



The Impact of Perceived Service Quality on Brand Love in Urban Tourism Destinations: A Green and Sustainable Approach

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Abstract

Tourism has evolved into a global industry that drives economic growth, job creation, and infrastructure development. To remain inclusive, this sector must address the needs of diverse groups—particularly individuals with disabilities. Globally, around ten percent of the population lives with some form of disability, representing a significant market segment that is frequently underserved. In Iran, accessibility in tourism services for people with disabilities holds considerable importance. The city of Hamedan, with its rich history and cultural heritage, possesses strong potential for attracting tourists; however, it still faces challenges in providing accessible services. This study examines the impact of service quality on brand love in urban tourism, focusing on the experiences of tourists with disabilities in Hamedan. The dimensions investigated include accessibility, safety, customer perception, and tangible service elements. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), data gathered from tourists with disabilities were analyzed to assess how service quality influences their satisfaction, brand love, and loyalty. The findings indicate that all dimensions of service quality significantly affect tourist satisfaction and emotional attachment to brands. Accessibility and tangibles—such as infrastructure and cleanliness—were particularly influential. Enhanced service quality leads to stronger brand love and customer loyalty, ultimately encouraging positive word-of-mouth promotion. The study underscores the importance of designing inclusive services in urban tourism. By prioritizing accessibility and safety, destinations such as Hamedan can strengthen their brand identity, foster emotional engagement, and attract loyal tourists.

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Introduction

In the modern world, tourism has evolved from a social luxury into an economic and social necessity. As one of the largest global industries and a fundamental pillar of sustainable development, tourism has experienced rapid growth in recent decades (Shirmohammadi & Choobdar, 2023, p. 28). One of the strategies recently adopted and successfully implemented in many countries is the systematic development and expansion of tourism (Shirmohammadi, Y., & Mavouni, M., 2021, p. 86). Green tourism, which builds upon natural resources and local culture, cannot be applied uniformly across all regions. It is closely interlinked with environmentally conscious tourism, reflecting the increasing public tendency to prioritize nature conservation and sustainability (Azizpuor et al., 2024). Green tourism is frequently described as the form of tourism that places the greatest emphasis on environmental preservation and establishes a meaningful connection between the natural environment and local communities.

Sustainable development, widely recognized as one of the most current and significant topics in management and business research (Sadeghi et al., 2025), depends on local commitment, cooperation, and public participation. In Iran, the type of tourism most compatible with local conditions is green tourism, which harmonizes with people's daily lives and therefore does not disrupt their routine activities (Hasanzadeh, 2015, p. 39). Green tourism also holds particular importance for individuals with disabilities (Agovino et al., 2017). National statistics indicate that approximately 10–15 percent of Iran's population consists of people with disabilities, and each disabled tourist typically travels with at least one companion or family member. This group thus represents an important sub-segment of tourism, offering destination brands a distinct market opportunity (Kordi Sarjaz et al., 2015).

This research investigates perceived service quality and its dimensions—safety, accessibility, customer perception, reliability, and tangibility—in urban tourism destinations (Shaterian et al., 2019). Safety is a multifaceted concept encompassing social stability, public health, tranquility, and individual well-being; it plays a vital role in attracting tourists, reducing crime, enhancing satisfaction, and contributing to destination development (Nematollahi et al., 2017, p. 7). Moreover, services and facilities must be designed to meet tourists' expectations and needs, particularly those of people with disabilities. Global issues such as rapid urbanization and ecological degradation have exposed cities to serious social and environmental challenges (Nobar et al., 2025, p. 91). Poorly planned urban spaces—especially those failing to accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities—create obstacles including inadequate public transportation, uneven sidewalks, and limited access to public facilities. These deficiencies restrict and endanger mobility for people with disabilities and diminish their participation in social life (Francis, 2018).

The overarching goal of destination marketing is to establish a strong emotional connection between tourists and the destination brand, with trust serving as a key element in this relationship (Abubakar & Ilkhan, 2017). In an increasingly competitive industry, price remains a crucial variable for business profitability. Sustainable tourism development requires efficient resource management across all dimensions—economic, social, and aesthetic—while preserving cultural interaction, ecological diversity, wildlife habitats, and life-support systems. Within this framework, sustainable tourism is recognized not only as an approach that safeguards natural and cultural resources but also as one that enhances their capacity to generate income and employment. Its fundamental objectives are to improve the quality of life of host communities, deliver high-quality experiences to tourists, and protect the environment of the host region (Hasanzadeh, 2015, p. 39).

Tourist satisfaction emerges from the comparison between pre-trip expectations and post-trip experiences. When a destination offers services and facilities that correspond to tourists' needs, desires, and expectations, satisfaction levels rise alongside the attractiveness of its offerings. Satisfaction is critical because most marketing scholars agree that it fosters repeat visitation and positive recommendations, which are essential indicators of loyalty (Jabari et al., 2018). Loyalty constitutes one of a company's most valuable assets, facilitating profitable long-term relationships. Positive word-of-mouth, as an informal yet



powerful form of communication, occurs when individuals share favorable experiences with others regarding a tourism destination or organization. Aro et al. (2018) define brand love as the emotional bond consumers develop with a destination brand, which manifests in varying forms and intensities.

