Original Research Article

Tourists' spiritual perception through the lens of culture

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Abstract| Tourists' spiritual perception of travel is the cognition of life; it becomes clear within a cultural context and will finally have a cultural result for the tourist. Culture is not considered as a source, product, or a reference but as a value by itself which makes sense of the philosophy of tourism, divine motion, and nature of man. He interprets his perceptions of the world and realizes the creation of the universe. This research which has been performed in a qualitative way based on description and analysis, the spiritual perception of tourists has been investigated as one of the most important categories of human realization and understanding in the compass of culture. The results indicate that culture is considered as the language of spirituality, intertwined with spirituality, and manifests itself in the core of the tourist's spiritual perception of travel. A deeper realization of the concept of culture in tourism requires concepts that realize this contemplation. On the other hand, tourism is a motion in the depths of culture and flows inside culture with the tourist's understanding of self and universe. The spiritual and cultural nature of the tourist's motion is described within a cultural context based on the tourist's presumed components, internal truth, external truth, and the tourist's action, and is linked to culture and ultimately leads to spiritual perception.

Keywords| *spiritual perception, tourism, culture.*

Introduction| Spiritual perception is the realization of an idealistic human being who can have continuous and permanent steps in the path of truth-seeking and cognition and for which there is no limit. Therefore, the human needs more closeness to spiritual perception in the path of God and to realize his divine caliphate, and the first step can be developing self-knowledge as much as possible (Shahrabi Farahani, 2019). The real origin of humans, as the main axis of travel and tourism, is considered a logical, coordinated, and practical thinking system around spirituality, whose purpose is the evolution of the soul (Elahi, 1998, 25). Actually, understanding the universe in its turn is a spiritual concept and related to the human soul that can't be separated from human life (Willson, McIntosh & Zahra, 2013). Cognition and searching for the meaning of life have forced the man to travel to gain cognition and experience to connect with the earth, nature, the creator of the universe, and to find the concept and meaning of life. Detection and receiving the meaning of life in the general sense is interpreted as knowledge and awareness of man from the outside world and the path of perfection and unraveling secret and mystery and the course of human movement and presence on earth (Imani Khoashkhoo & Shahrabi Farahani, 2019). The values presented to human beings in the space of travel are considered like the guiding principles of understanding reality and the significance of life (Schwartz, 1994), which will vary

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according to each person's cognitive system (Kim, Borges & Chon,, 2006; Ramdas & Mohamed, 2014). Tourism has been associated with culture from the beginning. Culture is not only a disposable product but also has a wide range in tourism so that it is noteworthy from the public, political, environmental, and psychological aspects. Culture is considered both as a necessity, as a product, and as a platform for all tourism activities. Culture is the cradle of the creation of knowledge, learning, discovery, and comprehension for the tourist (Su, Aaron, McDowell & Lu, 2019). Travel is the cradle of the formation of human existence that can include all path traverses of human life and lead it to integrity. From man's relation with himself, which the people who travel with man, the environment in which he is placed due to the atmospheric features dominant there, and the universe and the existence around, and ultimately the creator that man is looking for while travel, he goes through all the relationships along the path of divine and the creator to reach the lost (Shahrabi Farahani, 2019). Spiritual perception can be interpreted along with the realization of the truth of human existence and the purpose of creation, which connects man to his true and spiritual meaning. Therefore, it takes place along with human evolution and transcendence and is in line with human cognition in the universe, which leads to his connection to his original and inner nature. Spiritual perception is the realization of the origin of human creation. According to philosophers, man has a supernatural nature and is the artwork of the creator of the universe, who himself imitates this feature and creates works of art in the world (ibid.).

Studies show that tourism and culture are both complicated issues that are not merely limited to superficial social behavior. On the one hand, tourism is more than a solely economic industry; on the other hand, culture is also a deeper and more thought-provoking concept than a fascination beyond instrumental approach. Tourism is a transcendental subject and realizes the spiritual and immaterial aspects of human existence and human society rather than being considered as a hobby or a lucrative industry. Tourists' spiritual perception refers to the tourist's perception, interpretation, and understanding based on spiritual principles related to his nature and explains awareness, cognition, truth-seeking, and connection with the concept in the path of realization of tourism philosophy. The relationship between tourism and culture requires understanding the depths of culture based on spiritual principles. Therefore, deeper cognition and

perception in this area can lead to more effective activities in the development of tourism and culture because a better understanding of the philosophy of each subject makes realizing the goals more possible than before. In this article, which has been performed in a qualitative manner, the descriptive method and analyzing theoretical concepts have been used to examine the tourist's spiritual perception in the field of culture. The concepts of tourists' spiritual perception and culture have been analyzed separately, and the origin of the relationship and the semantic realm of tourist spiritual perception in the field of culture have been evaluated.

