# Investigating the Effects of Electronic Satisfaction Factors on Forming Electronic Satisfaction of Website Services in Tourism Industry

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## Abstract

*Enormous amount of websites in developing and developed countries show the importance of this industry in the world. In many countries tourism has become the first revenue source. E-satisfaction factors can play a great role in this respect. Using the conceptual model of Masoome (2006), this paper investigated the effects of electronic satisfaction factors on forming electronic satisfaction of website services in tourism industry. A sample size of 140 customers of travel agencies with websites was selected using purposeful sampling. The results showed that 4 factors including website convenience, safety, information, website design, and information have important role in forming e-satisfaction. No correlation was found between product orders by website and e-satisfaction.*

**Keywords**: Electronic satisfaction factors, forming electronic satisfaction, website services, tourism industry.

## Introduction

About 50 years ago, work frame of wide computers started. After 25 years, Internet appeared and after that service providers accelerated toward on-line services. Internet was known as a way of providing service for a huge deal of users[1]. Along with demand growth in tourism industry, competition has increased, leading to customers' higher expectations and servers' more attempts for finding newer ways for tourist attraction. Internet and IT developments can solve these problems even in tourism industry. They lead to faster communications, less expenses, and more global access to on-line services[2]. In a short time, IT and communications have changed sale and marketing related to tourism industry[3]. According to the reports of electronic units of travel and tourism industry, published in 2008, the first e-units of tourism belong to Arabic countries and the European countries[4]. According to the report of global business, Iran is the fifth susceptible country for tourism in the world for its rich natural and historical resources[5]. Among the developments of e-trade in all industries, tourism industry also tries to develop its traveling tours' operations, tourism national organizations, traditional travel agencies, airlines and hotels. This trend leads to the appearance of a new issue called e-tourism. It must be noted that e-tourism companies try to provide better services for their customers by Internet. In this respect, in a ph.D. thesis, Ibrahim[6] stated that focus on quality in providing tourism services is better than focus on quantity. One of the important issues regarded in e-tourism is relation of management with e-customers which is closely correlated with customer satisfaction, loyalty and maintenance. Considerable point here is that customer loyalty leads to higher organizational efficiency and cost reduction. So, if an organization aims to increase its

customers should ask itself that which factors create customer satisfaction. This article tries to investigate and measure customer satisfaction factors on on-line purchase purpose, mentioned in previous literature. For this purpose, it uses the conceptual model and standard questionnaire of Masoomeh to measure effective factors in customer satisfaction. To test variables, smart PLS software was used.

## Material and Methods

Tourism is an important industry. 10 % of GDP in 2002 and 198 million jobs were coming from it. It is predicted that by the end of 2012 this number will reach 10.6%. It is also one of the most job-making industries which has been resolved by the advent and usage of IT and communication developments[7]. Tourism has 3 stages: 1. a customer looks for buying Internet tickets or booking a hotel, 2. the customer starts traveling, and 3. some tourism services are provided for the customers after finishing traveling. In general, many concepts have been posed in relation with tourism and e-satisfaction from which motivation, loyalty, and satisfaction are the most important.

**Motivation:** Along with the factors like attitude, character, learning, motivation can be used for behavior prediction. Luthans[8] stated that motivation is not the only predicting factor of human behavior, but it acts in coordination with other factors. Thus, motivation is not tangible like other cognitive factors, but the behavior resulting from it is tangible which its after-coming is. Among different definitions of motivation, want, desire, aim, wish, and incentive are prevalent. According to Barnes and Vidgen[9], motivation is divided in three sections. i. Stimulating power or latent energy in the people's performance, by which

people tend to create good feelings in the others by their internal interest and stimulation and by performing their tasks well to achieve the goals that others expect them to reach, ii. The type of decision-makings and bias of the people, and iii. Behavior stability and the extent to which people insist on reaching their goals, Generally, about tourism, this discussion comes back to this question that why do people travel and what makes them enjoy and have fun[10]. In tourism literature 2 pull and push reasons are mentioned for traveling. Ajzen and Fishbein believed that these forces affect people's decision-makings by pull motivators to go traveling and push incentives make them willing to the destination's attractive features. In other words, pull incentives focus on people's wishes and push incentives focus on destination's features. Generally, people travel for escaping from repetitive lives, life problems, or soothing their hurt minds. In general, to know tourism behaviors, recognition over customer needs and demands is needed. The culture in which an executive is raised has major implications for behavior[11].

