

A STUDY OF TOURISM USING DEMOGRAPHIC AND TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS: THE CASE OF SALALAH, SULTANATE OF OMAN

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study is conducted to explore segments of tourist visiting Salalah, one of the most visited cities in the Middle East and to segment these tourist into meaningful and manageable groups. Segmentation has been emerged as a very powerful and useful tool to market goods and services to targeted markets and targeted groups (Berrigan *et al.*, 1992). As stated by Chen (2003. p. 310), “with fast-changing consumption patterns, it is a great challenge to keep up with the expectations of consumers because the development of new services and products are rather costly and time-consuming.” When segmentation is well-constructed and effectively utilized to understand and serve markets, firms/destinations are able to direct their resources much more efficiently to reach the target markets and their efforts to compete against their rivals becomes much more fruitful. Why segmentation is such a powerful tool to better compete and better market goods and services lays behind many aspects of this innovative approach. By utilizing market segmentation effectively and meaningfully, a tourist destination may gain many impressive benefits including competitive advantage (Dolnicar *et al.*, 2005; Berrigan *et al.*, 1992). According to Dolnicar (2008. p. 2), some of the important benefits of segmentation are;

1. Competition can be reduced from the global market to tourism destinations specializing on the same segment (*e.g.* all ecotourism destinations),

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2. Efforts can be focused on improving the product in a specific way rather than trying to provide all things to all people at high cost (*e.g.* a family destination is unlikely to need extensive nightlife options),
3. Marketing efforts can be focused by developing the most effective message for the segment targeted (*e.g.* a sun and fun message for young tourists traveling with friends) and by communicating the message through the most effective communication channel for the segment (*e.g.* in national geographic or other nature magazines for ecotourists), and finally,
4. Tourist experiencing a vacation at a destination that suits their special needs are likely to be more satisfied with their stay and, consequently, revisit and advertise the destination among like-minded friends.

It is clear from the benefits stated above, segmentation is a strong tool to compete better and effectively, so that destinations must do the work to better understand their visitors and shape their products and services accordingly. As stated by Dolnicar (2008. p. 2), "... the expected outcome from market segmentation is competitive advantage. Consequently, the aim of the actual segmentation task is to group tourist in the way that is of most managerial value." There are a number of requirements to make the segments managerially useful Dolnicar (2008. p. 3);

- The segment should be distinct meaning that members of one segment should be as similar as possible to each other and as different as possible from other segments.
- The segment should match the strengths of the tourism destination
- The segment should be identifiable. While female travellers can be identified very easily, identification of those visitors who are motivated by rest and relaxation may not be as simple.
- The segment should be reachable in order to enable destination management to communicate effectively. For instance, surf tourists are likely to read surf magazines which could be used to advertise the destination.

A segment should be suitable in size. This does not necessarily imply that a bigger segment is better. A tourism destination may choose to target a small niche segment that represents a large enough market for the particular destination and has the advantage of having very distinct requirements.

Therefore, the objectives of this current study are designated to be;

1. To identify the profile of the tourists who vacation in Salalah
2. To examine the factors influencing them to choose Salalah

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A destination image is impacted by destination features and tourists' variables (such as age, income, past experiences) (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). Mill and Morrison (1985), for example, indicated that tourists from different countries usually have different perceptions for tourists' attractions and differences in perception require different marketing topic for those and different market segments. Finding out why people decide to visit different places and what influences their choice of destination are very important insights for developing suitable marketing strategies and managing market segments (Heung *et al.*, 2001. p. 260)

In general, natural and man-made characteristics of tourist destination (climate, beaches, scenery, hotels, mountains, transportation, package tours, historical and cultural buildings) may identify the tourist segments and these segments can be adapted to tourist preferences by tourism marketers to satisfy the tourists segments (Heung *et al.*, 2001. p. 260-261).

Identifying segments has been a strong marketing management tool that caught attention of many practitioners and researchers. Using and benefiting from results of various segmentation studies, destination managers, officers and firm owners are able to better position their destinations which in turn enables them to attract larger numbers of tourists to their destinations and establishments. Balođlu (1997) for example studied motives of West German tourists to the United States and found six image factors that attracts Germans to visit United States. These factors loosely named to be;

1. Friendly environment,
2. Adventure, nature and resort,
3. Urban environment,
4. Budget and value,
5. History and culture, and,
6. Active outdoor sport.

