

Original Research Article

The Role of the Experience Economy in the Development of Senior Tourism Behavior (Case Study: Mashhad City)*

Abdolreza Khaligh¹, Katayoon Alizadeh^{2*}, Hamid Jafari³

1. Ph.D. Candidate in Geography and Urban Planning, Geography Education Group, Faculty of Engineering, Mashhad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran.
2. Associate Professor in Geography Education Group, Faculty of Engineering, Mashhad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran.
3. Associate Professor in Geography Education Group, Faculty of Engineering, Mashhad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran.

Received: 27/08/2023

Accepted: 03/12/2023

Available online: 21/01/2024

Abstract | In today's world, more people experience elderly, due to the increase in life expectancy and longevity of people in different societies compared to the past. Leisure time significantly, contributes to the lives of the elderly. So, the development of the tourism industry is very important. As a religious site in Iran, Mashhad is considered a tourist and pilgrimage city. This study was conducted to analyze and investigate the significant relationship between the experience economy, the formation of the mental image of the destination and senior tourism behavior to develop senior tourism. The samples include senior tourists who visited Mashhad. A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed and the results were studied considering the COVID-19 pandemic. The reliability and validity of the questionnaires were confirmed. The questionnaires were analyzed through SmartPLS and examined to determine the relationship between the variables in the modeling. The results showed that the most important component of the experience economy is aesthetics with a coefficient of 4.08 and the least important component is education with a coefficient of 3.59. The most important component of tourism behavior is the emotional component, with a coefficient of 4.32 and the least important is the cognitive component, with a coefficient of 3.85. The results also show that there is a significant positive relationship between tourism behavior and the components of the experience economy (emotional dimension, cognitive dimension, loyalty, memories and mental image). This relationship is confirmed statistically because the significance level of all the components is less than 0.05.

Keywords | Elderly, Experience economy, Tourism behavior, Mashhad city.

Introduction | Aging is an integral part of human life in the development process. Today's societies face this phenomenon and this process has accelerated significantly in the contemporary era. In the meantime, the tourism industry must grow in parallel with this

trend because humans are not static and constantly move and strive to reach perfection. Tourism can provide this dynamic for people, especially the elderly, who have more free time, under different environmental, spiritual, social and cultural conditions (Alén, Losada & Domínguez, 2016). Researchers argue that the phenomenon of aging can be found more in developing countries. However, according to the United Nations, almost all countries deal with this crisis. It seems that more researchers should investigate the field of senior tourism, so that effective steps can be taken in

This paper is extracted from Ph.D. thesis of "Abdolreza Khaligh", entitled "Presentation of Tourism Development Model for Elderly Tourist with Emphasis on the Role of Experience Economy (Case Study: Mashhad City)" which is being conducted under supervision of Dr. "Katayoon Alizadeh" and advisement of Dr. "Hamid Jafari" in Faculty of Engineering, Mashhad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran.
** Corresponding author: 09117630024, k-alizadeh@mshdiau.ac.ir

this field (Nielsen, 2014). Aging is an important period in human life. One of the reasons for the increase in the number of elderly people, is the decrease in the number of children in developed and developing countries. Human societies, especially in developed countries, face this problem. So, the phenomenon of aging has been noticed more than before. Iran suffers from such a crisis as well. According to the latest census in Iran, the number of elderly people has increased significantly since 1976 in such a way that the elderly population over 60 years of age constituted about 3.9% of Iran's population of 79 million people in 2016 (Statistical Center of Iran, 2017). It is estimated to reach about 30% of the total population of Iran in 2049 (Secretariat of the National Council of the Elderly, 2017). So, the aging of the Iranian population is an inevitable phenomenon in the coming decades (Fathi, 2019). The elderly population has increased more than five times in the whole world between 1950 and 2020, but its intensity in Iran is higher than at the global level (more than six times) (Fathi, 2020). Although this is a threat to Iran's demographic future, it can become an Haghshenas opportunity. In this regard, care for the elderly has been given special attention. Since the number of elderly people in Iran has increased, the needs of these people in the mental and physical dimensions, including emotional, health and housing needs, have been raised (Moti Haghshenas, 2011). The correct management of the tourism industry makes elderly people not be forgotten and always play an active role in society (Vigolo, 2017). Meanwhile, organized trips for the elderly are a basic solution for the elderly to meet their needs and desires in different societies, especially in Iran (Asadi, Azar & Taghavi 2016). This can expand and promote the tourism industry that has been neglected in Iran. The quality of life includes several areas of life, among which leisure time and neighborhood and family life occupy the largest part of the life of the elderly after retirement (Zhang & Zhang, 2018). Increasing the quality of life of the elderly, depends on the correct understanding of urban management of well-being and comfort and related indicators to apply a better understanding of well-being in their lives. Senior tourists improve their quality of life through travel. So, it can be argued that travel plays an important role in improving their quality of life. As the economy of a society progresses, the people of that society become more interested in increasing their quality of life (Ryu, Han & Lee, 2016; Lee, Kim & Bonn, 2016; Lee, Rahtz & Sirgi, 2007). The experience economy has now replaced the service economy. This