**Satisfaction and tourism:** In tourism literature, maximizing customer satisfaction is of the most importance, leading to increasing customer loyalty, cost decrease, and in a wider look, raising tourism number and income. Some researchers believe that customer satisfaction has the most important role in bushiness although the ways of it and its management are ambiguous. Higher job satisfaction leads to higher customer loyalty and maintenance[12] and many believe that this is the best way of organizational promotion. In another definition, job satisfaction refers to customer repurchase, implying that he/she is satisfied with it, introduces it to the others, and increases organizational productivity[13]

**Online satisfaction:** Measuring customer's e-satisfaction is a newly introduced concept. On-line successful companies tend to keep customers, recognize their demands, and make services accessible by websites or SMS s. Quality is important here; so, since websites are connection tools between customers and company, companies try to improve websites' quality. Interaction is provided by IT between human and company. So, website is a trust-making tool between human and company. Although companies try to reconstruct the interactions between human and company by IT, some aspects have been left unknown. Interactions like friendship, commitment, flexibility, and etc. For this purpose, companies must focus on higher performance, more quality, and new products. Appropriate information is sometimes difficult to extract and there are incompatible IT systems among organizations[13].

SERVQUAL has a new and famous online satisfaction model which will be regarded here.

**Tangibles**: examples for tangibles are observable equipments, update facilities, and the items that can be requested after observation. These factors are more important than face-to-face relations in the relations of customer-company. In this condition, good performance and appearance of a website gain importance. Many customers have left their shopping-cards for getting tired of their repetitiveness or boredom[14]. Apparent features of a website are judged by different people at different pages. The youth enjoy attractive graphics, and music, while the olds avoid long and difficult texts or animations that disrupt their access to a website.

**Reliability**: Some reliability-related factors include doing what has been promised or on time delivery. Masoome believes that although companies know cost reduction as on-line shopping reason, this is not the case. Some have found that convenience and peace are the main reasons for this[15]. In fact, when customers can't trust their organizations to meet their needs, cost reduction or convenience can't change the situation.

**Responsiveness**: An important aspect in responsiveness is representing fast services. Download time is important for a user. Studies in 1999 showed that 10% of the customers leave Internet page if it takes over 7 s; if it takes 8s, 30% leave it, and 70% of the users leave the page if it takes more than 30s[16]. Obviously, people expect higher download speed for more advances of IT. Increasing animation numbers and size, pictures, and music, websites get more tangibles than before; but, increasing them, the speed of providing website services decreases. So, companies should compromise between speed balance and website appearance.

**Confidence**: An important confidence –creating factor is having knowledge for answering the questions. Customers expect to find what they need in a website. In other words, people expect fewer inventions on websites and like to get what they need easily[17]. Two other aspects are the ability of trusting employees and trust and safety feeling in the staff. The former refers to people's fear from sharing information with an organization to which they have no awareness. A study in 2001 showed that $\frac{2}{3}$ of Internet users leave a webpage when it asks them personal questions and $\frac{1}{5}$ have entered wrong information.

**Sympathy**: There are many aspects of sympathy that don't exist in websites and their interactions. Some websites have specific design invented for personalized interactions with the customers. In this way, every person has his specific version of website whose goal is increasing customer loyalty and repetition likelihood. Generally, beside these 5 aspects, many studies have examined practicality of them[18,19,20] ,but, no consensus was achieved which needs more studies.

