Prioritization of Pull Factors of China as a Destination for Iranian Tourists

[1]Dr. RaminAsadi (Ph.D), [2]Dr. Mahmoud Daryaei (Ph.D)

[1]Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. Institute of Geography.
[2]Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. Institute of Geography.

Abstract: Researches show that a large number of Iranian tourists choose china as a travel destination. In this research pull factors attracting Iranian tourists are weighted referring to secondary information existing in literature review and Delphi model are recognized. Then using the same model five criteria are recognized in order to analyze these factors and finally pair-wise comparison is applied to weight these criteria. This research is of applied type and its statistical population consists of 50 tour leaders of companies engaged in the field of providing tour packages of china in all around Iran. To select statistical population the familiarity of this population with desires and interests of tourists and attracting factors in China should be taken into account. In order to determine sample size Morgan Table was used and the result was 44 sample size chosen via random method among randomly selected tour leaders. On the basis of acquired results cheap shopping, variety of attractions, modern attractions besides cultural attractions are the main factors to attract Iranian tourists. Also it should be mentioned that similarities in the area of language, culture and religion and accessibility have no effect on Iranian tourists decision to choose China as a destination.

Key words:

INTRODUCTION

The new millennium and the coming decades are a crucial time for the relationship between travel and tourism and sustainable development.The need to preserve the world's inherent assets for future generations is becoming an imperative goal not only for travel and tourism, but also for all other industries that use the earth's natural resources.The scale of travel and tourism's contribution to the global economy and its potential for enabling sustainable development are becoming more evident for governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and industry alike. Travel and tourism is now one of the largest industries in the world. Economically, it creates jobs and contributes over 10% Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as well as brings in capital investment and exports. Socially and culturally, travel and tourism offers the opportunity of providing jobs for minority and disadvantaged groups, creating adequate training in management skills, education and technology to local people and increasing incomes in rural and local economies, thereby contributing to the alleviation of poverty in developing countries. Environmentally, it is essential for travel and tourism to maintain an optimal balance of its natural resources to ensure the ongoing arrival of tourists to destinations (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2002).

China is the largest country in the Asia pacific Travel Association(PATA) in terms of international tourism. china enjoyed the fastest growth in arrivals in the region in the last decade and such trends will develop in the years to come (Alan A. *et al.,* 2003).

China is becoming a leading international tourist destination. Many tourists are coming to China for its natural and scenic beauty, in addition to its vast 5,000 year history and culture (Nianyong, H. and Zhuge, R. 2001). Since China's economic reforms in 1978, international and domestic tourism have steadily increased to become one of the biggest industries in China (Wen, J. and Tisdell, C. 2001).

With the notable progress of China's economy, international tourism has developed rapidly since the policy of openness was adopted in 1978, and domestic tourism achieved similar growth. Domestic tourism turned out to be a new growth point in many areas of China. It makes a significant contribution in promoting regional economic growth, improving local economic structures, driving the development of related industries, enhancing employment and activating domestic demands (Bihu Wu, Hong Zhu and Xiaohuan Xu, 2000).

China is the world's third most visited country in the world. The number of overseas tourists was 55.98 million in 2010. Foreign exchange income was 45.8 billion U.S. dollars, the world's fourth largest in 2010. The number of domestic tourist visits totaled 1.61 billion, with a total income of 777.1 billion yuan.

One form of tourism that is rapidly gaining popularity in China, and the world, is ecotourism . Ecotourism is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" (The International Ecotourism Society, 2006). The year 1999 was declared the "Year of China's Eco-tour" by the State Tourism Administration (STA); the theme was "Touching Nature, Understanding Nature, and

---

Protecting Nature." The increasing number of tourists and their demand on protected areas is causing protected area managers to consider ecotourism as a means of financing sustainable development in and around the parks.

Nature reserves in China are the main destination of ecotourists and many reserves are under-funded, under-staffed, and lack the infrastructure to deal with large volumes of visitors (Studley, J. 1999). Chinese nature reserves, forest parks, and scenic areas are becoming increasingly popular attractions for ecotourism and nature tourism, both for international and domestic tourists (Deng, J., 2003). The number of nature reserves in China has greatly increased from 119 in 1982 to 1,146 in 1999; nature reserves now cover 8.8% of China's area (SEPA, 1998).

