The Effect of Destination Image on Satisfaction and Revisiting Intention of Desert Sport Tourists

Farzaneh Mazloomi Soveini*[1] | **Pedro Gaspar[2]**

1. Ph.D. in Sport Management, Faculty of physical education and sport sciences, Allameh Tabatabaei University, Tehran, Iran
   Email: *mazloomi97@gmail.com*
2. University of Coimbra, Faculty of Sport Science and Physical Education, Coimbra, Portugal
   Email: *pedrogaspar@fcdef.uc.pt*

A B S T R A C T

Given the importance of desert sports in the development of sports tourism in desert areas, the purpose of this study was to assess the effect of destination image on satisfaction and revisit the intention of desert sport tourists in the Lut desert of Iran as a desert sport destination. The research population was sport tourists who had visited the Lut desert (in Iran) in 2020. 208 valid and reliable questionnaires were distributed among the research samples that were selected through a convenience sampling approach. The model validity and the relationships among research variables were verified by using structural equation modeling with PLS. The research findings demonstrated that destination image of a desert sport destination has influenced desert sport tourists' satisfaction and their revisiting intention. Moreover, tourists' satisfaction had a significant effect on tourists' revisit intention. The findings of this study can lead to a better understanding of behavioral mechanisms that can provide reliable principles for maintaining and developing sport tourism in desert sport destination destinations.

Introduction

Today, tourism has become an attractive industry that play critical role in the economic development of many countries (Allameh, Pool, Jaberi, Salehzadeh, & Asadi, 2015). Tourism is one of the sectors that is becoming the number one industry in the world due to its positive social, cultural and economic effects; So that many countries are trying to take advantages of this industry by creating suitable infrastructures and satisfying the demands of tourists. For most countries, tourism is an important source of business, income, employment and foreign exchange (Giao, Vuong, Phuong, & Dat, 2021). Tourism can be defined as a significant aspect of economic development (Chin, Mohamad, Lo, Ibrahim, & Ha, 2020). Following the successful countries in the tourism industry, other countries have also tried to develop this sector. However, it should be noted that achieving a comparative

How to Cite: Mazloomi Soveini, F., Gaspar, P. (2022). The Effect of Destination Image on Satisfaction and Revisiting Intention of Desert Sport Tourists, *Journal of New Studies in Sport Management*, *3*(2), 486-493. DOI: 10.22103/JNSSM.2022.18555.1043

advantage in the field of tourism requires the establishment of appropriate infrastructure, meeting the needs of tourists and the creation of desirable tourism facilities (Reihani & Khatibzadeh, 2021).

Due to the diversity of tourists' demands as significant factors in attracting tourists and developing tourism requirements, the development of this sector requires a complete recognition of these needs and its provision by the destination (Allameh et al., 2015). By investing on infrastructures, as well as predicting efficient plans consistent to the tourists' expectations, the demands of tourists in the tourism market can be met. It is generally believed that a high level of satisfaction can lead to positive word of mouth, revisiting, and behavioral reactions; which ultimately affects the financial performance of the host in the tourism industry. Mazanec et al. (2007) stated that the competitiveness of a tourist destination is the ability of that destination to provide proper and memorable services to create satisfying experiences for the tourists. In other words, the possibility of tourists returning to tourism destinations depends on their satisfaction, and addressing tourists' satisfaction will lead to re-visiting intention. As a result of these actions and reactions, an evolutionary cycle is created, the result of which is the destination benefiting from the resources obtained from tourism development in various economic, social, and cultural fields.

The level of satisfaction refers to the perceived difference between previous expectations and perceived performance after consumption. Dissatisfaction occurs when performance falls short of expectations (Oliver, 1980). Satisfaction level can be defined as the amount of positive emotional experience (Rust & Oliver, 1993). In tourism texts, the level of satisfaction is mainly shown as a function of pre-trip and post-trip expectations. Thus, when a tourist experiences a pleasant feeling, he is satisfied, but when he experiences an unpleasant feeling, his dissatisfaction prevails over his satisfaction (Long, 2004). Tourist satisfaction is a behavioral phenomenon that is created through emotional and cognitive factors of tourism activities and evaluation of various elements of the destination. The return of tourists to a destination depends on their level of satisfaction with the previous visit. Understanding the tourist's feelings about a place indirectly refers to the characteristics of the destination from the tourist's point of view at different levels (Alegre & Garau, 2010).