**Tourism and e- tourism concepts:** Now, tourism is an industry changing because of IT revolutions [21]. In this industry, products are not produced directly, but provide wide and important services to the customers. It is a mixture of different industries like food, transportation; accommodation and etc. it is also a complementary industry executing economic- social activities like attracting people to destinations, transferring, feeding, and

settling them. Tourism has an evolving trend. For example, in 2001 in England, there were 400 millions of transportations; it reached 520 millions in 2003, and will probably exceed over 720 millions in 2020[22]. So, amalgamating physical products and information has changed it into the most important concern of tourism. Tahayori and Moharrer believe that this informatics need is because of the nature of represented services by tourism. Since tourism products can't be tangible, their description and representation ways affect people's decision-makings. Another reason is this that people need to transfer from one place to another to experiment and experience their shopping. In the case of the lack of access to Internet, different industries and especially tourism can't provide superior services to the customers[23]. So, IT has widely helped tourism growth and demand increase. Like other fields such as e-trade or e-advertisement, tourism has been changed electronically[24]. Here, Internet plays the role of holding interactions and information gathering for identifying target market. In general, successful tourism companies' secret is enough knowledge of target markets. Buhalis and Law[25] introduce e-tourism as a digitalization process of all value chain processes in travel industry, tourism, and hospitals. Technically, this trend includes e-trade and performs it to maximize tourism organization's efficiency. Strategically, e-tourism revolves all trade processes and value chains like tourism organization's communications with the stakeholders.

**The role of IT and communication in tourism:** To examine the role of IT and communication in tourism and their strategies for it, first Internet's effect on tourism structure should be regarded. Porter[26] introduced 5 forces for determining competition intensity in the market including, haggling ability of suppliers which is the ability suppliers get when they increase/decrease the prices of services/ products. If suppliers are few in the market, the represented products to the market are alike, or changed costs are high, haggling abilities of the suppliers increase. Second force of Porter is the haggling abilities of the customers that result when they demand higher quality and competition's increase in the market. Increasing this force may be because of product differentiation or sensitivity to the prices. The threat of new rivals is the third force. According to Porter, rivals' entrance to the market creates a new capacity for reaching market share and considerable sources. The threat of replaced products is the fourth force. Porter believes that replaced products limit the profitability by posing a price roof for a company. Then, industry growth and productivity are affected by price limitations, unless the services/products are distinct. If change costs are high, customers will not incline to change products and services. The threat of existing rivals is the fifth force. Rivals do everything like, price competition, customer service increase, production introduction or advertisements to get a valuable situation in the industry. Generally, highly competing industries create less capital return for the high cost competition. When market growth is low, rivals compete more to get more market share. By the advent of IT tools, tourism competition has increased because of offering

service packages and delivery with high quality and good price. Even non- touristy sections have entered this field, offering touristy services. Porter's second force (entrance barriers) is minimum in relation with tourism. So, many active companies in tourism have moved toward being on-line. It was long back in 1839 that the International non-governmental organizations had started[27]. This issue has increased competition. So, from this aspect, the role of internet/IT has been negative. The effect of Porter's third force is the maximum on tourism. In fact, finding a good replacement in e-tourism doesn't need much time. Although people look for replacing out-of-tourism services/products, Internet provides many replacements in a Haggling ability of suppliers is high in e-tourism, implying that e-tourism is able to offer many services without specific intermediates and just via Internet. From the other hand, suppliers like to work with on-line intermediates. So, this effect can be either positive or negative. The last effect, haggling ability of the shoppers is correlated with e-tourism. Increasing shopper's skills by raising IT expertise, fortifies this effect. In other words, with developing IT, customer loyalty to a specific website or server decreases, so, it can be concluded that IT has multiple advantages for tourism, although it has had some disadvantages as well. Powel and ET al[28] stated that IT is useful when it is mixed with the holistic strategies of the company. Then successful adaptation of the organization with new technologies is posed.3 barriers including the lack of necessary sub-structures, knowledge and expertise and high cost of IT and adoption strategies are regarded[29]. According to Bohalish and Law there are 2 strategies: first, offering discrimination value principle and distinctness of e-tourism products with a reasonable price, and second, stressing cost reduction strategies. In this section, industry should provide a big deal of services, homogenize, and standardize them with lower prices. He also offered a frame showing the ways IT can help tourism. This frame has been updated by the advance of IT. The general access pattern tracking analyzes the web logs to understand access patterns and trends. These analyses can shed light on better structure and grouping of resource providers[30].