China's inbound travel market has enormous potential to grow. In fact, the prospect of China's inbound travel market growing in the next 10 to 20 years looks promising given the country's varied tourism resources. China's recent membership in the World Trade Organization and Beijing's hosting of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games also support this development. Based on WTO projections (WTO, 1998) China will likely become the major tourist destination by 2020, with the United States the next most important tourist destination. By 2020, it is forecasted that China will attract over 137 million international tourists or 8.6 per cent of the world total (NicolinoStrizzi, 2002).

The positive contributions of tourism development to the national economy are gaining more recognition. Besides, China's tourism industry has long been considered as an important "government-led" industry (Qian 2003), thus, tourism development in Western China became one of the five areas that were specified as the near-term goals of importance or the ultimate objective of the "Go West" strategy under the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2000-2005) (Onishi, Y. 2001).

pull motives are those that affect the option regarding the place to visit and are related to the attributes of the destination (Lundberg, 1990). According to Gnoth (1997), the need for holidays depends on wishes such as self actualization, self-esteem and social status. Based on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, the tourist builds his/her own perceptions (Gartner, W.C., 1993). As Gnoth (1997) refers, perceptions about a destination can be reduced to a behavioural or cognitive perspective.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is of descriptive research type. It is considered as applied type in terms of objective. The present study is of survey research type in terms of collection of information and data has been made through studying books and documents. For obtaining necessary information at this study, required data have been collected through library-based studies, questionnaire and obtaining data from resources and documents (for provision of study theoretical fundamentals).

2.1 Research Model:

In the first phase by referring to the literature review and Delphi method, pull factors of China as a destination for Iranian tourists are determined. Then by the same method five criteria are determined for analyzing these factors and by pair-wise comparison these factors are weighted.

In the next step, TOPSIS method is used for ranking the importance of 22 pull factors of China.

2.2 statistical population, Sample size and Sampling Method:

All tour leaders are statistical population of the preset study. In this study the statistical population consists of 50 tour leaders of companies engaged in the field of providing tour packages of china in all around Iran. The reason to select these people is their familiarity with motives and desires of tourists travel to China.sample size is calculated by application of Morgan tableand in this study amounts to 44 persons.

2.3 Validity & Reliability, Measuring Tools:

Provided initial questionnaire was given to university professors and experts in charge, with the aim of presenting their views on validity of questionnaire and whether questions posed at the questionnaire are appropriate or not. Necessary changes were made at questions on the basis of viewpoints of lecturers and officials in charge.

Cronbach'sAlpha (Bland, J.M., Altman D.G., 1997) Test was used for testing reliability of questionnaire of study. For this reason, 82 study questionnaires were distributed among statistical population (individuals set for this study). Then each answer was studied individually and response rate of each question was calculated. In the same direction, Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test was made through the application of SPSS software package. Generally, test reliability rate was obtained 792% at large.

2.4 Method of Analysis:
2.4.1 Delphi

Delphi method starts with identification of the problem and selected experts (Delphi panel) based on their experiment related to the defined problem. A questionnaire is designed and distributed to the Delphi panel. Then data is collected and analyzed to reach consensus in responses. If the respondents have reached consensus a report is developed based on responses, if not, a new questionnaire is developed based on the results of the previous round and again distributed to the panel. This process is repeated until consensus is reached and based on which a final report is developed (Pill, J. 1971).

2.4.2 Weighting the Criteria:

The basic procedure to carry out the pair-wise comparison consists of prioritization of criteria by pair-wise comparison (weighing). Rating the relative priority of the criteria is done by assigning a weight between 1 (equal importance) and 9 (extreme importance) to the more important criterion, whereas the value reciprocal to that is assigned to the other criterion in the pair. The weightings are then assigned a number and averaged in order to obtain an average weight for each criterion (Saaty, T.L., 1990).