Previous studies have demonstrated that the perceived value of services affects the level of satisfaction and the level of satisfaction also affects the desire to revisit tourist destinations(Chen, 2008; Clemes, Gan, & Ren, 2011; De Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Žabkar, Brenčič, & Dmitrović, 2010). For example, satisfied tourists may visit a destination, recommend it to others, or have a favorable opinion of the destination. On the other hand, a dissatisfied tourist may not return to that destination and may not recommend it to other tourists. Even worse, dissatisfied tourists may have negative opinions about the destination and damage its market reputation (Long, 2004). Saxena et al. (2021) found that tourists' satisfaction had a significant effect on future behavioral intentions(Saxena, Sharma, Pandey, & Pandey, 2021).

Tourism destinations can be attractive brands and need to be regarded as growing brands. The destinations always convey a special image that can influence tourists' attitudes and behaviors. Keller (2013) defines brand image as a perception of the brand that is formed by associating brand meanings in the mind of the customer. Brand image is rooted in all customer consumption experiences and understanding the quality of service is the function of these experiences (Kayaman & Arasli, 2007). Destination image includes an impression that is stablished in tourists' minds through selection among various associations(Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Destination image can be one of the most important factors that most marketing strategies are focused on to highlight the destination brand (Jaberi, Khazaei Pool, & Asadi, 2018). Marketing the destination image is the start of a prosperous tourism marketing because destination image has a close relationship with tourists' attitudes to the destination (Chao, 2005). The brand image in the eyes of customers is formed based on their beliefs about a particular brand, these beliefs are based on their perception of the characteristics of the product or service. Without an attractive destination image, the destinations are not able to attract tourists and achieve the tourism advantage (Esmaili, Rezaei, Abbasi, & Eskandari, 2017). Brand positioning is directly related to the image that is attractive and distinctive, and the brand image is the basis of decision and action in the field of management (Ferrand & Pages, 1999). Images are a factor

of differentiation and positioning for destinations, and this image can also influence tourists' decision-making and selection. Different studies assessed destination image according to different aspects such as natural attractions/environment, historical and cultural attractions, reputation of the destination, entertainment and events, outdoor/leisure activities, nightlife, infrastructure, accessibility, accommodation, and atmosphere (Lee & Xue, 2020). Adane (2021) found that destination image had a significant and positive effect on revisit intention in tourism destinations(Adane 2021). Moreover, the findings of Che et al. (2021) showed that destination attributes had a positive influence on satisfaction and revisit intention(Che et al., 2021). The moderating effect of destination image between service qualities and foreign visitors' satisfaction was also confirmed in a study conducted by Khurelchuluun and Kim (2021). Based on the findings of Shazly (2022), memorable experiences had greatly shaped the perceived image(Shazly, 2022).

Today, sport and tourism are recognized as two growing industries that are able, due to their unique nature, to pave the way for the development of a wide range of tangible and intangible resources for countries. The attractiveness of these two industries will become more meaningful when both are placed next to each other as a complement (Jaberi et al., 2018). In Iran, despite the increasing development of sports and the existence of significant tourism potentials, the issue of sports tourism has not been properly considered by sports and tourism managers. The development of scientific research and the strengthening of the theoretical foundations of sports and tourism can gradually provide the necessary grounds for the development of these two revenue-generating industries. Specially, desert tourism in Iran is a growing market and has a significant potential to become an attractive market. Iran is a country with different climate, mostly, a hot and dry. Many desert plains which are proper for developing sport tourism are located in various places, especially in the central part of Iran. Lut desert is one of the most famous deserts in Iran and the world. This mysterious land is an exciting destination that attract many sport tourists from different cities of Iran and it has the potential to become an international destination for sport tourists.

