.	.000

Table 19.Total Variance Explained for Traveler's mental image about hotels in Iran

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.470	36.738	36.738	1.470	36.738	36.738	1.397	34.916	34.916
2	1.150	28.761	65.500	1.150	28.761	65.500	1.223	30.584	65.500
3	.978	24.454	89.954						
4	.402	10.046	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 20 shows the rotation component matrix for traveler’s idea about current hotel.

Table 20. Rotation Component Matrix for Traveler's idea about current hotel

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c6	.681	.178	.224	.071	.415	.029	.029
c3	.649	.334	.115	-.040	.049	.009	.290
c29	.607	.094	.339	.209	.013	.152	.079
c11	.602	.194	.057	.106	.038	.289	.084
c4	.579	.273	.183	.242	.131	-.002	.206
c8	.555	.251	.264	.394	.128	.076	-.065
c18	.547	.137	.086	.467	.255	-.004	.231
c5	.546	.099	.009	.082	.493	.211	-.200
c9	.505	.151	.209	.182	.381	.021	.143
c10	.237	.706	.116	.139	-.077	.308	-.039
c7	.262	.663	-.001	.159	.228	-.121	.231
c21	.330	.653	.212	.188	.108	.186	.031
c19	.425	.470	.175	.287	.141	.058	-.097
c25	.232	.232	.812	.092	.142	.103	.046
c24	.206	-.032	.751	.227	.189	.243	-.075
c22	.405	-.006	.719	.139	.003	-.043	.320
c23	.015	.536	.652	.067	.229	.014	.178
c20	.448	.124	.113	.635	.068	.110	.066
c2	.038	.111	.139	.616	.225	.292	-.198
c16	.315	.162	.101	.597	-.041	.134	.432
c17	.164	.394	.193	.537	.250	.116	.134
c28	.091	-.012	.204	.181	.748	.141	.197
c15	.271	.112	.138	.038	.647	.299	-.106
c27	-.036	.259	.268	.414	.490	-.100	.248
c1	.203	.420	-.078	.070	.463	.136	.141
c14	.120	.041	.098	.149	.163	.823	.067
c13	.099	.209	.101	.135	.212	.773	.197
c26	.125	.061	.096	.020	.160	.144	.706
c12	.324	.305	.249	.308	-.116	.276	.431

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 15 iterations.

It is clear that item c12 has the lowest loadings in this matrix. Therefore it has been taken out and the second factor analysis has been run. Omitting item c12 reduces the KMO and does not change the number of factors extracted and it also reduces the total variance explained by these factors so item c12 will be remained for further analysis.

4.3. Cluster Analysis

For answering some of the research questions and due to the lack of quantity in some nationality cases that were too few to be compared by other group of nationalities here cluster analysis have been used to find the clusters with the most similar members.

The first cluster analysis was based on clustering nationalities on the foundation of their perception about Iran. The results are as it is demonstrated in table 21.

Table 21. Cluster analysis for nationalities based on their perception about Iran

Input (Predictor) Importance

■ 1.0 ■ 0.8 ■ 0.6 ■ 0.4 ■ 0.2 ■ 0.0

Cluster	5	2	3	1	4
Label					
Description					
Size	26.7% (52)	19.5% (38)	19.5% (38)	17.4% (34)	16.9% (33)
Inputs	Nationality French (26.9%) travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.16	Nationality Austrian (26.3%) travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.37	Nationality Indian (28.9%) travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.91	Nationality Chinese (26.5%) travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.54	Nationality German (39.4%) travelers_perception_about_Iran 2.63

The cluster analysis for Traveller's perception about Iran and nationalities of travellers staying in Epinas International hotel and Persian Azadi hotel have been run. Five main clusters were recognized that the major nationalities were French, Austrian, Indian, Chinese and German. These groups except the group of nationalities with head group of German did not have so much difference and the average ratios were 3.16, 3.37, 3.91, 3.54 and 2.63 respectively (figure).

Based on cluster analysis cases that were in French group were as following:

3 Swedish, 4 Italian, 4 German, 1 Chinese, 4 French, 3 Turkish, 1 Iranian, 3 Dutch, 6 Indian, 4 Austrian, 2 Greek, 3 Canadian, 3 American, 1 Moroccan, 4 Swiss, 1 Polish, 1 Russian, 2 Mexican and 2 English.

Austrian group consisted of:

1 Brazilian, 6 Russian, 1 Indonesian, 2 Singapore, 1 Indian, 1 Malaysian, 3 Austrian, 1 Venezuelan, 9 Iraqi, 2 United Arabs Emirates, 1 Tanzanian, 1 Spanish, 1 Scottish, 4 Australian, 1 South African, 1 Swedish, and 2 Malaysian.