replacement, especially in senior tourism, can be expressed in such a way that senior tourists do not just feel satisfied by receiving high-quality services, but expect tourism service providers to provide new and memorable experiences (Ryu et al., 2016). This is the connecting point between senior tourism and the experience economy. The experience economy has two main dimensions, including active participation and passive participation and four sub-dimensions, including education, entertainment, aesthetics and escapism, which aim to gain satisfaction from new experiences (Hwang & Lee, 2018). This is the basis of the relationship between the experience economy and tourism (Fathi, 2020). Mashhad is the second-largest city in Iran. As a metropolis located in the northeast of Iran and a tourist and religious destination for Iranian people, especially the elderly and foreigners, Mashhad has been of interest since ancient times in terms of its natural conditions and the settlement in this city dates back to five thousand years BC. It is the ultimate destination for many Muslims in the world. Many people from all over Iran and the world visit this city annually. Among the special groups that pay special attention to the religious sites in this city are senior tourists. This is mainly due to Mashhad's natural, historical and religious attractions. The number of residential units in Mashhad is almost the same as the total number of residential units in other parts of Iran. However, statistics suggest that 40% of this capacity is currently available to foreign tourists. This has suitable potential for the development of religious tourism and other types of tourism. These are available capacities that can be used to develop tourism in Mashhad. In this study, the relationship between the experience economy, the formation of the mental image of the destination and the tourism behavior of the elderly is investigated.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Some of the most important concepts of this study are defined to explain its theoretical framework.

• Elderly

This point of view is raised from an individual, health and medical point of view. The elderly include those aged 65 and above. This division is used in most countries as a demarcation between the young and the elderly.

• Aging of the population

It is proposed from a demographic point of view and refers to the increase in the number of elderly people in the population. In other words, it is a decrease in the number of people aged 0–14, an increase in

the number of people aged 60 or 65 and older and a concept to show the changes in the age grouping of people in society, indicating that society has an upward trend toward old age. These demographic changes are expected to start around the world in the coming decades (Zanjani, Fathi & Noorollahi, 2016). Although there is no specific threshold for old age, experts and planners usually consider the elderly population at the age of 65 and over in Iran's demographic studies (Rafizadeh & Nozari, 2010).

• Experience economy

- The concept of the experience economy

Pine and Gilmore first proposed the term experience economy in an article titled "Welcome to the Experience Economy" and then completed this study by writing a book titled "The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre and Every Business a Stage" (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). This is a modification of the theory that seeks to express the concept of a new trend in economic development in which the tendency of people to search for identity and involvement in society is increasingly important. This concept goes beyond just markets, entertainment, culture or tourism, which are only aspects of economic experiences (Lorentzen, 2009). The experience economy in the tourism industry now focuses more on tourists and its products are services. It mainly seeks to create a memorable experience for tourists (Tozser, Katona, Vasvari & Bujdosó, 2015). In classifying experiences, Pine and Gilmore identified two dimensions and combined them to develop four realms (European Institute for Brand Management, 2009). These four domains are presented based on the two axes of participation: absorption or immersion in the environment (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011).

- Experience economy and senior tourism

One of the most effective measures to maintain and strengthen the general health of the elderly is the development of senior tourism. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has recognized the development of senior tourism as an opportunity for reasons: 1. Increasing the number of elderly people in human societies. Such a growing trend continues and determines the direction of lifestyle in societies, 2. The elderly have more free time and financial resources than other people in society and 3. The elderly stays longer due to mental and physical conditions and having more free time and financial resources (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2020).

- Experience economy and senior tourism behavior

Investigating and understanding the behavior of senior tourists on tourism trips or tourism behavior is one of the issues that is particularly important in improving

the quality of senior tourism. The nature of human development is such that behavioral patterns change several times during a person's life for various reasons, such as biological, psychological and social changes, which will significantly affect the indicators of choosing the type of tourism trip. For example, the choice of accommodation, means of transportation and travel companions. This dynamic in tourism behavior can be explained by life events and changes in life path. Leisure mostly changes at transition points in people's lives and old age is one of these transition points. However, the transition is gradual rather than sudden. Life events can be defined as markers on the path of life. These events have and will affect the travel behavior of the elderly throughout their lives. Therefore, travel behavior in leisure time has an important place in tourism studies and researchers have tried to study and conceptualize this phenomenon from different angles. Recent studies in this field have examined a wide range of topics in tourism behavior, including decision-making. Development processes, travel motivations, tourist personalities, vacation satisfaction, destination loyalty, internal forces of traveler psychology (personality, attitudes, perceptions and motivations), etc., do not operate in a vacuum.

- Dimensions of tourism behavior

According to the relevant recent studies, tourism behavior not only has a psychological dimension, but also has determining factors that are outside of the individual. Thus, it shapes external forces, social influences, patterns and travel activities (Huber, Milne, & Hyde, 2019). Only a few studies have focused on the elderly population from the perspective of tourism development. To advance the understanding of tourism behavior, Sedgley, Pritchard and Morgan (2006) argued that it is not possible to study older people's leisure behavior through "snapshot" research, which isolates one moment in time. This means that the leisure behavior of the elderly is formed during a process that needs to be investigated comprehensively. The leisure behavior of the elderly, especially on a tourist trip, appears to be a result of the realities of society and the events that involve the body and mind of the elderly before old age. The development of tourism patterns and preferences of the elderly on tourism trips is a complex process that is partially rooted in the course of individual life and cannot be fully explained by traditional linear life cycle approaches. Fig. 1 shows these patterns (Patterson, 2018). These events will continue into old age.

