

STRATEGY OF TOURISM PROMOTION IN AL-KHARJ, KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

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***Abstract:** The present study explores the level of Promotion Policies and Programs in Al-Kharj Governorate in the views of stakeholders concerned with tourism sector. Further, appropriateness and components of promotional mix in promoting tourism are also investigated. The study also aims at designing appropriate strategies in promoting tourism activities in Al-Kharj. The study collects and utilizes the primary data through a well-structured questionnaire by systematic random sampling. After testing the reliability of questionnaire and instruments, analytical descriptive method and regression analyses are carried out. We find that Promotional Policies and Programs are not up to mark in Al-Kharj Governorate to satisfy the stakeholders in tourism sector. The promotional mix with its components is also found unsatisfactory in terms of advertising, personal selling, public relations and sales promotion. Further all instruments of promotion mix are proved positive contributors in tourism promotion policy and HRM obstacles and customer services obstacles are found negative contributors. The present study proposes Al-Kharj Governorate to revise strategies of tourism promotion by finding appropriate solutions to achieve the expected satisfaction level of tourists and other stakeholders.*

***Key Words:** Promotional Policies and Programs, Tourism, Promotional Mix*

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism plays a very important role in the economic activity of any country of the world. Several countries either developed or developing are relying on tourism sector to support their economies. Tourism sector can positively contribute to the income and Gross National Product (GNP) of a country and can play an important role in earning the foreign reserves to keep balance of payments favorable.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is distinguished with several diversified tourism resources like visit of two holy places in Makkah and Madina. Al-Kharj governorate

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also occupies a distinct position in the tourism map of the Kingdom due to neighboring city of capital city Riyadh as every tourist has interest in visiting capital city. Secondly, Al-Kharj is a historical city with oldest palace of King Abdulaziz, the founder of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and with the oldest well and attracts a great attention of visitors.

There is no doubt that the promotion of tourism services plays an important role in introducing the tourist about the nature and importance of tourism product available in any region as the promotion is only a means of communication process between the tourism product and tourist. It enhances the tourism purpose and it provides knowledge to the tourist about available tourism activities and programs in the particular region. Also, it creates a great impact on their purchasing decision of tourist and increase the demand for tourist products. But the success of promotional programs relies on its ability to affect the target segments through different promotional activities. That can be considered as a main source of information for the tourists. The promotion is also improve the mental image/picture of the attractive tourism places and traditional products of that particular area. This is not only helpful in increasing the number of tourism trips on the one hand but also helps in increasing the days of tourists' stay.

The role of tourism promotion is not limited to only providing information about the tourism offers and to increase in demand for products in particular area but it also enhance the welfare of tourist by enjoying maximum out of his/her trip by using unique regional products and services. The tourism promotion is an continuous and organized process for the marketing of tourism product of attractive tourism places including goods and services. This also contributes to build a positive image of tourism areas both in domestic and foreign tourism markets and attracts more tourist in future by creating unique product's image in the mind of tourist. Further, the tourism promotion activities are not die by attracting the present tourist at a single point of time but it also becomes the words of mouth of tourist which disseminates in the tourist mother country/place and becomes a sources attracting further tourists in future.

Tourism promotion has not only direct effects of promoting information, increased in demand and economic growth but it also defuses some spillover effects such as increasing competition in domestic markets and resultantly increased in quality of goods and services offered at tourist places. The increased quality of products provides the tourist an unforgettable experience which changes their attributes and attitudes about the tourist places. This, in turn, overcomes the problem of low demand of tourism for any region in line with the tangible and intangible elements which are being provided by tourism industry. This requires an appropriate marketing mix with the aim to satisfy the needs and desires of current tourists and to attract further prospective tourists. A lack of marketing efforts and an inappropriate marketing mix may be result in poor quality of tourist services and can damage the image of tourist places even in the presence of good quality of tourist products available in the region. Therefore, it

is pertinent to test the perception of tourist about promotional mix and its impact on perceived tourism policies to inquire the level of promotional mix in any particular region to maintain its tourist activities at highest possible level.

The Research Problem

Al-Kharj is an ancient city with full of charm of tourist activities but it is lacking in developing the clear cut tourist promotional mix to attract potential tourists and to promote tourism in that governorate. Further, there are no specific and clear strategies for tourism activities and to promote the tourism facilities. Further, government is not aware of the importance of the tourism sector and importance of promotional mix to achieve the tourists' satisfaction and to enhance tourism in this city. Al-Kharj is one of the governorates that supports the Saudi economy with all of its agricultural, industrial, commercial and human resources. But the tourism sector does not catch much attention that can be utilized at its best level to get diversification in oil-dependent Saudi Economy. As more than 50% of national income and more than 90% of Kingdom's total exports are depending directly and indirectly on the oil-sector. This phenomenon along with a heavy fluctuation in oil prices, that has been recently hit the oil market, has created an urgent need to search for alternative resources to achieve diversification in economy particularly through tourism promotion. These changes which are happening at national level require the mechanisms and strategies for activating the tourism activities in line with national directions towards activating the role of tourism sector at the national level potentially including Al-Kharj governorate. There are already some government's directions to activate the role of tourism sector in the national economy at general but the promotional efforts has not kept pace in Al-Kharj with these directions in particular. Therefore, there is a dire need to investigate this issue at level of this city.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To evaluate the policies and promotional programs for tourism activity in Al-Kharj.
- 2) To assess the elements of promotion mix for tourism activity in Al-Kharj.
- 3) To analyze the factors that are affecting the promotional efforts for tourism promotion in Al-Kharj.
- 4) To design appropriate strategies to promote tourism activity in Al-Kharj.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several studies which have been conducted on the importance of the strategies of tourism promotion. Some of these are reviewed to highlight the importance of this issue. Al-Hazmi (2009) explains the role of tourism festivals in tourism promotion in Yemen. He majorly relies on analytical descriptive method and concludes that the