Indian group of traveller's displayed a sum as below:

3 Singapore, 5 Indonesian, 5 Malaysian, 2 Chinese, 3 South African, 4 Turkish, 4 English, 4 Indian, 1 Russian, 1 Tajikistani, 1 Portuguese, 2 American, 1 French, 1 Irish and 1 Iranian.

Chinese group of travellers had the frequencies as below:

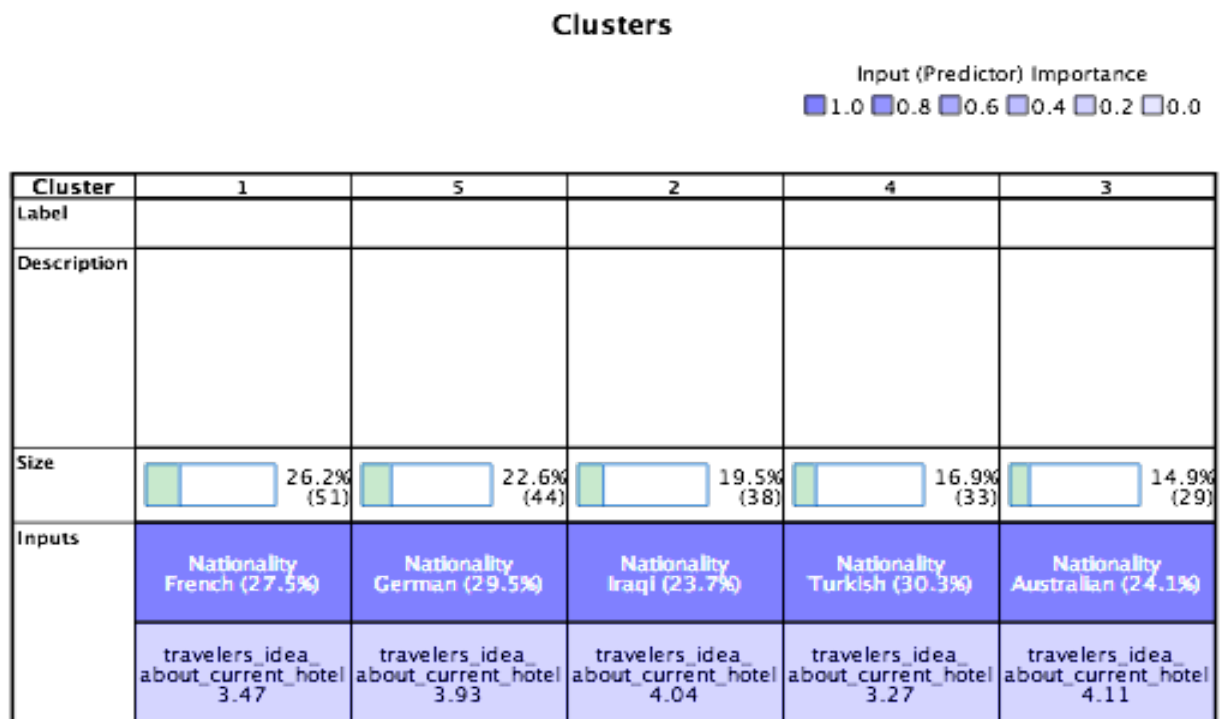
6 Chinese, 6 French, 5 Indonesian, 1 German, 3 Austrian, 1 American, 1 Swiss, 5 Italian, 1 Dutch, 1 Polish, 2 Australian, 1 Norwegian and 1 Qatari.

German group based on results was as following:

1 Australian, 2 Finish, 1 Dutch, 8 German, 2 Canadian, 4 American, 2 Norwegian, 1 Swedish, 1 Belgian, 1 South African, 1 Hungarian, 1 Swiss, 1 English, 3 Turkish, 3 French and 1 Saudi Arabian.

Cluster analysis based on nationalities and their idea about current hotel have been done. Results of this analysis are displayed in table 22.

Table 22. Cluster analysis for nationalities based on their idea about current hotel they are staying



The main head clusters according to this analysis were French (51 members), German (44 members), Iraqi (38 members), Turkish (33 members) and Australian (29 members). The mean ratios about traveler’s idea about current hotel were 3.47, 3.93, 4.04, 3.27 and 4.11 respectively.

French cluster consisted of following members:

8 French, 2 Iranian, 4 Russian, 1 Qatari, 2 South African, 1 Moroccan, 1 Spanish, 5 Indian, 3 Italian, 2 Turkish, 1 Irish, 2 United Arab Emirates, 1 Malaysian, 1 Greek, 4 Americans, 3 Iraqi, 1 Venezuelan, 2 Mexican, 2 English, 1 Hungarian, 1 Brazilian, 2 Chinese and 1 Swedish.