- Experience economy and senior tourism behavior

By developing active and passive participation, which are the two main indicators of the latest type of economy, the experience economy exposes the elderly on a tourist trip to new and unique experiences and

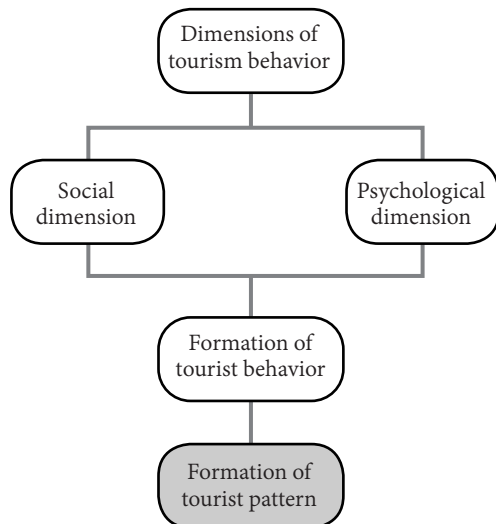


Fig. 1. Formation of tourism pattern. Source: Authors.

transforms the individual behavior of the elderly on a tourist trip into tourism behavior using four sub-indicators of education, entertainment, aesthetics and escapism. An elderly person may behave differently in a tourist group than outside of this group. However, it should be noted that the incidence, emergence and formation of senior tourism behavior do not have two main results: satisfaction with travel or dissatisfaction with it. If senior tourists are satisfied with the relative well-being of their tourism trip, their needs are aligned with the tourism services provided during the trip. This means the willingness to use the provider's tourism services, recommending the tourism trip to others and consequently, developing senior tourism.

In a study titled "A Strategy for Enhancing Senior Tourists' Well-Being Perception: Focusing on the Experience Economy", Jinsoo & Jung Hoon (2018) investigate how the well-being perception of the elderly is formed in the tourism industry. They specifically examine the causal relationships between four dimensions of the experience economy (education, entertainment, aesthetics and escapism), perceived well-being, the effects of increased quality of life on consumer attitudes toward a brand, brand attachment, brand loyalty and the moderating role of advertising effectiveness. The data was collected from 323 senior tourists in Korea. According to the results, all four positively affect the senior quality of life, which has a positive effect on the investigated variables. The results also show that advertising effectiveness is an important moderating factor in the relationship between education and well-being.

In a study titled "Impacts of Leisure and Tourism on the Elderly's Quality of Life in Intimacy: A Comparative Study in Japan" by Linghan Zhang and Junyi Zhang

(2018), leisure and tourism behaviors are captured by visit frequency, travel party and expenditure and quality of life is measured by the happiness and life satisfaction in different life domains, in line with the life-oriented approach. It is found that leisure behavior contributes to maintaining the elderly's QOL in leisure life and intimacy domains. Tourism behavior only contributes to QOL in populated areas. Leisure activities strongly enhance QOL in terms of intimacy and improve the neighborhood relationships of the elderly in depopulated areas and family life in populated areas.

Huber, Milne and Hyde (2019) conducted a study titled "Conceptualizing Senior Tourism Behavior: A Life Events Approach". This article utilizes the context of senior tourism to conceptualize life events and their impacts on tourism behavior. Life events are markers in the individual life course that can be used to explain the formation of travel patterns. This study adopts a qualitative biographical research methodology to explore the life trajectories and related tourism behaviors of 23 senior citizens in Freising, Germany, to gain an in-depth understanding of how and why tourism behavior changes across the individual life course. Life events can have a strong impact on tourism behavior; they can interrupt existing travel patterns or prompt new ones.

Basakha, Hosseini Amiri and Rohinezhad (2019) conducted a study titled "The Role of the Economy of Rural Tourism Experience on Place Attachment and Behavioral Intentions of Rural Tourists (Case Study: Countryside and Rural Areas of Ramsar and Chalous)". They investigate the effect of the economy of tourism experience in the countryside and rural areas of Ramsar and Chalous on place attachment and behavioral intentions. Findings show that the economy of the rural tourism experience has a meaningful relationship with pleasant excitement, the pleasant excitement derived from experience has a meaningful relationship with memories and the pleasant excitement has no meaningful relationship with the behavioral intentions of tourists. Therefore, experience economy affects place attachment and ultimately, the behavioral intentions of the tourists.

In a study titled "Assessment of Elderly Tourists' Views of Mashhad Through Age-Friendly City Factors", Tabrizi, Nozarasl, Naghavi and Esmaeili (2018), measure elderly tourists' views of Mashhad through elderly-friendly city factors. The results show that there is a correlation between the components such as having a mental image of the destination, satisfaction with the environment and religious attitude with satisfaction

and loyalty to the destination because as each component increases, satisfaction and loyalty increase. According to the above studies, it can be argued that the experience economy can significantly contribute to the formation of the elderly's mental image of the destination and accordingly, their behavior. Only a few studies have focused on the population and behavior of the elderly from the perspective of tourism development and the role of the experience economy in the formation of senior tourism behavior in Mashhad has not been investigated so far. Table 1 shows the strategic objectives and results of theoretical studies.