role of the tourism festivals has been found significant in the promotion and development of tourism sector in Yemen. The tourism festivals are found the most important means for tourism attraction. Further, the diversification in such festivals leads to diversify of target segments of tourist by enhancing the promotional campaigns. He concludes that publicity of tourism festivals along with all means of promotional mix has been promoted the tourist activities at national level. Therefore, he recommends further tourism promotional strategies to attract more tourists in that region and also suggests diversifying promotional mix to attract more tourist activities. Zaidan (2009) inspects the role of advertisement in promoting the tourism in Egypt through analytical descriptive method. He concludes that the tourism's advertisement has played a major role in the tourism promotional mix to attract more tourists in Egypt and it has also been helpful in stimulating the demand for Egyptian tourism products. Therefore, he recommends promoting the advertisement along with comprehensive package of promotional mix to further increase tourism activities.

Boodi (2009) aims at to know the extent of appropriateness of marketing efforts on tourism and to find the obstacles standing in the way of tourism sector in Algeria. He finds that there is a lack of clear and specific strategies for tourism marketing at government level that is responsible for poor performance of tourism sector. Therefore, he recommends allocating more budget for marketing activities of tourism sector, to integrate tourism sector with other sectors that can promote tourism and to provide training to the marketing staff. Ujailah (2009) aims at finding the impact of promotional mix and published tourism information on the trends of tourists in Libya. He finds an insufficient means of promotional mix i.e. advertisement and promotion in attracting tourism. Therefore, he recommends to diversify in promotional mix in the public and private sectors and also to provide training to the staff for this purpose.

Damado (2010) finds that an incomplete promotional mix, inappropriate promotional methods and absence of coordination between the promotional strategies and operational plans are remained responsible for lower growth of local tourism. He recommends that a comprehensive promotional mix along with complete information about national tourism attractions can promote local tourism. Barhom (2010) investigates the efficiency of tourism marketing in Syria. He finds an insignificant contribution of tourism sector in economic growth. This contribution has been observed low due to inefficiency in and ineffectiveness of promotional messages about the tourism sector. He recommends raising tourism culture and awareness, to explore new tourism places and to use the electronic media such as internet to promote tourism.

Balmadni (2011) finds a significant role of tourism communication in the promotion of tourism activity in Algeria and absence of accurate specification of promotion strategies has remained major reason in low growth of tourism activities. He recommends to strengthen the role of promotion strategies in line with the latest tools of communication and to open the offices for tourism communication and promotion. Barbas (2010) finds a significant role of promotional mix on tourist services' satisfaction

level. He recommends that expansion in the presentation of tourism product, presenting several promotional gifts to the tourists and designing brochures containing information about tourism product may enhance tourism sector. Al-Ramzan (2011) investigates the role of media in tourism promotion in Saudi Arabia. He finds that there is a very limited role of media in promoting tourism particularly newspaper and magazines. Therefore, there is need to disseminate the culture of tourism in media and to adopt modern medium to disseminate the culture of tourism in the local communities by developing the comprehensive contents of tourism messages.

Husain (2011) and Milode (2011) find an effective role of e-marketing in activating the demand and quality of tourism services. They recommend to concentrate on the e-marketing in providing the contents of marketing messages as it can attract the tourist significantly and to train the marketing personnel in this regards. Abdurrahim (2010) investigates the role of tourism marketing in the development of craft industries. He finds a significant role of tourism marketing in the development of craft industries and in achieving prompt economic growth. Budalah (2011) aims at finding the role of the tourism marketing in the tourism development in reducing the crisis of tourism sector. He finds that tourism marketing by tourism institutions is found an important factor in achieving the goal of tourism development and recommends the further tourism marketing in achieving higher goals. Gilaninia and Mohammadi (2015) discuss the role of marketing on the tourism promotion in Iran. They argue that every individual market has specific characteristics that have to be consider in the tourism promotion and they find the positive impact of tourism marketing on tourism promotion in Iran. Masud-ul-Hassan (2015) investigate the impact of marketing mix on tourism promotion in Bangladesh. They find that lack of experience in marketing is becoming the major hindrance for tourism promotion in Bangladesh.

