



## THE EFFECT OF IMAGE AND BEHAVIORAL VARIABLES ON TOURIST LOYALTY IN JERUSALEM, PALESTINE



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### ABSTRACT

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International tourism in Palestine has been economically and culturally undesirable because it has been subject to political turmoil over the past decades, and its tourist arrivals have not fully capitalized on the potential that the region holds. This is compounded by the negative image that the media has developed about Palestine concerning instability as opposed to actual reality (stability, security and safety) and as such, it has become essential to disseminate the right image. The purpose of this study is to lay emphasis on the Palestinian tourism industry in light of the investigation about image and behavioral variables influencing tourist loyalty in Jerusalem. The current article presents analysis of an empirical study which is connected to destination image, tourist trust, Israel's risk and political stability with tourist loyalty in Jerusalem, Palestine. The results from a pilot study indicate that the entire measures achieved high-reliability coefficient that ranged from 0.897 to 0.955, based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient test; they all exceeded 0.70's benchmark with no significant deviation of skewness values from zero. It can be concluded from this study that the problem of perception may represent a challenge to many potential destinations like Jerusalem, and this may require significant investment in tourism promotion. The destination has to create awareness amongst potential visitors, and it must do so in an increasingly global tourism market.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This is one of few studies which have investigated the relationship between image, trust, emotion, Israel's risk, political stability and tourist loyalty in the context of returning tourists to Jerusalem, Palestine. The resulting framework provides a further understanding about factors affecting tourists' loyalty.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Palestine is a unique faith tourist destination – its long history, religious significance, and natural beauty make it an amazing place to visit (Isaac, Hall, & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2015). Palestine's importance derives partly from the fact that it is home to the three monotheistic and Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Reiter, Eordegian, & Khalaf, 2001). However, since the beginning of the twentieth century, Palestine has seen complicated changes in its political circumstances. These have included the creation of Israel in 1948 and the 1967 war (Beinin & Hajar, 2014). Consequently of the latter, Israel occupied the West bank including East Jerusalem and the Gaza

strip (Burton, 2017). These events have created catastrophic political, economic and social facts that have deeply affected the life of the Palestinian people, many of whom became refugees dislocated to neighboring states and indeed the world as a Palestinian diaspora (Timothy., 2018). In many ways, Palestine itself has simply wiped off the map, historic Palestine coming to be known as Israel. In this context, tourism became a political tool in the supremacy and domination of the Israel establishment over land and people, and an instrument for preventing the Palestinians from enjoying the benefits of the fruits of the cultural and human interaction on which tourism thrives (Rami, 2010).

Israel as a destination offers several religious and historical sites, such as beach resorts, archaeological tourism, heritage tourism, ecotourism and museums that attract visitors (Karl, Winder, & Bauer, 2017). Tourism planning in Israel started from the beginning of 1970s on a national scale (Apostolopoulos, Leontidou, & Loukissas, 2014). The Israeli presence in the Middle East beset by political instability leads to another strategy like alliance with another country to enhance and increase tourist arrival and decrease the risk of political issue (Isaac, 2019). Various Israeli hotel chains have been collaborating with international partner hotels by using global brands to enhance their hotel performance and to keep up with changes based on global service (Ghaith, Mutia, Ahmad, Enas, & Abdul Malek, 2018).

Despite the fact that Israel signed the Oslo Agreements with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the 1990s and recognized the establishment of the Palestinian Authority to administer some of the Palestinian territories, namely the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, many years of life in those areas are still under Israeli control (Kaunert & Wertman, 2019). For example, Israel controls all access to Palestine (land and sea borders as well as access from the airport), most of the Palestinian water resources, and all movement of people and goods from, to and within Palestine. These facts have significant impacts on the development of tourism in the Palestinian territories and the dissemination of information. Jerusalem – the heart of tourism in the region – has been illegally annexed to Israel, filled with illegal settlements, besieged, surrounded by checkpoints, and encircled by the Apartheid Wall, Isaac and Eid (2019) all of which has resulted in the city's distancing from its social and geographical surroundings.

