# Measuring and analyzing the perceived level of competitiveness of tourism destinations (Case study: Kashan city)

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## Introduction

The increasing globalization of the tourism industry and the rapid pace of technological advancements have made competitiveness a critical factor for destinations. Competitive destinations must be able to adapt to changing market trends and technological innovations to remain relevant and attractive to tourists. The study of this issue becomes more important due to the direct relationship between the tourism experience and the issue of competitiveness

Measuring tourism competitiveness enables policy makers to develop strategies that promote sustainable tourism development and improve the overall performance of the tourism sector. To achieve this goal, operational goals should be established to accurately measure the competitiveness of tourism. Operational objectives are practical objectives that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and strategies.

For this purpose, the current research measures and analyzes the level of perceived competitiveness of tourist destinations and seeks to answer the following two questions:

1. Is the perceived competitiveness of the studied tourist destinations at a satisfactory level?

2. Which of the four measured dimensions (attractiveness of the destination, infrastructural factors, influential mental and psychological factors, support factors) have the greatest impact on the perceived competitiveness of tourism destinations?

**Materials and Methods**

The present research is practical in terms of its purpose, and in terms of method, it has been carried out using a descriptive-analytical method. In this research, to explain and justify the reasons, there was a need for a strong argumentative support, this support was provided by searching in theoretical topics. Due to the fact that questions were raised at first and then the researcher tried to answer them by sampling, the qualitative method was used. The method of collecting information in the present research has been considered in both library and field forms (through questionnaire, interview and observation), in order to determine the formal and content validity of the questionnaire, after preparing it, an initial control on the questions of the questionnaire. , it was done by professors and related experts and meaningless and irrelevant questions were removed. In the following, by conducting a pre-test and distributing 30 questionnaires among tourists and then checking them again, the questions that were directional, unclear, unanswered or associated with few tourists were removed and corrected. Also, in order to determine the reliability of the questionnaires, the value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was taken into consideration, and its calculation showed an acceptable value of 0.79, thus stating that the questionnaires have the necessary reliability and the answers of the tourists have convergence and they are internal correlation.

The statistical population of this research is foreign tourists who traveled to Kashan from 21 February 1401 to 30 May 1402. Since the population size of this research is unlimited, Cochran's formula is used to determine the sample size. Based on the preliminary sampling of 25 people, the standard deviation of 0.372 has been obtained; Therefore, at the detection level of 0.05 and the error of 0.05, the sample size of the research was calculated as 213, and 230 questionnaires were distributed to ensure the response of tourists.

**Discussion and Results**

Summarizing the responses provided by the tourists in the one-sample T-test, shows that in all three components of the attraction of the destination, i.e. historical heritage, natural heritage and man-made resources, The calculated averages are equal to 2.88, 2.72 and 2.63, at a significance level of 0.01, it is less than the numerical desirability of the test subject, i.e., an average of 3, and in total, at the confidence level of 99% Considering the negativity of the T-statistics and the upper and lower limits and the calculated average of 2.74, it can be said that the attractiveness of the destination in the studied tourist destinations of Kashan city is not at a satisfactory level. In terms of infrastructural factors, as the results show, it is only in the index or component of health infrastructure that the calculated average equal to 3.01 at the significance level of 0.01 is greater than the numerical desirability of the test and therefore It can be said that the city of Kashan has a satisfactory level of health infrastructure for

tourists. But in the other components of this dimension, as can be seen, the value of T statistic is negative and the averages calculated at a significance level of 0.01 are less than the numerical desirability of the test, as in the component the software infrastructure is calculated as 2.56. In total, according to the calculated average equal to 2.69 at a significance level of 0.01, it can be said with a confidence level of 99% that tourists are not in a satisfactory situation in terms of infrastructure factors. Examining the state of the mental and psychological influencing components shows that according to the average calculation of 2.64 at a significance level of 0.01 and 99% confidence, they are not satisfactory. By examining the situation of the fourth dimension of the studied tourist destinations, i.e. the dimension of support, we find that in the price competition variable, the average value equal to 3.17 is more than the expected average value (3) and it is calculated according to the value of the significance level. equal to 0.01, it is possible to know with 99% confidence the appropriate price of tourism in Kashan city. In the other index and component investigated in this dimension, i.e. the status of access to the destination, the average is calculated as 2.91, so that according to the positive value of the T statistic and the calculated significance level, which is less than alpha 0.01, it can be Realization that the average and relative level of access to the destination is satisfactory. Finally, by summarizing all the answers, the result was obtained that the average perceived competitiveness of tourist destinations equal to 2.77 at a significance level of 0.01 was lower than the expected numerical average (3), so it was stated that the city of Kashan It is not in a satisfactory and favorable condition.

## Conclusions

This research, which was conducted with the aim of measuring and analyzing the level of perceived competitiveness of tourists in Kashan city, sought to answer two main questions, and the following results were obtained:

First question: Is the state of perceived competitiveness of tourists at a satisfactory level?

In order to answer this research question, one-sample t-test was used, and the results showed that according to the average of 2.77 and the significant value of 0.01, it can be The confidence level of 95% stated that the state of perceived competitiveness of the study is not at a satisfactory level. Meanwhile, the average level of attractiveness of the destination was calculated with an average of 2.74, infrastructure factors with an average of 2.69, mental influencing factors with an average of 2.64, and support factors with an average of 3.04. As can be seen, the subjective impact dimension with the lowest average result has the most unfavorable situation in terms of perceived competitiveness, but the perceived competitiveness situation in the dimension of support factors is evaluated with a satisfactory average more than the average level so that it can be said which is relatively satisfactory in terms of support, this result is in line with the research of Javan Amani (1400.(

Second question: Which of the four measured dimensions (destination attractiveness, support, infrastructure, and subjective influencing factors) have the greatest impact on the perceived competitiveness of tourists?

In order to answer this question, the path analysis test was used, the results of which showed that this dimension of the attractiveness of the destination has the greatest impact on the formation of the current situation of the level of perceived competitiveness. In addition to directly influencing this situation, the attractiveness dimension of the destination has indirectly increased the intensity of the perceived competitiveness of the study by influencing the performance of support and infrastructure dimensions. Among the reasons for explaining this situation, we can mention the importance of the attractiveness of the destination and the desirability of its indicators in infrastructure and support factors. Another significant and indirect effect of the dimension of support on perceived competitiveness is the effect of this dimension on the status of the infrastructural dimension of perceived competitiveness under study. In this connection, we can point out the dependence of the support status on the status of infrastructure factors in tourism destinations.

**Keywords:** Perceived competitiveness, tourist destinations, Kashan city.