Methodology

This is an applied study in terms of objectives and the data were collected using library and field methods. The methodology used is descriptive-analytical. According to the official statistics announced by the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism of Khorasan Razavi Province in 2020, the arrival of tourists to Mashhad increased from 27500000 to 32800000 from 2015 to 2019 (General Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism of Khorasan Razavi Province, 2020). It had a 16% growth. The head of the representative office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Northeast Iran stated that the number of foreign tourists who arrived in Mashhad in 2018 was about 100,000. Although the exact statistical number of foreign senior tourists is not available, the average age of foreign tourists who arrived in Iran is about 50 years, according to Mehr News Agency on December 1, 2014, quoting the Director General of the Tourism Planning Office at the time. He adds that the tourists coming to Iran are elderly. So, in this study, 30% of these foreign tourists (about 30,000 people) are considered elderly and the total number of foreign and domestic senior tourists is about 2,000,000. The required number

of questionnaires is 384 according to the Cochran formula. Questionnaires including questions based on the Likert scale were designed to collect the required data. The questionnaire questions were used to measure the relationship between the experience economy and the mental image of the destination and their effect on the formation of senior tourism behavior. The questionnaire data were analyzed using SEM. It should be noted that the questionnaires were not completed by foreign tourists due to the restrictions caused by COVID-19 and the decrease in the number of tourists arriving in Iran and Mashhad. According to the collected questionnaires, the age range of the elderly who completed the questionnaires was 65 to 77 years.

According to the conceptual model in Fig. 2, the hypotheses are developed as follows:

- 1. The experience economy significantly contributes to the formation of senior tourism behavior.
- 2. The experience economy significantly affects the formation of the mental image of the destination of senior tourists in Mashhad.

The following relationships are examined to confirm or reject the hypotheses.

Does the experience economy significantly affect the formation of the senior tourist's mental image of the destination?

Does the experience economy significantly affect the formation of the senior tourist's mental image of memories?

Does the mental image of the destination significantly affect the formation of the senior tourist's mental image of memories?

Does the mental image of the destination significantly affect the formation of the senior tourist's sense of loyalty and place attachment?

Do tourism memories significantly affect the senior tourist's sense of loyalty and place attachment?

Table 1. Strategic objectives and the results of theoretical studies. Source: Authors.

Paramete	Type of participation	Indicators of the Experience Economy	Sub-indicators
Experience Economy in senior tourism	Active participation	Entertainment	Getting out of time
			Creativity
			Satisfaction
	Passive participation	Aesthetics	Loyalty
			Happiness
			Purposefulness
		Education	Changing one's attitude
		Escapism	Standard environment
			Creating a mental image

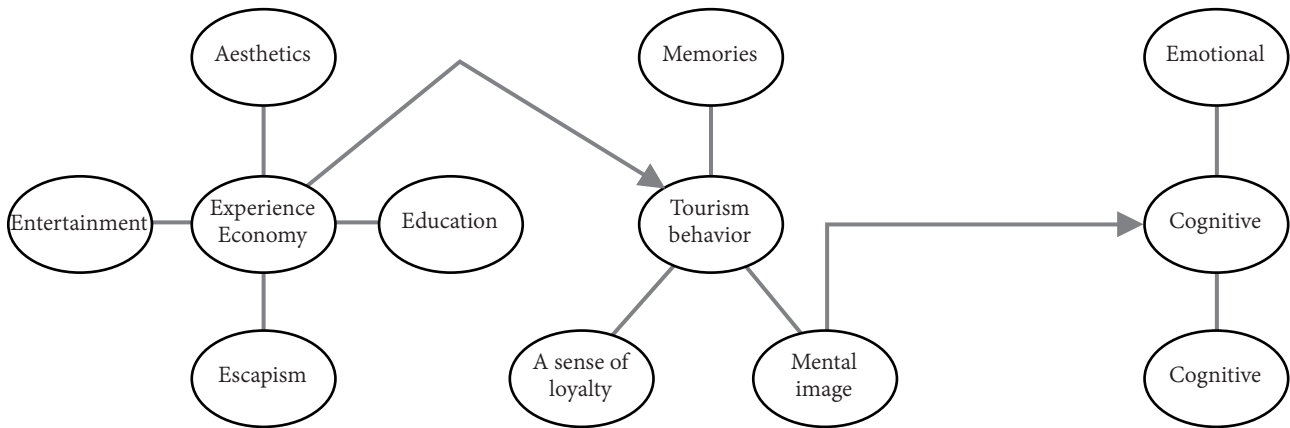


Fig. 2. The conceptual model. Source: Authors.

Does the mental image of the destination significantly affect the senior tourist's behavior?

Do memories significantly affect the senior tourism behavior?

Does the sense of loyalty and place attachment significantly affect the senior tourist's behavior?

Findings

The main items of the questionnaire were identified based on studies by Oh, Fiore and Jeung (2007), Finn (2005), Pine and Gilmore (1999), Yuksel, Yuksel and Bilim (2010), Gross, Brien and Brown (2008), Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996) and Louriero and González (2008) and expert opinions through interviews. So, the data were collected through researcher-made questionnaires and the survey method. The answers were given on a Likert scale. Table 2 shows the validity of the questionnaires according to the above structural model and using indicators and sub-indicators. According to the results, the value of Cronbach's alpha for all indicators is above 0.7, which is acceptable.

The measurement model will be homogeneous if the t-value is greater than the absolute value of 2.58 at the desired significance level (99%) and the factor loadings of each of the observed variables corresponding to its latent variable have a minimum value of 0.4. All the paths in this study met ideal conditions, no items were excluded from the model and suitable conditions were obtained for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) without modifying the constructs. Furthermore, the reliability of the constructs was determined using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability and their validity was determined using convergent validity. According to Table 2, the value of Cronbach's alpha for all the constructs is above 0.7, indicating the internal consistency of the model. Moreover, the average variance extracted (AVE) of all the constructs

is above 0.5, indicating the internal validity of the model. The results suggest that the most important component of the experience economy is aesthetics with a coefficient of 4.08 and that the least important is education with a coefficient of 3.59. The results also show that the most important component of tourism behavior sub-indicators is the emotional component with a coefficient of 4.32 and the least important is the cognitive component with a coefficient of 3.85. Additionally, all the components are of high importance according to the respondents, because the obtained averages are higher than the theoretical average, i.e., 3.