However, the turbulent situation in Jerusalem occasioned by Israeli-Palestinian crisis put euphoria in the mindset of tourists visiting the country (Peretz., 2019). To allay feelings of despair among tourists who think that the conflict will be a barrier to explore the sites in the country, this article will throw up debates and likely issues to be resolved. Indeed, the conflict over Palestine is one of the most complicated dilemmas the international community has faced and this revelation is an effort to show readers that, in spite of all the complexities, "feelings of confusion and helplessness" should not predominate. Israeli-Palestinian conflict is fundamentally embedded in history and the differing interpretations of that history by the principal actors (Loureiro & González, 2008).

There are few regions where tourism has come as fraught especially the Middle East. In these areas, tourism has been inseparable from broader issues of self-determination, occupation, openness, power, representation, terrorism, transparency, mobility and, of course, peace (Aidanazima, 2015). Arguably the location in which these concerns have been brought into sharpest focus is Palestine-Israel. A state in which mobility is potentially one of the most constrained in the world, yet is simultaneously an extremely attractive destination not only for pilgrimage, for which it is most recognized, but a range of other tourism activities as well. To further complicate any study of tourism in Palestine-Israel, the politics of the region are also deeply enmeshed with its study (Peretz, 2019). To pretend otherwise would be naive. Yet, despite what some readers may perceive, the intent of this work does not alien with the controversial political space of Palestine-Israel. Instead, the aim of this article is to bring together a number of different Palestinian tourism focused based on the identified variables from the literatures to allow greater discussion and insight into the past, current and future role of tourism in Jerusalem (Albayrak et al., 2018; Isaac, 2019; Shtudiner, Klein, & Kantor, 2018; Vanden Boer, 2016). This is regarded as an essential first step to better understand not only the possibilities that exist in Jerusalem tourism development but also the implications

of different positions that exist with respect to policy formulation and marketing strategies in the country and the wider region, especially in relations with Israel and other countries and the determination of Palestinian sovereignty (Tatlock, 2017). This article does not include Israeli voices with respect to Palestine or, just as significantly in some instances, Egyptian, Jordanian and those of international institutions (Kazemi & Mostafa, 2014; Mohammad & Alhamadani, 2011). Hopefully, these voices, along with those of Palestinians, will be assembled in a future study as part of a broader discussion as to the role of tourism in the sustainable development and promotion of the region and how tourist's mobility can be better encouraged and enabled as part of community-based tourism strategies (Razak, Palilati, Hajar, & Madjid, 2016).

## 2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DESTINATION IMAGE AND LOYALTY

Image has been deemed as a crucial factor determining overall organization and corporate success (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012; Kandampully & Hu, 2007). This assertion is based on the fact that the destination area image lies in the mind of the customers and forms the benchmark which customers use to judge the reliability of the service providers (Bravo, Montaner, & Pina, 2009; Nguyen, 2006). Even though image has been regarded as an important asset which area can possess, however, a globally definition of it does not exist (Pina, Martinez, de Chernatony, & Drury, 2006).

The diverse view of image considers it from two perspectives of organization and marketing literature (Keisidou, Sarigiannidis, Maditinos, & Thalassinou, 2013). From the perspective of organization, image is considered as the way employees of the destination area would want external tourists to perceive their company. On the other hand, the suggestion of marketing literature regards image as the feelings of all the customers and other external stakeholders with respect to their attitudes and beliefs towards it (Pina et al., 2006). Importantly, this concept has been widely used to explain the way tourists feel about Jerusalem, the services and products which the destination offers and its reputation which can generate value (Fathollahzadeh, Hashemi, & Kahreh, 2011).

