

## Investigating the Effective Factors of Attracting Foreign Tourists (Case Study: Isfahan City)

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study investigating the affecting factors of attracting foreign tourists. This study is an applied research regarding the purpose and is a survey based and descriptive study regarding the method of execution. The sample of this study is foreign tourists that came to city of Isfahan during a period of time in autumn and winter of 1392 that were selected using simple random sampling. Required data for this study is collected by a questionnaire designed by researcher from 84 samples. The validity of this 35 question questionnaire were acknowledged by supervisor and advisor professors. Also, the reliability of this questionnaire were supported by Cronbach's Alpha of more than %70. Study questionnaire includes demographic questions and main questions for testing hypotheses. Collected data were analysed by statistical tests using AMOS and SPSS software in two levels including descriptive tests: frequency, percent cumulative percentage, mean and standard deviation and perceptive tests for testing hypotheses and identification the relationships between variables including t-test. Also the relationships between variables were tested by Pearson correlation test. According to study findings all of hypotheses except the hypotheses that investigate the impact of advertising and tranquility and security on tourist attraction were supported. Therefore, according to the results, destination brand, quality of facilities and hospitality services, tourism costs and tourism appeals are effective to attract tourists.

**Keywords:** Tourism Industry, Foreign Tourists, Tourism Marketing, Isfahan City.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is the most important activity of contemporary human being which along with creating massive changes in the face of earth, has transformed political, economic, cultural and the way of human lives. In addition tourism has created fundamental changes in the economic, cultural conditions and people's rituals (Mahalati, 2001). Many countries consider this dynamic industry as a main resource of revenue, employment, growth of private section and development of infrastructure and always tourism is an important factor for economic development (Ebrahimi, Khosravian, 2005). Experts predict that in 2020 this industry will become most profitable industry in the world, so that they call it invisible industry which is economic center of cities (Movahed, 2001). One of important characteristics of this industry is existence of heavy competition for capturing tourists. Competition in such an atmosphere with presence of international big companies is representing this point that to be successful in this intense competition, mere investment on infrastructures would not work, but also along with that other success factors such as marketing should be considered. Iran as one of ten countries in terms of tourism attractions has an economy which is dependable on oil and one of contexts of diversification of Iran's revenue sources is development of non-oil revenues which in the meantime tourism industry is very important. Despite Iran's abilities of tourism, unfortunately, so far Iran couldn't achieve to a competence position in this industry. Therefore it is necessary that Iran uses its abilities toward developing tourism. One of factors can develop and improve tourism industry, effective applying tools and parameters of marketing and advertising (Sardi Mahakan, 2001). Here tourism marketing is very important; because if we know marketing as a managerial process, all of activities such as planning, providing tourism products and tourists attraction will require marketing activities and operations (Pander, 1999). Weakness of marketing in *Iran Cultural Heritage, Handcrafts and Tourism Organization is the main factor of Iran's lag in this growing industry in the world. Tourism marketing as a science follows specific principles which following these principles is necessary for trading success and increasing market share in tourism market.*

## 2. Study theoretical framework (Study Background And Hypotheses)

### 2-1- concept and definition of tourism

*Tourism facilitated the move from industry to modernity and postmodernism in social, economic and cultural arenas and practically in all cases caused deconstruction. There are several definitions of tourism which in the following we refer to some of them. Some scholars view tourism as sum of phenomena in communications due to mutual action between tourists, capital, governments, host communities, universities and non-government organizations in process of attraction, transportation, hospitality and control of tourists and other visitors (Papli Yazdi and Saghaei, 2006). Mill and Morrison (1992) also define tourism as a set of activities which happen during a traveler's journey. This process involve any activity such as journey planning, journey to destination, inhabitancy, returning and even reminding that. Further, tourism involves activities that a tourist do as a part of journey such as buying different goods, interaction with host and guest and etc.*

### 2-2- Marketing in tourism industry

Because of the nature of tourism, it is relative difficult to present a comprehensive definition of marketing. Since changes in marketing, predicting the future conditions of markets is very difficult and it depends on many factors such as economic, social and political conditions. Therefore, tourism marketing can be defined an interactive process between suppliers and consumers (tourists) during which tourism products and services are exchanged in an environment which is specified for this study. This process may start from the step of creating

motivation and continue to return step. Marketing is very necessary for continuity of tourism survival (Clarck, 1995). Thus, formulating marketing strategic plans can effectively help achieving to regarded goals. Tourism marketing because of its service nature is very sensitive. Intangibility, instability, heterogeneity, inseparability and lack of ownership are the characteristics of service industry which in the process of planning for marketing reveals the necessity of using a marketing compound model (Heidari, 2008).