## Hypotheses

Adopted from Masoomeh, the conceptual model of this study is shown in figure 1 in which convenience; product order, product information, website design, and financial safety are the constituents of customer satisfaction and independent variables, while e-satisfaction is dependent variable i. Tourism website's convenience affects customer satisfaction, ii. Product order convenience via websites affects customer satisfaction, iii. Provided information of the product/service via tourism website affects customer satisfaction, iv. Good design of tourism website affects customer satisfaction, v. Financial security of tourism website affects customer satisfaction.

## Results and Discussion

Using Cochran formula and purposeful sampling method, the sample size of 14 agencies was achieved. The results of

demographic study and descriptive data on the sample members are shown in table 4.

In this paper, structural equation models and Partial Least Squares (PLS) Path Modeling were used to test hypotheses and model fitness. A two stage Partial Least Squares Path Modeling, suggested by Hulland[31], was used to analyze data. In the first step confirmatory factorial analysis and in the second step, a path analysis was used to analyze the relations between variables. To measure data fitness, confirmatory data analysis was used whose value should be over 0.5. This value was 0.728 for this study, confirming factorial analysis fitness for this data. Significance level was also below 0.05, showing factorial analysis fitness.

**Structural model fitness:** Based on Hulland's Partial Least Squares Path Modeling, the second stage includes path analysis that follows in next section and table 6 shows the indices of conceptual model fitness of the research.

According to Jung, the values over 0.5 for fitness indices show the high quality of the model. As seen in table 6, it can be said that research model is fit. Then, based on model fitness indices, tested models are confirmed. In fact, these indices evaluate the quality of conceptual model as favorable. After confirming model, path analysis results were used in hypothesis test and interpreted. In the following section, investigating research

hypotheses with regression and determination coefficients will be regarded.

H1, implying that convenience of tourism website usage affects customer satisfaction was confirmed at 0.05% error level, based on table 7. The resulted path coefficient was 0.340, showing the strong correlation of website usage convenience and tourism satisfaction.

H2 was rejected at the error level of 0.05%, since the resulted significance level was 0.750 (p>0.05). Path coefficient was also 0.026, showing weak correlation path of two variables of usage convenience and tourism satisfaction from the services.

H3 was confirmed at the significance level of 0.031 that is smaller than 0.05. Path analysis for 2 variables of information and tourism satisfaction was 0.171, showing the strong correlation of those 2 variables.

H4 was confirmed at the significance level of 0.00 and path coefficient of 0.501.

H5 was confirmed at the significance level of 0.031 and path coefficient of 0.162. In this way, provided financial safety in tourism websites affects customer satisfaction.