An important criterion that is determined through divergent validity is the degree of relationship between the construct and its indicators in comparison to its relationships with other constructs. The acceptable divergent validity of a model indicates that a construct in the model interacts more with its indicators than with other constructs. In Table 3, the correlation between the latent variables and the second power AVE of the variables is used in the main diameter. Divergent validity was confirmed too according to the test results. Finally, an acceptable model according to the measurement model entered the structural model test phase. AVE root of a construct is suggested to be more than the correlation between that construct and other constructs, indicating that the correlation between that construct and its indicators is more than its correlation with other constructs. Divergent validity was checked using the Fornell-Larcker correlation matrix, according to which the variance shared between a variable and its measures must be greater than the variance shared with other variables. These values are given in Table 4.

The internal (structural) model indicates the relationship between the latent variables. For the path coefficients to be significant, the t value of

Table 2. Indicators and sub-indicators based on the conceptual model. Source: Authors.

Indicators and sub-indicators			Items	Standardized coefficients	Significance coefficients	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
Experience Economy	Behavior formation	Education	EA1 I learned new experiences and lessons with a non-family group tourism trip to Mashhad.	0.889	30.3	0.811	0.730
			EA2 I learned a lot by indulging my curiosity and having an exciting experience on the tourist trip.	0.913	40.60		
			EA3 Gaining this educational experience has positively changed my attitude toward life.	0.753	14.92		
		Entertainment	ES1 Visiting Mashhad villages is interesting and exciting for me.	0.827	27.25	0.746	0.662
			ES2 I enjoy visiting the historical sites of Mashhad	0.863	23.22		
			ES3 It is interesting for me to see the daily activities of traders and pilgrims in Reza Bazaar.	0.747	10.91		
	Mental image	Escapism	ER1 I found a new dimension of my personality by participating in the tourist trip to Mashhad.	0.631	7.13	0.783	0.613
			ER2 I feel like a different person after gaining a new experience in Mashhad.	0.754	12.78		
			ER3 I am looking for freedom from my daily activities with the experience of traveling to Mashhad.	0.851	20.04		
			ER4 I feel the experience of living in another place and time by gaining the experience of pilgrimage.	0.847	36.16		
		Aesthetics	EZ1 Mashhad's sights and attractions are very interesting and attractive to me.	0.87	21.75	0.739	0.682
			EZ2 The atmosphere of visiting Imam Reza Holy Shrine has created a unique inner feeling in me.	0.779	8.22		
			EAT1 The spiritual atmosphere of pilgrimage has created an indescribable emotional image for me.	0.673	7.77		
		Emotional	EAT2 The texture around Imam Reza Holy Shrine has created a beautiful emotional connection with the past for me.	0.776	43.30	0.744	0.667
			EAT3 Visiting historical sites has created a good emotional connection with the past of Iran for me.	0.846	15.88		
			TSH1 The spiritual atmosphere of the Holy Shrine has raised my understanding of spirituality.	0.7	10.97	0.793	0.622
		Cognitive	TSH2 The spiritual atmosphere of the Holy Shrine has had a positive and significant psychological effect on me.	0.525	7.017		
			TR Staying and tourism in Mashhad have increased my desire to visit there again.	0.678	5.86	0.845	0.505
	Behavior formation	A sense of loyalty and attachment to the place	The tourist trip to Mashhad has created so much attachment in me that I feel homesick when I think about going back.	0.865	24.70		0.772
			I will have a sense of spiritual disconnection if i disconnect from Mashhad.	0.892	39.61		
			KH1 Many beautiful memories were evoked for me in Mashhad.	0.950	112.47	0.854	0.871
		Memories	KH2 I have established such a relationship with this tourist trip that it will remain in my mind as one of my best memories.	0.916	22.29		

each path must be greater than 1.96 at the 0.95% confidence level and greater than 2.58 at the 0.99% confidence level. The hypothesis that the experience economy significantly contributes to the formation of senior tourism behavior in Mashhad was confirmed according to the path and significance coefficients. According to the results of data analysis, it can be argued that the experience economy has a significant positive effect on tourism behavior with a path coefficient of 0.382 and a statistic of 2.48.

As one of the components of SEM, the direct effect

shows the directional relationship between dependent and independent variables in a model. However, a dependent variable in another direct effect can be the independent variable and vice versa. Moreover, a dependent variable can be associated with several dependent variables in a multiple regression model. Table 5 shows the results of the path coefficient, the t-value and the results of the hypotheses, including the second hypothesis (the experience economy significantly affects the formation of the mental image of the destination of senior tourists in Mashhad). Since the t-value is used to check the significance of relationships in SmartPLS and this value is 1.96 for a 5% error level, the t-value of the relationship is compared with the value of 1.96 to check the significance. If the t-value is greater than the mentioned value, the relationship is significant. As can be seen in the Fig. 2, all the t-values are greater than 1.96. So, all the relationships are significant. According to the obtained values, the data collected for the measurement of the latent variables have the necessary adequacy and fit. Thus, the results of the model estimation are reliable. Unlike the covariance-based SEM, there is no index to measure the entire model through PLS in SEM, but an index called goodness-of-fit (GoF) has been proposed for this purpose. This index considers both measurement and structural models and is used to measure the overall model performance. It shows the fit between the quality of the structural model and the measurement model and is manually calculated as mean R² and

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the variables. Source: Authors.