### **2-3- effective factors on tourist attraction**

That creates appeal for people towards a city destination are tourism resources. The main core of visits are attractions, but in the meantime, it involves other services and facilities which exist based on tourist's taste and placed in the destination for his/her reception during habitation (Hatami Nejad, 2008). Based on what is said, due to some shortages we investigate advertising, destination brand (tourism brand) and other effective factors on tourism attraction.

#### **2-3-1- Advertising**

The main perspective about advertising activities in tourism industry is that this kind of advertising is not costly but is kind of fundamental and material investment for proceeding national and organizational objectives and in case of correct execution it can bring valuable achievements in different dimensions of tourism industry. In this regard, the objective and function of advertising is increasing "marketing and promotion" and any ignoring and misuse of this tool not only cause failure but it leads to lagging behind competitions and proceedings of tourism marketing and finally failure and bankruptcy in correct marketing world in international arenas (Ibrahimi et al., 2010). Tourism advertising tools which can be used in this context are: book of knowing country (city or region), video tape of country's attractions, brochure communication of Iran traveling or province traveling guidance, internet website and tourism communication email, radio, poster, TV, press, marketing, direct mail, database and tourism communication and exhibitions. Therefore, it is obvious that in today's world, marketing and advertising attempts are more important than production and sales, thus, if each city or country has many tourism facilities and attractions, but it would not be successful if it doesn't place methods of introducing these attractions, abilities and offering it to buyer's market (tourists) in its macro plan. Therefore, investigating effective advertising methods in marketing for attraction tourists is necessary. So, it should be noted that development of tourism and advertising in a given process, have close ties with each other; because tourism industry in developing process is a part of economic production structure which can has a fundamental and important in developing production, revenue and creating employment in countries (Tale Masoule, 2002).

#### **2-3-2- Tourism brand (destination brand)**

In contrast with numerous studies investigating product brand (and less on service brand), investigation on destination brands is in its infancy era (Kay, 2002). On the other hand, despite destination branding faced many developments in recent years and it was one of new areas of research, but a part of discussing issue was argued under substitution label as studies in mental image of destination and was the topic of study for more than 30 years (Koneknik, 2002). Aaker (1991) suggested a model for evaluating product brands from customers' perspective which contains dimensions such as brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality and brand loyalty. Except numerous research done in the brand image context, other

dimensions of brand equity rarely investigated from tourists' perspective for destinations. Regarding past research results such as Yu and Donto, brand equity from consumer's perspective involves dimensions such as awareness, mental image, quality and loyalty (Koneknik, 2002). In the following we will explain each of these dimensions.

### **2-3-2-1- Brand destination awareness**

The objective of destination marketing is increasing awareness of destination through awareness of creating a unique brand. Aaker defines brand awareness as a potential buyer's power to review and recognition which places brand in a unique class of products. Aaker introduced several levels for brand awareness which start from brand recognition to finish at dominant brand. Dominant brand is called conditions that a brand is only a name in consumer's mind at that class of product which is reviewed. In this study, brand awareness means the potential tourist's ability of recognition and remembrance about destination (tourism) brand of Isfahan city as a destination brand (Jago et al., 2003).

### **2-3-2-2- Destination brand image**

Brand image is based on a perceptive definition which is reflected by brand associations in consumer's mind. Brand image should not be necessary objective or representing reality. From brand image perspective, reality per se has less importance than perception of reality. Mental perceptions can be appeared superficially; this item get more power in services because consumers can put their perceptions on an experience which inherently is intangible and it is not standardized. Therefore, a tourist can have more unfavorable perception and image of that park rather than when it is sunny or less crowded. In short, most of the time brand image of a service can be mental phenomenon (Woodward, 2000).

