



## **Foreign Cultural Tourists' Spiritual Perception Factors from Travel to Isfahan**

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### **Abstract**

Human beings take a step in the path of discovery and searching the universe. Meanwhile, travel is one of the means of searching wisdom and experience for communicating with the land, nature and the world's creator, and finding meaning and concept of life. Therefore, humans understand travel as a perception resource and take benefits from it for recognizing themselves and the universe. The term "spiritual perception" is defined as a way for understanding and interpreting all non-material affairs related to the origin of human soul which is being investigated in this research, using the qualitative-quantitative method in which the spiritual perception factors were obtained by using concept analysis method after conducting deep interviews with experts in philosophy, psychology, culture and tourism in Dec. 2017. Four factors of human hypothesis, spiritual truth, outward truth and human interaction were considered between March to June 2018. The data gathered was analyzed by using structural equation and using Smart PLS. The results showed that all the hypotheses of research were confirmed and there was a meaningful relationship between tourists' spiritual perception and its effective factors among foreign tourists to Isfahan city.

**Keywords:** Perception, Spirituality, Spiritual perception, Cultural tourists

## **Introduction**

Human perception, meant as a way to understand and find the meaning of the universe, has been among one of the most important human concerns in life (Klein, 2016). The human origin, as the chief element of travel and tourism is a systematic and coordinated system which focuses on spirituality. In other words, understanding of spirituality is meant to find existential truth for humans (Miner-Williams, 2006; Tanyi, 2002; Willson et al., 2013). It can be deduced that perception of and understanding the Universe is a spiritual meaning related to human soul which cannot be separated from human life. The values delivered in the travel atmosphere are the same as guiding principles and understanding truth and the meaning of life (Schwartz, 1994), which regarding individuals' perceptual systems, affects human understanding and perception of life and consequently his/her behavior (Kim et al., 2006; Ramdas & Mohamed, 2014). The tourists' perception is created in the process of transferring the information from external to internal environment and from the realm of the mind to the experience (Nazem & Mohamad, 2016). But the philosophy of tourism, as the greatest physical movement of humans, has led to travel from and returning to a certain point, accompanied with thought and attitude in a way that it causes the mind to evolve. Tourism was expressed as the result of dynamic and complicated cultural processes (Azmi et al, 2015). As a result, historical and cultural attractions, especially cultural diversity, have led to the formation of various types of tourism, as well as the cause of the movement and prosperity of tourism in cities. (Srisawad & Ounvichit, 2016). The cultural tourism market includes a group of people interested in cultural attractions who seek a profound, diverse cultural experience, and have different levels of perceptions regarding visiting such attractions (Isaac, 2008).

The search for the meaning of life and the discovering the truth, in the sense of human perception, are the main examples for travel, during which gaining knowledge is the philosophy of travel. Therefore, the concept of "spiritual perception", which has been observed rarely and very little in the discussions, goes beyond the concepts of perception and is shaped by the themes of spirituality. The spiritual perception of the tourist is defined as a level of perception that is related to the interpretation and analysis of the outside world based on the spiritual elements of human existence and covers

all the existential aspects of man. The tourist is human, the process is perceived and the spiritual elements in the perception are obtained. Taking into account individual characteristics and environmental factors, the tourist acquires perception by traveling to a tourist destination. His perception, regardless of the senses, social interactions, and presence in the environment, in the core of the spiritual elements, creates a higher level of spirituality.

### **Literature Review**

Undoubtedly, the human being is a rhetorician from the perspective of the philosophers, the simplest form of perception is the human exposure to the peripheral and emotional world that contains the environment and the situation in which it is located. This feeling comes from the physiological senses of humans and the inner sense that one finds in outer space (Borchert, 1996:394). In general, the perception of a subjective (abstract) concept is indisputable for observing and recognizing things in human existence (Zhang & Chan, 2016).

Spirituality is one of the most important components of the quality of life, so is being in societies, so that human values and quality of life have a significant contribution to the goals of life, which have spiritual foundations (Carmody et al., 2008). Individual ownership and self-interest, the ability of inner consciousness and individual development are expressed in the concepts of spirituality. Hence, spirituality is defined as a way of life, as well as a way of recognizing the universe (Chan et al., 2006). From the point of view of philosophy, because spirituality is an integral part of human soul, its discovery has been made to find the true existence of man, so that it is understood by all human beings as it exists within all human beings. Hence, spirituality is defined as a broad concept of the human spirit that is induced in the presence of every human being (Willson et al, 2013). Gerald et al. (2002) defines spirituality as a deep and intrusive interdependence between man and the world in which he lives. However, Neck & Milliman (1994) see the spirituality as a type of religious connection.