German cluster was including members as are written below:

6 German, 4 American, 3 Swiss, 2 south African, 2 Italian, 2 Turkish, 3 Dutch, 1 Polish, 1 Greek, 2 Norwegian, 1 Swedish, 3 Singapore, 1 Scottish, 5 French, 3 Chinese, 2 Canadian, 1 Iraqi, 2 Russian and 1 Malaysian.

Members of Iraqi cluster were exhibited in accordance of below:

3 Canadian, 2 Dutch, 1Belgian, 2 Swedish, 1 Norwegian, 1 Portuguese, 1 South African, 4 Indian, 1 Tajikistani, 1 Iraqi, 6 Indonesian, 4 German, 2 Singapore, 2 Austrian, 1 English and 2 Malaysian.

Turkish group showed a total of following nationalities:

4 Chinese, 3 Swiss, 4 Italian, 7 Turkish, 3 Indian, 1 Saudi Arabian, 1 Polish, 1 French, 3 Indonesian, 1 German, 2 Malaysian, 2 Russian and 1 English.

Australian cluster embraced:

7 Australian, 2 Finish, 2 American, 1 Swedish, 8 Austrian, 2 Indonesian, 2 German, 3 English and 2 Malaysian.

In the next step of cluster analysis gender have been clustered with Traveler's perception about Iran and Traveler's idea about current hotel. In these two cluster analyses there were not any cluster with mixed genders therefore all clusters showed whether male or female.

In the first analysis the largest group contained 62 males and following that 45 females (second cluster), 32 females (third cluster), 31 females and finally 25 Males (forth cluster). The average ratios for these clusters of their perception about Iran were 3.44, 2.76, 3.87, 4.26 and 2.18 respectively.

The cluster analyses for gender and travelers idea about current hotel cluster sizes were 52 (males), 45 (females), 38 (males), 32 (females) and 28 (males). The mean ratios were 3.78, 4.04, 4.45, 3.16 and 2.91 by order.

In clustering analysis for tourists who have already been to Iran and those who traveled for the first time the five clusters the perception ratios of 3.87 (31 people who traveled to Iran for the first time, 3.16 (56 people traveled to Iran for the first time), 3.93 (41 travelers that had traveled to Iran before) and 1.97 (4 people who were traveling to Iran for the first time).

Cluster analysis for tourists who have already been to Iran and those who traveled for the first time on the basis of traveler's idea about current hotel have been run and the five clusters showed means of 3.14 (84 travelers that have traveled to Iran for the first time), 4.06 (50 people who traveled to Iran for the first time), 3.74 (36 people that have traveled to Iran previously), 1.89 (20 people that were traveling for the first time) and 1.80 (5 travelers who have already been to Iran).

The next clustering has been done for traveler's perception about Iran on the basis of duration of stay in Iran. The clusters demonstrated following data:

Cluster 1: Attributed to those travelers that stayed in Iran two weeks or more, this cluster covered a number of 84 people with the mean of 3.22.

Cluster 2: consisted of 47 travelers with the mean ratio of 3.47 in perception of Iran that stayed 1 week.

Cluster 3: 24 people with the mean ratio of 3.50 formed this cluster, which visited Iran for 5 days.

Cluster 4: this cluster had a sum of 19 travelers who shaped a mean of 3.21 in perceiving Iran and stayed 6 nights.

Cluster 5: this cluster was including travelers who stayed 1,2,3 and 4 nights and had a mean of 3.31.

Duration of stay along with traveler's idea about current hotel have been put into cluster analysis. Clusters were the same in size and duration of stay with the means of 3.92, 3.68, 3.69, 3.62, and 3.26 respectively.

The two constructs of Traveler's perception about Iran and Traveler's idea about current hotel were clustered on the stand of where the travel is taking place (only Tehran or round-trip to other cities as well), how the tourist is traveling (In group or individually), the reason for visiting Iran (Rest and relaxation, Business reasons, Culture and history discovery, Sports and recreation, Religious reasons, visiting relatives and friends, Attending a conference, congress, seminar or exhibition, Fun, Health and other), and finally on how people have booked their hotel room (booked the room directly from hotel, booked the hotel room using online booking websites, booked their room by the aid of travel agency and did their booking by the means of somebody they knew in Iran).

What did tourists comment after staying in whether Espinas international hotel and Parsian Azadi hotel? (Tripadvisor, 2016a)

Traveler No.1

“ We stayed here at the start and end of a 2 week photo tour of Iran. On each occasion our room was on a lower floor (3rd and 4th). I would recommend higher floors if you want a view. On our first stay I would have rated the hotel 3 stars, however, after experiencing other hotels around Iran I now rate it 4 stars. In relative terms for Iran, it is a very good hotel.”

Traveler No.2

“ This hotel seems to be the top choice for foreign business travelers, and there were multiple delegations from France, Germany, Italy, and Poland while I was there (likely arranging new business deals now that sanctions have been lifted).”

Traveler No.3

“ I would agree that this is likely the best option for a Western-style hotel in Tehran, but it's not what one would consider "five star" in Europe or the US.”