In the contexts of hotel business, Farah (2010) finds that promotional means in the hotel business relies on hotel environment and the strategies of promotion have significantly support the hotel business. Al-Barzanji (2010) finds that there is a weak coordination between the hotels and tourism board in promotional campaigns and further the uses and means of promotional mix are limited in promoting tourism. Therefore, there is need to take care of hotel promotions with an appropriate promotional mix and use of latest promotional tools such as internet is highly recommended.

Summary of Previous Studies

After doing a comprehensive literature review, we find that most of the studies are focusing on the different elements/tools of promotional mix in the marketing of tourism services and are shedding the importance of tourism marketing in the development of tourism sector and particularly are discussing the role of advertising and festivals to support the tourism activity. Further, most of the previous studies has relied on descriptive analyses. There is no single study up to best of our knowledge that is addressing the importance of appropriate strategies of promotion to activate the

tourism product in Al-Kharj governorate specifically. Therefore the present study is going to bridge this gap by the descriptive analyses of variables of our interest and also focusing on some impact analysis to find the reasons of low level of tourism activities in Al-Kharj.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The current study relies on analytical descriptive method through the implementation of qualitative and quantitative research methods such as correlation coefficients of Cronbach's Alpha, arithmetic mean, percentages, t-tests and regression analysis.

This study depends on primary data that is collected through questionnaire distributed to the stakeholders concerned with tourism sector in the Al-Kharj. We have distributed 350 questionnaires and received 211 corrected and properly filled. Therefore, response rate has found about 60%. We use statistical programs like SPSS and EVIEWS for data analyses to achieve our objectives. The study relies on systematic random sample and sample size is specified through the statistical program "Sample Size Calculator" available on the following link: http://www.macorr.com/ss_calculator.htm.

The current study includes private sector, government sector, companies, bodies and individuals concerned to the tourism sector like Al-Kharj governorate, Municipality, Al-Kharj Chamber of Commerce, Al-Kharj Tourism Board, Travel & Tourism Agencies, Hotels, Tourists, Residents of Al-Kharj interested in tourism activity (in terms of human resources) in its sample. In terms of geographical area, the study covers Al-Kharj region.

3.1. Limitations of the Study

- a) **Spatial Limit:** The study is confined to Al-Kharj region only and no other cities and governorates of Kingdom have been included.
- b) **Time Limit:** The study is completed during the year 2016 GC.
- c) **Human Limit:** Our sample includes workers in tourism sector and those who are directly and indirectly concerned with tourism sector in Al-Kharj.
- d) **Subject Limit:** The study is focused on the role of strategies of tourism promotion in Al-Kharj, KSA.

Table 1
Parts of Questionnaire*

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Field</i> | <i>Questions measuring the theme</i> |
|--------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| First | To evaluate promotion policies and programs in Al-Kharj | 1 – 5 |
| Second | Advertisement | 6 – 14 |
| Third | Personal Selling | 15 – 20 |
| Fourth | Sales Promotion | 21 – 25 |
| Fifth | General Relations | 26 – 28 |

Source: Prepared by Research Team

Table 2
Criteria of Response to the Items of Questionnaire*

| <i>Description</i> | <i>From</i> | <i>To</i> | <i>Likert Scale Score</i> |
|------------------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| I strongly agree | 80% | 100% | 5 |
| I agree | 60% | 80% | 4 |
| Neutral | 40% | 60% | 3 |
| I don't agree | 20% | 40% | 2 |
| I strongly don't agree | 0 | 20% | 1 |

Source: Prepared by Research Team

3.2. Validity and Reliability of Questionnaire

The validity and reliability of items of questionnaire has been ensured by two methods that are as followings:

Virtual Reliability (Checking Reliability by Arbitrators)

After designing the questionnaire with all of its items and instruments, it has been moderated by some arbitrators/experts working in 8 government universities in KSA and Egypt. They are selected on the bases of their expertise and research interest in the area of tourism marketing. We have collected their views regarding the items, instruments and overall structure of questionnaire on a well-designed Performa and make corrections in the light of their opinions and suggestions to ensure the reliability of our questionnaire.

Reliability of Structural Consistency of Themes of the Study

After collecting the data through our well-structured questionnaire, reliability of our instruments are further tested by correlation coefficients of Cronbach's Alpha test. The estimated statistics are presented in table-3 and are ranging from 0.895 to 0.933 for our five instruments. These are showing a very good type of reliability and stability of instruments.

Table 3
Coefficients of Cronbach's Alpha

| | | <i>Number of Paragraph</i> | <i>Coefficients of Cronbach's Alpha</i> |
|--------|--|----------------------------|---|
| First | Evaluate promotion policies and programs in Al-Kharj | 5 | 0.895 |
| Second | Advertisement | 9 | 0.933 |
| Third | Personal Selling | 6 | 0.933 |
| Fourth | Sales Promotion | 5 | 0.911 |
| Fifth | General Relations | 3 | 0.905 |
| | | 28 | 0.911 |

Source: Authors' calculation based on responses of survey

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Evaluating the promotional policies and programs in Al-Kharj

Table (4) shows the descriptive statistics of views of surveyed sample regarding evaluation of tourism promotion policies and programs in Al-Kharj. The averages of all items in this section are ranging between 2.589-2.971. That is in-between the two opinions of disagree and neutral. The highest average value, 2.971, has been observed in case of item-5 that is availability of some promotional programs that are executed periodically in Al-Kharj and its relative importance has been observed at 59.43%. Item-2 stands at second position with an average value of 2.783 that is concerned with Supreme Commission of Tourism in Al-Kharj achieved its objectives pertaining to the promotion activity and its relative importance stood at 55.66%. The lowest average score has been observed in case of Item-3 with an average value of 2.589 that is concerned with the organizational structure of tourism in Al-Kharj. It includes promotion activity in its components and its relative importance stood at 51.79%.