According to this definition, spirituality is defined in relation to the Lord, and the search for the knowledge of the Creator of Beings is spirituality (Spencer, 2016). Spirituality means the reflection onto and awareness of oneself and the general simultaneous awareness of what is beyond itself. This

awareness is the concept of human search for meaning and connectivity and communication with experiences (Jarrat, 2013).

Piedmont (2001) expressed that man was in search of his excellence in order to understand the meaning and nature of the universe. Hence, in its relationship with himself, others, the nature, and God, he searches for spirituality to achieve excellence. Therefore, it can be said that the understanding of the spirituality and spirituality of a concept depends on the way of understanding and experiencing of man (Wilsson et al, 2013). Some also believe that spirituality involves trying for meaning and purpose, superiority (being human beings beyond simple material existence), connecting (including connecting to nature), and values such as love, compassion, and justice (Mueller et al., 2001).

The acquisition of spiritual experience, the feeling of affinity and connectivity to nature, the sense of strength, inner calmness, pleasure, inner peace, inner happiness, wonder, pride, positive feelings and attitudes are the elements that the tourist experiences while approaching the elements of spirituality and the discovery of the reality of life during travel. The traveler, when staying in a place, establishes mental and emotional relationships with that place. In this situation, an individual with all his cultural attributes, attitudes, beliefs, perspectives, past experiences, is within the culture of a place with physical characteristics that go beyond the sensory and cognitive experiences. In other words, an inner connection is formed between the individual and the environment. The place in question has a role in the mind of the tourist. The person feels that place (positive, negative, spiritual appeal, etc.) and finally, the nostalgia and childhood experiences are reviewed in his mind. All of these factors indicate the intangible and spiritual connection a tourist makes when visiting a tourist destination (Jarratt, 2015).

The values presented in the space of travel are the same as the principles of guidance and understanding of truth and meaning for life (Schwartz, 1994), which, according to the cognitive system of each individual, affects the attitude and understanding of human life and, consequently, their behaviors. (Kim et al., 2006; Ramdas & Mohamed, 2014). Man searches for his identity and his feelings in life, then he falls into wonder and searches for spiritual meaning. The sense of consciousness of the present moment, and the concentration, the sense of mystery of wonder, the perception and the sense

of value meaning the sense of enthusiasm from the spiritual components that the traveler is seeking on the journey (Jarratt, 2013).

Tourism flows through physical movement, from one point to the next, and then returning to it after a process. Therefore, this circulation does not only affect the physical displacement of individuals but also the experiences of people when they begin to move from the origin, sightsee, and return to the starting point of the journey. Since tourism moves the traveler to search for the meaning, it can be defined as the producer of spirituality (Ambroz and Orsenic, 2011). In the field of tourism, a primitive look at spirituality has considered it as one of the motivators of travel. Therefore, each type of tourism has the capacity to deepen and realize a level of spirituality that is strongly affiliated with the views and opinions of the tourist (Haq et al., 2009; Jesurajan & Prabhu, 2012).

In the 21st century, culture and tourism have become important components of transforming societies. On the one hand, culture as one of the main sources of destinations has been a factor in the development of tourism, and on the other hand, human beings have always had a great interest in becoming acquainted with their ancestors and their lifestyles. For this reason, a type of tourism called “cultural tourism” in societies has been formed (Azmi et al., 2015; OECD, 2009).

According to the World Tourism Organization, more than 40% of tourists worldwide are cultural tourists (Yun et al., 2008). Historical and cultural attractions, especially those with cultural diversity, have expanded the presence of tourists in these places. Thus that cultural diversity in various cities is a factor in the movement and prosperity of tourism (Srisawad & Ounvichit, 2016).

In the definition of cultural tourism, there are often two issues: (1) the main reason and motive of travel, and (2) the level and extent of experience. Therefore, cultural tourists are divided into two general and specialized groups. General cultural tourists travel for fun and entertainment, but specialized cultural tourists focus only on one or more cultural spheres during which time conduct in-depth studies to achieve profound experiences (Yun et al., 2008).