Hamedan—one of Iran’s historic and culturally vibrant cities—stands as a noteworthy tourism destination. Given its rich potential, effective planning, infrastructural development, and adaptation of tourism spaces can ensure safe and barrier-free access for all, particularly people with disabilities. Leading tourist cities worldwide are identified by their distinctive symbols that define their cultural identity; tourists often plan their journeys based on the appeal of these landmarks (Shirmohammadi et al., 2019, p. 148). Such positioning enables Hamedan to compete with other destinations in attracting visitors, creating employment, drawing investment, and delivering high-quality and inclusive services.

Sustainable development specialists emphasize that ecotourism achieves true sustainability only when it avoids the degradation and misuse of natural resources. This can be realized through responsible management and regulation of activities such as hunting, fishing, and the inappropriate use of beaches, lakes, and other protected environments. Sustainable resource use demands careful oversight guided by conservation principles. The aim of this study is to promote high-quality, accessible, and safe tourism services, ensuring equitable access to public spaces for all members of society—particularly individuals with disabilities. The research further seeks to provide practical recommendations for tourism authorities, organizations, and service providers to optimize existing resources, plan infrastructure investments effectively, and address systemic weaknesses. These actions will support the realization of sustainable tourism development, ensuring that destinations like Hamedan become inclusive, resilient, and strongly aligned with the principles of eco- and social sustainability.

Theoretical Framework

Brand Love and Loyalty

Brand love represents a powerful emotional connection between consumers and brands, encompassing passion, intimacy, commitment, and a sense of spiritual attachment that goes beyond mere satisfaction. It is defined as the degree of emotional affection that a satisfied consumer feels toward a particular brand. This concept originates from theories of interpersonal love (Shirmohammadi, 2024, p. 5) and reflects a profound individual-brand bond grounded in psychological engagement and affective intensity. A brand is considered one of an organization’s most valuable assets; effective green brand management therefore contributes to expanding market share and profitability across industries (Noorali et al., 2024).

Brand image—interpreted as consumers’ overall perception and emotional impression of a brand—plays a central role in shaping consumer behavior. It arises through dynamic interactions between brand stimulation and consumer cognition (Shirmohammadi et al., 2024). Scholars describe brand love as a mutual, purposeful, and evolving relationship driven by cognitive, emotional, and affective dimensions. Since up to 80 percent of consumer decisions are influenced by emotions (Junaid & Hossein, 2019), this emotional foundation reinforces brand attachment. Customer satisfaction and brand image have been identified as fundamental antecedents of brand love (Al-Haddad, 2019).

Research on brand loyalty dates back to 1923 and has since been examined in thousands of studies on “brand power” (Cossio-Silva et al., 2019). Loyalty is defined as a consumer’s consistent preference for a product or service despite competing options, often accompanied by a willingness to pay a premium for the favored brand (Parsaei et al., 2019, p. 4). In tourism, satisfaction and perceived service quality are recognized as key drivers of destination loyalty (Chi, 2018), linking tourists’ emotional ties directly to their commitment toward revisiting or recommending the destination.



Safety and Tangibility in Service Quality

Safety represents one of the fundamental prerequisites for tourism development. It is generally understood as the objective or perceived sense of security experienced by tourists within a destination (Derakhshi & Sharifnia, 2018). The presence of safety is decisive in transforming ordinary locations into tourism destinations; without it, tourism cannot flourish (Dozende & Amara, 2019, p. 93). Across destinations, security enhances tourist satisfaction, lowers crime rates, and increases visitation levels (Abd Rahmani & Mohammadi, 2020).

Tangible aspects, on the other hand, relate to the physical environment of tourism services—covering appearance, cleanliness, facility quality, air and noise conditions, temperature, and furnishings (Sadeghloo et al., 2015). This physical context influences tourists' behavioral responses during their interactions with service environments (Mohammadi & Mirtaghian Roudsari, 2018). Together, safety and tangibility form essential pillars of perceived service quality, shaping tourists' impressions and satisfaction levels.

Word-of-Mouth Communication and Reliability

Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication is a highly influential, informal exchange of information and personal experiences between consumers concerning products, services, or destinations. It can consist of both positive and negative feedback shared by actual, potential, or former customers (Taghvaei et al., 2010, p. 47; Shirmohammadi et al., 2022, p. 108). Loyal customers are particularly effective WOM agents, recommending destinations they appreciate to friends and family, thereby acting as informal ambassadors of those destinations (Kanwel et al., 2019, p. 6401).

Reliability plays a crucial role in establishing and maintaining trust within marketing relationships. Initially introduced by Parasuraman (1985), reliability refers to an organization's ability to deliver promised services consistently and meet customer expectations (Rita et al., 2019, p. 5). Reliability and trust jointly foster strong, long-term relationships between service providers and customers, enhancing perceived credibility and loyalty.

Customer Perception and Delight

Customer perception—another core dimension of service quality—encompasses the way consumers select, organize, and interpret marketing stimuli related to a brand and its offerings. This process is central to refining marketing strategies and identifying opportunities for service improvement and business growth within tourism destinations (Di Vaio et al., 2020, p. 3). Since tourists actively shape their experiences through production, delivery, and consumption stages, their perceptions continuously evolve during travel. When performance shortcomings occur, many tourists respond not with hostility but with empathy and understanding (Seifollahi & Deghani Qahnovieh, 2021, p. 111), indicating the complexity of emotional response patterns in service encounters.