Component	Number	Average	SD	Standard error
Education	70	3.5952	0.99255	0.11863
Entertainment	70	4.0190	0.69013	0.08249
Escapism	70	3.7536	0.94743	0.11324
Aesthetics	70	4.0857	0.82958	0.09915
Experience Economy	70	3.8357	0.77189	0.09226
Emotional	70	4.3286	0.61775	0.07384
Cognitive	70	3.8500	0.94543	0.11300
Behavioral	70	4.3286	0.73665	0.08805
Loyalty	70	4.1429	0.72803	0.08702
Memories	70	3.9714	1.11928	0.13378
Mental image	70	4.1690	0.62715	0.07496
Tourism behavior	70	4.0571	0.85462	0.10215

Table 4. Measuring divergent validity using the method suggested by Fornell and Larcker. Source: Authors.

Component	Education	Experience Economy	Mental image	A sense of loyalty	Memories	Tourism behavior	Behavioral	Escapism	Aesthetics	Entertainment	Emotional	Cognitive
Education	0.877											
Experience Economy	0.855	0.880										
Mental image	0.661	0.707	0.928									
A sense of loyalty	0.549	0.599	0.741	0.898								
Memories	0.439	0.537	0.608	0.728	0.933							
Tourism behavior	0.639	0.743	0.771	0.878	0.830	0.834						
Behavioral	0.540	0.416	0.711	0.736	0.627	0.709	0.780					
Escapism	0.713	0.783	0.745	0.553	0.544	0.719	0.442	0.902				
Aesthetics	0.611	0.826	0.638	0.462	0.437	0.603	0.291	0.685	0.829			
Entertainment	0.695	0.715	0.631	0.506	0.435	0.611	0.341	0.686	0.724	0.814		
Emotional	0.620	0.660	0.776	0.490	0.424	0.677	0.373	0.616	0.457	0.569	0.789	
Cognitive	0.619	0.746	0.817	0.642	0.501	0.780	0.537	0.713	0.689	0.596	0.593	0.934

Table 5. The matrix of correlation between the variables. Source: Authors.

Component	Experience Economy	Emotional	Cognitive	Behavioral	Loyalty	Memories	Mental image
Experience Economy	1						
Emotional	0.746**	1					
Cognitive	0.657**	0.598**	1				
Behavioral	0.421**	0.502**	0.374**	1			
Loyalty	0.607**	0.625**	0.495**	0.735**	1		
Memories	0.547**	0.464**	0.438**	0.600**	0.699**	1	
Mental image	0.780**	0.892**	0.870**	0.631**	0.700**	0.566**	1
Tourism behavior	0.617**	0.570**	0.497**	0.706**	0.883**	0.952**	0.699**

mean shared values. To put it more simply, the data have a good fit with the factor structure and the theoretical foundation, indicating that the questions are aligned with the theoretical constructs. So, the calculated GoF value is 0.450, suggesting a good fit of the model to the data.

According to the Table 5, there is a significant positive relationship between tourism behavior and the components of the experience economy (emotional dimension, cognitive dimension, loyalty, memories and mental image). This relationship is statistically confirmed because the significance level of all the indicators is less than 0.05.

Conclusion

A descriptive analysis of the questionnaire indicates that aesthetics is the most important component of the experience economy for the elderly, that is, they care more about the aesthetics of a tourist trip than other components. According to the results, education is the least important component of the experience economy for the elderly and this may be considered a requirement of their age. The results of the mathematical and scientific analysis of the conceptual model show that the experience economy significantly affects the formation of senior tourism behavior. This means that the participation of the elderly in the tourism process, even if it is inactive, creates unique experiences for senior tourists and a more memorable image of the tourist destination in their minds. The results also show that the purpose of creating the satisfaction of senior tourists is to create their mental image of the destination, recommending the motivation to travel again and the experience of the trip to others. This study scientifically proves that designing a tourist trip based on the components of the experience economy will improve the senior tourism behavior to develop this type of tourism in Mashhad. According to the results, Imam Reza Holy Shrine and

its spiritual atmosphere affect the attraction of senior tourists. Creating a mental image of the Holy Shrine is the most important factor in promoting the return of senior tourists there. The results of the questionnaires indicate that the atmosphere around the Holy Shrine is not attractive for tourists and does not create a unique memory and mental image for them. Although this problem is partly due to the transition of the atmosphere around the Holy Shrine from traditional to modern, the past of this atmosphere, which somehow manifests the memories of many Iranians, especially the elderly, who are interested in the holy atmosphere of the holy shrine, is no longer seen. The current urban environment of Mashhad does not attract the attention of senior tourists, but the historical sites of Mashhad have preserved the historical link of the city's past with these tourists. The villages of Mashhad are effective in the formation of the memories and behavior of senior tourists as well. The results are in line with the findings of previous researchers such as Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007) and Sandra & Correia (2014). Since the experience economy depends on the 4 components of education, entertainment, escapism and aesthetics, tourism destination marketing managers and specialists are recommended to promote factors affecting pleasant feelings and creating positive memories in the minds of tourists through appropriate advertisements and providing the conditions for obtaining education, entertainment, escapism and aesthetics experiences and special experiences for tourists. Additionally, important information can be obtained to improve tourism experiences through a survey among tourists about their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the experiences gained in tourist destinations. The results are also consistent with the findings of previous researchers such as Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007) and Dolcos and Cabeza (2002). Tourism destination marketing managers and specialists should always