According to Baloglu (1997), different marketing strategies should be employed to cater different market groups.

Rudez *et al.* (2013. p. 138) wanted to explore what attracts of visitors to Portorož. They found four different segments of visitors. These segments are labelled "well-being visitors," "friends-oriented visitors," "curious passive visitors" and "multifarious visitors." The largest segment, "well-being visitors," for example are people who are looking for physical activity and convenience. "Friends-oriented visitors" on the other hand, are people who sought benefits linked to passive ways to spend time with friends during the visit to Portorož.

Van der Merwe *et al.* (2011) want to explore travel motivations of tourists in the South African coast. The study concluded with four factors which are named destination attractiveness, escape and relaxation, time utilization and personal safety.

Cha *et al.* (1995) researched the travel motivation of Japanese overseas travelers and defined six motivational factors such as relaxation, knowledge, adventure, family, travel bragging and sports. Researchers have demonstrated that Japanese were motivated by two important factors of knowledge and adventure traveling.

On the other hand, Weaver *et al.* (1994) found that age is a distinctive demographic factor that affecting destination choice. While younger people seek fun and cheap places, older people tend to seek comfort and security. Weaver *et al.* (1994) also found that tourist under 45-year-old tend to be novelty-seeking.

Dey and Sarma's (2010) study focused on tourists travel motivation in North-East India. This study revealed three segments: "Natureloving explorers," "nature-loving vacationers," and "change seekers." The travel motivation factors found in this study are: Vacation, fun and independence, health and recognition, nature and wander thirst.

Inbakaran and Jackson's (2005. p. 53-61) study focused on the characteristics and segmentation of tourists who visit resorts. They found four segments and were named: "Resort incidental, recreation focused (Romantics)," "resort-centred, utilities focused (Immersers)," "resort-centred, family-focused (Tasters)" and