Theoretical Literature
• Tourist's spiritual perception
The concept of spirituality is defined and becomes meaningful in man's relationship with himself, the world around him, and the creator of the universe. Spiritual themes in the travel space are manifested by emphasizing man's relationship with himself, others, the environment, and the creator of the universe (Shahrabi Farahani, 2019). Some consider spirituality to be specific to the existence of the tourist himself, which results in completely personal perception; thus, they explain spirituality as an individual experience. Spirituality from the perspective of acquiring cultural meanings has also been studied in tourism studies. (Garcês, Pocinho & de Jesus, 2018).

Ivtzan et al. (2013) have expressed the belief in human nature, the purpose of life, superior existence, and the need to know to understand and experience existence and God. This is because travel can be a valuable resource to achieve these goals of humans in life. According to many tourism researchers, the tourist travels to discover the meaning of self, life, and God. Therefore, tourism is a very important resource for human life because it intends to achieve its main purpose through that. So, tourism is a valuable experience that realizes spirituality for the tourist rather than mere entertainment. Many researchers, including Dan (2015), Coghlan (2015), Filep and Pearce (2014), emphasize the key aspects of positive feelings, positive thinking, mental health, happiness, and hope in life. Spiritual nature and are, in fact, a philosophical concept in tourism where the psychological approach is also required to recognize the concept of spirituality more precisely. Because all these components are realized through a better understanding of spirituality as goals that each person seeks in life, and in the meantime, tourism can be considered a source of realizing these goals. The

nature of the tourist, the mental states of the tourist, including feeling happy, positive experience, sense of fortune, and satisfaction with spiritual themes, are considered (Garcês, Pocinho & de Jesus, 2018).

The assumptions in the tourist's mind are formed of the collection of the tourist's experiences during life and his and his beliefs. The tourist's presumption creates a set of beliefs, values, religious beliefs, moral principles, and assumptions about the destination of the tourist. The internal truth is the key and inseparable element of spirituality and human nature, which are related to the immaterial and spiritual part of human existence. Internal truth, as one of the main pillars and components of spiritual perception, refers to the feeling of inner ecstasy and delight of the tourist while facing culture, feeling of connection and closeness to the place where he is located, and a kind of affiliation with the background of the culture and history of the region and sense of closeness to the creator of the universe. The superficial truth encompasses the physical dimensions of the tourist and his appearance. Due to the terrestrial nature, he finds with his presence in nature, and to conform and align with life on the earthly planet, the tourist requires to benefit from the elements and dimensions that also find a physical sort in his existential material

capacity and make worldly life easier for him. The tourist has been created concerning other human beings and the universe. Travel space is also the cradle of the formation of human communications types. The tourist's action, besides emphasizing the type of his communication, refers to the number of tourist's interactions with other people during the trip and the experiences that the tourist gains during travel with other people. These relations contribute to human excellence and form the tourist's spiritual perception (Shahrabi Farahani, 2019); (Fig. 1).

• **Tourism and culture**

Until the middle of the twentieth century, culture and tourism was separated from each other. Cultural resources have been considered as cultural attractions in the destinations that people travel to visit. On the other hand, tourism has been considered as a recreational and historical activity of people's lives in the industrial community. In this view, culture is seen as a tourism product that has a high impact on the development and progress of communities (OECD, 2009). The relationship between tourism and culture is generally described as follows from the 1980s onwards (Table 1).