The overall average of all items is 2.89 that is in-between the opinion Neutral (3) and Don't Agree (2) of Likert Scale. Further, standard deviation is 1.191 that is showing a lesser deviation of percept opinions of our surveyed sample and its t-value is 39.706 that is showing significant level of overall average at 1%. Since the overall average is not reaching to the least satisfactory level of 3.5. Therefore, we can conclude that Evaluation of Promotion Policies and Programs in Al-Kharj is not satisfactory according the perception of our surveyed sample and these need revision whether at a level of Al-Kharj governorate or in Higher Commission for Tourism. The appropriate satisfaction level can be achieved through floating clear specifications of promotion policies and through designing effective promotion programs which can, in turn, guarantee to improve the overall image of the region as a tourist destination. Also, there should be a clear specification for components of tourism promotion which should highlight within the components of organizational structure of Supreme Commission for Tourism in Al-Kharj governorate.

4.2. Evaluating the Elements of Promotion Mix in Al-Kharj

Personal Selling

Table (5) shows the descriptive statistics of views of surveyed sample regarding the role of personal selling in the campaigns of tourism promotion in Al-Kharj. The averages of all items in this section are ranging between 2.613-2.962. That is in-between the two opinions of disagree and neutral. The highest average value, 2.962, has been observed in case of item-4 that is elegance of employees working in tourism sector in Al-Kharj and its relative importance has been observed at 57.36%. Item-3 stands at second position with an average value of 2.957 that is concerned with workers in promotion activities in Al-Kharj have impact on others and establish good relations with them, and its relative importance stood at 59.15%. The lowest average score has been observed

Table 4
Results of Descriptive Analysis of Opinions of Surveyed Sample regarding Evaluation of Promotion Policies and Programs in Al-Kharj Governorate

| | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Std.</i> | <i>Relative importance</i> | <i>(T)Value</i> |
|---|-------------|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| There are clear and specific promotion strategies about the tourism product in Al-Kharj such as advertisement strategy, sales promotion and public relations etc. | 2.783 | 1.018 | 55.66 | 33.538 |
| Supreme Commission for Tourism in Al-Kharj reached its objectives related to promotion activity. | | | | |
| The organizational structure of tourism in Al-Kharj includes promotion activity in its components. | 2.589 | 1.208 | 51.792 | 32.426 |
| Al-Kharj governorate strives to improve the mental image of Al-Kharj as a tourist destination in the frame of its promotion activity. | 2.646 | 1.162 | 52.924 | 32.725 |
| There are some promotion programs which are executed periodically in Al-Kharj like free gifts and trade exhibitions etc. | 2.971 | 1.177 | 59.434 | 32.771 |
| Total | 2.896 | 1.32 | 57.924 | 35.382 |
| | | 1.192 | | 39.706 |

Source: Authors' calculation based on responses of survey. t-values greater than 3 with sample size 211 are showing level of significance at 1%.

in case of Item-6 with an average value of 2.613 that is concerned with "there are continuous communications with the beneficiaries to convince them about tourism product in Al-Kharj" and its relative importance stood at 52.26%.

The overall average of all items is 2.869 that is in-between the opinion of Neutral (3) and Don't Agree (2) of Likert Scale. Further, standard deviation is 0.1918 that is showing a lesser deviation of percept opinions of our surveyed sample and its t-value is 42.63 that is showing significant level of overall average at 1%. Since the overall average is not reaching to the least satisfactory level of 3.5. Therefore, we can conclude that the campaigns of personal selling, as a tool of tourism promotion in Al-Kharj, are implemented in bad way according to the perception of the researched sample. This requires a revision from bodies concerned with promotion of tourism activity in Al-Kharj to diagnosis the strengths and weaknesses in the strategies of personal selling and to find appropriate solutions to implement these in more effective way which can fulfill needs of target segments of these campaigns and can achieve their expected satisfaction level.