2.4.3 TOPSIS:

For ranking and selecting the most appropriate suppliers TOPSIS method is more appropriate due to the following reasons:

In this technique, due to permission of desirability exchange between the attributes, it is possible to improve a supplier performance through its comparative advantage in some areas, despite its poor performance in other cases. In TOPSIS decision making technique, interaction effect of attributes is considered. This technique also considers Conflict and compatibility between attributes (Triantaphyllou E., 2000; Ho, W, *et al.,* 2010; Shih, H.S., *et al.,* 2007). TOPSIS decision making technique is less sensitive compared to weighting technique. Considering the statistical populations covered in this study, compensating models and its constructive subgroup, TOPSIS technique, is used for evaluating and ranking the suppliers (ManikraoAthawale, V., Chakraborty, S., 2010).

2.5 Reorganization and Weighting of Evaluative Criteria:

Referring to literature review and research background, 5 criteria are recognized for analysis of pull factors of China as a destination for Iranian tourists and then by administration of questionnaire, aspects and ideas of tourism and geography experts are acquired. Then weight of each criterion is calculated on the basis of pair-wise comparison.

Matrix of pair-wise comparison of decision makers is calculated by using geometric mean as follows:

In this method after completing pair-wise comparison matrix, first geometric mean of each line of matrix is calculated; in the second phase the present column is normalized by dividing each attribute to the sum of present attributes.

The new column matrix is the matrix of weight of the indexes of the considered problem. Below the mathematical form of this method is provided:

$$\begin{bmatrix} a_{11} & . & . & a_{1n} \\ . & . & . & . \\ . & . & . & . \\ a_{n1} & . & . & a_{nn} \end{bmatrix} \xrightarrow{1} \begin{bmatrix} \sqrt[n]{a_{11} \dots a_{1n}} \\ . \\ . \\ \sqrt[n]{a_{11} \dots a_{1n}} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \pi_1 \\ . \\ . \\ \pi_2 \end{bmatrix} \xrightarrow{2} \begin{bmatrix} \dfrac{\pi_1}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} \pi_i} \\ . \\ . \\ \dfrac{\pi_n}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} \pi_i} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} W_1 \\ . \\ . \\ W_n \end{bmatrix}$$

In this research 5 basic criteria are recognized to analyze the pull factors of China as a destination for Iranian tourists, which are shown in the matrix of pair-wise comparison (Table 1).

Table 1: Matrix of Pair-wise comparison of basic criteria

criteria	Number of tourists	Amount of expenditure	Length of stay	Second visit	Encouraging others
Number of tourists	1	0.5	1.6	3.5	4.7
Amount of expenditure		1	2.4	2.7	2.2
Length of stay			1	3.1	1.8
Second visit				1	
Encouraging others					1

After forming the model in expert choice and importing the matrix of pair-wise comparison, the weight of criteria and sub-criteria was calculated as shown below. Table 2 shows the prioritization of the pull factors of China as a destination for Iranian tourists which are determined on the basis of AHP method (expert choice software). As shown in table 2 amount of expenditure is the most important criteria with relative weight equal to 0.343. So, it is the most affective factor among all important factors in strategic decision-making of Iranian tourists, and number of tourists with relative weight equal to 0.292 is in the next priority. Consistency rate of pair-wise comparison is equal to 0.06 which is acceptable, because it's lower than 0.10.

Table 2: Weighting the basic criteria

row	Basic criteria	weight	priority
1	Number of tourists	0.292	2
2	Amount of expenditure	0.343	1
3	Length of stay	0.179	3
4	Second visit	0.076	5
5	Encouraging others	0.11	4

In table 3 matrix of decision and in table 4 matrix prepared in the basis of five criteria stated above and 22 pull factors about China as a destination for Iranian tourists, which are prioritized by TOPSIS (2005) software and Excel are shown.