The latter category of cultural tourists is specialist group with a curious motive and a very high sense of search who seek to learn, gain knowledge and

high perception and to deeply and profoundly look at the culture of a region. These people consider cultural tourism as one of the most important areas for studying the sociology, history and culture of societies that create a unique cultural identity for that area. This group is very interested in cultural contradictions and differences, a gap that is an important element in improving the level of information (Petroman et al., 2013).

A study of research shows that the term spiritual perception is expressed only in two studies which are not related to tourism studies. In one of those studies, spiritual perception is introduced as a concept of the recognition of spiritual themes. Spencer (2016) has spoken of the term spiritual perception in terms of understanding God, which, in his view, is achieved in two ways. One through religion and the other in an intuitive way. Religion and religious beliefs are the way in which man gets closer to God. On the other hand, man can achieve this recognition in an intuitive way and in other ways such as through experiences, connection with nature, and with human beings, etc.

In another study, the term spiritual perception is also defined in psychology and medicine studies in terms of understanding the spiritual themes that are more focused on religious discussions. In one study, nurses' spiritual meditation in tending to patients has been attributed to their understanding of spirituality for communicating consciously and effectively, on patients' recovery. Therefore, spiritual perception has been addressed to the concept of nurses' understanding of spiritual themes in providing better services to patients. (Stranahan, 2001).

### **Research Methodology**

The present research is intended to explore and present the new concept of "spiritual perception of the tourist" in tourism studies as an exploratory target, and it is descriptive as it evaluates this concept among foreign tourists of Isfahan. In terms of its nature, it is also applicable. This research is a combination of methods that combines two qualitative and quantitative approaches. In the qualitative section, using a profound interviewing method with 10 professors and experts in the fields of philosophy, culture, psychology and tourism, the results of the interviews were analyzed using content analysis, and identification of the components and indicators. The data was collected using questionnaires which were distributed among foreign cultural tourists in Isfahan. In this research, the methods of analyzing the information

obtained from the questionnaire are descriptive and inferential statistics. In descriptive data analysis, SPSS software was used to obtain frequencies, frequency percent, averages and standard deviations. For investigation model values and testing research hypotheses, structural equation model using Smart PLS3m SPSS21 was used.

The sample population of this study is foreign cultural tourists of Isfahan city, selected by using randomized sampling. As the proposed sample population was based in PLS-SEM on specifications of OLS regression, based on statistical exponent of Kohen, the minimum sample population for reaching to the minimum of  $R^2=0.25$ , is statistical exponent of 0.80 and the maximum arrow to one structure in a path model is 147. This research is periodical and it was carried out from March to June 2018 in Isfahan.

The city of Isfahan, the capital of Isfahan province, is located in an area of 250 square kilometers, located 40 degrees, 39 minutes and 51 seconds east, 30 degrees, 38 minutes and 32 degrees north of Greenwich. This city is bounded to a green and refreshing greenland from the east to the desert and semi-desert area, and from the west to the Zagros Mountains. The population of the city of Isfahan is estimated to be around 2 million in the suburbs, which is considered one of the major cities in the country. The city is located 414 kilometers south of the capital (Tehran) along the north-south road (Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf) and its height is 1575 meters above sea level ([www.isfahancht.ir](http://www.isfahancht.ir)). The importance of the existence of historical and ancient monuments and the history of Iranian culture and civilization in Isfahan is such that in 2006, the city of Isfahan was named by the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation as the second largest cultural capital of the Islamic world.

### **Data Analysis**

The results obtained from the qualitative section of this study are as follows:

For gathering expert's view, it was used from deep interview by using interview manual. The analysis of data was conducted by using content analysis method inferred from deep interview by applying thematic analysis. Firstly, all the written notes have been studied several times and the relevant parts were identified. Then, it was returned to data and all the highlighted parts were separated from written notes. Ultimately the similar codes were

determined in classified groups and subgroups and finally, spiritual perception factors and elements and their effective factors were submitted. According to the results of analyzing the content of expert interviews, spiritual perception is what human beings receive from non-material factors; in other words, spiritual perception is the concept of receiving the essence of existence, and that one can be intrinsically get closer and closer to his true being. Spiritual perception is a type of perception, which is a direct and immediate cognition. And the mind and the experience are not the tools of this knowledge, but it is the heart of man, the inner most part of the human being that makes this cognition. Spiritual perception is to communicate with the soul and the underlying truth. Spiritual perception is the depth and cause of all human perceptions because spiritual perception is the concept of existential and esoteric truth. Indicators and terms derived from interview results are presented in the following table:

**Table 1. Spiritual perception factors**

| description  | index                    | variable                                      |
|--|--------------------------|---|
| Human pre-requisite from place before travel<br>Past experiences<br>Human values<br>religion<br>Behavior   | Human pre-requisite      | <b>Spiritual perception</b>                   |
| Internal happiness and ecstasy<br>Feeling connection and closeness<br>Feeling close to creature<br>human highest capability<br>feeling to return to himself<br>internal loss<br>Feeling calmness | inward truth (internal)  |   |
| architecture<br>aesthetic sense<br>environment   | Outward truth            |   |
| Human interaction with other people<br>Gaining new experiences   | Human action             |   |
| One's perception<br>One's perception from place<br>Physical conditions<br>Aesthetic sense<br>Curiosity sense<br>interest<br>demographic characteristics<br>unconsciousness                       | Internal (personal)      | <b>Spiritual perception Effective factors</b> |
| place<br>human connections and interactions<br>Geographical condition<br>Rules and regulation<br>Environment non-manipulation  | External (environmental) |   |



Content analysis from an interview with experts on the components of the spiritual perception of the tourist and the factors affecting it indicates that spiritual perception refers to a kind of contemplation within oneself, and from the point of view of experts, all that is in the minds of man before travelling to a place, as well as experiences in life, are values that arise from moral principles, which are related to the religious beliefs of the individual, including the first component of spiritual perception.

The inner truth, as the experts expressed in the definition of its concepts as a key element of spirituality and spiritual perception, express the inner sense of excitement, through the sense of connection with the universe and God, the feeling of the supreme human power in the creation and creation of works of art and history, the feeling of returning to ourselves and the search for the lost, and a kind of sense of tranquility that expresses it as elements of the perception of esoteric truth.

The apparent truth from the viewpoint of the experts is the elements and factors that the tourist faces in front of him. Therefore, the architecture of the place and cultural buildings, the sense of aesthetics of the appearance of buildings and places, as well as the tourist's surrounding environment, which is encountered in the place, are considered as components of apparent truth.

Human action was the last component of spiritual perception as a result of interviews with experts that emphasize interaction with the tourist and with other people on the journey, as well as gaining new experiences in the context of communicating with others, including fellow travelers and the host society and service providers.

The human assumption, esoteric truth, apparent truth, and human action as components of the spiritual perception of the tourist were obtained in the analysis of the content of the interview with the experts, which are influenced by internal and external factors. The internal factors are the extent to which the tourist is aware of the place it travels, the physical conditions of the tourist during the journey in terms of the physiological health, the aesthetic sense of the tourist, the curiosity, the interests and demographic characteristics, including age, income, gender and education as well as the amount of tourist's ability to express his findings in a trip to tourist attractions, termed "unconscious".

External factors are the location of the place they travel, human communication and interactions in the place, geographical conditions, rules and regulations in place, as well as the lack of tampering with the tourist environment and, thus, not changing that tourist attraction by preserving the heritage.

Considering the results of analyzing the content of expert interviews obtained from the qualitative method, in this research the factors affecting spiritual perception as independent variable and spiritual perception as dependent variable are examined. Accordingly, the research hypotheses can be expressed as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is a meaningful relationship between the internal (individual) factors and the human assumptions.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between internal (individual) factors and internal (innermost) truth.

Hypothesis 3: There is a meaningful relationship between the internal (individual) factors and apparent truth.

Hypothesis 4: There is a meaningful relationship between the internal factors (individual) and human action.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant relationship between the external (environmental) factors and human assumptions.

Hypothesis 6: There is a significant relationship between exterior (environmental) factors and esoteric (internal) truth.

Hypothesis 7: There is a significant relationship between exterior (peripheral) and apparent truth.

Hypothesis 8: There is a significant relationship between external factors (environments) and human behavior.

Content and construct validity were used to assess the validity of the questionnaires, as well as to verify the reliability of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. In the content validity study, a questionnaire was provided to 10 experts. After two proposed expert modifications, the CVR method was used to calculate the reliability coefficients of the referees, which confirms the average of the obtained coefficients. The purpose of convergent validity is to measure the extent of explaining the hidden variable by the observable variables. This is the average of the extracted variance; the minimum value of 0.5 is an acceptable value, which indicates that the hidden

variables are at least 50% of their observable variance are explained. The results of a sample analysis of the initial test of the questionnaire using the bootstrap procedure for 500 replications are presented in the table 2. The results show that the convergent validity value is significant for the model size of the research variables.