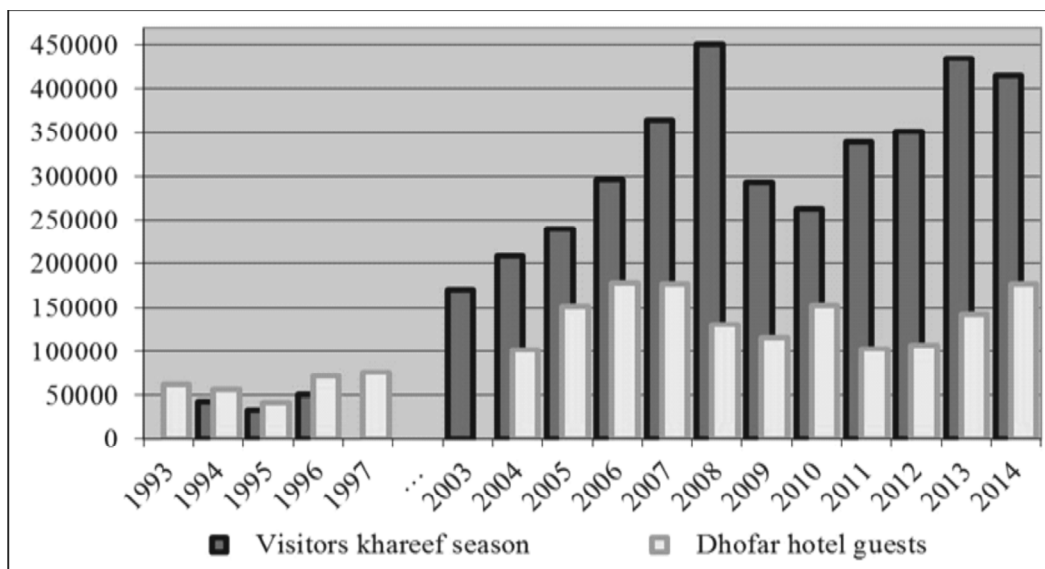


Figure 1: Tourist arrivals in (Dhofar) Salalah

“resort-incident, safety-focus (Veterans).” According to Zimmer *et al.* (1995), choice of tourists destinations is also affected by income and education. People with high income and education levels spent their free time much more differently from other people. Zimmer *et al.* (1995) reported that tourists want to travel further away if they have more disposable income and better education.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to put forth demographics of tourists visiting Salalah and to identify tourist profiles based of those demographic and travel characteristics. A questionnaire was developed and a survey was conducted benefiting from quota sampling and convenience sampling method. According to Neuman (1994. p. 197) “Quota sampling is an improvement over haphazard sampling.” and “...quota sampling is easier, cheaper, and quicker than probability sampling” (Neuman, 1994. p. 198). On the other hand, “as the name implies, a “convenience sample” is one chosen purely for expedience (*e.g.* items are selected because they are easy or cheap to find and measure)” (Boyd *et al.*, 1985. p. 409). As the researchers clearly states, “convenience sampling is sometimes useful in marketing research for certain, rather specialized purposes” (Boyd *et al.*, 1985. p. 409).

The main objectives of this study/research are:

1. To identify the profile of the tourists who vacation in Salalah,
2. To examine the factors influencing them to choose Salalah

3.1. Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the profile of the tourists who vacation in Salalah?

Research Question 2: What are the factors influencing tourists to choose Salalah?

3.2. The Population and the Sample of the Study

The population of the investigation constitutes tourists leaving the Muscat and Salalah airports. In this study, 508 respondents were given given structured questionnaires. Salalah has been a popular destination for tourists due to its moderate climate, beautiful beaches and mountains and the khareef (monsoon) season.

3.3. Data Collecting Methodology

In this study, questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on previous studies (Ball and Giakoumis, 2003; Kastenholz *et al.*, 1999; Sarýgöllü and Rong, 2005; Öztürk, 2001; Baloglu, 2004; Birdir, 2009). In addition, in arranging the form

Buhalis (2003. p. 290)'s 6A framework of tourist destinations is also used. The 6A that Buhalis formulated (2003. p. 290) are;

1. Attractions,
2. accessibility,
3. amenities,
4. available packages,
5. activities and
6. ancillary services.

The questionnaire consisted of totally 22 questions to gather respondents' demographic and travel characteristics such as gender, age, occupation, income level, number of visiting times to Salalah and Oman, accommodation type and sources of information and to rate 32 destination motives for tourists to choose a destination on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not important at all, and 5 = very important).

In the study, the standard deviation of the mean and descriptive statistics was used for the analysis of the data. In addition, t-test, crosstabulation and factor analysis were also utilized.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Research Question 1 What is the Profile of the Tourists who Vacation in Salalah?

Table 2 shows the demographics of the tourists contributed to the current study. It was found that 41.1% were "women" and 58.1% were "men." The married group dropped to 48% and 36% were "alone" travelers.

Age groups of the tourists in this study were found to be 32.5% for "21-30" age group, 29.9% for "31-40," 15.7% for "41-50" age group and 10.6% for "51-60" age group.

Based on Table 2, it was found that nationality of tourists were scattered very differently. In the study, the nationality of tourist were found to be 13% "Germans," 11.2% "Russians," 6.3% "Americans" and 5.7% "English" respectively. More than 4.5% of the tourist joined the study were "Canadians," 4.1% "Ukranian" and 3.5% "Iranian." Occupation of the tourists in current study were found to be 19.7% for "self-employed," 15.6% for "managers," 13.6% for "student" and 11.6% for "academician" respectively.

More than 49.2% of the tourist joined the study were "university" graduates. "Masters" graduates were 22%. "High" school graduates, on the other hand, were 15.7%, and elementary graduates were 10.6%. Education level among the tourist visiting to Istanbul seems to increase dramatically.