Public Relations

Table (6) shows the descriptive statistics of views of surveyed sample regarding role of campaigns of public relations in the tourism promotion in Al-Kharj. The averages

Table 5
Results of Descriptive Analysis of Perceived Opinion of Surveyed Sample regarding Personal Selling

| | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Std. Deviation</i> | <i>Relative importance</i> | <i>(T) Value</i> |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Workers in promotion activities in Al-Kharj have enough experience to carry out their tasks. | 2.910 | 1.104 | 58.280 | 38.374 |
| Workers in promotion activities in Al-Kharj have enough knowledge | 2.867 | 1.097 | 57.358 | 38.036 |
| Workers in promotion activities in Al-Kharj have impact on others and establish good relations with them. | 2.957 | 1.144 | 59.150 | 37.609 |
| Workers in promotion activities are characterized by elegancy and maintain decency in dealing with others. | 2.962 | 1.163 | 59.246 | 37.066 |
| Workers in promotion activities are putting more efforts to attract maximum possible number of potential beneficiaries for tourism service. | 2.905 | 1.164 | 59.140 | 36.331 |
| There are continuous communications with the beneficiaries to convince them about tourism product in Al-Kharj. | 2.613 | 1.123 | 52.264 | 33.869 |
| Total | 2.869 | 0.980 | 57.390 | 42.631 |

Source: Authors' calculation based on responses of survey. t-values greater than 3 with sample size 211 are showing level of significance at 1%.

of all items in this section are ranging between 2.778-2.971. That is in-between the two opinions of disagree and neutral. The highest average value, 2.971, has been observed in case of item-1 that is "The Bodies concerned with promotion activities solve the problems facing beneficiaries from the service", and its relative importance has been observed at 59.43%. Item-3 stands at second position with an average value of 2.882 that is concerned with "Workers in promotion activities in Al-Kharj make efforts to fulfill needs of beneficiaries from the service", and its relative importance stood at 57.64%. The lowest average score has been observed in case of Item-2 with an average value of 2.778 that is concerned with "The Bodies concerned with promotion activities make efforts to know the desires of beneficiaries", and its relative importance stood at 55.57%.

The overall average of all items is 2.877 that is in-between the opinion of Neutral (3) and Don't Agree (2) of Likert Scale. Further, standard deviation is 1.015 that is showing a lesser deviation of percept opinions of our surveyed sample and its t-value is 41.99 that is showing significant level of overall average at 1%. Since the overall average is not reaching to the least satisfactory level of 3.5. Therefore, we can conclude that the campaigns of Public Relation, as a tool of tourism promotion in Al-Kharj, are implemented in bad way according to the perception of the researched sample. This

requires a revision from bodies concerned with promotion of tourism activity in Al-Kharj in respect of its mechanism of implementation and to find appropriate solutions to implement these in more effective way which can fulfill needs of target segments of these campaigns and can achieve their expected satisfaction level.

Table 6
Results of Descriptive Analysis of Views of Study Sample regarding Use of Campaigns of Public Relations for Tourism Promotion in Al-Kharj

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Relative importance | (T) Value |
|--|-------|----------------|---------------------|-----------|
| The Bodies concerned with promotion activities solve the problems facing beneficiaries from the service. | 2.971 | 1.122 | 59.434 | 39.293 |
| The Bodies concerned with promotion activities make efforts to know the desires of beneficiaries. | 2.778 | 1.115 | 55.566 | 36.893 |
| Workers in promotion activities in Al-Kharj make efforts to fulfill needs of beneficiaries from the service. | 2.882 | 1.084 | 57.642 | 39.661 |
| Total | 2.877 | 1.0152 | 57.548 | 41.989 |

Source: Authors' calculation based on responses of survey. t-values greater than 3 with sample size 211 are showing level of significance at 1%.

Sales Promotion

Table (7) shows the descriptive statistics of views of surveyed sample regarding sales promotion in the campaigns of tourism promotion in Al-Kharj. The averages of all items in this section are ranging between 2.891-3.103. That is in-between the two opinions of disagree and neutral. The highest average value, 3.103, has been observed in case of item-1 that is "The interest of Governorate to provide some promotional offers", and its relative importance has been observed at 62.08%. Item-2 stands at second position with an average value of 3.014 that is concerned with "The interest of governorate to organize meetings and seminars about the activity of tourism promotion in Al-Kharj", and its relative importance stood at 60.28%. The lowest average score has been observed in case of Item-4&5 with the average values of 2.891 these are concerned with "The bodies concerned with promotion activity in the Governorate provide information to the beneficiaries about the tourist places of Al-Kharj" and "The governorate organizes some meetings and seminars to introduce to the tourism product in Al-Kharj", and their relative importance stood at 57.83% for each item.

The overall average of all items is 2.963 this is very near to Neutral (3) of Likert Scale. Further, standard deviation is 0.093 that is showing a very low deviation of percept opinions of our surveyed sample and its t-value is 47.05, that is showing significant level of overall average at 1%. Its relative importance stands at 59.26%. Since the overall average is not reaching to the least satisfactory level of 3.5. Therefore,

we can conclude that the sales promotion of tourism product, as a tool of tourism promotion in Al-Kharj, is implemented in bad way according to the perception of the researched sample. This requires a revision from bodies concerned with promotion of tourism activity in Al-Kharj to diagnosis the strengths and weaknesses in the strategies of sale promotion and to find appropriate solutions to implement these in more effective way which can fulfill needs of target segments of these campaigns and can achieve their expected satisfaction level.