**Table 2. Results obtained by extracted convergent validity for research variables**

| Variable            | (AVE) | P         | (T) meaningful coefficient | Results    |
|---------------------|-------|-----------|----------------------------|------------|
| Human pre-requisite | 0.680 | P < 0.001 | 4.237                      | acceptable |
| Inward truth        | 0.574 | P < 0.001 | 5.142                      | acceptable |
| Outward truth       | 0.573 | P < 0.001 | 3.759                      | acceptable |
| Human action        | 0.896 | P < 0.001 | 11.041                     | acceptable |
| Internal factors    | 0.720 | P < 0.001 | 6.350                      | acceptable |
| External factors    | 0.526 | P < 0.001 | 16.010                     | acceptable |

Assessment of measurement models were investigated by using Cronbachs Alpha and composite reliability. The scale of Cronbachs Alpha is 0.91 for all questionnaires which showed that the measurement model is acceptable. The results of analyzing reliability indexes and its meaningfulness are shown by using Bootstrap method with 500 frequencies as described in below table3:

**Table 3. Results obtained by Cronbachs Alpha for research variables**

| variable            | Cronbachs Alpha | P         | (T)    | Result     |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------|--------|------------|
| Human pre-requisite | 0.744           | P < 0.001 | 2.638  | Acceptable |
| Inward truth        | 0.754           | P < 0.001 | 13.006 | Acceptable |
| Outward truth       | 0.735           | P < 0.001 | 4.007  | Acceptable |
| Human action        | 0.812           | P < 0.001 | 17.487 | Acceptable |
| Internal factors    | 0.698           | P < 0.001 | 10.411 | Acceptable |
| External factors    | 0.834           | P < 0.001 | 4.304  | Acceptable |

**Table 4. Results obtained by composite reliability for research variables**

| variable            | (CR)  | P         | (T)    | Result     |
|---------------------|-------|-----------|--------|------------|
| Human pre-requisite | 0.764 | P < 0.001 | 3.954  | Acceptable |
| Inward truth        | 0.705 | P < 0.001 | 4.698  | Acceptable |
| Outward truth       | 0.835 | P < 0.001 | 3.682  | Acceptable |
| Human action        | 0.817 | P < 0.001 | 10.432 | Acceptable |
| Internal factors    | 0.788 | P < 0.001 | 6.587  | Acceptable |
| External factors    | 0.798 | P < 0.001 | 4.304  | Acceptable |

In the second section, the quantitative results are as follows; the results obtained from the demographic information of the respondents are shown in the following table 5:

**Table 5. Descriptive statistics**

| Percent | Distribution | Gender                       |
|---------|--------------|------------------------------|
| 48.4    | 77           | male                         |
| 51.6    | 82           | female                       |
| 100     | 159          | total                        |
| percent | frequency    | age                          |
| 5.7     | 9            | 25                           |
| 20.1    | 32           | 25-35                        |
| 30.2    | 48           | 35-45                        |
| 44      | 70           | >45                          |
| 100     | 159          | Total                        |
| percent | frequency    | education                    |
| 7.2     | 11           | diploma                      |
| 17      | 26           | Associate degree             |
| 43.8    | 67           | BA                           |
| 32      | 49           | MA and higher degrees        |
| 100.0   | 153          | total                        |
| Percent | Frequency    | Travel Experience to Isfahan |
| 5.7     | 9            | Yes                          |
| 94.3    | 150          | No                           |
| 100     | 148          | Total                        |

In this research, partial square minimum method was used which is a method based on structural equation model based on variance for hypothesis testing. In research structural equations, the value of 't' is more than 1.96 for each factor which showed structure or hidden variable. Therefore, the validity of alignment of questionnaire's questions in this stage can be shown. Hence, relationships between structures and hidden variables were deductible and the models confirmed the meaningfulness of path coefficient. The general model of research was shown in the form of standard coefficient and meaningful level in figure 1.