Traveler No.4

“ The Hotel industry and in general the hospitality industry in emerging Iran leaves a lot to be desired. Espinas is good effort.”

Traveler No.5

“ Payment terms are only cash (well, this is due to sanctions against Iran, not hotel's fault).”

Traveler No.6

‘‘ The check-in process was far from being smooth as our reservation (made via local travel agent) could not be found and we were sent by the check-in desk to the Reservation Department to clarify the issue.’’

Traveler No.7

‘‘ I just suggest the check-in staff to keep their private belongings in a better order as the mess can be seen by the guests climbing on the lifts.’’

Traveler No.8

‘‘ The food was excellent and the prices very affordable for the average European pocket like ours.’’

Traveler No.9

‘‘ I imagine these small matters are an issue from the 'sanctions era' and will be sorted out soon....’’

Traveler No.10

‘‘ You already know from the other reviews that the bathroom is small.

What you don't know is that you can open the window in your room, which was a real relief in overheated Iranian hotel rooms! Fresh air, at least!’’

Traveler No.11

‘‘ There was no window’’

Traveler No.12

‘‘ The check-in is swift and you will need to surrender your passport to the hotel during your stay.’’

Traveler No.13

' There are a lot of pictures on the wall from several ministers from different countries.'

Traveler No.14

' Swimming pool only for male guests.'

Traveler No.15

' The only English speaking waitress gets quickly a little bit too familiar with her unpleasant jokes.'

Traveler No.16

' For the Dizzi, nobody explained us how to crush the stew. Fortunately we already ate it in a cafeteria in Esfahan where the waiter had prepared it for us. In the Espinas they just put the hot iron pot with the stew on the table and disappeared. So I stood up and worked a good 5 minutes to crush the Dizzi by myself with the pestle. No staff member came to help.'*

Traveler No.17

' This is a very popular wedding/event hotel, and the function rooms are on the second floor. Music was BLASTING and was very much intrusive in the 3rd floor sleeping rooms.'

Traveler No.18

' One thing should the travellers keep in mind, Iran is under the sanctions and it would be not fair to use the same benchmark like of a Hilton or a landmark.'

Traveler No.19

' Friendly people, that's the gem of the Persian culture.'

Traveler No.20

'' Expect to pay in Iranian reals or USD or EUR,- no availability to pay by credit card (pretty much everywhere in the country, including DutyFree at International Airport). ''

Traveler No.21

'' The lobby is spacious, with a pleasant raised seating area - no one hustles you for drinks (as alcohol is not allowed in Iran). ''

Traveler No.22

'' Interesting view out the window of 6 men working to demolish a four story building - by hand with sledge hammers. They took down a floor a day while we were there. ''

Traveler No.23

'' Hard to comment on convenience of location as we don't know Tehran at all - suffice it to say it worked well for us. ''

Traveler No.24

'' Diplomats stay here, you never know who you might meet. ''

Traveler No.25

'' We went to Iran during their Nowroz, were pleasantly surprised that Tehran was half empty, less traffic as most people had travelled''

Traveler No.26

'' This hotel discriminates against their female customers, as the use of swimming pool and related services is restricted to men only. In Azadi Hotel (another luxury hotel in Tehran we stayed at), for instance, they allow women in the mornings and men in the afternoons. ''

Traveler No.27

“ The staff was not very efficient, but their politeness and willingness to assist made up for their lack of professionalism and experience.”

Traveler No.28

“ There is complimentary wifi which works quite fast but of course some sites like Facebook and YouTube are blocked.”

Traveler No.29

“ Iran is a dry country and don't even think bringing alcohol into the country: bags/luggage have a high probability of being scanned at arrival (at the airport). You may have friends of friends knowing someone whose uncle managed to smuggle alcohol.”

Traveler No.30

“ On the other hand, if you want to bring back Coca-Cola or 7-up made in Iran, it only costs 20.000 IRR (0,50EUR), though you can find cheaper in the streets. (No U.S. companies in Iran, ... really ? ;-)”

Traveler No.31

“ As in most islamic countries, there is a Water hose next to WC to wash the feet”

Traveler No.32

*“ Trust me, it's quite an eye-opening experience. You have to try once in a lifetime :-)
.”*

Traveler No.33

“ We stayed at Azadi Hotel which was built by Hyatt and later became Azadi.”

Traveler No.34

“ This property was formerly the Hyatt Hotel in Tehran. It is understandable why President Xi stayed here during his brief visit to Iran last weekend.”

Traveler No.35

“ I was advised to deposit my soiled toilet paper in the waste bin instead of dumping it into the toilet bowl.”

Traveler No.36

“ Quite funny to see the lobby full of European and American tourists, who either did not believe the presentation of Tehran made by some media or decided to check the city themselves.”