### **2-4-2-3- perceived quality**

Perceived quality is competitive necessity and today most companies have moved toward customer oriented quality as a strategic weapon (Atilgan et al., 2005). By studying the past research on development of destinations, it can be seen that only few limited research have investigated perceived quality issue (Murphy, Pritchard and Smith, 2000). Overall tourists' evaluation of a destination in fact encompasses a compound of products, services and experiences. Since, tourism or destination product is service product, quality level is used for measuring perceived quality. Parasuraman (1988) introduced five wide dimension of service quality through psychometric test and investigating shared traits and characteristics of service quality:

- Tangibles (physical and tangible environment,
- reliability,
- Responsiveness and assistance to customers,
- Assurance and
- empathy.

### **2-3-2-4- brand destination loyalty**

Although the concept of loyalty in general marketing literature has been widely investigated, but brand loyalty in the context of destinations was rarely studied. It should be noted that loyalty cause destination sustainability is increased. Benefits of brand loyalty for destination can be less marketing costs, increased vulnerability of journey trade and repeat of word of mouth advertising. In this sense, Gastelson and Crompton in their study referred to five factor which have led to return to destination which was visited before:

- Reduction of experiential risk which doesn't meet satisfaction
- Awareness of that they meet people like them in that destination
- Emotional dependency
- An opportunity for visit aspects of destination that they have not experienced.
- Showing to others that their previous experience was satisfactory (Pike, 2004).

#### **2-4- Tourism attractions**

Each motivational phenomenon or factor in a region of destination which creates appeal and leads to people visiting of different parts of destination is called attraction. For a place or monument to be a tourism attraction, existence of characteristics such as visual value, historical background, credibility, recreational and sport value, religious, artistic, and etc. and finally as most important factor in order to minimum of tourism demand (internal, external and local) is necessary. In fact attraction is a something that besides absolute values has been noticed by tourists in current situation. It should be considered that each monument or place potentially should have potential of attraction and in the meantime conditions potentiality should be provided by special preparedness. Therefore, different sources presented different classifications of tourism attractions from different perspective (Ebrahimi et al., 2010).

#### **2-5- Tourism Costs**

Tourism costs is one of economic tourism dimensions and regarding its impacts, studying and investigation about this topic is necessary. In many countries, costs of tourism help economic developing and advancing. Investigating credible resources and documents in tourism areas referring that one of important approaches toward tourism is economic approach. Since tourism in national and local economy is important, economists study this economic part carefully; because the most important reason of developing tourism in most countries is benefiting from economic benefits of it. During 1970s negative circumstances of tourism activity had been noticed; but the fact is that today the importance of economic, social and cultural tourism and its effect on hosting community and also in all of region is obvious.

According to an investigation from global organization of tourism, the most important classification of tourism costs in seven classes involves types of planned tourism journeys, journey packages, holidays package and tour package; residence, food and drinks; transportation, recreation, culture and athletic activities; purchasing and other costs (Heydari Chiane, 2008).

#### **2-6- Security**

Security and tourism are parameters of one equation which have a direct relationship with each other. In other words, as one of important factors of tourism development is security, prosperity of tourism in a region and commuting of tourists in a destination also make creating security. Of course, we should not forget that this proposition is not right always, because in some cases existing tourism phenomenon and tourists commuting caused insecurity. Despite this, tourism industry and security keep close ties and we can say development of tourism industry depends on security. Generally, security is one conditions that is accepted for developing regions (Aghasi et al., 2009).

#### **2-7- Tourism facilities and services**

Piers (1981) views tourism facilities and services involving residencies, facilities and supporting services (e.g. Journey service offices, banking services, recreational services, buying, insurance etc.). Bowerd Boy and Loveson (1998) divide tourism facilities and services in two following sections:

Basic or general facilities and services: these facilities and services don't just belong to recreational sites, but also they are across tourism paths, cities and strategic transit location. Basic tourism facilities and services are classified in five sections such as shelters, units offering food and drinks, supportive services and technical infrastructures, recreational, cultural and sport facilities and services and other facilities and services such as: shopping centers, beauty and health services, automotive services, journey services, banking services and housing services.