The concept of delight describes the positive difference between perceived performance and prior expectations following consumption. Measuring tourist delight provides insights into how services can be refined to exceed expectations and generate emotional resonance (Smelash & Kumar, 2019, p. 5). When service quality surpasses customer desires, it produces genuine delight, which benefits service providers through reduced marketing expenditures and enhanced reputation (Trimurti & Outama, 2020, p. 4494).

Collectively, these constructs—brand love, loyalty, safety, tangibility, word-of-mouth, reliability, customer perception, and delight—form the theoretical foundation for understanding emotional and behavioral responses in tourism service quality. They underscore that sustainable competitive advantage in tourism destinations arises not merely from physical or tangible resources but from the capacity to cultivate trust, emotional connection, and memorable experiences that foster enduring brand relationships.



Literature Review

A wide range of studies has investigated service quality, satisfaction, accessibility, and brand relationships within the tourism sector, particularly emphasizing sustainability and inclusivity. Zayyari et al. (2021, p. 17), in "Adaptation Model of Tourism Spaces for People with Disabilities and Veterans in Yazd City," identified critical shortcomings in tourism infrastructure for people with disabilities, including facility mismatches, inadequate accessibility, weak organizational structures, insufficient governmental policies, and a lack of economic incentives for investment. These deficiencies have resulted in the exclusion of not only domestic visitors but also international disabled tourists and their companions. Similarly, Nematollahi (2017, p. 39) noted that over one billion individuals worldwide live with disabilities, facing both physical and social barriers that restrict access and diminish the inclusiveness of urban tourism environments.

Several studies have addressed how service quality drives satisfaction and loyalty in tourism contexts. Heidarzadeh et al. (2017, p. 115), in "The Impact of Service Quality on Destination Loyalty" (Qazvin City), concluded that perceived service quality significantly influences tourists' satisfaction, mental image, and loyalty toward destinations. Tayebnia (2020) found that in Iran's western border cities, tourists expressed high satisfaction with social security, and improvements in urban service quality directly enhance overall satisfaction and repeat visitation. Zarabi et al. (2017, p. 119), analyzing tourism security in Isfahan, confirmed that security and tourism maintain a reciprocal and direct relationship, emphasizing that a strictly policing approach cannot ensure tourism safety. In this context, security is considered a fundamental condition for tourism viability and travelers' peace of mind (Derakhshi & Sharifnia, 2018; Dozende & Amara, 2019, p. 93).

Sustainable and green tourism has also become central to tourism theory and practice. Hasanzadeh (2015, p. 39) defined green tourism as an environmentally conscious and sustainable form of travel that complements local livelihoods. He argued that tourism has evolved into a distinct academic discipline within the humanities, with green and cultural tourism serving as modern, ecologically sensitive paradigms. The study highlighted the necessity of considering sustainability and resource management as the foundation of tourism development.

The relationship between brand love, loyalty, and satisfaction has been explored extensively in the marketing literature. Haji Babaei and Esmailpour (2019, p. 24), in "Examining Brand Love and Its Impact on Brand Communication, Satisfaction, and Trust," showed that positive brand interactions generate favorable emotions, which, in turn, strengthen brand love and loyalty. Satisfaction derived from product and service experiences positively influences the degree of emotional attachment to a brand. Supporting this, Mittal et al. (2022) demonstrated that employees exhibiting brand love develop higher emotional commitment and positive word-of-mouth behaviors, aligning with social identity theory. Li et al. (2020) emphasized that service quality, security, and technological innovation—such as cloud services—are decisive factors in achieving customer satisfaction and maintaining competitive advantage in the banking sector. These findings collectively reinforce the broader significance of service quality in building customer trust and loyalty.

Ahrholdt et al. (2018, p. 18) found that loyalty increases when consumer satisfaction and delight are prioritized, underscoring the need for managers to differentiate the emotional aspects of satisfaction and pleasure when evaluating repeat consumption behavior. Chaudhary (2018) revealed that satisfied consumers are more likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth (WOM) communication, establishing a meaningful link among brand love, loyalty, and customer advocacy. Likewise, Shirmohammadi et al. (2022, p. 108) and Taghvaei et al. (2010, p. 47) defined WOM as direct communication among consumers sharing experiences—positive or negative—about products, services, or destinations. Loyal travelers thus function as informal ambassadors, recommending destinations to friends and family (Kanwel et al., 2019, p. 6401).



Reliability has been identified as another critical factor within service quality frameworks. Introduced by Parasuraman (1985) and later elaborated by Rita et al. (2019, p. 5), reliability reflects a service provider's ability to consistently fulfill promises and maintain customer trust. Coupled with emotional satisfaction, reliability deepens behavioral loyalty and supports positive WOM communication.

Collectively, the reviewed studies highlight that destination attractiveness and loyalty are shaped through interconnected dimensions—service quality (safety, accessibility, tangibility, reliability), customer satisfaction and delight, brand love, trust, and word-of-mouth. Security and accessibility serve as prerequisites for inclusion and equitable participation, while emotional factors such as brand love and delight underpin loyalty and advocacy.

Based on these theoretical insights, the conceptual framework of the present study is adapted from Abubakar and Na'avi (2017, p. 31) and is illustrated in Figure 1, which models the relationships between perceived service quality dimensions (safety, accessibility, tangibility, reliability, and customer perception) and their collective impact on tourist satisfaction, brand love, and destination loyalty.