Table 2
Demographic Characteristics of Tourists visiting Salalah

| <i>Characteristics</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>Characteristics</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>Characteristics</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>%</i> |
|------------------------|----------|----------|------------------------|----------|----------|------------------------|----------|----------|
| <i>Nationality</i> | | | <i>Age</i> | | | <i>Occupation</i> | | |
| German | 66 | 13.0 | 20 and below | 31 | 6.1 | Academician | 59 | 11.6 |
| Russian | 57 | 11.2 | 21 30 | 165 | 32.5 | Self employed | 100 | 19.7 |
| American | 32 | 6.3 | 31 40 | 152 | 29.9 | House wife | 28 | 5.5 |
| English | 29 | 5.7 | 41 50 | 80 | 15.7 | Worker | 31 | 6.1 |
| French | 9 | 1.8 | 51 60 | 54 | 10.6 | Officier | 29 | 5.7 |
| Iranian | 18 | 3.5 | 61+ | 24 | 4.7 | Retired | 11 | 2.2 |
| Italian | 16 | 3.1 | Not specified | 2 | 0.4 | Student | 69 | 13.6 |
| Dutchman | 5 | 1.0 | Total | 508 | 100 | Unemployed | 10 | 2.0 |
| Chinese | 8 | 1.6 | Education level | | | Manager | 79 | 15.6 |
| Egyptian | 9 | 1.8 | Elementary | 54 | 10.6 | Other | 90 | 17.7 |
| Swedish | 8 | 1.6 | High school | 80 | 15.7 | Not specified | 2 | 0.4 |
| South Korean | 9 | 1.8 | University | 250 | 49.2 | Total | 508 | 100 |
| Kazakhstani | 10 | 2.0 | Masters | 112 | 22.0 | Marital status | | |
| Spanish | 1 | 0.2 | Not specified | 12 | 2.4 | Single | 183 | 36.0 |
| Libyan | 9 | 1.8 | Total | 508 | 100 | Married | 244 | 48.0 |
| Spanish | 4 | 0.8 | Income level | | | Divorced | 6 | 1.2 |
| Iraqi | 3 | 0.6 | Low | 15 | 3.0 | Live together | 23 | 4.5 |
| Saudi | 3 | 0.6 | Below middle | 38 | 7.5 | Not specified | 40 | 7.9 |
| Turkish | 19 | 3.7 | Middle income | 259 | 51.0 | Other | 12 | 2.4 |
| Azerbaijani | 3 | 0.6 | Above middle | 138 | 27.2 | Total | 508 | 100 |
| Syrian | 1 | 0.2 | High | 49 | 9.6 | | | |
| Ukrainian | 21 | 4.1 | Not specified | 9 | 1.8 | | | |
| Canadian | 23 | 4.5 | Total | 508 | 100 | | | |
| Finn | 11 | 2.2 | Sex | | | | | |
| Pakistani | 8 | 1.6 | Female | 209 | 41.1 | | | |
| Other | 124 | 24.4 | Male | 295 | 58.1 | | | |
| Not specified | 2 | 0.4 | Not specified | 4 | 0.8 | | | |
| Total | 508 | 100 | Total | 508 | 100 | | | |

Income levels of the tourist in current study were found to be 51% for “middle incomers,” 27.2% for “above middle” income groups and 9.6% for “high” income groups. In an intensively competitive industry where more and more destinations develop strategies to attract tourist, keeping middle and high income level tourist to visit Istanbul might be an achievable target.

The major travel characteristic findings of this study are presented in Table 3. It can be said that, tourists mostly prefer quality accommodation establishments when they holiday in Salalah. Accommodation preferences in this study show us that 24.2% of the tourists reported to stay at “four-star” hotels. Four-star hotels