Specific facilities and services: which are determined regarding their own locations. These facilities use site resources and environment for specific activities which determining the nature of recreational sites or recreational span. Costal mountainous locations, mineral water and places to spend holydays or out of city parks are instances of centers in which these kind of facilities are developed. According to Venhof (2005), basic element of tourism facilities, is shelter section. Success of tourism depends on accessibility of shelters in adequate quantity and quality which fit visitors' demand who enter destination. The other mix of tourism facilities is food and drinks services. This section plus shelter section, encompass more than 40% of tourism expenses. A wide range of other facilities including shops, health and hygiene services, pharmacies, banks, barbershops, theaters, cinemas, parking, recreational and sport services and etc. which in addition to residents they encompass offering services to tourists (Venhof, 2005).

### **3.Hypotheses development**

#### **3-1- main hypothesis**

There are effective factors for attracting foreign tourists in Isfahan city.

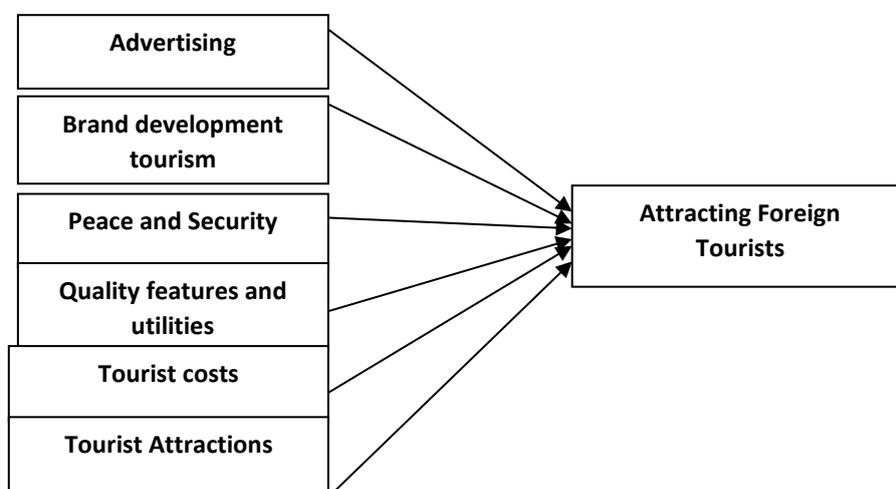
#### **3-2- sub- hypotheses**

- 1- Advertising and communication are effective factors on foreign tourists attraction in Isfahan city.
- 2- Destination brand is one of very effective factors on foreign tourists attraction in Isfahan city.
- 3- Security and tranquility are very effective factors on foreign tourists attraction in Isfahan city.
- 4- Quality of welfare facilities and services are very effective factors on foreign tourists attraction in Isfahan city.
- 5- Tourism costs are very effective factors on foreign tourists attraction in Isfahan city.
- 6- Tourism attractions are very effective factors on foreign tourists attraction in Isfahan city.

### **4.Study conceptual model**

Model is relationship between theoretical design and the job of data collection and analyzing of information. In social science models include symbols and signals that is characteristics of some of empirical phenomenon (including components and their relationships) relate reasonably through concepts related to each other. Therefore, model reflects fact and figures out given aspects of real world that related to the investigated problem. Model shed light on mentioned aspects and eventually makes empirical test of theory possible regarding the nature of these relationships. After testing model, better understanding of some parts of real world is achieved. In summary, model is a set that consists of concepts, hypotheses and measures which facilitates selection and collection of required information to test the hypotheses. In order to make an analytic model, researcher finally can act in two ways which there is no significant difference between them: either begins with setting hypotheses and

then works on concepts or goes through a reverse way (Ghasemi, 2010). Therefore, regarding the above reasoning, defined hypotheses, professors' and experts' point of view in the context of management and marketing and also according to the theoretical basics, model has been designed and established as follows:



## 5. Methodology

This study regarding the methodology is descriptive survey. Also from the purpose point of view, this study is an applied- scientific research and regarding the nature, it is type of correlation. In this kind of research the relationship between variables is analysed based on study objectives. Also, in this study existence or non-existence of relationship or correlation, magnitude and type of relationship between independent variables and dependent variables are tested. Since this study uses library method, review of related texts and also survey based method like questionnaire and its objective recognizing society people characteristics, preferences and behavior through referring to them, we can say that this study regarding the nature of methodology is a field research. The sample of this study is Foreign tourists in Esfahan. Due to Unlimited size of study's sample, 84 samples including males and females were selected using simple random sampling method. For identifying the sample size a primary study with 30 samples carried out. By calculating standard deviation and putting this value in the Cochran's limited sample size formula the appropriate sample size was achieved.  $n$ : desired sample size,  $\alpha$ : level of significance (5%),  $d$ : standard error (5%),  $\sigma^2$ : variance of statistical sample and  $N$  size of sample. After estimation of standard deviation primary sample calculated as follows:

$$n \geq \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 \sigma^2}{d^2}$$

$$n \geq \frac{(1.96^2) \times (0.467^2)}{(0.10^2)} = 83.781 \approx 84$$

From 84 distributed questionnaires 74 were back (return rate= 87%).

## 6. Data-collection method

In order to collect the research data for testing the research hypotheses, a questionnaire has been used with 38 items. 4 questions of this questionnaire refer to the demographic variables including gender, age, job situation, educational levels, and job experiences and the remaining 34 questions refer to the research variables. About 84 questionnaires have been distributed among respondents that 77 of them were submitted by respondents. Unfortunately, 10 questionnaires were not indicated completely by respondents and so 74 questionnaires were used in final analysis.

### 7. Reliability and validity of the questionnaire

Although the questionnaire has been standardized by its developer, but it is better to examine its reliability and validity. This is why that reliability and validity of this questionnaire has been examined and its results have been indicated in the following section.

#### 7-1. Validity of the questionnaire

Validity refers to this fact the data-collection instrument can measure the research variables. The importance of validity is that the insufficient and inappropriate instrument can make the research and its finding unusable and invalid. Validity of every data-collection instrument can be measured and determined by any expert in that field. In order to this, the academic experts and professors were asked to review the questionnaire and indicate their modifications and corrections.

#### 7-2. Reliability of the questionnaire

When a data-collection instrument is reliable that there is a powerful correlation between scores and observation and actual scores. In order to examine reliability of this questionnaire, Cronbachs' Alpha Coefficient has been used in this study. In order to this, 30 questions of 30 primary questionnaires have been entreated to the SPSS and then its coefficient was calculated that is 0.87. These findings have been indicated in table 1.

**Table 1: scale, frequency of the questions, and Cronbachs' Alpha coefficient of the questions**

Variables	Scale type	Number of questions	Cronbachs' Alpha coefficient
Advertising	Likert five-point	5	0.70
Peace and Security	Likert five-point	4	0.88
Quality features and utilities	Likert five-point	4	0.87
Tourist Attractions	Likert five-point	10	0.85
Tourist costs	Likert five-point	5	0.77
Tourism Brand	Likert five-point	7	0.72
Total	Likert five-point	35	0.92

### 8. Findings

Before testing hypotheses, mean, standard deviation and variance of study variables should be considered (table 2).

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics for study variables**

variable	Number	Variance	Standard deviation	Average
Advertising	1-5	.484	.69552	2.6139
Peace and Security	6-9	1.251	1.11827	2.5347
Quality features and utilities	10-13	.983	.99136	2.8056
Tourist Attractions	14-23	.502	.70856	2.8069
Tourist costs	24-28	.837	.91498	3
Tourism Brand	29-35	.280	.52875	4.1329

### 8.1. Measuring model

In the model of structural equations it is required to test two models. First model includes measuring models for each latent variable. Measuring model represents factor weights of observed variables (factor) for each latent variable. Common goodness of fit indices in measuring models for 6 study latent variables are representing in following table. As observed, main goodness of fit indices of all of latent variables are in the acceptable range.