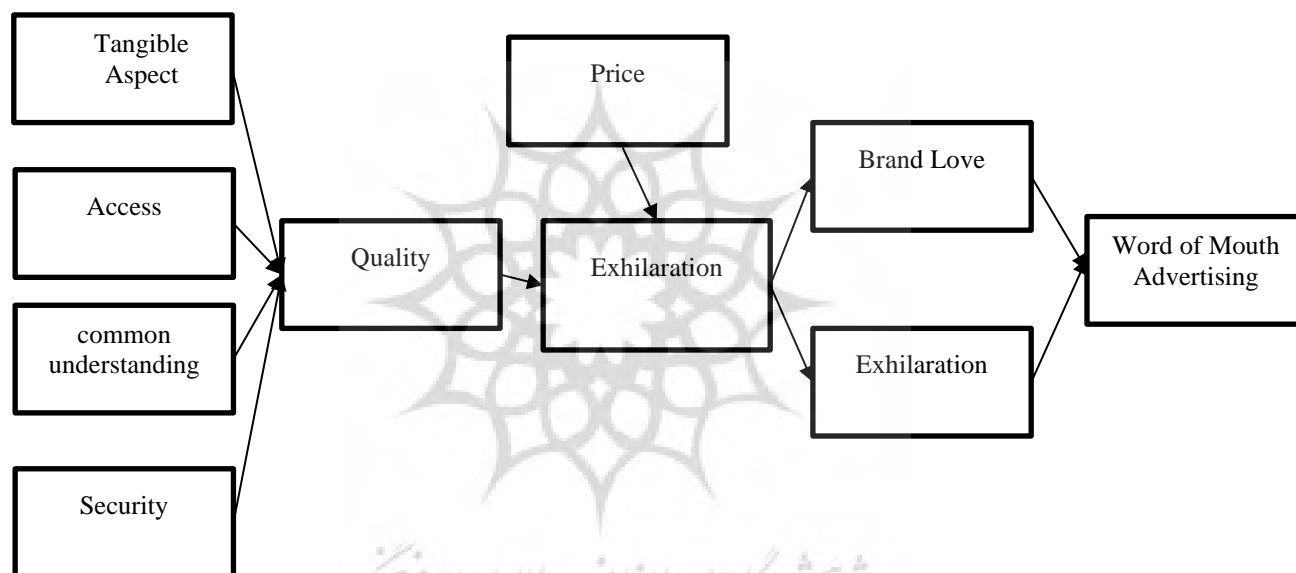


Figure 1. Conceptual model of Boubaker, Nawi's research (2022)

Materials and Methods

This study employs an applied, correlational-descriptive research design aimed at examining the interrelationships among the key variables identified within the research objectives. Specifically, the study investigates how perceived service quality influences pleasure, loyalty, word-of-mouth communication, and brand love among tourists with disabilities visiting Hamadan, a historical city in western Iran. The research is situated within the field of tourism marketing, with an emphasis on inclusive and accessible tourism services.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Data for this study were obtained through both library and field methods.

- Library research involved reviewing relevant books, journal articles, conference papers, and credible online sources to establish the theoretical foundations of service quality, brand relationships, and accessible tourism.



- Field research consisted of empirical data collection directly from disabled tourists in Hamadan, focusing on their perceptions, experiences, and evaluations of tourism service quality and accessibility. Structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used as data-collection instruments to ensure both quantitative and qualitative richness.

Sampling and Statistical Population

The statistical population comprises all disabled tourists visiting the city of Hamadan. Given the exploratory nature of the research and the lack of precise statistics on the total number of disabled tourists, the sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula for an unknown population:

$$n = \frac{\frac{z^2}{2} \times s^2}{e^2} \quad (1)$$

From the data collected in the study, in the initial sample size, the sample standard deviation was calculated as (0.51) and based on that, at an error level of 0.05 and with 95% confidence, a sample of 400 people was selected according to equation (2).

$$n = \frac{z(1/96)^2 \times (0/51)^2}{(0/05)^2} = 399/68 \cong 400 \quad (2)$$

Questionnaire Validity and Reliability

The validity of the questionnaire was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, a widely recognized method for determining the reliability of survey instruments. The Cronbach's Alpha value obtained was 0/967, which indicates a high level of reliability and internal consistency.

Research Findings

To analyze the data, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed. The adequacy of the sample size was evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, which was conducted with the SPSS software. The KMO value obtained was 0/967, which is considered excellent and suggests that the sample size is adequate for the analysis.

Additionally, regression analysis was used to estimate the path coefficients, and all hypotheses were tested at a 95% confidence level. The results of these tests were generated using the AMOS software, with all hypotheses being found significant and confirmed at the 0.95 confidence level. The results of the Bartlett's Test for the data from the questionnaire are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Bartlett test results for questionnaire data

KMO test		0/967
Approximate Chi-Square χ^2	12363/049	
degree of freedom (DF)	528	
Significance Level (sig)	0/000	

KMO Test and Data Analysis

The KMO test was conducted using the SPSS software, and the obtained value was 0.967, which indicates a high adequacy of the sample for conducting structural equation modeling analyses. KMO values above 0.7 are considered suitable for such analyses, so the obtained value in this study is completely acceptable.

The results of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are as follows:

- Chi-Square (χ^2): 12363/049
- Degrees of Freedom (df): 528



- Significance Level (Sig.): 0/000

Since the significance level of Bartlett's test is less than 0.01, it can be concluded that the data are not fully independent, and there are relationships between the variables. This result indicates that the data are suitable and acceptable for further analysis.

To assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model, several fit indices were used, including the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Incremental Fit Index (IFI). These indices are detailed in Table 4, and they indicate a good fit of the model.

To estimate the paths of the model, regression analysis was used, conducted with the AMOS software. In this analysis, a p-value less than 0.05 was considered as the criterion for a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level. All hypotheses were tested using this criterion, and the results were significant and confirmed at the 95% confidence level.

The significance levels of the hypothesis tests are shown in Table 2 and Figure 2. These results clearly indicate the significant impact of the variables on each other and help to better explain the relationships between the variables in the study.

Table 2. Initial estimate of the conceptual model indicators

index name	allowed amount	The obtained values
Chi – Square / df (Chi – Square Divided by Degrees of Freedom)	Less than 5	4/565
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	Less than 1	0/096
GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)	Above 0/7	0/749
CFI (Comparative Fit Index – Adjusted)	Above 0/7	0/872
AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index)	Above 0/7	0/860
NFI (Normed Fit Index)	Above 0/7	0/843
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	Above 0/7	0/846
RFI (Relative Fit Index)	Above 0/7	0/811
IFI (Incremental Fit Index)	Above 0/7	0/873

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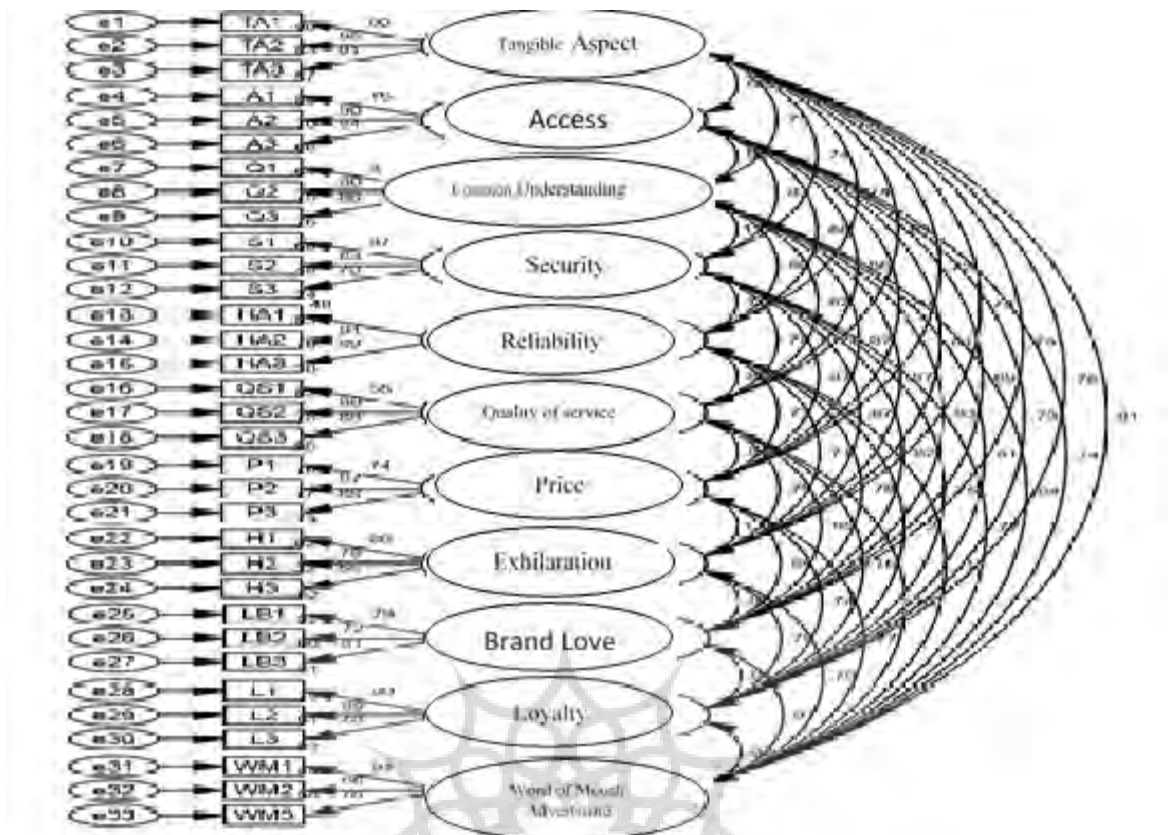