Table 3: Decision matrix

Row	Pull factors	Number of tourists	Amount of expenditure	Length of stay	Second visit	Encouraging others
1	Natural attractions	32	34.8	27.30	28	22.60
2	Cultural attractions	46.7	23.6	33.70	22.65	43.60
3	Cheap shopping	66.3	16.8	66.30	55.3	59.40
4	Public health and hygiene	22.39	43.85	25.70	28.4	27.40
5	Modern attractions	54.8	25.26	45.00	50	46.20
6	Suitable accommodating	17.5	34.89	42.84	35.9	45.32
7	Variety of attractions	49.7	19	58.40	53	55.30
8	Social security	25.8	33.7	33.40	41.88	23.00
9	Accessibility to visa	18.5	52	27.00	22	19.40
10	Festivals and events	30.24	36.8	36.80	28.4	36.30
11	Quality of services	28.4	45	45.32	34	35.80
12	Visiting the places which are shown in the films	53.8	36.9	42.00	33.6	36.20
13	Religious, cultural and language similarities	15.7	55.6	22.60	16.8	15.90
14	Performing activities which are not available in the country of origin	65	27	45.20	47	47.00
15	Suitable transportation system	22.7	42	30.00	33.6	32.00
16	A destination with high prestige	33.7	40.8	28.26	32	27.40
17	Climate	24	56	27.00	28.5	21.00
18	Economic and political close relationships	45.6	28.5	32.51	48.5	45.00
19	Hospitable people in destination	34.7	35.70	25.00	30.00	25.20
20	Accessibility	27.40	63.00	19.00	21.00	17.40
21	Low expenses in destinations	43	38.4	30	36.8	36
22	Recreational attractions	37.5	54.8	22.5	25.2	21.7

Table 4: Table of normalized decision matrix

Row	Pull factors	Number of tourists	Amount of expenditure	Length of stay	Second visit	Encouraging others
1	Natural attractions	0.0402	0.0412	0.0356	0.0372	0.0306
2	Cultural attractions	0.0587	0.0279	0.0440	0.0301	0.0590

3	Cheap shopping	0.0834	0.0199	0.0866	0.0735	0.0804
4	Public health and hygiene	0.0281	0.0519	0.0336	0.0377	0.0371
5	Modern attractions	0.0689	0.0299	0.0588	0.0664	0.0625
6	Suitable accommodating	0.0220	0.0413	0.0559	0.0477	0.0613
7	Variety of attractions	0.0625	0.0225	0.0763	0.0704	0.0748
8	Social security	0.0324	0.0399	0.0436	0.0557	0.0311
9	Accessibility to visa	0.0233	0.0616	0.0353	0.0292	0.0262
10	Festivals and events	0.0380	0.0436	0.0481	0.0377	0.0491
11	Quality of services	0.0357	0.0533	0.0592	0.0452	0.0484
12	Visiting the places which are shown in the films	0.0676	0.0437	0.0548	0.0446	0.0490
13	Religious, cultural and language similarities	0.0197	0.0658	0.0295	0.0223	0.0215
14	Performing activities which are not available in the country of origin	0.0817	0.0320	0.0590	0.0625	0.0636
15	Suitable transportation system	0.0285	0.0497	0.0392	0.0446	0.0433
16	A destination with high prestige	0.0424	0.0483	0.0369	0.0425	0.0371
17	Climate	0.0302	0.0663	0.0353	0.0379	0.0284
18	Economic and political close relationships	0.0573	0.0338	0.0424	0.0644	0.0609
19	Hospitable people in destination	0.0436	0.0423	0.0326	0.0399	0.0341
20	Accessibility	0.0344	0.0746	0.0248	0.0279	0.0235
21	Low expenses in destinations	0.0541	0.0455	0.0392	0.0489	0.0487
22	Recreational attractions	0.0471	0.0649	0.0294	0.0335	0.0294