**Table3. Goodness of fit indices for latent variables measuring models**

fit indices	Index	Basic model
	NPAR	20
	DF	1
	P greater than (/0/05)	087.
absolute	CMIN (Chi Square)	2.924
	AGFI greater than (0/9)	893.
	GFI greater than (0/9)	995.
Comparative or relative	TLI greater than (0/9)	959.
	NFI greater than (0/9)	996
	CFI greater than (0/9)	997.
thrifty	PNFI greater than(0/5)	066.
	PCFI greater than(0/5)	066.
	RMSEA) smaller than(0/08)	080.
	CMIN/DF smaller than(0/5)	2.9242.924

### 8.2. Structural model

After testing the measuring models, it is time to test and represent structural model that representing the relationship between study's latent variables. Using structural model we can test study hypotheses. Structural model of this study is analysed by AMOS software. Figure 1 shows the tested conceptual model. In outcome of structural equations, primary tested model of this study regarding the standard naming effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables represents with the ( $\gamma$ ) symbol and effect of endogenous variables on each other represents with ( $\beta$ ) symbol. In order to investigating the extent of significance of  $\gamma$  and  $\beta$  coefficients it is required to show t value of each path. t value of paths shows that all of paths are significant ( $t\text{-value} > 2$ ) and as a result all of paths were acknowledged.

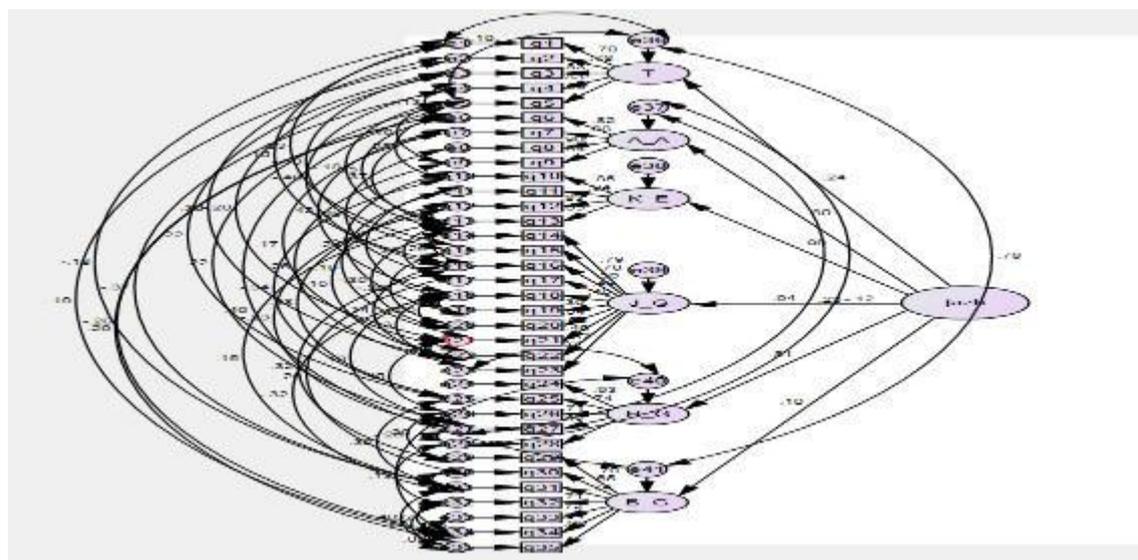


Figure 2. Study model

Table 4. Testing study hypotheses

	T-statistics	Degrees of freedom	Significant bilateral.	Differences in Average	Lower bound	Top bound
Advertising	1.389	71	.169	.11389	-.0496	.2773
Peace and Security	26.205	71	0.00	1.63294	1.5087	1.7572
Quality features and utilities	.263	71	.793	.3472	-.2281	.2975
Tourist Attractions	2.615	71	0.11	.30556	.0726	.5385
Tourist costs	4.637	71	0.00	.50000	.2850	.7150
Tourism Brand	3.676	71	0.00	.30694	.1404	.4734

**9. Conclusion**

Results from first hypothesis showed that the value of t for this hypothesis is  $1.389 < 1.96$  which is not significant in 0.05 level. Therefore the researcher's claim is not supported and with 95% of certainty we can say that there is not direct and positive relationship between advertising and attraction of foreign tourists in Isfahan city. Results of this study is consistent with Saei and Rezaei work. Saei and Rezaei (2010) work showed that there is a relationship between cultural tourist attraction and advertising so that the more integrated advertising, the more cultural tourists enter Iran.