Figure 2. Analysis of the fit of the research conceptual model

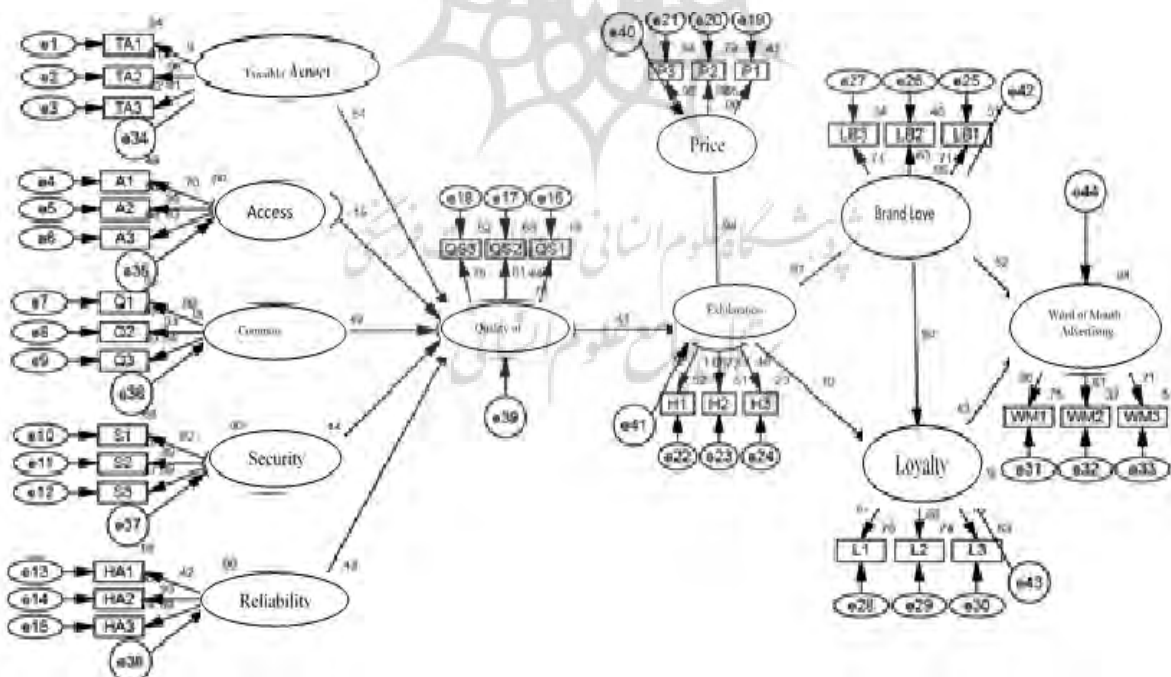


Figure 3. Path analysis of research hypotheses



Research Hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: The tangible aspects have a positive and significant impact on service quality.
 Hypothesis 2: Accessibility has a positive and significant impact on service quality.
 Hypothesis 3: Perception has a positive and significant impact on service quality.
 Hypothesis 4: Security has a positive and significant impact on service quality.
 Hypothesis 5: Reliability has a positive and significant impact on service quality.
 Hypothesis 6: Service quality has a positive and significant impact on delight.
 Hypothesis 7: Price has a positive and significant impact on delight.
 Hypothesis 8: Delight has a positive and significant impact on brand love.
 Hypothesis 9: Delight has a positive and significant impact on loyalty.
 Hypothesis 10: Brand love has a positive and significant impact on word-of-mouth advertising.
 Hypothesis 11: Loyalty has a positive and significant impact on word-of-mouth advertising.
 Hypothesis 12: Brand love has a positive and significant impact on loyalty.

Table 5. Path analysis of research hypotheses

hypothesis	path	Path Estimation	the result
		Estimate (p-value)	
Hypothesis 1	Tangible aspect → Service quality	(***)538/0	Hypothesis confirmation
Hypothesis 2	Accessibility → Service Quality	(***)155/0	Hypothesis confirmation
Hypothesis 3	Perception → Service Quality	(***)487/0	Hypothesis confirmation
Hypothesis 4	Security → Service Quality	(***)145/0	Hypothesis confirmation
Hypothesis 5	Ability Reliability → Service Quality	(***)431/0	Hypothesis confirmation
Hypothesis 6	Service Quality → Delight	(***)411/0	Hypothesis confirmation
Hypothesis 7	Price → Delight	(***)943/0	Hypothesis confirmation
Hypothesis 8	Delight → Brand Love	(***)805/0	Hypothesis confirmation
Hypothesis 9	Delight → Loyalty	(***)103/0	Hypothesis confirmation
Hypothesis 10	Brand Love → Word of Mouth	(***)519/0	Hypothesis confirmation
Hypothesis 11	Loyalty → Word of Mouth	(***)968/0	Hypothesis confirmation
Hypothesis 12	Brand Love → Loyalty	(***)425/0	Hypothesis confirmation

As shown in the table, the effect of tangibles on service quality is significant, with a path coefficient of 0.538 and a p-value < 0.05, confirming the relationship at the 95% confidence level. The effect of accessibility on service quality is also significant, with a path coefficient of 0.155 ($p < 0.05$), supporting the hypothesis. Likewise, customer perception has a significant effect on service quality, with a path coefficient of 0.487 ($p < 0.05$). The effect of security on service quality is significant, with a path coefficient of 0.145 ($p < 0.05$). In addition, reliability significantly affects service quality, with a path coefficient of 0.431 ($p < 0.001$).

The effect of service quality on delight is significant, with a path coefficient of 0.411 ($p < 0.05$), while the effect of price on delight is also confirmed as significant, with a path coefficient of 0.943 ($p < 0.05$).

Hypothesis 8: Delight has a positive and significant effect on brand love. This is supported by a path coefficient of 0.805 ($p < 0.05$). The effect of delight on loyalty is significant, with a path coefficient of 0.103 ($p < 0.05$). Brand love also has a significant effect on loyalty, with a path coefficient of 0.425 ($p < 0.05$), and on word-of-mouth advertising, with a coefficient of 0.519 ($p < 0.05$). Finally, loyalty exerts a strong and significant impact on word-of-mouth advertising, with a path coefficient of 0.968 ($p < 0.001$).