**Table-1**
**Shows some studies on e-tourism and the effects of IT on tourism**

| Row | Research Conducted Surrounding the Issue | Place | Author and Year |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | This study examines the challenges and opportunities of e-trade and IT in tourism and e-tourism advent as a new strategy for this industry. It also aimed to develop e-trade in future tourism and stated the necessity of learning needed knowledge for blooming this phenomenon. | China | Hainan |
| 2 | This PHD thesis aimed to investigate the factors affecting people s views toward tourism marketing as a development strategy. This study was based on the fact that e-tourism has some disadvantages that for their prevention people s view toward tourism marketing and people s support from promotion activities can be used. | Michigan of America | Jeamok[28] |
| 3 | This PHD thesis aimed to examine tourism growth in red sea of Egypt. For this purpose, tourism, environmental, and investment rules were tested. Some governmental documents were also used. The results showed that Egyptian government should focus on quality improvement rather than quantity improvement. | Egypt | Ibrahim |
| 4 | This article aims to investigate e-trade usage in interaction-based tourism in developing countries. It also tries to examine e-trade usage for developing transaction –based tourism in those countries. | 3 Asian regions | Harris[29] |
| 5 | This article aims to examine the usage of mixed internet marketing for developing tourism in Iran. Tourism and its development were dependent variables and mixed marketing elements were independent variables. | Iran | Alipour and Hajaliakbari and Baroudi[30] |
| 6 | This study aimed to examine e-tourism and virtual institutes. In this way, e-tourism nature was studied. It is an industry that can improve service quality and fast delivery. It also concludes that E-tourism leads to virtual institutes' creation. | Brazil | José and Junqueira and Paulo[31] |
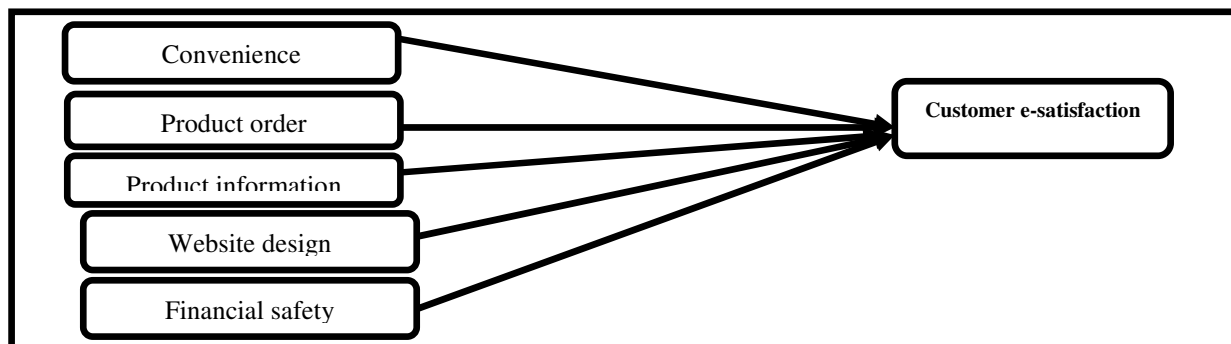
**Figure-1**
**The conceptual model of the research**
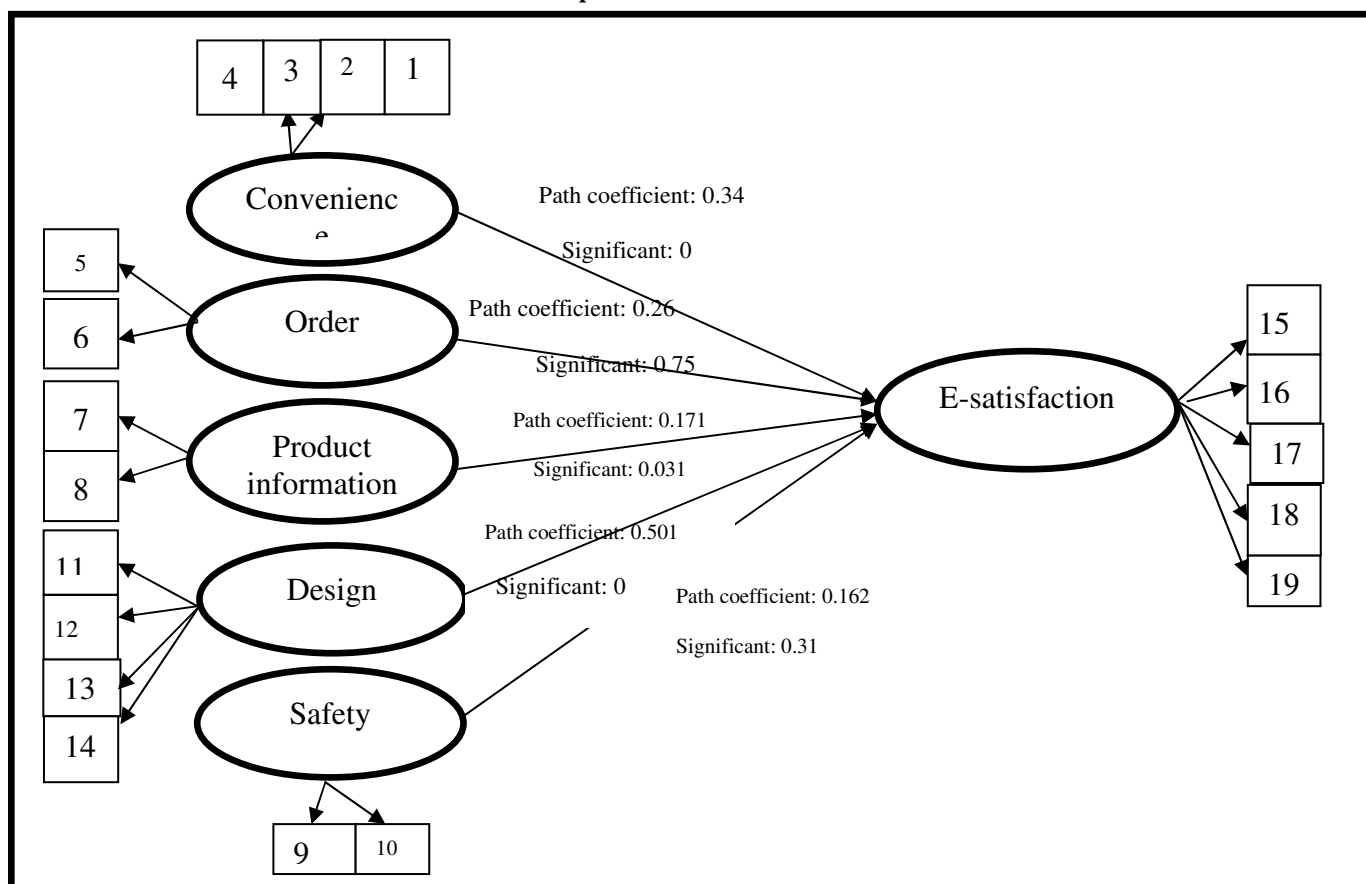