Table 5: Weighted normalized decision matrix

Row	Pull factors	Number of tourists	Amount of expenditure	Length of stay	Second visit	Encouraging others
1	Natural attractions	0.0117	0.0141	0.0064	0.0028	0.0034
2	Cultural attractions	0.0171	0.0096	0.0079	0.0023	0.0065
3	Cheap shopping	0.0243	0.0068	0.0155	0.0056	0.0088
4	Public health and hygiene	0.0082	0.0178	0.0060	0.0029	0.0041
5	Modern attractions	0.0201	0.0103	0.0105	0.0050	0.0069
6	Suitable accommodating	0.0064	0.0142	0.0100	0.0036	0.0067
7	Variety of attractions	0.0182	0.0077	0.0137	0.0054	0.0082
8	Social security	0.0095	0.0137	0.0078	0.0042	0.0034
9	Accessibility to visa	0.0068	0.0211	0.0063	0.0022	0.0029
10	Festivals and events	0.0111	0.0149	0.0086	0.0029	0.0054
11	Quality of services	0.0104	0.0183	0.0106	0.0034	0.0053
12	Visiting the places which are shown in the films	0.0197	0.0150	0.0098	0.0034	0.0054
13	Religious, cultural and language similarities	0.0058	0.0226	0.0053	0.0017	0.0024
14	Performing activities which are not available in the country of origin	0.0239	0.0110	0.0106	0.0047	0.0070
15	Suitable transportation system	0.0083	0.0171	0.0070	0.0034	0.0048
16	A destination with high prestige	0.0124	0.0166	0.0066	0.0032	0.0041
17	Climate	0.0088	0.0227	0.0063	0.0029	0.0031
18	Economic and political closerelationships	0.0167	0.0116	0.0076	0.0049	0.0067
19	Hospitable people in destination	0.0127	0.0145	0.0058	0.0030	0.0038
20	Accessibility	0.0101	0.0256	0.0044	0.0021	0.0026
21	Low expenses in destinations	0.0158	0.0156	0.0070	0.0037	0.0054
22	Recreational attractions	0.0138	0.0223	0.0053	0.0025	0.0032

Table 6: Prioritization of the pull factors by TOPSIS method

Row	Pull factors	d-	d+	d-+d+	CL	priority
1	Natural attractions	0.00856	0.02238	0.0309	0.2767	18
2	Cultural attractions	0.02257	0.00765	0.0302	0.7468	4
3	Cheap shopping	0.02961	0	0.0296	1.0000	1
4	Public health and hygiene	0.00501	0.02537	0.0304	0.1648	19
5	Modern attractions	0.02469	0.00677	0.0315	0.7848	3
6	Suitable accommodating	0.01483	0.01542	0.0302	0.4903	8
7	Variety of attractions	0.02465	0.00646	0.0311	0.7923	2
8	Social security	0.01332	0.01786	0.0312	0.4271	9
9	Accessibility to visa	0.00478	0.02488	0.0297	0.1611	20
10	Festivals and events	0.01316	0.01824	0.0314	0.4190	11
11	Quality of services	0.0132	0.01893	0.0321	0.4108	12
12	Visiting the places which are shown in the films	0.01303	0.01755	0.0306	0.4260	10
13	Religious, cultural and language similarities	0.00312	0.02747	0.0306	0.1020	22
14	Performing activities which are not available in the country of origin	0.02037	0.01157	0.0319	0.6377	5
15	Suitable transportation system	0.01359	0.02033	0.0339	0.4007	13
16	A destination with high prestige	0.01162	0.01859	0.0302	0.3846	14
17	Climate	0.00879	0.02226	0.0311	0.2831	17
18	Economic and political close relationships	0.01868	0.01169	0.0304	0.6150	6
19	Hospitable people in destination	0.00973	0.02132	0.0310	0.3133	16
20	Accessibility	0.00432	0.02701	0.0313	0.1380	21
21	Low expenses in destinations	0.01886	0.01216	0.0310	0.6081	7
22	Recreational attractions	0.01117	0.01913	0.0303	0.3688	15

According to 5 indexes and results of TOPSIS method, variety of attractions, low expenses in destination and performing activities, which are not available in the country of origin with the most importance are located in the first, second and third ranks as shown in table 6.

2.6 Interpretation of the table:

The analysis of table of China pull factors as a destination attracting Iranian tourists referring to 5 weighted criteria via pair-wise comparison matrix and TOPSIS method show that cheap shopping factor with weight equal to (1.000) is of high importance for Iranian tourists.

The other factors like variety of attractions (0.7923), modern attractions (0.7848), cultural attractions (0.7468) respectively are very important for tourists travelling to China. Likewise the factor of similarity in the area of language, culture and religion (0.1020) and accessibility (0.1380) somewhat are less important.

3.Conclusion:

Economical growth of China resulted from production of various and cheap products attracted large number of Iranian tourists to this country. This demand is consisted of wholesale shopping of Iranian merchants and tradesmen and retailed shopping of travellers. Geographical condition, variety of climate, old civilization and ancient history are some of the unique advantages of China that provide suitable opportunities to make various tourist attractions and different forms of tourism.