Table 7
Results of Descriptive Analysis of Views of Study Sample regarding sales promotion of tourism product in Al-Kharj

| | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Std. Deviation</i> | <i>Relative importance</i> | <i>(T) Value</i> |
|--|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| The Governorate gives some promotional offers like publications, garments and gifts etc. | 3.103 | 1.113 | 62.076 | 41.372 |
| The Governorate organizes some seminars and meetings about the promotion activity. | 3.014 | 1.027 | 60.284 | 43.725 |
| The workers in promotion activity offers some discounts on the tourism services provides by the Governorate. | 2.915 | 1.169 | 58.302 | 36.351 |
| The bodies concerned with promotion activity in the Governorate provide information to the beneficiaries about the tourist places of Al-Kharj. | 2.891 | 1.058 | 57.830 | 39.934 |
| The governorate organizes some meetings and seminars to introduce to the tourism product in Al-Kharj. | 2.891 | 1.054 | 57.830 | 41.030 |
| Total | 2.963 | 0.933 | 59.264 | 47.050 |

Source: Authors' calculation based on responses of survey. t-values greater than 3 with sample size 211 are showing level of significance at 1%.

Advertisement

Table (8) shows the descriptive statistics of views of surveyed sample regarding advertising in the campaigns of tourism promotion in Al-Kharj. The averages of all items in this section are ranging between 2.698-3.226. That is very near to opinion of neutral in Likert Scale. The highest average value, 3.226, has been observed in case of item-1 that is "The advertisement for tourism promotion in the governorate is carried out", and its relative importance has been observed at 64.53%. Item-2 stands at second position with an average value of 3.136 that is concerned with "The promotion advertisement about the governorate is designed clearly and specifically", and its relative importance stood at 62.74%. The lowest average score has been observed in case of Item-5 with an average value of 2.698 that is concerned with "Means of advertisement used in the promotion campaigns are characterized by attractiveness for public", and its relative importance stood at 53.96%.

The overall average of all items is 2.926 this is very near to Neutral (3) of Likert Scale. Further, standard deviation is 0.962 that is showing a very low deviation of percept opinions of our surveyed sample and its t-value is 44.27 this is showing significant level of overall average at 1%. Its relative importance stands at 58.52%. Since the overall average is not reaching to the least satisfactory level of 3.5. Therefore, we can conclude that the advertising, as a tool of tourism promotion in Al-Kharj, is implemented in bad way according to the perception of the researched sample. This requires a revision from bodies concerned with promotion of tourism activity in Al-Kharj to diagnosis the strengths and weaknesses in the strategies of sale promotion and to find appropriate solutions to implement these in more effective way which can fulfill needs of target segments of these campaigns and can achieve their expected satisfaction level.

Table 8
Results of Descriptive Analysis of Views of Study Sample regarding advertisement for tourism product in Al-Kharj

| | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Std. Deviation</i> | <i>Relative importance</i> | <i>(T) Value</i> |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| The advertisement for tourism promotion in the governorate is carried out | 3.226 | 1.218 | 64.528 | 38.562 |
| The promotion advertisement about the governorate is designed clearly and specifically | 3.136 | 1.149 | 62.736 | 39.716 |
| The beneficiaries from the tourism service in Al-Kharj are informed about advertisement campaigns organized by the governorate like gifts, exhibitions etc. | 3.099 | 1.206 | 61.982 | 37.413 |
| There are organized advertisement campaigns about the tourism places in Al-Kharj. | 2.811 | 1.285 | 56.226 | 31.852 |
| Means of advertisement used in the promotion campaigns are characterized by attractiveness for public. | 2.698 | 1.161 | 53.962 | 33.821 |
| Means of advertisement about tourism promotion are diversified like newspapers, journals, publications, Facebook, twitter, radio, television etc.) | 2.844 | 1.246 | 56.886 | 33.223 |
| Different events and occasions are exploited for tourism promotion of the Governorate. | 2.849 | 1.121 | 56.982 | 37.003 |
| Some articles are written about the promotion activities which are carried out in the governorate. | 2.867 | 1.127 | 57.358 | 37.030 |
| Some seminars are organized for different media regarding promotion activity in Al-Kharj | 2.801 | 1.203 | 56.038 | 33.893 |
| Total | 2.926 | 0.962 | 58.522 | 44.273 |

Source: Source: Authors' calculation based on responses of survey. t-values greater than 3 with sample size 211 are showing level of significance at 1%.

4.3. Important Factors Affecting the Promotion Efforts of Tourism Product in Al-Kharj

Important factors that are affecting the promotion efforts of Tourism Product in Al-Kharj are studied and analyzed using multiple regressions in table 9. Advertisement, personal selling, sales promotion and public relation are used as independent variables while the dependent variable is accumulative factor of the all of independent variables, termed as promotion mix.

The results of statistical analysis showed that there is positive and significant effect of all of our selected independent variables on promotion mix at 1% level of significance with equal magnitude of their coefficients approximately. Further, overall goodness of this regression is confirmed by significant F-value and its reliability is ensured by Durbin-Watson test that is around 2. Therefore, we can conclude that all components of promotional mix are equally important in promoting tourism in Al-Kharj and Al-Kharj governorate can utilize all these methods of promotions to make the tourism sector more successful.