The present study is the first research study that seeks to investigate the effect of desert sports tourism destination image on satisfaction, and revisiting of tourism destinations. The current study investigates the effect of destination image of Lut desert as a desert sport destination in Iran, on tourists' satisfaction and their revisit intentions for this tourist destination. In this study we seek to provide information and appropriate decision-making data for the development of desert tourism industry with a focus on desert sports activities. This can also provide a proper basis for sustainable development of tourism in the region as a desert sport destination.
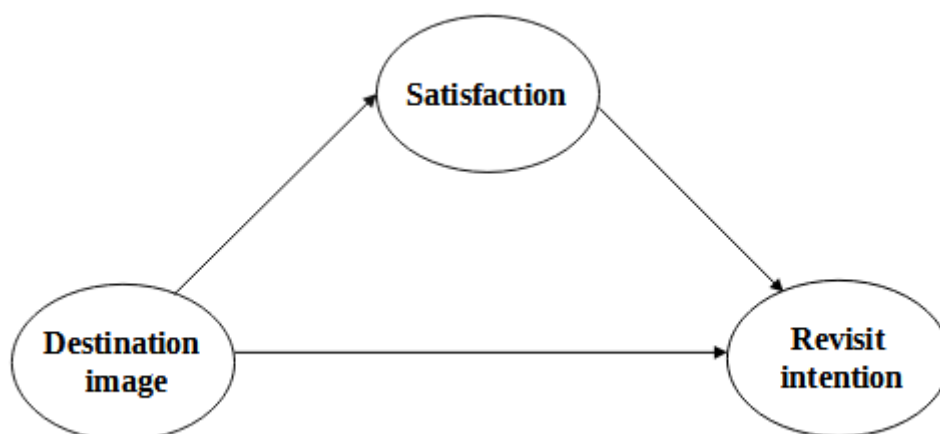

Figure 1. The research model

Figure 1 shows the research conceptual model that has been proposed based on theoretical foundations. This model involves the effect of the destination image on the sports tourists' satisfaction, and their revisit intention.

Methodology

This was a descriptive and applied study conducted based on structural equation modeling. The research population consisted of sport tourists who traveled to Lut Desert in Iran in 2020 as a desert sports tourism destination. To select the research sample, several areas were randomly selected, then in each area, sports tourists were selected through convenience sampling. Based on Cochran's sample size formula, 198 subjects were found proper for sample size. 250 questionnaires were distributed among the research sample. 208 complete and valid questionnaires were used in data analysis. The main data collection tool was a questionnaire designed based on the Likert scale. Thus, a 5-item researcher-developed questionnaire was used to measure the destination image. To measure the tourists' satisfaction, we used a questionnaire adopted from Žabkar et al. (2010), Gallarza and Saura (2006), and Quintal and Polczynski (2010) (Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Quintal & Polczynski, 2010; Žabkar et al., 2010). To measure the revisit intention, we applied a questionnaire adopted from Žabkar et al. (2010), and Huang and Hsu (2009) (Huang & Hsu, 2009; Žabkar et al., 2010). Content and face validity method was used to ensure the validity of the questionnaire. The initial questionnaire was reviewed using the opinions of 7 experts in the field of sports tourism. In this study, Cronbach's alpha method has been used to calculate the questionnaire reliability. Cronbach's alpha values of research structures are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. The result of structures' reliability

Variables	Items	Cronbach's a
Destination image	5	0.89
Satisfaction	5	0.88
Revisit intention	8	0.86
Total	18	0.90

SPSS version 18 and AMOS version 18 were used for data analysis. In this research, structural equation modeling has been used to analyze the hypotheses and the overall fitness of the research model. In structural equation modeling, on the one hand, the degree of conformity between the research data and the conceptual model was examined to see if it has a suitable fit, and on the other hand, the significance of the relationships in the fitted model was tested. Model fit indices included CMIN / Df, RMSEA, GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI and IFI.

Results

To determine the acceptable level of each indicator for measurement models, all measurement models must first be assessed separately. Based on the adoption of such a method, first three measurement models of research structures were tested separately. The general fitness indices for the measurement models have been presented in Table 2.