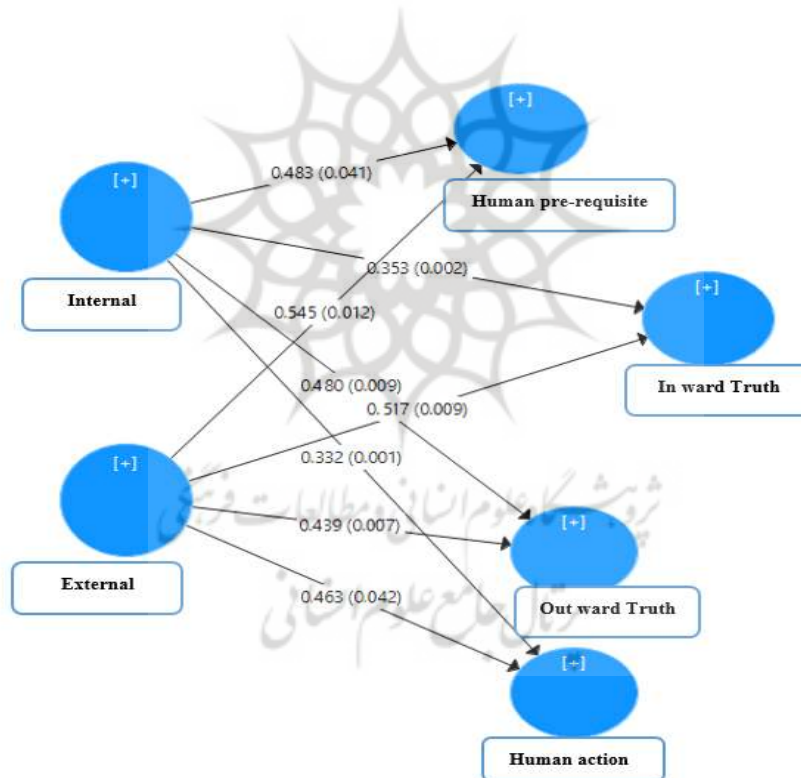


Figure 1. General model of research in the form of standard coefficient and meaningful level

The structural model quality test showed the value of described variance in endogenous construct to the extent an exogenous construct evaluated in the amount of R2 with an exogenous construct. Without exogenous construct, the results had low R2 value.

Based on the difference in the amount of R2 for model assessment and without anticipated structure, it can measure the scale of its effect. The coefficient of R2 and the measure of f2 are shown in table 6.

**Table 6. Coefficient index and its measurement**

| Effect scale             |                     | Coefficient |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| External (environmental) | Internal (personal) |             |                     |
| 0.237                    | 0.167               | 0.386       | Human pre-requisite |
| 0.274                    | 0.345               | 0.421       | Outward truth       |
| 0.263                    | 0.191               | 0.512       | Inward truth        |
| 0.374                    | 0.431               | 0.623       | Human action        |

Besides assessment of the great measure of R2 as a criterion for accuracy of anticipation, the researchers investigated the amount of Q2 Stone-Geisser. The amounts of Q2 is remarkably more than zero. Hence, it was supported from the proportion of anticipate model in regards to internal variables.

**Table 7. Internal variables anticipate proportion index**

| $Q^2 = (1 - SSE/SSO)$ | SSE     | SSO      |                     |
|-----------------------|---------|----------|---------------------|
| 0.377                 | 703.416 | 1132.000 | Outward truth       |
| 0.380                 | 394.388 | 636.000  | Inward truth        |
| 0.152                 | 674.449 | 795.000  | Human pre-requisite |
| 0.266                 | 242.896 | 318.000  | Human action        |

Bootstrapping model was used with 500 frequencies for model hypotheses. The results of test hypotheses showed all the research hypotheses are valid. The summary of results is shown in table 8:

**Table 8. Summary of research hypotheses**

| Hypothesis       |                     | Path coefficient | t     | Meaningful level | Result    |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------|------------------|-----------|
| from             | to                  |                  |       |                  |           |
| External factors | Outward truth       | 0.353            |       | P < 0/05         | Confirmed |
| External factors | Inward truth        | 0.484            | 3.337 | P < 0/05         | Confirmed |
| Internal factors | Human pre-requisite | 0.483            | 4.064 | P < 0/05         | Confirmed |
| Internal factors | Human action        | 0.332            | 4.268 | P < 0/05         | Confirmed |
| Internal factors | Outward truth       | 0.517            | 2.797 | P < 0/05         | Confirmed |
| Internal factors | Inward truth        | 0.439            | 6.178 | P < 0/05         | Confirmed |
| Internal factors | Human pre-requisite | 0.353            | 5.772 | P < 0/05         | Confirmed |
| Internal factors | Human action        | 0.463            | 3.012 | P < 0/05         | Confirmed |