Traveler No.37

“ Almost all web sites are blocked by the government even some newspaper pages.”

Chapter 5

5.1. Discussion

This study meant to find out the differences among groups of various nationalities traveling to Tehran the capital of Islamic Republic of Iran within an exploratory design. The procedure of collecting data was carried out in two mostly booked hotels based on their occupancy rate and based on Tripadvisor.com.

Since there is no data base in Iranian tourism sector that records and registers the aim of tourists for traveling to Iran the first research question was meant to distinguish the main stream of tourists that at least visit Tehran in this study of mostly booked hotels. On the foundation of simple statistics and with the aid of fabricated questions, the first research question has been answered. Most of tourists travel to Iran with the aim of culture and history discovery. The second large group of travellers are business travellers that are raising the number nowadays. Only few tourists come to Iran for other reasons like rest and relaxation, Health issues, sport, visiting friends and relatives or having fun. At least this minor group of travellers are not staying at hotels normally. People travel to Iran mostly in their middle ages. Younger interviewees mentioned that they were first afraid of traveling to Iran because risks they may suffer and due to negative commercials they encountered before coming to Iran. Male travellers seem to be more traveling to Iran. This may have several reasons. As it was stemmed from interviews solo women travellers were not comfortable to travel alone as they mentioned. One of the reasons to this is the restriction that exist for women in Iran that they have to wear Hijab. Although many women explained that they liked to experience

covering themselves for a short period of time and they were curious and interested about it. Majority of tourists came from European countries and North America (United States and Canada). They said they felt safer to travel to Iran after the agreements between Iran and United States about lifting sanctions. These results confirm that in line with Shondrick et al. (2010) people make use of implicit theories that are in mind and in that way they make their decision how to comport, feel or judge. Women tourists because of restrictions and younger travellers as a result of negative commercials had an implicit mind set about Iran that firstly they did not have the intention to travel to Iran. Accordingly most of younger travellers and women were traveling in groups. As Iran is famous for an ancient civilization and it has a lot of historical well-known attractions tourists. This makes an implicit theory for tourists to travel more by the aim of culture and history discovery to this tourism destination.

Going back to comments of travelers on Tripadvisor.com, most of reviews about Espinas International hotel and Persian Azadi hotel show that they might have been very happy, very angry and displeased, very surprised or shocked. Cultural shocks are reflected from travelers' comments more than anything else. Some might have liked the hospitality traits of people (traveler no. 19) and hotel's personnel or some might have been confused why people are trying to get so close to me? (Like the comment of traveler no. 15). Traveler's staying in the two target hotels commented on Wi-Fi, transportation, front desk or restaurant's staff behaviors, size of rooms, equipment of bathrooms, dinning facilities and hotel's location more than other aspects and except the reviews they made about the experiences they got by traveling to Iran. In accordance with Baltes and Parker (2000) tourists traveling to different destinations and staying in hotels have their premade prototypes, which are criterion of their

expectations regarding the situation they are facing, therefore tourists are more avid to leave comments by comparing what they expected to envisage and what they really met.

Gender cluster analysis showed that regardless of being male or female, travelers can have whether positive (or extremely positive and satisfying) or negative (below average) ideas about Iran in general or any of the two hotels they might have stayed (Espinass or Persian Azadi).

Tourists traveled to Tehran or they made a round-trip to other cities around Iran. Clusters of travelers that had a round-trip showed higher means than clusters for travelers only staying in Tehran about current hotel they were staying.

Results from cluster analysis showed that duration of stay seemingly did not have any salient influences on travelers' perception about Iran or the hotel they were staying in, since the clusters showed a similar mean values in perceiving. These mean values declared that a great number of tourists have positive perceptions and ideas over Iran and hotels that they had resided in (One good example for proving the reason behind that is comment for traveler no. 1). Clusters of Individuals traveling alone or those who were traveling in group manifested that they might have good opinions about Iran or the hotel they were settled in or they could show a negative notion as well. Among the clusters regarding tourists traveling to Iran for the first time or those who have traveled previously the negative perception about Iran related to a small cluster of those who were traveling to Iran for the first time. Clustering these two groups for ideas they had about current hotel, there existed dissatisfied small clusters of both groups.

Regardless of purpose people had for traveling to Iran almost all groups had positive idea about Iran and the hotel of residence. Booking method clusters displayed that traveler's who booked with travel agency were more discontent about the hotel. Those tourists that booked

their room using online websites had the most positive impressions about Iran based on cluster analysis.

Results from the cluster analysis of interview-based data collection responded to third research question. Clusters of nationality based on the idea of the traveller about the hotel they were staying in had five head clusters of French, German, Iraqi, Turkish and Australian. Australian cluster members were the most satisfied hotel residents (whether in Espinas hotel or Persian Azadi hotel). The travellers of Australian cluster liked the two hotels totally. They appreciated cuisine, Wi-Fi; sleep quality, room and bathroom outfits, housekeeping affairs and the room service. On the other hand they thought reservation department and what they are doing is quite average.