Discussion and Conclusion

This research investigates the impact of perceived service quality on brand love through the mediating roles of word-of-mouth marketing and tourist delight among tourists with disabilities in the historic city of Hamadan, Iran. The results show that the dimensions of perceived service quality—namely accessibility,



tangibility, customer perception, reliability, and security—all exert a positive and significant influence on the service experiences of disabled tourists.

As competition intensifies in the tourism industry, destinations that integrate distinct tangible features—such as well-maintained facilities, adaptive environments, and aesthetically appealing infrastructures—are more likely to attract and retain visitors. Boubker and Naoui (2022) also confirmed the significant positive effect of tangibles on service quality, emphasizing that physical aspects remain a decisive factor in forming tourists' evaluations. Similarly, Ramzi et al. (2006, p. 1702) found that of the five SERVQUAL dimensions, tangibles constitute the strongest determinant of service quality in tourism. Akbaba (2006) further observed that from a customer's standpoint, tangibles rank highest in importance, followed by customer perception, comfort, and assurance.

Accessibility emerged as another crucial factor in shaping service quality for disabled tourists. Ghaabadian (2017, p. 78) concluded that ensuring ease of access to tourism services and facilities requires the adaptation of public and urban spaces. Walkways, sidewalks, public transportation, and buildings must be designed to allow safe and equitable use for both able-bodied individuals and those with disabilities. Poorly designed accessibility features lead to destination avoidance among persons with disabilities, reducing both inclusivity and tourist inflow. In this context, accessibility implies that products, spaces, services, and facilities should be usable by everyone, ensuring equal safety, comfort, and independence for all users.

Tourists' perceptions of service quality also play a decisive role in their evaluation of the destination. Motouri Pour (2019) highlighted that accurate perceptions of tourism services are instrumental in attracting and encouraging potential tourists, while destinations that deliver satisfying and memorable experiences enhance their competitiveness in an increasingly globalized market. The way tourists perceive the quality of services and infrastructure is therefore central to destination management success and visitor retention.

In addition to accessibility and tangibility, security represents a fundamental requirement for inclusive tourism. Nematollahi et al. (2017, p. 7) defined security as a key social construct that evolves with changes in social interaction, noting its critical importance for all population groups—particularly people with disabilities. When individuals feel insecure or uncomfortable in a public space, the perceived value of the destination declines, prompting them to avoid travel or limit social engagement (Akbari Oghaz & Hanaei, 2019). Security, therefore, serves as both a psychological and physical prerequisite for tourist satisfaction and continued visitation.

Reliability and transparency in service delivery also contribute strongly to tourists' emotional connections with destinations. Boubker et al. (2017) demonstrated that high-quality services delivered honestly and promptly reinforce tourist trust in destinations—trust that increases the likelihood of repeat visits and recommendations. Similarly, Su et al. (2020) found that the quality of urban services and perceived fairness in pricing significantly enhance the delight of disabled tourists, reflecting a deep link between perceived justice, emotional satisfaction, and loyalty. Ekiz et al. (2006) also observed that perceived service quality exerts a direct positive effect on satisfaction, while Hosseini et al. (2015) emphasized that fair and transparent pricing enhances both customer satisfaction and loyalty. Collectively, these findings underline that fairness perceptions—particularly regarding pricing—serve as pivotal elements in the formation of customer delight, which subsequently reinforces brand love and loyalty.

Overall, the results confirm that perceived service quality, when translated into inclusive tangible features, accessible infrastructure, reliability, and a sense of security, nurtures positive emotions and attachment among disabled visitors. These emotional outcomes manifest as delight, trust, and brand love, ultimately leading to stronger loyalty and favorable word-of-mouth advocacy—the key pillars of sustainable destination development and brand equity in accessible tourism.

The findings of this research demonstrate that tourist delight exerts a positive and significant influence on loyalty, as well as on brand love for the tourism destination. This result aligns with the findings of



Lee et al. (2011), who showed that tourist delight has a direct and significant effect on loyalty. Tourists who experience high levels of satisfaction during their trips tend to exhibit stronger loyalty toward the destination. Similarly, Heydari Chiane (2016) confirmed that tourist satisfaction directly and positively impacts loyalty.

Creating and maintaining loyalty among tourists with disabilities depends on fulfilling their needs and expectations while taking into account their specific physical and psychological conditions. When the time and resources tourists invest in a destination yield pleasurable experiences that exceed their expectations, this delight leads to repeat visits and reinforces destination attachment. According to Pandow et al. (2019), customer satisfaction fosters a multifaceted and emotional relationship with the brand, ultimately generating brand love. They further describe satisfaction as a positive cognitive and emotional response to previous experiences that shapes future behavioral intentions. Similarly, Marcos and da Silva (2020) identified brand recognition and satisfaction as key antecedents of brand love.

The results of the current study also reveal that brand love has a positive and significant effect on loyalty and word-of-mouth (WOM) communication, and that loyalty itself positively influences WOM. Using structural equation modeling, Bairrada et al. (2018) demonstrated that brand love enhances brand loyalty, positive WOM, and the willingness to pay a relative price premium. Likewise, Khan and Fatma (2017) found that a favorable brand experience evokes positive emotional responses, transforming individuals into loyal customers whose satisfaction affects post-purchase behaviors, such as repurchasing and WOM advocacy. Bhat Suhail et al. (2018) also confirmed the significant, positive influence of brand love on both brand loyalty and word-of-mouth promotion. Collectively, these studies suggest that the stronger the emotional bond individuals form with a tourism destination, the more inclined they are to engage in positive WOM, strengthening destination reputation and tourist attraction.