believe that providing tourists with pleasant feelings about tourist sites through creating recreational and educational centers, holding nature tours, taking advantage of markets, holding local exhibitions, teaching handicrafts and positive emotions lead to happy moments and, consequently, record exciting events and memories in the minds of tourists. Holding local festivals, exhibitions and markets can be very effective in increasing pleasant feelings and creating positive memories. Tourists' mental image of the destinations they are going to visit is very important. Besides, memories and place attachment have a significant positive effect on tourism behavior. These results are in line with the findings of researchers such as Groos et al. (2008), Yuksel, Yuksel and Bilim (2010) and Sandra & Correia (2014) concerning place attachment, researchers such as Martin (2010) and Sandra & Correia (2014) concerning memories and researchers such as Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996), Louriero & González (2008) and Sandra & Correia (2014) concerning tourism behavior. In general, place attachment means the identity and physical characteristics of a place. According to Izenhar et al. (2000), people first strongly relate to physical characteristics and then gradually attract more social aspects. On the other hand, Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) argue that social relations in areas are more important than physical and environmental characteristics in creating place attachment. According to these two views, it can be concluded that aggregation of positive experiences, feelings and memories to create deep and positive behavioral intentions can gradually strengthen the preference

for one place over other places, leading to finding oneself in that place, getting satisfaction from being in that place compared to other places and causing it to be recommended to others and, consequently, to return to that place again. Tourists' mental image of tourist destinations can be improved by increasing advertising and promotional measures and using and expanding media and advertising tools. This study has many theoretical and practical applications.

The practical recommendations derived from the results contribute to the clarification of the effect of the experience economy on the formation of senior tourism behavior in Mashhad. On the other hand, it can be very effective for the development of knowledge about the role of the experience economy in the development of senior tourism. In most of the domestic studies on the experience economy, its effect on variables such as travel patterns, intimacy, improvement of elderly neighborhood relations, etc. have been examined and not many studies have been conducted on the role of the experience economy in the formation of senior tourism behavior. This study is important in increasing the mental health of senior tourists.

Accordingly, recommendations for future studies are provided:

1. Identifying solutions to achieve the desired situation in the field of the experience economy according to the study results
2. Examining the effect of the experience economy on the behavior of other organizations involved in the affairs of the elderly through changing various organizational dimensions such as the organizational structure of tourism.

References list

- Alén, E., Losada, N., & Domínguez, T. (2016). The impact of ageing on the tourism industry: An approach to the senior tourist profile. *Social Indicators Research*, 127(1), 303–322. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S11205-015-0966-X>
- Asadi, M. M., Azar, A., & Naghavi, S. A. (2017). Evaluation and analysis of traditional hotels quality of services (QoS) using importance-performance analysis tool from domestic tourists' perspective (Case Study: Selected Traditional Hotels of Yazd Province). *Tourism Management Studies*, 12(39), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.22054/tms.2017.14822.1421> [In Persian].
- Basakha, M., Hosseini Amiri, S. M., & Rohinezhad, S. (2019). The role of the economy of rural tourism experience on place attachment and behavioral intentions of rural tourists (Case study: Countryside and rural areas of Ramsar and Chalous). *Tourism Management Studies*, 14(47), 125-156. <https://doi.org/10.22054/tms.2019.10610> [In Persian].
- Bujdoso, Z., David, L., Tozser, A., Kovacs, G., Major, V., Uakhitova, G., Katona, P., & Vasvari, M. (2015). Basis of heritagization and cultural tourism development. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 188, 307-315. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.03.399>
- Dolcos, F., & Cabeza, R. (2002). Event-related potentials of

emotional memory: Encoding pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral pictures. *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience*, 2, 252–263. <https://doi.org/10.3758/cabn.2.3.252>

• European Institute for Brand Management. (2009). *Brand-experience model of Pine and Gilmore*. Retrieved from https://www.eurib.net/experience_realms_model

• Fathi, E. (2019). *A study of the main causes of death and their impact on the years of lost life (from 2006 to 2016) and its role in the future population of Iran* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Science and Research Branch. [In Persian].

• Fathi, E. (2020). *The phenomenon of population aging in Iran and its future*. Statistical Research and Training Center. Retrieved from <https://src.ac.ir/analytical-reports/ID/5117>

• Finn, A. (2005). Reassessing the foundations of customer delight. *Service Research*, 8(2), 103–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670505279340>

• General Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism of Khorasan Razavi Province (2020). *Performance Report Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism of Khorasan Razavi Province*. <https://www.razavichto.ir/Statistical%20Report.aspx>

• Gross, M. J., Brien, C., & Brown, G. (2008). Examining the dimensions of a lifestyle tourism destination. *International Journal of Culture*, 2(1), 44–66. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17506180810856130>

• Hidalgo, M. C., & Hernandez, B. (2001). Place attachment: Conceptual and empirical questions. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21(3), 273–281. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jevp.2001.0221>

• Huber, D., Milne, S., & Hyde, K. F. (2019). Conceptualizing senior tourism behaviour: A life events approach. *Tourist Studies*, 19(4), 407–433. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797619832318>