The group of travellers in Iraqi cluster liked most of the hotel aspects and services, they had the opinion that reservation and reception departments are working well, the hotel has been built on the basis of universal standards, the sleep quality is quite high and the room facilities are appropriate. The cleanness is plenty by in their opinion and the service is efficient but this cluster members were not completely satisfied with the breakfast buffet offered by the two hotels of this study and TV channels are not reasonable, although they had a total satisfied impression of the hotels. French cluster travellers had opinions of up to average mostly. They had good impressions about the front office, just some minor issues with reservation process. They were happy about room and bathroom equipment but they believed that conditioning system is not always working well. Wi-Fi Internet is what they normally rated as average. They liked the location of the hotel and transportation. They also enjoyed the cuisine. Totally good impressions about the hotel of residence were reflected from this cluster members.

German cluster members were satisfied about most of services and facilities of the hotel however they did not like TV channels and the food quality offered by restaurants and they thought the Wi-Fi was averagely weak. The most noticeable point about this cluster was their ratings about alcohol drinks, they did not really like it that alcohol drinks were not served at the hotels. Turkish cluster had the lowest mean among all clusters and they had intermediately opinions about hotel services and aspects. They complained about the cleanness of the rooms in most cases and they did not like TV channels, they also negatively rated airport transport in comparison to other clusters.

Nationality clustering on the basis of travellers' perception about Iran with the head clusters of French, Austrian, Indian, Chinese and German displayed that except German cluster that showed an average perception about Iran the rest of clusters showed a highly positive attitude about it. French cluster members frequently thought people of their homeland had a quite positive mind-set about Iran and Iran has a unique image but they did not think that Iran is a popular tourist destination and it is a little bit risky to travel. Austrian cluster members majorly believed that their compatriots did an average opinion about Iran, they thought Iran has a fairly unique image, they also reflected that Iran is somehow a popular tourist destination and it is not so risky for traveling. Indian cluster members' data revealed that their countrymen had a unique, positive image of Iran; they thought Iran is an approximate popular tourism destination and it is not risky at all. Chinese cluster showed the same results as Indian cluster but they felt a minor risk by traveling to Iran (most of Chinese tourist mentioned about car accidents and pickpockets in interviews). German cluster travellers' data declared that people their

homeland did not have a positive opinion about Iran, they thought Iran has a unique image but it is not popular at all, in addition it might be risky to travel to Iran.

Regarding last research question about prohibitions and restrictions of Islamic Republic of Iran in the viewpoint of tourists, most of women travelers from non-Islamic countries are aware of how they have to cover their body and hair, they normally avoid traveling to Iran or they have accepted to experience the situation. Some travelers (like traveler No.21) mentioned about alcohol consumption prohibition in Iran, they normally wished they could have had buzz to enjoy more from their journey but the majority did not expect to have it totally as they knew it before.

As it is reflected from interviews and comments of travelers about their experiences in Iran or the time that they were staying in the hotel, tourists (traveler No.10 for instance) read online travel websites and they also reflect their opinions by posting reviews. There are a lot of culture shocks for a western tourist staying in a Middle Eastern hotel of course.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Implicit theories can be generalized to cultural-based contexts. Using these theories in the area of hospitality industry and within foreign tourists coming from all over the world to Tehran is a good example since the results of this study is parallel with what has been explained in theory.

People of different nations can have various ideas about other countries and their people based on the stereotypes and prototypes in other words implicit perception that they might have. These implicit mindsets are shaped by the means of different events in one's life. It can be a reflection of media or a personal experience.

People may travel to anywhere to calm down their curiosity even if they feel that it is risky. They may recall their experiences as they really were or they may manipulate it because of good or bad experiences they had and based on how they expected it to be.

Tourist can feel the cultural diversity in living style of people in host country or even in this study the way they have been served in a hotel. They can feel that for example in Iran sanctions have had its impacts on the quality of services.

Almost all people who travel gain experience some in positive pleasant way and some in negative and dissatisfying one. How people grasp their experiences to be can have various reasons. Tourists may have a negative point of view about a destination but they might appreciate good hotel services at the same destination and vice versa.

Implications

The result of this study can aid hospitality industry of Iran and in a more focused way hospitality industry of Tehran to use it a improving services, hiring more professional and educated staff and ameliorating the quality of dinning sectors in the way that guests aim them to be.

It is also suggested that Iranian hoteliers read comments of travelers in online websites and get use of them in providing better condition in giving service to tourists.