**Figure-2**
**The model resulting from structural model fitness**

**Table-2**
**Cronbach α values**

| Cronbach α | Dimension | Variable |
|---|---|---|
| 0.726 | 4 | Convenience |
| 0.670 | 2 | Information |
| 0.779 | 4 | Design |
| 0.702 | 2 | Safety |
| 0.639 | 2 | Order |
| 0.638 | 5 | Satisfaction |

**Table-3**
**Confirmatory Factorial Validity**

| Factorial load mean | Variables |
|---|---|
| 0.6485 | Convenience |
| 0.868 | Information |
| 0.772 | Design |
| 0.8495 | Safety |
| 0.787 | Satisfaction |

**Table-4**
**Demographic features of the sample**

| Features | Responses | Frequency | Frequency Percentage | Cumulative Frequency Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | Female | 86 | 61.4 | 61.4 |
| | Male | 54 | 38.6 | 100 |
| **Education Level** | Under-diploma | 3 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | diploma | 10 | 7.1 | 9.3 |
| | Graduate of Community College | 23 | 16.4 | 25.7 |
| | BA | 81 | 57.9 | 83.6 |
| | MA/MS | 18 | 12.9 | 96.4 |
| | PHD | 5 | 3.6 | 100 |
| **Age** | 18-24 | 49 | 35 | 35 |
| | 25-34 | 49 | 35 | 70 |
| | 35-44 | 28 | 20 | 90 |
| | 45-54 | 7 | 5 | 95 |
| | 55-64 | 5 | 3.6 | 98.6 |
| | 64 and above | 2 | 1.4 | 100 |
| **Usage times from travel agencies** | Less than once a year | 54 | 38.6 | 38.6 |
| | Once a year | 25 | 17.9 | 56.4 |
| | Twice a year | 20 | 14.3 | 70.7 |
| | 3 times a year | 16 | 11.4 | 82.1 |
| | 4 times or more | 25 | 17.9 | 100 |
| **Usage times from the websites of travel agencies** | Less than once a year | 88 | 62.9 | 62.9 |
| | Once a year | 10 | 7.1 | 70 |
| | Twice a year | 8 | 5.7 | 75.7 |
| | 3 times a year | 13 | 9.3 | 85 |
| | 4 times or more | 21 | 15 | 100 |

**Table-5**
**Bartlet test**

| Kazer criterion | 0.728 | |
|---|---|---|
| Bartlet test | Rotation test statistics | 1758.205 |
| | Significance | 0.000 |

**Table-6**
**The indices of conceptual model fitness**

| Index value | Index type |
|---|---|
| 0.687 | Absolute index |
| 0.838 | Partial index |
| 0.965 | External model index |
| 0.868 | Internal model index |

**Table-7**
**Path coefficients and hypothesis significance level**

| Results | Test statistics | Significance | Path coefficients | Independent variable |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Confirmed | 4.801 | 0.000 | 0.34 | Convenience |
| Confirmed | 2.199 | 0.03 | 0.171 | Information |
| Confirmed | 6.267 | 0.000 | 0.501 | Design |
| Confirmed | 2.147 | 0.031 | 0.162 | Safety |
| Rejected | 0.319 | 0.750 | 0.026 | Order |

## Conclusion

There have been many studies on e-satisfaction, but no clear and same result was achieved from them. The results of this study showed that website convenience and design are the most important determinants of Internet satisfaction from tourism website services. Proper tourism website designs include download speed and web page coherence. The results of this study can be used in travel agencies for planning entrance to e-market. Confirming H1 consists with the studies of Masoome and Miles and Huberman[32]. Masoome stated that knowing the factors leading to customers' interests in using tourism websites and e-satisfaction, can affect designing necessary plans and strategies in managerial policies. So, increasing time economization efficiency and 24 hour services promoting user convenience should be a priority[33]. This result also agrees with the study of Cox and Dale, implying that downloads speed and web page preparation affect customer satisfaction.

H2 was rejected that this result agrees with the study of Masoome. So, the factors like number and variation of offered services in tourism websites doesn't have a significant effect on user satisfaction from tourism services. The reason for this as Masoome stated can be insignificance of this factor compared with the factors like website design and usage convenience.

H3 was confirmed that agrees with the study of Masoome. So, providing update and correct information quantitatively and qualitatively affects e-satisfaction of the people from tourism sites web services.

Confirming H4, it was concluded that good design and attraction of travel websites is effective in providing user satisfaction. As Masoome stated, the websites of travel agencies are like a window and symbol of agencies which attract customers to websites. So, the important role of website design in satisfying electronic satisfaction of the customers becomes clear[34]. Many companies complain about personalizing websites based on customer needs. This result agrees with the results of Masoomeh, Cox and Dale and Zeithaml[35]. Among the factors, website design is more important. This result consists with the studies of Tahayori and Moharrer and Andersen and Henriksen. According to these researchers intangibility of tourism website products leads to more significance of website design. Investigating the effect of website safety on providing e-satisfaction was done and confirmed in H5. This result agreed

with the study of Masoomeh. It is suggested that these studies should be done in other sections like air lines, hotel reserve systems and etc and compared with this study.

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