Table 3
Travel Characteristics of Tourists visiting Salalah

| <i>Characteristics</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>Characteristics</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>Characteristics</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>%</i> |
|---|------------|------------|--|------------|------------|------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| <i>Have you been in Oman for a holiday before?</i> | | | <i>Holiday reservation periods</i> | | | <i>With whom did you travel?</i> | | |
| Yes | 292 | 57.5 | Last minute | 67 | 13.2 | Alone | 150 | 29.5 |
| No | 214 | 42.1 | Between 1 and 4 weeks | 159 | 31.3 | With my family | 215 | 42.3 |
| Not specified | 2 | 0.4 | Between 1 and 4 months | 124 | 24.4 | With my friends | 91 | 17.9 |
| | | | Before 5 month and up | 110 | 21.7 | Other | 25 | 4.9 |
| | | | Not specified | 48 | 9.4 | Not specified | 27 | 5.3 |
| Total | 508 | 100 | Total | 508 | 100 | Total | 508 | 100 |
| <i>Times to Oman</i> | | | <i>Source of information</i> | | | <i>Satisfaction level</i> | | |
| First time | 58 | 11.4 | Travel agencies | 41 | 8.1 | Not satisfied at all | 7 | 1.4 |
| 2 4 times | 93 | 18.3 | Family/friends/collages | 281 | 55.3 | Not satisfied | 11 | 2.2 |
| 5 times and up | 123 | 24.2 | Media (book, internet, newspapers, TV, travel magazines/brochures) | 94 | 18.5 | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 58 | 11.4 |
| Not specified | 234 | 46.1 | Tourism information office | 7 | 1.4 | Satisfied | 244 | 48.0 |
| | | | Other | 50 | 9.8 | Very satisfied | 142 | 28.0 |
| | | | Not specified | 35 | 6.9 | Not specified | 46 | 9.1 |
| Total | 508 | 100 | Total | 508 | 100 | Total | 508 | 100 |
| <i>Have you been in Salalah for a holiday before?</i> | | | <i>Accommodation type</i> | | | <i>Is this a package tour?</i> | | |
| Yes | 213 | 41.9 | Five star hotel | 96 | 18.9 | Yes | 78 | 15.4 |
| No | 61 | 12.0 | Four star hotel | 123 | 24.2 | No | 406 | 79.9 |
| Not specified | 234 | 46.1 | Three star hotel | 76 | 15.0 | Not specified | 24 | 4.7 |
| | | | Motel | 40 | 7.9 | T | | |
| | | | Relatives/friends | 80 | 15.7 | | | |
| | | | Other | 56 | 11.0 | | | |
| | | | Not specified | 37 | 7.3 | | | |
| Total | 508 | 100 | Total | 508 | 100 | Total | 508 | 10 |
| <i>Times to Salalah</i> | | | | | | | | |
| First time | 55 | 10.8 | | | | | | |
| 2 4 times | 71 | 14.0 | | | | | | |
| 5 times and up | 70 | 13.8 | | | | | | |
| Not specified | 312 | 61.4 | | | | | | |
| Total | 508 | 100 | | | | | | |

were followed by “five-star hotels (18.9%),” “relatives/friends (15.7%)” and “three-star hotels (15%)” are ranked respectively. This result seems to be in line with the income levels of the tourist represented in this study.

Sociodemographic variables (such as age, occupation, income) are important factors influencing the tourist travel experience (Goodall and Ashworth, 1988). “family/friends/collages” was number one information source with 55.3%. This result seems to be parallel to the findings of Gitelson and Crompton’s (1983) study, which shows “friends and relatives” was the biggest (74%) travel information source also. The second information source was “media (book, internet, newspapers, TV, travel magazines/ brochures)” with 18.5% and the third information source with 8.1% was “travel agencies.”

It is clear that 42.3% of the tourists visiting Salalah were “with their family” and 29.5% of them travel “alone.” This might also be showing that people see Salalah and Oman as a safe destination to travel with their family and alone. This result could be an indicator why Salalah receives such a high revisit percentages (between 2 and 4 times 14% and 5 times and up 13.8%).

On the other hand, holiday planning periods seem to change for tourists dramatically. The major holiday planning period was “between 1 and 4 weeks” (31.3%). “Between 1 and 4 months” is 24.4%, and “before 5 months and up” is 21.7% respectively. “Last minute” planning period was 13.2%. Tourists seem to prefer short term reservation periods to take advantages of last minute deals.

This study shows that 48% of the tourists visiting Salalah were “satisfied” and 28% of them were “very satisfied” with this holiday. In total, 76% of the tourist indicated satisfaction with their holidays. Satisfaction levels trigger to perform future travelling (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989; Gyte and Phelps, 1990; Karaman, 1999). In this study, 79.9% of tourists indicated that they want to revisit Salalah for another holiday in the future.