One of the core drivers of sustainable tourism development is the enhancement of service and facility quality, which directly contributes to tourist satisfaction and loyalty. As argued by Aghaei et al. (2015), without prioritizing tourist satisfaction, destinations cannot successfully attract or retain visitors. Since tourist delight constitutes a key competitive variable, a determinant of profitability, and an indicator of service quality, meeting or exceeding tourists' expectations amplifies attraction levels and supports tourism development.

Among the dimensions of service quality, security plays a particularly critical role. It represents not only the physical safety of tourists but also broader aspects of societal stability, health, peace, and well-being. In tourism destinations, security fosters confidence, reduces crime, increases satisfaction, and ultimately accelerates destination development (Nematollahi, 2017, p. 7). In the absence of security, tourism cannot thrive.

Empirical evidence further demonstrates that tourist satisfaction gradually builds loyalty and trust toward the destination brand. Loyal tourists repeatedly visit and consume services, and after developing brand love, they willingly recommend the destination to others through WOM. Advertising, therefore, plays a strategic role in enhancing destination brand success. By utilizing effective promotional tools—including both traditional and digital WOM marketing—destinations can shape a positive mental image and influence travelers' attitudes, decisions, and behavioral intentions. Overall, tourists require accessible and reliable information about service providers and facilities to make informed travel choices, and positive WOM serves as one of the most influential channels for guiding these decisions.

Tourists acquire information about destinations and services from various channels, including mass media such as radio, television, and the internet. Despite the availability of numerous formal and reliable sources, many still prefer to rely on informal networks—friends, relatives, acquaintances, and peers—for travel decisions. With the advancement of digital technologies, word-of-mouth (WOM) communication has increasingly migrated to online platforms, where even strangers play a role in influencing opinions and choices. Positive WOM is widely recognized as a powerful tool for attracting new visitors and turning existing customers into loyal and committed ones. The results of this applied and descriptive study indicate



that when destination managers and service providers consistently revise and enhance the quality of services to meet or surpass tourists' expectations—and adapt them to the specific physical and psychological conditions of disabled tourists—these visitors are more likely to have a pleasant and memorable experience. Such experiences not only increase their satisfaction and enjoyment of the brand but also lead them to perceive that the price paid is justified by the value received. This fosters positive evaluations of the destination's services, generates delight, encourages repeat visits and repurchase behavior, and ultimately establishes customer loyalty. Disabled tourists who hold a positive attitude toward a tourism destination are particularly inclined to share their experiences through positive WOM, further enhancing the destination's reputation and attractiveness.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are offered to tourism managers and service providers, particularly in Hamadan. First, tourism spaces should be equipped with accessible and ergonomic infrastructure, including standardized restrooms with wheelchair-accessible doors and proper handrails, as well as renovated walkways and suitable slopes to ensure comfort and mobility for tourists with disabilities. Second, efforts should be made to remove barriers and standardize urban public spaces—such as pathways, buildings, accommodations, and transportation systems—to create barrier-free access routes tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities. Third, price fairness and transparency should be prioritized so that tourists perceive the services they receive as worth the cost. Additionally, when service delays or disruptions occur, providers should inform disabled tourists in advance, offer apologies, and endeavor to compensate for any inconvenience to maintain trust and satisfaction. Finally, tourism enterprises—including hotels, travel agencies, and other service providers—are encouraged to segment their customer base and extend free or discounted services to target groups, especially tourists with disabilities. Examples include complimentary access to hotel amenities such as swimming pools and gyms, free transportation to major attractions, and special discounts. Implementing these strategies can substantially improve the satisfaction of disabled tourists and strengthen the inclusive and responsible image of Hamadan as a sustainable tourism destination.

- It is recommended that marketers work to increase the level of enjoyment for disabled tourists. Satisfaction with services, performance, fair pricing, and brand love among them will increase. It is suggested that after meeting their needs and desires, marketers should identify their emotions and feelings and respond appropriately. It is recommended that managers and service providers create a distinctive feature for their brand by designing facilities, services, and special conditions that set them apart from other brands, so that when tourists see such services in Hamadan, the brand will be recalled in their minds. This can create a suitable platform for enhancing brand love and increasing interest.
- It is recommended that service providers at tourism destinations, in addition to spending on catalog, online, and magazine advertisements, focus on providing suitable and worthy services to tourists, establishing a complaint handling system, and responding promptly. This will lead to satisfaction and brand love, with tourists sharing their satisfaction with family, friends, acquaintances, and others, which is the best form of advertisement for them.

The limitations of this research primarily arise from gaps in the existing theoretical and empirical literature. There has been relatively limited prior work explicitly addressing the specific variables examined in this study—particularly those related to tangibles, pricing, and service reliability within the context of services provided to people with disabilities. This scarcity of research made it necessary to devote considerable time to identifying, collecting, and synthesizing relevant studies, which occasionally led to conceptual overlap among the selected variables. Furthermore, data collection posed practical challenges, as reaching disabled tourists in Hamadan was inherently difficult. The process of distributing and completing questionnaires among this population required extended time and effort, consuming a substantial portion of the thesis schedule and ultimately creating a time constraint for the researcher.



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