Making artificial and modern attractions specially in large cities, other attractions of China have attracted many Iranian tourists to this country. Ancient history and culture of this legendary country, art and artifacts, ethnic variety, enormous unique remains registered in Global Organization of UNESCO are the other important priorities for Iranian tourists to choose this country as a destination.

Likewise close economical and political ties between destination and origin country and also providing opportunities to perform activities which are not available in the origin country affects the number of Iranian tourists attracted. Low travel expenditure and providing cheap package tours alongside suitable accommodation

and high social security are the other important factors in tourist attraction. The results of this research manifests that the distance between the origin country and destination (low accessibility) besides lack of language, culture and religious similarities considered in attracting Iranian tourists to China.

REFERENCES

Alan A. Lew, Lawrence Yu, Yohn AP, Zhang Guangrui (eds.), 2003. tourism in china. the Haworth Hospitality press

Bihu Wu, Hong Zhu and XiaohuanXu, 2000. *Trends in China's domestic tourism development at the turn of the century.*MCB University Press.

Bland, J.M., D.G. Altman, 1997. Statistics notes: Cronbach's alpha. *BMJ*, 314: 572.

Deng, J., S. Qiang, G.J. Walker and Y. Zhang, 2003. Assessment on and Perception of van Visitors' Environmental Impacts of Nature Tourism: A Case Study of Zhangjiajie National Forest Park, China. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 11(6): 529-548.

Gartner, W.C., 1993. Image formation process. In M. Uysal& D. R.Fesenmaier (Eds.), Communication and Channel Systems in Tourism Marketing (pp. 191-215). New York Haworth Press.

Gnoth, J., 1997. Tourism motivation and expectation formation. Annals Tourism Research, 24(2): 283-304.

Ho,W., X. Xu and P.K. Dey, 2010. Multi-criteria decision making approaches for supplier evaluation and selection: A literature review. *Eu J of O R,* 202: 16-24.

http://www.ecotourism.org.hk/other%20files/Ecotourism%20in%20China.doc.

Lundberg, 1990. The tourist business (6th ed.). Van Nostrand Reinhold: New York.

ManikraoAthawale, V., S. Chakraborty, 2010. A TOPSIS Method-based Approach to Machine Tool Selection. Proceedings of the 2010 International Conference of Industrial Engineering and operations Management Dhaka, Bangladesh, January, 9-10, 2010, India.

Nianyong, H. & R. Zhuge, 2001. Ecotourism in China's Nature Reserves: Opportunities and Challenges. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism,* 9(3): 228-242.

NicolinoStrizzi, 2002. China's Tourism Markets: an Overview of Trends, Developments and Prospects., 21 (2).

Onishi, Y., 2001. *China's Western development strategy: issues and prospects*, Institute of Developing Economies: Japan, pp:3.

Pill, J., 1971. The Delphi method: Substance, context, a critique and an annotated bibliography. *Socio-Economic Planning Science*, 5: 57-71.

Saaty, T.L., 1990. How to make a decision: The Analytic Hierarchy Process. *European Journal of Operational Research,* (48).

Shih, H.S., H.J. Shyur & E.S. Lee, 2007. An extension of TOPSIS for group decision making, Math and Com Mod., 45: 801-813.

State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA). (1998). *List of China's Nature* Reserves. Beijing: China Environmental Science Press.

Studley, J., 1999. Ecotourism in China: Endogenous paradigms for SW China's indigenous minority peoples. Retrieved June 28, 2006, from

The International Ecotourism Society, Retrieved July 3, 2006, from http://www.ecotourism.org/index2.php?what-is-ecotourism

Triantaphyllou, E., 2000. Multi-Criteria Decision Making Methods: A Comparative Study (Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands): 5-201.

Wen, J., & C. Tisdell, 2001. *Tourism and China's Development: Policies, Regional Economic Growth and Ecotourism*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co.

World Travel & Tourism Council, International Hotel & Restaurant Association, International Federation of Tour Operators, International Council of Cruise Linesand United Nations Environment Programme, (2002). *Industry as a partner for sustainable development.* United Kingdom.