4.2. Research Question 2 What are the Factors Influencing Tourists to Choose Salalah?

Based on the ranking and mean scores of the effective components there seems to be 26 attractiveness factors that affect tourists to choose Istanbul. The results showed that “destination security (4.1181)” has been identified as the most important factor for tourists influencing their choice of Salalah. The other four factors at the top five are; (respectively, in descending importance) “the friendliness of the local people (4.0591),” “comfort at place of accommodation (4.0413),” “low local crime rate (4.0138)” and “natural beauty and scenery (3.9350).” Four of this attractiveness factors scored above 4.0 in a five-point scale (with 5.0 being very important). On the other hand, the lowest mean score was “hunting.”

Factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to see the summability of effective factors in choosing Istanbul of tourists participating in the study. While factor analysis is performed, factor in the selection of Eigen values >1 and at least have a correlation of .400 level were included. Factor analysis was applied to a total of 32 items in the scale. If any item was loaded on two different factors (items 18, 23, 28 and 29), no factor loading (item 31) and factors with less than three items loaded (items 4, 5, 6 and 30) were removed from the scale. Later, factor analysis was applied again to the remaining 23 items. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be 0.879, which is greater than Nunnally's (1978) reliability principle of 0.7, and a good of construct reliability (Nunnally, 1967). The factor analysis produced six factors. The total variance of the factors that have been found to explain was found to be 62.146%.

To understand the features that tourists' prefer most in Salalah, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. The value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin was found to be 0.854 (> 0.7), which is a well-considered value (Hair *et al.*, 1995) and the significance is 0.000 ($P < 0.05$). The results showed that the structure of the questionnaire was valid and reliable. The results obtained from the analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 summarizes the factor analysis which consists of six factors. The factors respectively were named as "comfort elements," "special interest and entertainment elements," "security and economic factors," "cultural elements," "elements of environment and natural beauty" and "elements of communication and transportation."

As it's shown in Table 4, the first factor is labeled "comfort elements" and explained 28.4% of the total variance with eigen value of 6.53 and consists of comfort elements such as "service quality in restaurants at place of accommodation," "service quality in restaurants outside the place of accommodation," "comfort at place of accommodation," "friendliness of local people" and "suitability for family vacation."

When analysing all the items in the first factor, it is safe to claim that, tourist mostly prefer Salalah because of its tourist-friendly features. These features as listed above might easily be cited as the "Strengths of Salalah" and should closely be watched and studied to improve the attractiveness and image of Salalah. Additionally, this factor's average (3.894) seems to have the largest average compared to other factors. On the other hand, the explained variance of 28.4% by this factor shows the importance of these attributes for picking Salalah as their holiday destination.

Factor two, "special interest and entertainment elements" connected five items which are related with "fair," "finding thrills and excitement," "nightlife and entertainment," "convention" and "visiting family members and relatives." The

Table 4
Factor analysis results on attributes affecting tourists to choose Salalah

| <i>Destination attributes</i> | <i>Load</i> | <i>Eigenvalue</i> | <i>Explained variance</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Reliability coefficient</i> |
|--|-------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| I. Comfort elements (five item) | | 6.532 | 28.402 | 3.894 | 0.779 |
| 15 Service quality in restaurants at place of accommodation | 0.799 | | | | |
| 16 Service quality in restaurants outside the place of accommodation | 0.742 | | | | |
| 14 Comfort at place of accommodation | 0.726 | | | | |
| 13 Friendliness of local people | 0.573 | | | | |
| 17 Suitability for family vacation | 0.450 | | | | |
| II. Special interest and entertainment (five item) | | 2.154 | 9.363 | 2.903 | 0.746 |
| 26 Fairs | 0.750 | | | | |
| 27 Finding thrills and excitement | 0.737 | | | | |
| 24 Nightlife and entertainment | 0.722 | | | | |
| 25 Convention/congress | 0.709 | | | | |
| 32 Visiting family members and relatives | 0.450 | | | | |
| III. Security and economic factors (four) | | 1.732 | 7.531 | 3.884 | 0.795 |
| 20 Value for money | 0.830 | | | | |
| 21 Local price level | 0.788 | | | | |
| 19 Shopping facilities | 0.694 | | | | |
| 22 Safety while staying at destination | 0.583 | | | | |
| IV. Cultural elements (three item) | | 1.485 | 6.458 | 3.327 | 0.761 |
| 8 Museums | 0.776 | | | | |
| 7 Religious places | 0.754 | | | | |
| 9 Cultural shows | 0.730 | | | | |
| V. Elements of environment and natural beauty (three item) | | 1.267 | 5.508 | 3.726 | 0.713 |
| 3 Natural beauty and scenery | 0.725 | | | | |
| 2 Environment | 0.713 | | | | |
| 1 Climate and weather | 0.655 | | | | |
| VI. Elements of communication and transportation (three item) | | 1.123 | 4.884 | 3.465 | 0.708 |
| 11 Tourist information centre | 0.850 | | | | |
| 10 Accessibility | 0.719 | | | | |
| 12 Guided city tour | 0.540 | | | | |