Many definitions have been expressed about the concept of culture. Hegel considers culture as a sign
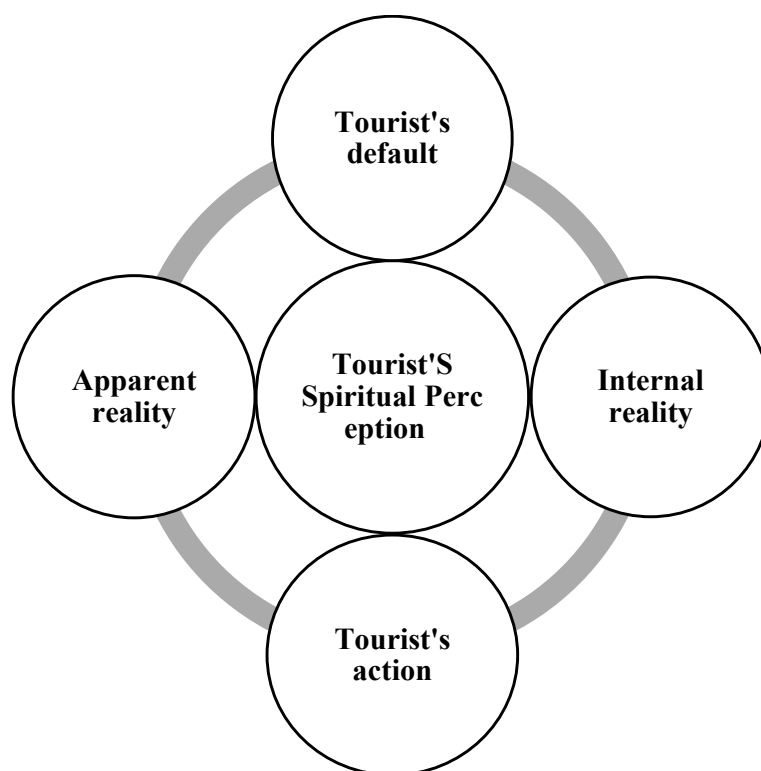

Fig. 1. The components of the tourist's spiritual perception. Source: Shahrabi Farahani, 2019.

of development, perfection, and progress of human society to a supreme level and the attainment of freedom as well as the identification of human beings. Jean-Paul Sartre believes that culture is a reflection of me; Man reflects and identifies himself in it. Only this transparent mirror unfolds his face to him (Salehi Amiri, 2007). Culture can be considered as a complicated whole of distinct spiritual, material, conceptual, and emotive traits in the most general concept that are considered as the properties of a society or social group and not only art and literature, but also lifestyles, human's constitutional rights, value systems, and traditions and beliefs are included (UNESCO, 1982, quoted in Ejlali, 2000). Culture is a category that consolidates human existence and consolidates at a more evolutional level. According to Hegel's ideas, if human steps out of the circle of necessities and needs and achieves a world of freedom and evolution, he is cultural. This importance is achieved when he can identify issues independently and, in other words, find more connection with the absolute Spirit (Rashidpour, Shah Norouzi & Iranpour, 2014, 82-83). Classification of common semantic domains has been performed that culture is due to the variety and multiplicity of definitions. For example, the concept of culture can be divided into six categories which have been shown in Table 2.

• **Spirituality and Culture**
Spirituality is one of the aspects of human existence in order to seek and acquire meaning and the way of experience and communication with self, others, nature, and the immaterial (Puchalski, Vitillo, Hull & Reller, 2014). Spirituality means the level of human awareness, intelligence, and sensation that differentiates him from other beings in the universe and provides the possibility of liaison with the immaterial dimensions of existence and self. In fact, spirituality is the immaterial aspect of the human dimension that is explained by a liaison to self, others, nature, and creator of the universe and makes it possible for him to interact and obtain supreme and acme of the universe. As a result, it will bring him physical and mental health (Jackson, Colleen, Capon & Pringle, 2016). On the other hand, culture is defined based on spirituality—some express culture and spirituality as entail and interdependent of each other. Spirituality is defined as conditional and dependent on the culture that is formed from the study of anthropology, sociology, and other humanities over time. Therefore, it can be assumed that spirituality has been different according to the period and cultural conditions of societies. Culture is considered in the society and lifestyle that seems to affect on spirituality.

From another point of view, if spirituality has a meta-religious approach, it determines the culture and lifestyle. Because the principle of human life and existence is spiritual, and man and culture find meaning with all components and properties within this spirituality (Gallagher, 2003). The importance of culture is to the extent that it has been expressed as the language of spirituality so that spiritual experiences can be understood through culture. Therefore, spirituality has three dimensions so that it can be explained in the realm of culture. 1) The individual dimension of spirituality, 2) The social dimension of spirituality, and 3) The reflective dimension of spirituality (Zyzak, 2008). Culture is a code that we learn and, in fact, is a common aspect between us and others. "Learning" and sharing ideas requires "communication," and communication requires encoding and symbols that must be learned and shared (Mohtadi & Shahbazi, 2017).