Table2. Fitness indices of measurement model

Variables	CMIN /Df	GFI	NFI	CFI	IFI	RMSEA
Destination image	2.12	0.911	0.941	0.924	0.939	0.013
Satisfaction	1.94	0.908	0.921	0.917	0.911	0.017
Revisit intention	2.68	0.961	0.918	0.932	0.942	0.022
Acceptable values	3>	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.10

According to table 2, the results showed that the collected data well support the research model. After confirming the model, two partial indices of critical value and P value have been used to test the significance of the hypotheses. Hypotheses as well as regression coefficients and values of partial indices related to each hypothesis are given in Table 4.

Table4. Results of hypotheses tests

variables	path	variables	Coefficient	Critical value	p	Result
Destination image	→	Satisfaction	0.39	10.32	***	Accepted
Brand image	→	Revisit intention	0.42	11.79	***	Accepted
Satisfaction	→	Revisit intention	0.45	13.86	***	Accepted

*** P< 0.001.

According to the results in Table 4, all the relationships in the research model were confirmed at a significant level of p <0.001.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the relationships between destination image, satisfaction, and revisit intention in a sample of sports tourists in desert sports tourism destination in Lut desert of Iran was confirmed. The results showed that the destination image affects the satisfaction of sports tourists. These results are consistent with the findings of Li et al. (2021), Lam et al. (2020) and Králiková et al. (2020) (Králiková, Peruthová, & Ryglová, 2020; Lam, Ismail, & Lee, 2020; Li, Liu, & Soutar, 2021). In addition, the findings of Allameh et al. (2015) showed that sport tourists' perception of destination image, influenced the satisfaction of sport tourists positively. Therefore, positive perception of sports tourists towards desert sports destinations can increase their satisfaction and can lead to positive behavioral and emotional reactions of sport tourists. Recognizing the values and desires of tourists and designing strategies tailored to their demands can help managers in the field of sports and tourism to develop this emerging industry in Iran(Allameh et al., 2015).

Another part of the results showed that the destination image of desert sports destinations had a significant effect on revisit intention of desert sports tourists. In accordance with this finding, the destination image has affected the loyalty of tourists(Králiková et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021) and their re-visit (Giao et al., 2021), in previous researches. Moreover, the findings of Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020)(Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020) revealed that destination image plays significant role in predicting tourist's behavior. Consistent with this result, the study of Allameh et al. (2015) revealed that sport tourists' perception of destination image, influenced the sport tourists' revisit intention positively(Allameh et al., 2015). In previous studies, tourists' satisfaction was also found to be

effective on behavioral intentions (Lee & Xue, 2020). One of the main behavioral manifestations resulting from satisfaction and positive perception of sports venues is the desire of people to revisit and re-experience tourism destinations. Therefore, the positive perception and consequently the positive associations of tourists with sports destinations can play a decisive role in guiding and explaining the future behaviors of desert sports tourists. This study confirms the effect of destination image on the tendency to revisit a tourist destination.

In this study, the effect of satisfaction on revisit intention of desert sports tourists has also been tested. The results of data analysis show that this effect is positively significant. This result is also consistent with the findings of Chen & Chen (2010), and Cronin et al. (2000)(Chen & Chen, 2010; Cronin Jr, Brady, & Hult, 2000). Moreover, Jaberi et al. (2018), found that tourists' satisfaction has a positive effect on intention to revisit sport tourism destination(Jaberi et al., 2018). Therefore, increasing the level of tourists' satisfaction with sports destinations as a cognitive component can lead to the revisit intention as a behavioral component among sports tourists. This desire to revisit, in addition to having tangible consequences for sports destinations, can also be considered as a promotional tool in increasing intangible resources. Increasing the desire to revisit as a result of improving the image of the destination and increasing the level of satisfaction, can lead to increased word of mouth and attract other people to desert sports destinations.