Currently, scholars consider a main link amongst destination image, tourists satisfaction, and tourists loyalty had become a vital part of sustainable tourism (Oliver, 1999). Numerous researchers have tried to determine if loyalty response is related with the element of destination image and tourist satisfaction (Agyeiwaah, Adongo, Dimache, & Wondirad, 2016; Chiu, Zeng, & Cheng, 2016; Le Chi, 2016). Oliver (1999) declared that satisfaction and the destination image is a essential phase in loyalty creation. In the scenario of the study, tourist satisfaction and destination image have a positive influence on tourist loyalty (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993). Therefore, tourist satisfaction and destination image influence tourist loyalty in numerous sectors, such as services (Fornell, 1992; Ghaith, Zukime, & Safizal, 2016).

## 3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST AND LOYALTY

Moving on to trust, it refers to the level of confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity, and is displayed via relational qualities of consistency, competency, honesty and benevolence (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). highlighted the importance of trust in the relationship between customer and service provider being the core of any relational exchange. The trust concept works to minimize the uncertainty and vulnerability of the customer in highly intangible service cases. In this regard, the loyalty of the customer to the firm is deemed to be higher if the customer trusts the firm and is convinced of its capability of responding and meeting his needs (Elena & Jose, 2001; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002).

Loyalty is the result of trust (Loureiro & González, 2008; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Consequently, huge degrees of trust toward destination service providers should positively impact the tourist's commitment to tourism destinations as demonstrated by behaviors which support that destinations. Kim and Cha (2002) employed satisfaction and trust as indicators of hospitality based relationship quality, and their results suggested that relationship quality has impacted on both repurchase behavior as well as word of mouth communication. A

customer who believes that a service company is capable to meet her expectation today, and in the future, is more probably to return to the service company (Berry, 1995; Ghaith et al., 2016; Oh, 2002; Walsh, Hennig-Thurau, Sassenberg, & Bornemann, 2010). Chi (2012) has stated that the antecedent of trust to tourist loyalty requires examination plus general satisfaction.

Some other studies cover the aspects of trust, destination loyalty and intention to revisit. For example, a study was conducted in Malaysia on Malaysian rural tourism in 2013. This study concluded that trust has a positive significant impact on consumer loyalty (Osman, 2013a). Besides, a study conducted in Gonbad-e-Kavoos during the Turkmen handicraft's festival revealed that trust directly affects destination loyalty towards the festival (Akhoondnejad, 2016).

#### **4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTION AND LOYALTY**

In the field of retail, the emotional states of customers were found to positively affect the amounts of money they expended in stores, their liking of the stores, and the amount of stuff they buy (Sherman, Mathur, & Smith, 1997a). In hospitality field, an important association was found among fifteen types of emotions and behavioral loyalty of consumers that attended a hospitality event (Pullman & Gross, 2004). Similarly, an important association was found between emotions and loyalty by Bloemer and De Ruyter (1999) in the context of a hotel. The authors specifically evidenced that emotions strengthen the motivation of customers for a revisit and their inclination towards recommending the brand to some others (Barsky & Nash, 2002). Emotions were found to play a significant role in the process of decision making pertaining to loyalty (Ghaith et al., 2018).

In a related study, Le Chi (2016); Lee, Back, and Kim (2009) explained that people are continuous in their attempt to attain positive mood and prevent negative mood conditions indicating that they will evade service situations where they could experience a negative mood. This similarly indicates that if a customer experiences a positive effect in an eatery, he will be inclined to repeat the experience and in turn, to become a loyal customer (De Ruyter & Bloemer, 1999). A high correlation was suggested by Yu and Dean (2001) among over all customer loyalty as well as emotional components and positive emotion. In fact, according to some researchers, emotions affect the approach/avoidance behaviors of shoppers (Robert & John, 1982) their inclination to purchase (Baker, Levy, & Grewal, 1992) and the present period purchase behavior (Robert & John, 1982).

#### **5. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED RISK AND LOYALTY**

Perceived risk includes ambiguity as well as adverse consequences to buy a service (Dowling & Staelin, 1994). There are numerous kinds of risks which include performance, financial, time, psychological and social risks. Performance risk signifies the loss incurred once a service does not perform as anticipated (Horton, 1976). Mitchell (1998) considered that performance risk could be viewed as a surrogate for general risk, that comprises a mixture of the entire other losses. This research is concerned with performance risk as customers are usually concerned with the performance of a service, that is characterized by intangibility and heterogeneity.