Table 9
Results of Multi Regression Analysis of Factors Affecting the Promotion Activity in Al-Kharj

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-Statistic | Prob. |
|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------|
| C | 6.92E-11 | 7.16E-11 | 0.966 | 0.334 |
| Advertisement | 0.251 | 3.50E-11 | 7.15E+09 | 0.000 |
| personal Selling | 0.252 | 3.54E-11 | 7.06E+09 | 0.000 |
| sales promotion | 0.256 | 3.70E-11 | 6.76E+09 | 0.000 |
| public relation | 0.258 | 3.25E-11 | 7.70E+09 | 0.000 |
| R-squared | 0.990 | Mean dependent var | 2.909 | |
| Adjusted R-squared | 0.990 | S.D. dependent var | 0.864 | |
| S.E. of regression | 2.94E-10 | Akaike info criterion | -41.036 | |
| Sum squared resid | 1.78E-17 | Schwarz criterion | -40.957 | |
| Log likelihood | 4354.831 | Hannan-Quinn criter. | -41.004 | |
| F-statistic | 4.57E+20 | Durbin-Watson stat | 2.016 | |
| Prob(F-statistic) | 0.000 | | | |

Source: Authors' calculation based on responses of survey.

4.4. Effect of Elements of Tourism Promotion on Promotional Policies and Programs in Al-Kharj

In the table (10), we estimate the effect of different tools of promotion mix like advertisement, personal selling, sales promotion and public relation on the success of promotional policies and programs in Al-Kharj. The results of multiple regression model showed that there are positive and statistically significant impacts of advertisement, personal selling and sales promotion on tourism promotional policies and program evaluations at 1%, 10% and 10% levels of significance respectively.

Table 10
Results of Multi Regression Analysis of Factors Affecting the Tourism Promotion Policies in Al-Kharj

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-Statistic | Prob. |
|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------|
| C | 0.405 | 0.178 | 2.272 | 0.024 |
| Advertisement | 0.461 | 0.087 | 5.300 | 0.000 |
| personal Selling | 0.165 | 0.088 | 1.876 | 0.062 |
| sales promotion | 0.163 | 0.092 | 1.773 | 0.077 |
| public relation | 0.021 | 0.081 | 0.264 | 0.791 |
| R-square | 0.493 | Mean dependent var | 2.777 | |
| Adjusted R-squared | 0.483 | S.D. dependent var | 1.018 | |
| S.E. of regression | 0.731 | Akaike info criterion | 2.236 | |
| Sum squared resid | 110.8016 | Schwarz criterion | 2.315 | |
| Log likelihood | -232.037 | Hannan-Quinn criter. | 2.268 | |
| F-statistic | 50.464 | Durbin-Watson stat | 1.798 | |
| Prob(F-statistic) | 0.000 | | | |

Source: Authors' calculation based on responses of survey

However, the impact of public relation has been found insignificant. The greatest effect has been observed in case of advertising. It means that advertising plays a greatest role in promotional policies and programs in Al-Kharj governorate and further focus on advertisement can improve the image of promotional policies. The effects of personal selling and sales promotion are found almost equal. Further, a significant F-value and a near to 2 Durbin-Watson statistics are showing a good statistical health of our model.

4.5. Effect of Obstacles on Promotional Policies for Al-Kharj

The questionnaire of the present study also collects the data on the organizational obstacles, HRM obstacles, information and data obstacles, administrative obstacles, technical obstacles, customer's obstacles and competitor's obstacles. We have tested the impact of these obstacles and constraints on the tourism promotional policies. The

Table 11
Results of Multi Regression Analysis of Effect of different Obstacles on the Tourism Promotion Policies in Al-Kharj

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-Statistic | Prob. |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------|
| C | 4.317 | 0.401 | 10.746 | 0.000 |
| Organizational Obstacles | 0.108 | 0.094 | 1.148 | 0.252 |
| HRM Obstacles | -0.211 | 0.120 | -1.757 | 0.080 |
| Information and data Obstacles | 0.072 | 0.121 | 0.598 | 0.550 |
| Administrative Obstacles | -0.179 | 0.138 | -1.298 | 0.195 |
| Technical Obstacles | 0.039 | 0.095 | 0.409 | 0.682 |
| Customers Obstacles | -0.313 | 0.131 | -2.390 | 0.017 |
| Competitors Obstacles | 0.108 | 0.083 | 1.292 | 0.197 |
| R-squared | 0.133 | Mean dependent var | 2.777 | |
| Adjusted R-squared | 0.103 | S.D. dependent var | 1.018 | |
| S.E. of regression | 0.964 | Akaike info criterion | 2.801 | |
| Sum squared resid | 189.602 | Schwarz criterion | 2.928 | |
| Log likelihood | -288.979 | Hannan-Quinn criter. | 2.852 | |
| F-statistic | 4.495 | Durbin-Watson stat | 1.735 | |
| Prob(F-statistic) | 0.001 | | | |

Source: Calculation from the Data of Questionnaire.