The model of this research including destination image and tourists' satisfaction, has been able to explain a significant percentage of variances in revisit intention of tourists. Based on the results, in the case of the studied sports tourism destination (Lut Desert in Iran), the destination image is of great importance for establishing a long-term relationship with sports tourists. Managers of sports tourism destinations can increase tourists' satisfaction and make them loyal to the destination by increasing the reliability, empathy, and efficiency in relation to sport tourists. Getting feedback from sports tourists plays a key role in improving the destination image. Sports tourism destinations that operate according to the philosophy of marketing orientation, must provide high quality services to tourists better than other competitive sports tourism destinations, to be more successful. In a sports tourism destination, tourists are the main focus and in fact everything is done to satisfy their expectations. Therefore, in the current competitive environment, there are successful destinations that can create a superior destination image for their sports tourists. On the other hand, due to the increasing sensitivity of tourists to the services provided by destinations, it should be considered that they always expect more desirable and better services. Due to the increasing changes in the tourism industry, the competitiveness of this industry and the rising level of tourists' expectations, destination managers should study and analyze the quality of services and be able to meet the growing expectations of tourists by recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses to guarantee their survival because no sports tourism destination would have any meaning without a tourist. Undoubtedly, in tourism activities, mistakes and slips are inevitable, but the basic principle in all tourism service activities is to solve the problem of tourists to increase tourists' satisfaction, which consequently leads to more loyalty and re-visiting intentions. Proper problem solving creates tourists who are practically more loyal than those who have no problems with destinations. Therefore, managers and officials of the desert sports tourism industry in the Lut desert in Iran should be trained to attach great importance to establishing a long-term relationship with sports tourists in order to promote the image of the tourism destination. Sports tourism industry in the desert destination in Lut desert needs to develop a specific marketing plan for different parts of tourist destinations.

In tourism industry, the demands of sports tourists should be highly assessed and sufficient attention should be paid to their changing expectations. Improving the image of desert sports tourism destinations as a significant management goal, as well as ensuring the destination image can leads to an increase in satisfaction is one of the important issues that managers of cultural heritage and sports tourism should pay attention to when determining long-term strategies. Customer experience has become a key concept in tourism marketing because the level of tourist satisfaction is often determined by the experience gained. In order to provide a favorable image, sports tourism managers must act to meet the expectations of tourists. Improving the image of desert sports tourism destinations and ensuring the image of the destination, which leads to an increase in satisfaction, are

among the important issues that cultural heritage and sports tourism managers should pay attention to when determining long-term strategies. Customer experience is a key concept in tourism marketing because the level of tourist satisfaction is often determined by the experience received. In order to provide a favorable image, sports tourism managers must follow approaches to meet the expectations of tourists. According to the research findings, it can be concluded that the managers of the desert sports tourism industry in Iran should provide the necessary grounds to increase the levels of satisfaction and tourists' re-visit intention by concentrating on the destination image. The data and information available in the desert sports tourism industry should be inserted in sports tourism approaches and policies to pave the way for more destination attraction.

Acknowledgments

References

Adane , M. (2021). *The Effect of Promotion on Revisit Intention Mediated by Heritage Destination Image: the Case of Addis Ababa City.* ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY.

Afshardoost, M., & Eshaghi, M. S. (2020). Destination image and tourist behavioural intentions: A meta-analysis. *Tourism Management, 81*, 104154.

Alegre, J., & Garau, J. (2010). Tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction. *Annals of tourism research, 37*(1), 52-73.

Allameh, S. M., Pool, J. K., Jaberi, A., Salehzadeh, R., & Asadi, H. (2015). Factors influencing sport tourists' revisit intentions: The role and effect of destination image, perceived quality, perceived value and satisfaction. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*.

Chao, W.-Z. (2005). *Marketing tools as factors in destination image formation*: San Jose State University.

Che, C., Koo, B., Wang, J., Ariza-Montes, A., Vega-Muñoz, A., & Han, H. (2021). Promoting rural tourism in inner mongolia: Attributes, satisfaction, and behaviors among sustainable tourists. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(7), 3788.

Chen, C.-F. (2008). Investigating structural relationships between service quality, perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions for air passengers: Evidence from Taiwan. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice, 42*(4), 709-717.

Chen, C.-F., & Chen, F.-S. (2010). Experience quality, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions for heritage tourists. *Tourism Management, 31*(1), 29-35.