Limitations of this study

In this study the same, as other studies there were some lacks and lags. Some minor things that may be happening in high season have not been considered in the questionnaire as it was mentioned in comments of guests in tripadvisor.com like lack of elevators in both hotels. One other vital thing that is very important especially for business travelers and those who are planning to stay for longer periods in hotels or backpacker that can load small amount of cloths is the laundry service of the hotel that we did not consider when constructing the questionnaire. There was a lack of time for the interview-based data collection therefore some important rating factors about hotel services or aspects were not determined among the questions.

Mini bar, Gym, Check-in and checkout processes also have not been considered.

Terms like 'OK' does not really have a rating meaning when interviewing it has been supposed as '3' in 5 likert-like scale questionnaire of this study which have meant some rate other than 3.

There were not varieties of nationalities as it was expected to be in high season, because normally tourists who were checking in the hotel came with groups that they were entirely from one country. But the best of effort have been made to interview people from different nationalities as possible. There are a lot of health tourists coming for medical procedures from Syria and Iraq that cannot speak English.

Future possible research area

Future possible research can be done more personality-based. It can be done in other touristic cities of Iran like Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz, Mashhad, Kerman, Yazd and Kish Island. The results can be compared to what has been gained in this study.

Other research that can be done is a focused study on most frequent nationalities that come to Iran, in that way there is a possibility of getting purer results to aiding hospitality industry.

There is also mighty to have a study over cultural tourists and business travelers to observe the deficiencies they might have suffered from of things that they like more to be improved.

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Appendix

Questionnaire for interviews

- Nationality.....
- Gender.....
- Age.....
- Date of interview

a. Where did you first get the idea to visit Iran?

- I already knew it
 - Internet
 - Media
 - Friends
 - Travel agency
 - Other.....
- At school or university
 - Relatives
 - Books and guides
 - Fairs/ exhibitions

b. Is this your first time visiting Iran?

- Yes
- No please specify how many times have you visited Iran before.....

c. When did you arrive?.....

d. How many nights are you planning to stay in Iran?

- 1 night
 - 3 nights
 - 5 nights
 - 1 week
 - 2 nights
 - 4 nights
 - 6 nights
 - Two week or more (please specify how long you are staying).....
- Is your trip only in Tehran or you are making a round-trip to other cities as well?

e. How do you travel?

- In group
- individual

f. Why have you planned to visit Iran?

- Rest and relaxation
- Business reasons
- Culture and history discovery
- Visiting relatives and friends
- Attending a conference, congress, seminar
- Fun

Sports and recreation Health
 Religious reasons Other.....

g. How did you plan your accommodation arrangements?

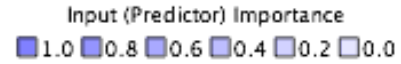
- I booked it directly from hotel.
- I used online booking website.
 Please specify the website.....
- Travel agency
- Someone I know in Iran did it for me.

5 Likert-like questions-Rate your ideas						
		Agreement Low high				
Rate your idea about Iran as a tourist destination.		1	2	3	4	5
a1	I think most people in my homeland have a positive opinion about this tourist destination.					
a2	Most people think Iran has a unique image.					
a3	I think most people consider Iran as a popular tourist destination.					
a4	Most people guess that Iran is not a risky tourist destination.					
Rate your idea about hotels in Iran						
b1	Most tourists have good impressions about hotels in Iran.					
b2	People consider Iranian hotels parallel to universal hospitality standards.					
b3	Most people normally use hospitality and tourism online websites.					
b4	People usually make their travel accommodation by reading comments in online booking websites.					
b5	People normally post their positive feedbacks about hotels in online websites.					
Rate your idea about current hotel services						
c1	The reservation in this hotel seems really easy for me.					
c2	The reservation department normally responds so fast.					
c3	I think this hotel is built based on universal hospitality					

	standards.					
c4	I find sleep quality very high.					
c5	I think pillows are proper for me.					
c6	I think beds are comfortable and convenient.					
c7	The rooms are spacious enough for me.					
c8	Rooms have everything I expect it should have.					
c9	The bathroom is well equipped I will say.					
c10	Most guests will enjoy the calm rooms in this hotel.					
C11	The conditioning system works perfectly.					
c12	The TV is always working.					
c13	There are enough TV channels.					
c14	TV channels are reasonable.					
c15	Wi-Fi is always working.					
c16	I think the front-desk employees are helpful.					
c17	Front desk staff will solve any problem I have.					
c18	I can say that the housekeeping is careful and efficient.					
c19	My room is always getting cleaned.					
c20	I have everything I may ask from house keeping.					
c21	I think the room service is efficient.					
c22	The restaurants and what they offer is suitable for me.					
c23	I like the breakfast buffet.					
c24	I enjoy the food quality in this hotel.					
c25	I like the cuisine that is being offered in this hotel.					
c26	I do not have any problem that alcoholic drink is not served in this hotel.					
c27	The location of this hotel interests a lot of guests.					
c28	The airport transportation is fare enough.					
c29	My total impression is good about this hotel.					