The degree of risk linked to the purchase of goods or services have similarly been associated to the developments of consumer loyalty (Lai-Ming, 2012). Accordingly, customers would stick with product/service which they recognize and are contented with, so as to diminish incurring needless risk (Currás-Pérez, Ruiz-Mafé, & Sanz-Blas, 2013). Therefore, if risk is viewed to be small enough in stimulating an initial buying, loyalty starts to grow as more purchase continues to content the customer's wants further diminishing risks (Bennett, Härtel, & McColl-Kennedy, 2005; Flavián & Guinalú, 2006). Empirical evidences prove that experiential information gained from continuing consumptions reinforce additional purchase behavior (i.e., a positive feedback loop). In other words, as perceived risk reduces customer's loyalty increases.

## 6. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL STABILITY AND LOYALTY

Governments are counseled to cultivate a steady political climate to entice tourists. Ghaderi, Saboori, and Khoshkam (2017) state that security and safety issues directly influence the choice of holiday destinations by tourists; tourism establishments in these nations must not take the security issue for granted. Initiatives must be focused to create and promote crime free, safe and secure destination. In previous research, Ali, Arifin, and Hasi (2012) suggested that “the Arab Spring” of 2011 increased tourists arrivals in Arab nations viewed to be politically steady.

Political uncertainty is typically known as a situation in which political legitimacy, social order and governance are tested, according to Ryu (2005) working definition. A political system is supposed to adapt to those tests so as to become steady again. When forces for changes are not satisfied in a political system, the usage of non legitimate activities like unauthorised protest, violence, or even a (civil) war occurred, so as to initiate changes. The political system then becomes unstable. Ghaith et al. (2016) argued that it is not the kind of government, but its steadiness that allows sustainable economic development. The concept that stable political situations are favourably related with economic developments is not a new idea (Ghaith et al., 2016). But, there is a slight agreement on how precisely such situations impact the promotion of economic development. The political steadiness appreciated by the administration is not startling.

## 7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research is adopted in this work as it is deemed to be the most appropriate approach to fulfill the objectives. The method encapsulates a system of inquiry classification through the relationship of variables that can be summarized and presented in numerical form and generalized to the population at large (Bryman, 2017). In a quantitative type of study, the participants and the outcomes are easily understood and related to the examined subject matter (Hair & Lukas, 2014). The present study made use of a descriptive measurement approach and a survey questionnaire. The proposed framework adds to existing theories on relationship marketing by empirically examining the relationship among its derived components relationship quality (image, trust, emotion, and Israel risk), political stability, and loyalty applied to international tourists in Jerusalem. A survey questionnaire was developed as an instrument of data collection. Accordingly, the questionnaire items were carefully formulated to avoid duplicity in view of the represented dimensions in measuring constructs contained in the research model. The questionnaire items, which were measured on five-point Likert scale, were adopted and adapted from previous studies to suit the objectives of study, as suggested by Zikmund, Carr, and Griffin (2013) see Table 1

Table-1. Measuring instruments.

No.	Variable	No. of items	Source
1	Tourist Loyalty Scale Items	6	Nguyen (2015); Yan (2015)
2	Political Stability Scale Items	7	Nguyen (2015); Yan (2015)
3	Destination Image Scale Items	8	Februadi (2014)
4	Trust Scale Items	8	Ghaith. et al. (2018)
5	Emotion Scale Items (positive) & (Negative)	6	Kasnakoglu, Yilmaz, and Varnali (2016)
6	Israel's Risk Scale Items	7	Selamat and Ibrahim (2018)