Chin, Y.-S., Mohamad, A. A., Lo, M.-C., Ibrahim, W. H. W., & Ha, S.-T. (2020). Antecedents of destination image in natural protected area: The moderating role of perceived value. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites, 32*(4), 1222-1228.

Clemes, M. D., Gan, C., & Ren, M. (2011). Synthesizing the effects of service quality, value, and customer satisfaction on behavioral intentions in the motel industry: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 35*(4), 530-568.

Cronin Jr, J. J., Brady, M. K., & Hult, G. T. M. (2000). Assessing the effects of quality, value, and customer satisfaction on consumer behavioral intentions in service environments. *Journal of retailing, 76*(2), 193-218.

De Rojas, C., & Camarero, C. (2008). Visitors' experience, mood and satisfaction in a heritage context: Evidence from an interpretation center. *Tourism Management, 29*(3), 525-537.

Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1991). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of tourism studies, 2*(2), 2-12.

Esmaili, S., Rezaei, N., Abbasi, R., & Eskandari, S. (2017). The impact of marketing mix on perceived value, destination image and loyalty of tourists (case study: Khalkhal City, Iran). *Modern Applied Science, 11*(11), 96-108.

Ferrand, A., & Pages, M. (1999). Image management in sport organisations: the creation of value. *European Journal of Marketing*.

Gallarza, M. G., & Saura, I. G. (2006). Value dimensions, perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty: an investigation of university students' travel behaviour. *Tourism Management, 27*(3), 437-452.

Giao, H. N. K., Vuong, B. N., Phuong, N. N. D., & Dat, N. T. (2021). A model of factors affecting domestic tourist satisfaction on eco-tourism service quality in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam.

Huang, S., & Hsu, C. H. (2009). Effects of travel motivation, past experience, perceived constraint, and attitude on revisit intention. *Journal of travel research, 48*(1), 29-44.

Jaberi, A., Khazaei Pool, J., & Asadi, H. (2018). The Effect of Perceived Quality of Sport Tourism Destinations on Satisfaction and Intention to Revisit. *Journal of Sport Management, 10*(1), 17-32.

Kayaman, R., & Arasli, H. (2007). Customer based brand equity: evidence from the hotel industry. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*.

Králiková, A., Peruthová, A., & Ryglová, K. (2020). Impact of destination image on satisfaction and loyalty. *Acta Universitatis Agriculturae et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis, 68*(1), 199-209.

Lam, J. M., Ismail, H., & Lee, S. (2020). From desktop to destination: User-generated content platforms, co-created online experiences, destination image and satisfaction. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 18*, 100490.

Lee, S. W., & Xue, K. (2020). A model of destination loyalty: Integrating destination image and sustainable tourism. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 25*(4), 393-408.

Li, T. T., Liu, F., & Soutar, G. N. (2021). Experiences, post-trip destination image, satisfaction and loyalty: A study in an ecotourism context. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 19*, 100547.

Long, P. (2004). Cross-cultural behaviour in tourism: concepts and analysis, by Y. Reisinger and LW Turner. Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford, 2003. No. of pages: 337. ISBN 0-7506-56689: Wiley Online Library.

Oliver, R. L. (1980). A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions. *Journal of marketing research, 17*(4), 460-469.

Quintal, V. A., & Polczynski, A. (2010). Factors influencing tourists' revisit intentions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*.

Reihani, E., & Khatibzadeh, M. (2021). Marketing Mix in Sport Tourism Context. *Journal of New Studies in Sport Management, 2*(3), 247-255.

Rust, R. T., & Oliver, R. L. (1993). *Service quality: New directions in theory and practice*: Sage Publications.

Saxena, A., Sharma, N. K., Pandey, D., & Pandey, B. K. (2021). Influence of Tourists Satisfaction on Future Behavioral Intentions with Special Reference to Desert Triangle of Rajasthan. *Augmented Human Research, 6*(1), 1-9.

Shazly, R. E. S. (2022). Exploring destination image in the Egyptian context: a qualitative study. *1735209643*.

Žabkar, V., Brenčič, M. M., & Dmitrović, T. (2010). Modelling perceived quality, visitor satisfaction and behavioural intentions at the destination level. *Tourism Management, 31*(4), 537-546.