Data analysis
• **Tourist's spiritual perception and culture**
The purpose of this study is to analyze concepts and theories about the tourist's spiritual perception, culture, and spirituality were performed by qualitative methods and analytical description in this research, which was conducted with the purpose of the analysis and investigation of tourist's spiritual perception in the realm of culture. Tourist's spiritual perception is one of the new concepts that has been addressed in tourism studies and explains various aspects of the tourist's perception of travel. Given the fact that culture has hidden basics and values, the tourist's spiritual perception was studied as one of the supreme examples of human perception in the realm of culture.
Culture itself is the cause of travel and plays an important role in this industry, but it can be viewed from different angles. Not only the type of tourism and the classification of types of tourists, but also the perception of the tourist occurs in this context, so how is this spiritual perception guided by culture? How is spiritual perception, which is a new concept in the tourist's cognition, realized in the realm of culture? Here we can point out the reason and nature of culture in tourism. Culture, beyond the product-oriented perspective, in this process of searching, discovering, and receiving the meaning of humans on earth, can be the goal to complete the path of cognition and perception. The reason and nature of human's movement to start traveling to find a title called tourist arises from the heart of his human existence, and it is the spirituality to search, discover, know and receive. This path is very spiritual perception.

Table 1. Relationship between tourism and culture. Source: OECD, 2009.

Dimensions	The relationship between tourism and culture
Demand	- Increase of tendency to visit cultural attractions as one of The sources of cultural identity in the industrial society; - The cultural capital appreciation in society; - Postmodern consumerism and emphasis on individual development; - The increase of the importance of intangible culture; - The role of atmosphere and intellectual image; - The increase of access to other cultures;
Supply	- Development of cultural tourism and increase of employment and revenue generation; - Significant advancement of the cultural tourism market in the world; - The supply increase of cultural products as one of the local development measures in the world; - The increase of accessibility to cultural sources; - The necessity of attention to cultural identity in societies; - The tendency to the representation of the cultural, intellectual image of touristic destinations and sites; - The supply increase of cultural products; - The elimination of financial problems in societies;

Table 2. The Classification of the Definitions of Culture. Source: Shakoori & Mirsadeghi, 2016.

Row	Concept	Description
1	The Human Learned	Total accumulated human learned; as follows all that human beings have learned in their normal lives and transformed from generation to generation.
2	The Human virtues	Referring to the ancient meaning of the word culture means refinement and ethical development; A set of necessities and competencies that support all aspects of human life.
3	The Human material and spiritual achievements	That's all things societies have obtained so far. The most extensive definition of culture including all material (buildings, industry, technology, etc.) and spiritual (customs, rituals, standards, etc.) achievements.
4	The Normalized beliefs and values	The main part of the culture is the spiritual part in which material manifestations must not be equated with culture. In this concept, it is the culture of normalized acceptances in a society that is divided into three general parts: beliefs, values, and norms.
5	The system of human occasions	Culture is software that defines human relationships with each other and measures the validity or falseness of these relationships. Culture is a system that adjusts human social relationships in different situations and conditions.
6	The lifestyle or pattern	Culture is defined in the concept of everyday life in modern definitions, especially sociological approaches.

If we take culture as the main realm in a general view, tourism and spirituality are placed in this context in the form of one of its components called the tourist's spiritual perception On the one hand, the tourist himself has a culture. When we consider culture in the form of tangible and intangible elements, all these elements express spirituality. Culture, while figuring individual and social beliefs and values due to nature, is a method and context that expand the tourist's spiritual perception and makes it interpretable. The spiritual perception of the tourist is both expressed through culture, in the language of culture, and deepens on individual factors. The rise of the tourist's spiritual perception of travel is culture. The relationship between tourist spiritual perception and culture is shown in Fig. 2.