negative and statistically significant impacts of HRM and customers obstacles are found on promotional policies. Therefore, these obstacles are creating the hindrance in the way of successful promotional policies. The study recommends that successful promotional policies can be achieved by removing such obstacles. In comparison of the coefficients of these obstacles, the greatest problem faced by tourism activity in Al-Kharj is primarily associated with human resource element that are including workers in the tourism sector as most of them don't have a clear and specific visions about the tourism sector and are not aware with mechanism of advancement and improvement in addition to their lack of expertise in dealing with this important sector. Therefore, training and development of human resource in this sector can enhance the scope of promotional policies. The significant F-values and Durbin-Watson statistics are showing a good fit of model and are also showing that model is out of the problem of auto-correlation. The rest of obstacles are showing insignificant impacts and further showing that these obstacles are not problematic for promotional policies.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study aims at finding the level of Evaluation of Promotion Policies and Programs in Al-Kharj Governorate in the perceptions of stakeholders concerned with tourism sector in Al-Kharj and to find the level of promotional mix in promoting tourism particularly advertising, personal selling, public relations and sales promotion in the campaigns of tourism promotion in Al-Kharj. For this purpose, primary data is collected through a very well-structured questionnaire by systematic random sampling. Its reliability is ensured by visual reliability and reliability of instruments are analysed by Cronbach's Alpha statistic and further data is analysed by analytical descriptive method. We find that Evaluation of Promotion Policies and Programs in Al-Kharj Governorate is remained unsatisfactory as average opinion about its rating is found around 3 that is neutral opinion in Likert Scale and overall average is not reaching to the least satisfactory level of 3.5. Further same results are found for the promotional mix such as advertising, personal selling, public relations and sales promotion. Therefore, we conclude that promotional tools are also not found satisfactory to promote tourism in Al-Kharj. Further, in the regression analysis, we are found that advertisement, personal selling, sales promotion and advertising are playing positive role in promotional activities. Further, these all promotional mix elements are also showing the positive role in creating a good image of tourism promotional policies and in comparison; the most effective factor is "advertisement". Further, the study also finds that HRM and Customers obstacles are playing negative role on tourism promotional policies.

Based on our findings, we are strongly recommends the Al-Kharj Governorate to revise strategies of tourism promotional mix on urgent bases in general by diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses in the strategies of promotional mix and to find appropriate solutions to implement these in more effective way. These could fulfill the needs of targeted segments of these campaigns and should achieve their expected

satisfaction level. Further, we are also proposing the following specific strategies to promote the tourism sector in Al-Kharj:

- 1) To activate the elements of advertisement to support the promotion activities in Al-Kharj, to improve the mental image about the governorate and to identify the sales volume.
- 2) To activate the elements of sales promotion, to diversify its means (like brochures, exhibitions, gifts, samples, competitions, bulletins, tourism festivals, tourism conferences and presentation) and to stimulate the tourism demand by increasing its value and by achieving the stability in sales.
- 3) To establish the information center for tourism sector in Al-Kharj which should contain accurate database about tourism information.
- 4) To establish the specialized center for tourism research which should have specific tasks such as conducting marketing researches, developing the tourism sector in the region and developing the prospects for its growth.
- 5) To support and to motivate the investment in the tourism sector in Al-Kharj by providing tourism establishments' supports to this sector.
- 6) To create an institutional frame and an appropriate organizational environment which can push the growth of tourism sector in Al-Kharj in terms of diversification, competition, quality of products, an improved working environment in tourism industry, and incentives to workers for better performance.
- 7) To promote private and public sectors partnership, and to take advantages of potentials and energies of private sector in the governorate.
- 8) To improve the infrastructure of tourism sector and to improve the facilities and services for visitors in the regions of natural and cultural heritage.
- 9) To activate the role of promotion activities in the governorate in developing the tourism products by improving the distribution channels & marketing communications and by organizing specialized promotion programs through most effective promotion tools which effectiveness has been mentioned in the results of the study, particularly advertisement, personal selling and sales promotion.
- 10) To organize annual tourism conferences, which focus on highlighting the landmarks of Al-Kharj and its tourism resources, and to activate the role of partners at local and regional level.
- 11) To promote effective coordination among concerned bodies in the governorate like labor ministry, human resource development fund and all other big partners with the tourism sector.
- 12) To support and to activate the role of tourism training, this can help in getting qualified cadres to serve this sector.

- 13) By promoting the tourism investment activities in the governorate through establishing centers for service of tourism businesses and by providing tourism counseling.
- 14) By establishing a fund for tourism development in Al-Kharj to facilitate the financing of tourism development projects in the governorate.
- 15) To activate the role of electronic means of promotion like internet in delivering bulletins, news, pictures, gifts and offers of particular tourism product.
- 16) By broadcasting the promotion programs through local, Arabic and foreign TV channels.
- 17) By doing efforts to achieve the satisfaction of customers and visitors by identifying and completing their demands in qualitative and quantitative manners.
- 18) By activating the role Saudi diplomats (in the external ministries and Saudi embassies in foreign countries) for tourism promotion of governorate by informing tourism landmarks and also prospects of tourism investment in the Governorate.

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