### Conclusion

As it has been stated, understanding and recognizing the universe in its turn is a spiritual concept related to the human spirit that cannot be distinguished from human life. Human beings are on the path to discover and search, and in the meantime, journeys are one of the steps people take to acquire knowledge and experience for communicating with the earth, nature, creator of existence, and finding the meaning of life (Willson et al., 2013). The values presented in the space of travel to humans are the same as the principles of guidance and understanding of truth and meaning of life (Schwartz, 1994); which, according to the cognitive system of each individual, relates to the attitude and perception of man on life, as a result affects him as his behavior (Kim et al., 2006; Ramdas & Mohamed, 2014). Because human beings seek to take on different dimensions of spirituality in their lives, they seek their identity and their sense of meaning in life (Jarratt, 2013). And, in the meantime, man uses the journey to go along with discovering and recognizing, because tourism ends with a physical movement, that is, moving from one point and returning to it after a process. The journey leads the tourist in search of meaning; tourism can be interpreted as the producer of spirituality (Ambroz & Orsenic, 2011).

The concept of "spiritual perception" is a term that is first expressed in tourism studies and refers to the perception of being as an indication of the spiritual nature of man. From the point of view of the experts and during the profound interview conducted with them in a qualitative way, the spiritual perception of all human beings are received from non-material factors. That is, spiritual perception means the reception of the esoteric essence of existence and of human existence; one can get closer to the true reality of his being and receive it. Spiritual perception is a kind of direct and immediate knowledge and is not the means of understanding of reason, mind and experience, but the heart of man, the innermost part of human existence. Spiritual perception is to communicate with the soul and the underlying truth. Spiritual perception is the depth and cause of all human perceptions. This is why spiritual perception is the concept of existential and esoteric truth. Therefore, spiritual perception is aligned with the goal of knowing that is an integral part of human life (Willson et al., 2013), as well as the perception of truth and meaning (Schwartz, 1994).

The concept of spiritual perception consists of human presuppositions, esoteric truth, apparent truth, and human action, obtained from a profound interview with experts in the fields of philosophy, psychology, culture and tourism through content analysis. In the meantime, all that is in the mind as the precondition of man before traveling to a place, as well as the experiences that he has in life, are values that are derived from the principles of ethics and dos and don'ts. They are related to the religious beliefs of the individual and are considered as the first components of "spiritual perception".

Elements of the perception of esoteric truth are expressed as the inner truth, the inner sense of excitement, the sense of connection with the universe and God, the feeling of the supreme human power in the creation and creation of historical works, the feeling of returning to ourselves and the search for the lost inner, and a kind of sense of tranquility.

The apparent truth is the elements and factors that a tourist faces in front of himself. Therefore, the architecture of the place and cultural buildings, the sense of aesthetics of the appearance of buildings and places, as well as the tourist's surrounding are considered as components of apparent truth.

Human action was the last component of spiritual perception discovered through interviews that interact with and relate the tourist with other people



on the journey, as well as gaining new experiences in the context of communicating with others, including fellow travelers, and host society and service providers.

The human presupposition, esoteric truth, apparent truth, and human action as components of the spiritual perception of the tourist in the analysis of the content of the interview with these components are influenced by both the individual (internal) and the environmental (external) factors. The internal factors are the extent to which the tourist is aware of the place where he travels, the physical conditions of the tourist during the journey in terms of the physiological health, the aesthetic sense of the tourist, the curiosity, the interests and demographic characteristics, as well as the amount of tourist's ability to express his findings in a trip to tourist attractions, termed "unconscious". External factors are the location of the place they travel, human communication and interactions in the place, geographical conditions, rules and regulations in place, as well as the lack of tampering with the tourist environment and, thus, not changing that tourist attraction by preserving the remaining heritage.

The following factors have been analyzed and examined. In the quantitative section, research hypotheses were distributed among 147 foreign tourists of the city of Isfahan and the data obtained using the partial least squares method, which is a method of modeling structural equations based on variance, was used to test the hypotheses using SmartPLS3 software. The results of statistical analysis are based on the confirmation of all the research hypotheses and there is a significant correlation between the components of spiritual perception and its internal and external factors that are shown in the following conceptual model of the research:

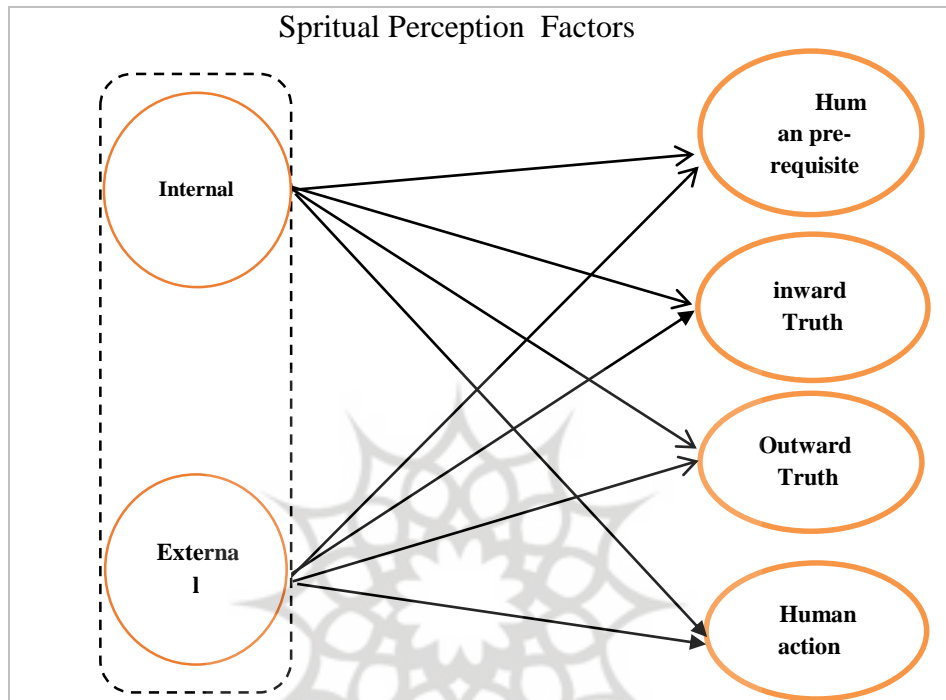


Figure. 2. Research Conceptual Model

### Discussion and conclusion

Man is the supreme being of the creation that has not been created without purpose and progresses in the course of life before the acquisition of truth and meaning; every human being seeks to realize its creation on the sphere of being and uses various ways to achieve happiness, excellence and perfection. In other words, human beings seek to make sense of their creation and fulfill the purpose of being present in this world. The immaterial dimension and the soul of man are interpreted as the main and most important constituent of the human being, which focuses the attention of that human being to meaning, truth and transcendence. This recognition is manifested in different ways.

Meanwhile, the journey is one of the most important human actions in history with the aim of searching, curiosity and cognition. Man uses the journey to find meaning, to know and gain the truth. Sometimes self-conscious and even unconscious, understanding the environment and the level of awareness of this understanding is different among people.

Recognition and reception of truth, inwardness and meaning can be expressed by the term "spiritual perception." Spiritual perception is the concept of what human beings receive from non-material means. In other words, the spiritual perception is the reception of the inner truth of existence and of human existence that one can get closer to the true reality of his being. Spiritual perception is a direct and immediate knowledge, and the main means of this knowledge are not intellect, mind and experience, but the human heart. Hence, the human presupposition derived from the experiences that a person has throughout his life, beliefs and human values are considered as one of the elements of spiritual perception. The inner truth of the human being, the level of consciousness and cognition that he has, the feeling of returning to himself, thinking within himself, the sense of the inner connection of himself and the being, the connection with the Creator, are all elements of spiritual understanding. After that, the apparent truth that emerges from the encounter of the tourist with a cultural environment is the recognition of the next component and then the type of communication and interaction that the tourist has with others, from his companions to the host community.

Since perception and reception of human presence are encountered in confrontation, spiritual perception is also a sign of the interpretation and reception of immaterial elements in the spiritual sense. Here the emphasis on spirituality plays a significant role in determining the elements and components. Spirituality is beyond religion, and includes all factors related to immaterial affairs. Therefore, spiritual perception is also understood as all immaterial matters that include the mind and the previous beliefs of the individual, the truth, or the terms of him/her inner knowledge and external elements and environment. Tourism has always provided a platform for human movement on the planet, and traveling to different regions has become very effective in gaining recognition. In particular, cultural tourism, as one of the most common types of tourism, provides the tourist with knowledge of culture, customs, rituals, religions, beliefs, history and background of a particular group of people, hence providing a sense of Curiosity and cognition in humans. Therefore, spiritual perception, especially among cultural tourists traveling with various motivations, can be very considerable. In this regard, personal factors such as personality, beliefs, age, gender, education, lifestyle, etc., as well as the environmental factors in which the tourist is present, the

laws and regulations of the tourism site to the principles of ethics, citizenship behavior, and geographic location could affect the spiritual understanding.

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