Tourist's beliefs and convictions, which are embedded in the cultural detail, are a part of the tourist's presuppositions consisting of worldviews and convictions, also from another part of the tourist's internal truth and human essence in connecting with the creator of the existence and self-cognition. On the other hand, the external truth that refers to physical exponents and properties is manifested in cultural symbols externally. These mental, internal, and physical properties of tourist's action and his relationships with society. Here it can be inferred that all these components of spiritual perception are components of culture themselves. In other words, the trace of culture can be found in each of these dimensions. Today tourist's spiritual perception is affected by culture and affects culture. Individual, social and reflective aspects are the factors of spirituality. In all three cultures, it either plays a productive role, is the aspect
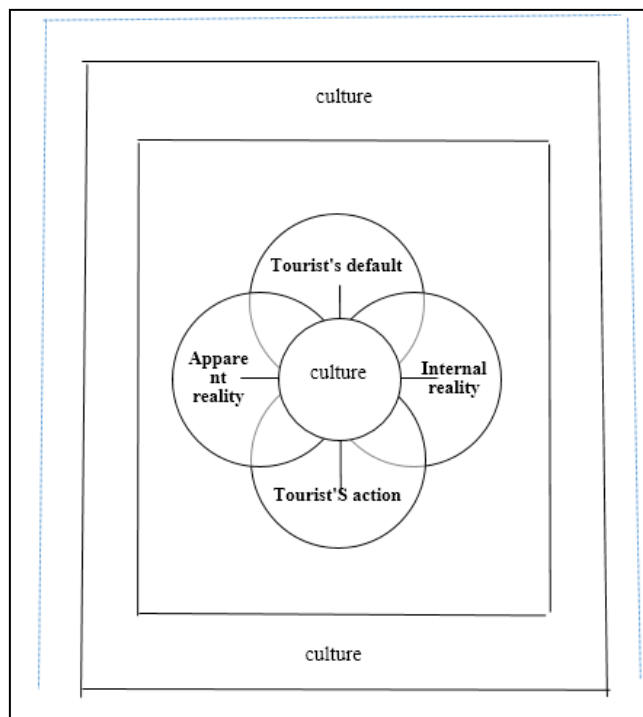
Fig. 2. Tourist's spiritual perception and culture. Source: author.

of behavior, social interactions, and expression occurs through the lens of culture.

Conclusion

Man has a meta-material nature, a spiritual essence, which is rooted in existence and all beings in the universe. The spiritual essence of existence can be interpreted in different terms and has different manifestations. Undoubtedly, culture can be one of these exponents. Culture has a meta-material nature in the literal and idiomatic sense, is embedded in human beliefs, minds and faiths, and has emerged in appearances and material externally. In the meantime, it can be said that culture is related to spirituality closely. How can this complicated relationship be described? Undoubtedly, spirituality is derived from culture, is considered the language of expression of spirituality, which drives a man to move and shape his journey in the life course. This is why the journey is derived from the spiritual essence of existence and humanity, and culture, as the root of this structure, is reduced in some perspectives. Culture is seen as a species in travel, and spirituality too. Now, with a deeper look, we can conclude that each spirituality and culture has components that can be described in the process of hospitality tourism, not a superficial description, but can be understood with more reflection on the depth of this.

Undoubtedly, interpretation and reflection on the concepts of culture and tourism require understanding the context of this description and interpretation. Therefore dimensions of tourism and culture can achieve this. The tourist's spiritual perception determines humans' perceptions in the path of unveiling the truth more and more. The tourist's spiritual perception is a connection with the Creator, existence, the world, and human society to interpret beliefs, opinions, values, worldviews, material, interactions, and everything that puts man in the path of his philosophy of creation. Culture is a set of symbols, norms, beliefs, and values of a society that are manifested in physical and non-physical forms. The principle of human life and existence is spiritual, and man and culture find meaning within this spirituality with all its components and properties. The importance of culture is to the extent that it has been expressed as the language of spirituality. The tourist walks through the culture in a journey, from the behavior of the host community to cultural symbols, religious, historical, and natural sites in which culture is injected into the behavior of people in the community. Now, this realm is located as a reference point and the tourist has various conclusions in this point. In this perspective, culture is considered as a value in its turn. The value that can step in parallel with human beings and develop the spiritual and heavenly aspects of human existence.

Investigating the tourist's spiritual perception in the realm of culture confirms that travel is an action to

move and go into the depths of culture. Travel can interpret culture beyond superficial and materialistic perspectives. Describing culture from different approaches can improve its performance and be effective in achieving tourism's spiritual purposes. The tourist's spiritual perception contains components that will be different in situations. However, the tourist's assumption, internal truth, external truth, and tourist's action are all related to culture closely, each of which can be a cultural component, considered a cultural value, can be the flagship of culture, and even provide a platform for a better description of the culture. Hence, it is

cultural approaches and attitudes that can deepen the function of the tourist's spiritual perception. In one approach, all the components of the tourist's spiritual perception can be considered culture. On the other hand, it may be possible to define the culture of the tourist's spiritual perception separately. Of course, this seems to contradict the nature of culture and spiritual perception. The culture and spiritual perception, which is in contradiction with the spiritual nature of these two categories, because spiritual themes are general and transcendental in nature and cannot be decomposed.

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