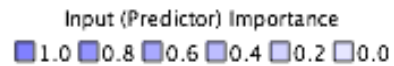
Cluster Analysis Tables

Clusters



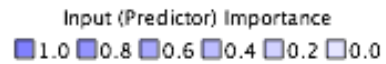
Cluster	4	2	5	3	1
Label					
Description					
Size	27.2% (53)	23.1% (45)	21.0% (41)	18.5% (36)	10.3% (20)
Inputs	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 3.84	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 4.03	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 3.12	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 4.41	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 2.90
	e round trip (100.0%)	e only tehran (100.0%)	e round trip (100.0%)	e round trip (100.0%)	e only tehran (100.0%)

Clusters



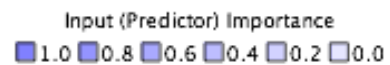
Cluster	4	2	3	5	1
Label					
Description					
Size	32.8% (64)	24.1% (47)	23.6% (46)	10.3% (20)	9.2% (18)
Inputs	travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.85	travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.81	travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.04	travelers_perception_about_Iran 1.81	travelers_perception_about_Iran 2.56
	e round trip (100.0%)	e only tehran (100.0%)	e round trip (100.0%)	e round trip (100.0%)	e only tehran (100.0%)

Clusters



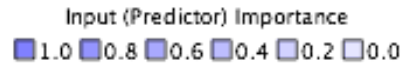
Cluster	3	2	1	4	5
Label					
Description					
Size	28.7% (56)	24.1% (47)	22.6% (44)	17.9% (35)	6.7% (13)
Inputs	travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.87	travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.89	travelers_perception_about_Iran 2.69	travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.01	travelers_perception_about_Iran 1.87
	f in group (100.0%)	f individual (100.0%)	f individual (100.0%)	f in group (100.0%)	f in group (100.0%)

Clusters



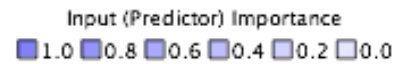
Cluster	2	4	1	3	5
Label					
Description					
Size	37.4% (73)	16.9% (33)	15.9% (31)	14.9% (29)	14.9% (29)
Inputs	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 4.05	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 3.69	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 3.18	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 4.45	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 2.94
	f in group (100.0%)	f individual (100.0%)	f in group (100.0%)	f individual (100.0%)	f individual (100.0%)

Clusters



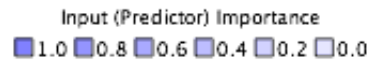
Cluster	1	5	2	3	4
Label					
Description					
Size	40.0% (78)	20.0% (39)	17.9% (35)	12.3% (24)	9.7% (19)
Inputs	g Culture and history discovery (100.0%)	g Business reasons (100.0%)	g Attending a conference, congress, seminar, exhibition (57.1%)	g Religious reasons (54.2%)	g Sports and recreation (57.9%)
	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 3.90	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 3.65	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 3.72	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 3.82	travelers_idea_about_current_hotel 3.25

Clusters



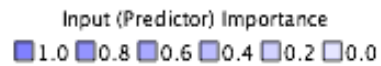
Cluster	5	4	3	2	1
Label					
Description					
Size	41.5% (81)	20.0% (39)	15.9% (31)	12.3% (24)	10.3% (20)
Inputs	g Culture and history discovery (96.3%)	g Business reasons (100.0%)	g Visiting relatives and friends (48.4%)	g Religious reasons (54.2%)	g Attending a conference, congress, seminar, exhibition (100.0%)
	travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.10	travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.38	travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.46	travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.52	travelers_perception_about_Iran 3.64

Clusters



Cluster	3	1	2	5	4
Label					
Description					
Size	35.4% (69)	25.6% (50)	17.4% (34)	16.9% (33)	4.6% (9)
Inputs	h Travel agency (100.0%)	h I used online booking website. (100.0%)	h I booked it directly from hotel. (100.0%)	h Someone I know in Iran did it for me. (100.0%)	h Travel agency (100.0%)
	travelers perception_about_ Iran 3.60	travelers perception_about_ Iran 3.18	travelers perception_about_ Iran 3.24	travelers perception_about_ Iran 3.45	travelers perception_about_ Iran 1.86

Clusters



Cluster	5	2	1	3	4
Label					
Description					
Size	40.0% (78)	17.4% (34)	16.9% (33)	13.8% (27)	11.8% (23)
Inputs	h Travel agency (100.0%)	h I booked it directly from hotel. (100.0%)	h Someone I know in Iran did it for me. (100.0%)	h I used online booking website. (100.0%)	h I used online booking website. (100.0%)
	travelers_idea_ about_current_hotel 3.77	travelers_idea_ about_current_hotel 3.73	travelers_idea_ about_current_hotel 3.79	travelers_idea_ about_current_hotel 4.14	travelers_idea_ about_current_hotel 3.12