• Hwang, J., & Lee, J. (2019). A strategy for enhancing senior tourists' well-being perception: Focusing on the experience economy. *Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 36(3), 314–329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2018.1541776>

• Jinsoo, H., & Junghoon, L. (2018). A strategy for enhancing senior tourists' well-being perception: focusing on the experience economy. *Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 36(3), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2018.1541776>

• Kim, M. J., Lee, C. K., & Bonn, M. (2016). The effect of social capital and altruism on seniors' revisit intention to social network sites for tourism-related purposes. *Tourism Management*, 53, 96–107. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.09.007>

• Lorentzen, A. (2009). Cities in the experience economy. *European Planning Studies*, 17(6), 829–845. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654310902793986>

• Loureiro, S. M. C., & González, F. J. M. (2008). The importance of quality, satisfaction, trust, and image in relation to rural tourism loyalty. *Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 25(2), 117–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548400802402321>

• Loureiro, S. M. C. (2014). The role of the rural tourism experience economy in place attachment and behavioral intentions. *International Hospitality Management*, 40, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2014.02.010>

• Martin, D. (2010). Uncovering unconscious memories and myths for understanding international tourism behavior.

Business Research, 63(4), 372–383. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2009.04.020>

• Mehmetoglu, M., & Engen, M. (2011). Pine and Gilmore's concept of experience economy and its dimensions: An empirical examination in tourism. *Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 12(4), 237–255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1528008X.2011.541847>

• Moti Haghshenas, N. (2011). Sociological aspects of aging population and the challenges of active aging in Iran. *Iranian Journal of Sociology*, 1(2), 133–147. [In Persian].

• Nielsen, K. (2014). Approaches to seniors' tourist behavior. *Tourism Review*, 69(2), 111–121. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-05-2013-0021>

• Oh, H., Fiore, A. M., & Jeoung, M. (2007). Measuring experience economy concepts: Tourism applications. *Travel Research*, 46(2), 119–132. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287507304039>

• Patterson, I. (2018). *Tourism and leisure behaviour in an ageing world*. CABI. <https://doi.org/10.1079/9781786390943.0000>

• Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1998). *Welcome to the experience economy* (Vol. 76, No. 4, pp. 97–105). Harvard Business Review Press. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781004227.00007>

• Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theater & every business a stage*. Harvard Business School Press. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.37-2254>

• Rafizadeh, N., & Nozari, S. (2010). *Building design guidelines for the daycare of older people*. Building and Housing Research Center. [In Persian].

• Ross, G. F. (2005). Senior tourists sociability and travel preparation. *Tourism Review*, 60(2), 6–15. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb058451>

• Ryu, K., Han, J. S., & Lee, T. J. (2016). Selection Attributes of Travel Products: A Case of Korean Tourists to Japan. *Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 33(5), 671–686. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2016.1167360>

• Sandra, M., & Correia, L. (2014). The role of the rural tourism experience economy in place attachment and behavioral intentions. *Hospitality Management*, 40, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2014.02.010>

• Secretariat of the National Council of the Elderly. (2017). *National document for the elderly, a program aimed at achieving healthy and active aging*. National Council of the Elderly. [In Persian].

• Statistical Center of Iran. (2017). *Excerpt of the results of the general population and housing census 2015*. Statistical Center of Iran. [In Persian].

• Sedgley, D., Pritchard, A., & Morgan, N. (2006). Understanding older women's leisure: The value of biographical research methods. *Tourism*, 54, 43–51.

• Sirgy, M. J., Lee, D. J., & Rahtz, D. (2007). Research in consumer well-being (CWB): An overview of the field and introduction to the special issue. *Macromarketing*, 27(4), 341–349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0276146707307212>

• Tabrizi, N., Nozarasl, S., Naghavi, M., & Esmaeili, M. (2018). Assessment of elderly tourists' views about Mashhad through "age-friendly city" factors. *Urban Tourism*, 5(3), 83–99. <https://doi.org/10.22059/JUT.2018.235473.337> [In Persian].

• United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2020). *Global*

and regional tourism performance. <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-data/global-and-regional-tourism-performance>

- Vigolo, V. (2017). Population aging: Challenges and opportunities for the tourism industry. In *Tourism, hospitality & event management* (pp. 3–23). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-47735-0_1
- Yuksel, A., Yuksel, F., & Bilim, Y. (2010). Destination attachment: Effects on customer satisfaction and cognitive, affective and conative loyalty. *Tourism Management*, 31(2), 274-284. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.03.007>
- Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L., & Parasuraman, A. (1996). The behavioral consequences of service quality. *Marketing*, 60(2), 31-46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299606000203>
- Zanjani, H., Fathi, E., & Noorollahi, T. (2016). *Demography of Iran: Population structure and distribution* (Vol. 1). Statistical Research and Training Center. [In Persian].
- Zhang, L., & Zhang, J. (2018). Impacts of leisure and tourism on the elderly's quality of life in intimacy: A comparative study in Japan. *Sustainability*, 10(12), 4861. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10124861>

COPYRIGHTS

Copyright for this article is retained by the authors with publication rights granted to Tourism of Culture journal. This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Khaligh, A., Alizadeh, K., & Jafari, H. (2024). The Role of the Experience Economy in the Development of Senior Tourism Behavior (Case Study: Mashhad City) .*Tourism of Culture*, 4(15), 6-17.

DOI:10.22034/TOC.2023.409683.1134

URL: https://www.toc-sj.com/article_185409.html?lang=en