Also results from second hypothesis showed that the value of t for this hypothesis is  $26.205 > 1.96$  which is significant in 0.05 level. Therefore the researcher's claim is supported

and with 95% of certainty we can say that there is direct and positive relationship between destination brand and foreign tourist attraction in Isfahan city. These results are consistent with Karami and Fakhri work. Their work results showed that brand image in studies in recent 30 years are considered as most important factor of tourists' evaluation of destination brand. Results from third hypothesis showed that the value of  $t$  for this hypothesis is  $0.263 < 1.96$  which is not significant in 0.05 level. Therefore the researcher's claim is not supported and with 95% of certainty we can say that there is not a direct and positive relationship between security and tranquility and attraction of foreign tourists in Isfahan city. Results of this study are not consistent with Shahivandi et al. study. Shahivandi et al. (2011) results show that a high percent of foreign tourists were satisfied of social and mental security status of Isfahan city and tend to come to visit this city.

Results from fourth hypothesis showed that the value of  $t$  for this hypothesis is  $2.615 > 1.96$  which is significant in 0.05 level. Therefore the researcher's claim is supported and with 95% of certainty we can say that there is a direct and positive relationship between quality of facilities and welfare services and attraction of foreign tourists in Isfahan city. Results of this study is along with Narayan et al. (2008) work. Narayan et al. (2008) in their study showed that five dimensions such as hospitality, food, procurement, security and value of spent money (fair price) have most impact on tourists' satisfaction of quality of services.

Results from fifth hypothesis showed that the value of  $t$  for this hypothesis is  $4.637 > 1.96$  which is significant in 0.05 level. Therefore the researcher's claim is supported and with 95% of certainty we can say that there is a direct and positive relationship between tourism costs and attraction of foreign tourists in Isfahan city. The study results are not consistent with Tavalaei's study.

Results from sixth hypothesis showed that the value of  $t$  for this hypothesis is  $3.676 > 1.96$  which is significant in 0.05 level. Therefore the researcher's claim is supported and with 95% of certainty we can say that there is a direct and positive relationship between tourism attractions and attraction of foreign tourists in Isfahan city. Gilmore (2002) in a study suggested that retaining, keeping, maintaining, getting more attention to tourism attractions, emphasizing on using traditional architecture in building tourism places and creating adequate infrastructures can lead to increase in tourism entrance and development of tourism industry.

### **10. Limitations of study and suggestion for future studies**

Every author has several limitations in his/her study that some of them exists in beginning of study. Also every comprehensive study has several limitations and difficulties that these prevent from generalizing its results to other cases. Recognizing these limitations paves the grounds for interpreting its results and promoting quality level of the future studies. There are several limitations in this study that some of these have been presented in the following sections. The difficulties that the managers facing in communicating managers, managers' sensitivity toward questionnaire, and inappropriate organizational culture are the main limitations of this study. Undoubtedly, the main limitation of every study is that the authors cannot generalize the results of the study to other cases. Such a limitation exists in this study and the authors cannot generalize its results and findings to other cases. Also this study has been done in an especial area of Iran in the city of Isfahan and thereby its results cannot be generalized to other cities of Iran.

The following suggestions can be indicated based on the findings of this study. The common rewards are allocated to the new product development team for their performances. Also the

managers can use policies of common reward allocation as an instrument for creating motivation in new products development team. It is suggested that the project team members are asked to present their points of view in terms of reward allocation. Also it is necessary to consider the participants' collective behaviors in order to manage the unpredictable conditions

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