Varimax rotation explained total variance: 62.146%. KMO: 85.4%; Bartlett's test of sphericity: X^2 4277.505, d.f.: 253, $p < 0.0000$; general means: 3.533; alpha: 0.879; mean scale: 1 Not important at all. 5 Very important. KMO: Kaiser Meyer Olkin

results and items of this factor seems to be similar to Öztürk's (2001. p. 47-48) study factor which was called "those who want to relax and have fun." Therefore, it can be claimed that tourists seek similar elements during a trip/holiday. On the other hand, Hosany *et al.* (2007) study found a similar factor which is called "conviviality" and includes friendly, family oriented and charming items.

Factor three was named "security and economic factors," consisted of three important items; safety, shopping and value of money. When the internal structure of the factors examined, tourists seem to include the features you need to have at a destination they want to spend their time. This factor bears similarities with the "economic" factor in Zhang's (2012. p. 63) study. Shih (1986), on the other hand, seems to identify similar vacation attributes, including visitor safety, reasonable prices, good accommodation, and a relaxing vacation in his study.

The fourth factor which consists elements that recognizing the cultural values of the places (museums, religious places and cultural shows) they want to see during their travel is called "cultural elements." This result is similar to Zhang's (2012. p. 63) study factor "tourist appeal and activities" and Öztürk's (2001. p. 47-48) study factor "the history and the relevant culture" and Kastenholz *et al.* (1999) "culture and tradition" factor. Moreover, Formica and Uysal (1998) studied tourists of the Spoleto Festival in Italy and specified six benefit factors that tourists find benefit to attend the festival. Among these six motivation factors "cultural/historical significance" was found to be the most important motivating factor to attend the festival.

Fifth factor is based on three items about climate, environment and natural beauty that's why this factor is called "elements of environment and natural beauty." These results produce similar factor attributes that are at Frochot's (2005. p. 340) study's factor named "tourist appeal and activities."

The findings of factor six focused on communication and transportation attributes that are especially important for today's constantly moving and communicating tourist. The factor is named "elements of communication and transportation" and be formed by three items "tourist information centre", "accessibility" and "guided city tour."

All six factors strongly and clearly point out that safety, value of money, friendliness, comfort, culture, tourist areas images (Crompton, 1992; Heung *et al.*, 2001. p. 259), knowledge and information (Riddick, 1986) and accessibility could strongly influence a tourist's destination choice (Chen and Xiao, 2013. p. 357).

5. CONCLUSION

Examining segments has been a very important act recently because comprehensively studied segments provide specific information about tourists' purchasing patterns

to managers and destination administrators in the tourism industry (Park, 2009. p. 45).

The goal of the current study was focused on the characteristics and segmentation of tourists who visited Salalah. Factor analysis detected six factors. After examining the results thoroughly “destination security,” “the friendliness of the local people,” “comfort at place of accommodation,” “low local crime rate” and “natural beauty and scenery” have been identified as the most important factors affecting tourists visiting Salalah.

The study results clearly show that the tourism industry managers and administrators in Oman must closely watch potential tourists and the tourists visiting Salalah to be able to serve them better and be able to cope with the intense competition in the Global Tourism Industry. Similar studies must be done almost every year and in different time periods. This is actually one of the limitations of the current study because the questionnaire was applied in a limited time period. Seeing the differences presented by each market segments makes studying different market segments individually to better serve each and every different segment properly.

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