## 8. PILOT STUDY

It is important to conduct a pilot study as it works on highlighting the weaknesses of the instrument design prior to the commitment of considerable time and resources to the large-scale actual study (Doody & Doody, 2015; Fraser, Fahlman, Arscott, & Guillot, 2018). More importantly, the major reasons behind conducting a pilot study are to confirm the validity and reliability of the questionnaire items, to assess the adequacy level of the wording of items, to phrase statements and construct questions for the purpose of obtaining accurate results, to evaluate if the

questions are framed to gain better response, and to determine if the respondents are capable of supplying the required data. The questionnaire validity refers to the level to which it measures what it is meant to measure, while its reliability is the level to which the questionnaire is error-free and the results are consistent and stable throughout time and in different contexts. In this study, 150 questionnaires were distributed to tourists who visited Jerusalem, as suggested by [Malhotra, Peterson, and Kleiser \(1999\)](#) to avoid lower rate of response. A total of 100 questionnaires were retrieved and further analyzed.

## 9. RESULTS

There are different tests to examine reliability, with the common one being the internal consistency reliability test ([Maiyaki & Mokhtar, 2010](#)). It represents the level to which items of a specific construct converge and are individually capable of measuring the same construct, while at the same time, it determines if there is a correlation among the items. Therefore, as recommended by [Sekaran and Bougie \(2016\)](#) internal consistency reliability test by Cronbach's alpha coefficient was conducted.

[Table 2](#) presents the results and indicates that the entire measures achieved high-reliability coefficient that ranged from 0.897 to 0.955. Based on the statements of research gurus, a reliability coefficient of 0.60 is deemed to be the average reliability coefficient, with 0.70 and above representing high reliability ([Hair & Lukas, 2014](#); [Sekaran & Bougie, 2016](#)). The tourist loyalty reliability coefficients exceeded 0.70, confirming that they are reliable. After the inclusion of seven political stability items, its reliability exceeded the acceptable value at 0.9. The value for destination image was 0.96, while tourist trust was at 0.93. This held true for emotion as well, at 0.9 and Israel's risk with 7 items scored 0.95.

**Table-2.** Summary of pilot test's reliability results.

No.	Construct	Cronbach's alpha
1	Tourist Loyalty	0.920
2	Political Stability	0.897
3	Destination Image	0.955
4	Tourist Trust	0.928
5	Emotion	0.899
6	Israel's Risk	0.949

## 10. EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

The questionnaire validity was checked through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and the total number of items is 42, divided among six constructs. The results for loading factors are presented in [Table 3](#). The matrix shows that all items were loaded above the benchmark level of 0.7. Hence all items were retained for further data collection.

## 11. CONCLUSION

This work primarily focused on conducting a pilot study to test the validity and reliability of the developed instruments in preparation for the actual large-scale study. In this regard, the managerial implications of the variables under examination are expected to be determined following the actual study. The content and face validity were carried out, which led to the tweaking and modification of several items. The study also conducted an inter-item reliability test, which indicated the reliability of all the items based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient test (they all exceeded 0.70 benchmark), and as a result all items were kept. The study also conducted a normality test with the help of skewness and kurtosis values, which indicated that data had a reasonable level of normality, with no significant deviation of skewness values from zero.

Table-3. Factor loadings.

	Factor					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
DI4	0.920					
DI1	0.906					
DI5	0.879					
DI8	0.871					
DI7	0.869					
DI3	0.851					
DI6	0.818					
DI2	0.721					
Risk4		0.887				
Risk1		0.881				
Risk7		0.872				
Risk3		0.858				
Risk2		0.855				
Risk5		0.827				
Risk6		0.798				
Trust6			0.877			
Trust4			0.853			
Trust5			0.852			
Trust8			0.797			
Trust7			0.765			
Trust1			0.727			
Trust3			0.714			
Trust2			0.712			
PS3				0.972		
PS5				0.842		
PS4				0.803		
PS6				0.759		
PS1				0.757		
PS2				0.743		
TI6					0.813	
TI4					0.798	
TI2					0.744	
TI7					0.732	
TI5					0.730	
TI3					0.715	
TI1					0.702	
Emotion5						0.860
Emotion6						0.806
Emotion4						0.759
Emotion2						0.759
Emotion1						0.741
Emotion3						0.714

Note: Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

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