AMERICAN TOURISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST REGION AS A TRAVEL DESTINATION

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

Image has consistently been found to be a crucial determinant of tourists'

intentions to visit destinations, and negative misperceptions can have devastating results

to tourism arrival numbers. Yet, scant empirical evidence has been collected regarding

how Western tourists' attitudes affect their intentions to travel to the Middle East Region.

One of the most often used theoretical frameworks for examining how attitudes

effect behaviors is the theory of planned behavior. Additionally, the role tourists' social

identity plays in potential tourists' behavioral intentions has been found to be important,

but it has rarely been studied. Hence, this study was undertaken in order to advance the

theoretical and practical understanding of tourism by extending the theory of planned

behavior (TPB) to include the construct of social identity salience as developed from

social identity theory.

Data were collected from potential American tourists (n=630), and the hypotheses

tested with structural equation modeling (SEM). Findings led the researcher to conclude

that the extended TPB model with social identity fit the data well. Statistical results

supported most of the hypothesized relationships among the study variables.

Thus, this made various advances for research and practice. In general, empirical

evidence that was delivered from this research led the researcher to suggest (1) the effects

of social identity of tourists on the attitudinal beliefs towards a travel destination; (2) the

appropriateness of the TPB model in a tourism context; (3) the non-significant effect of

social identity on behavioral intention; (4) the effects of attitude, subjective norms and

perceived behavioral control on the behavioral intention level of tourist. Additionally, to be an asset in evolving the tourism industry in the Middle East Region, the current study provides practical implications to destination authorities and people who account for promoting tourism in that region (e.g., practitioners and tourism leaders) to advance their understanding of the Western perceptions.

DEDICATION

First and foremost, this work is dedicated to the first loves of my life, my parents. Without them, it would not have been possible to achieve any of my goals. They have showered me with their prayers, support, and encouragement. The most beautiful person on the planet, my mother, Aidah Alharbi, enlightens my life on a daily basis. I cannot imagine surviving a day on this journey without thinking of her and hearing her voice. Although we are separated by an ocean and several time zones, she is always the first person to check on me before and after any event on this journey. Her unwavering belief in me has helped me reach this goal. My father, Sabar Alharbi, is the wisest, kindest person I've ever met, and a constant blessing in my life. He will always be my primary role model. His presence in my life has provided me with the sense of security that has made it possible to get where I am today.

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"إهداء إلى أغلى مافي الوجود أمي وأبي وإلى إخوتي وأخواتي وعائلتي الجميلة وإلى موطني العظيم وإلى والد الجميع خادم الحرمين الشريفين الملك سلمان بن عبدالعزيز وسمو ولي عهده الأمين الأمير محمد بن سلمان وإلى كل من علمني حرفا وإلى أصدقائي وأحبتي"

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NOMENCLATURE

ME	Middle East
DI	Destination Image
SIT	Social Identity Theory
RQs	Research Questions
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
SN	Subjective Norms
PC	Perceived Control
AT	Attitude
IB	Intentional Behavior
NB	Normative Belief
CB	Control Belief
BB	Behavioral Belief
SEM	Structural Equation Model
Cronbach's alpha	Reliability Coefficient

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Justifications

Image has consistently been found to be a crucial determinant of tourists' intentions to visit destinations (Baloglu, 2000; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Crompton, 1979; Park & Petrick, 2009; Wang, 2017), and negative misperceptions can have devastating results to tourism arrival numbers (Chen et al., 2016; George, 2003; Haddad et al., 2015). Yet, scant empirical evidence has been collected regarding how Western tourists' attitudes affect and relate to their intentions to travel to the Middle East. One of the most often used theoretical frameworks for examining how attitudes effect behaviors is the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985). Additionally, the role tourists' social identity plays in potential tourists' behavioral intentions has been found to be important, but rarely studied (Chen et al., 2013; Choo et al., 2016). Hence, this study was attempted in order to advance the theoretical and practical understanding of tourism by extending the theory of planned behavior (TPB), postulated by Ajzen (1985), to include the construct of social identity salience as developed from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The study was guided by the "clash of civilizations" concept borrowed from political science (Huntington, 1993), which will additionally be used to ground the study.

Both conceptual and empirical data were collected to assist in the investigation of travel intentions, this variable of interest in this study. Travel intentions have been suggested to be complex (Prentice, 2006), but its salience to travel decisions has been suggested to be even more complicated (Lam & Hsu, 2006; Um & Crompton, 1990).

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Additionally, understanding the processes tourists engage in when making decisions about travel has been argued to be challenging (Chien, Yen, & Hoang, 2012), in part because it is unclear whether such a process is different for each tourist, or if certain generalizations can be made. For example, Karl, Reintinger, and Schmude (2015) believed that the search stage was likely the same for all tourists, but Chung and Petrick (2016) found that the mode of choosing a travel destination varied from one tourist to another.

With regards to Western tourists travelling to the Middle East Region, many critical factors have been found to influence travel decisions including: safety (Farajat, Liu, & Pennington-Gray, 2017), sustainability (Martens & Reiser, 2017) and social animosity (Sánchez, Campo, & Alvarez, 2016). The formation or roots of Western tourists' beliefs about the Middle East Region as a travel destination (i.e., the images they've formed) have been suggested to not have been fully covered in previous studies (Farajat et al., 2017). It is believed that a better understanding of these perceptions would be helpful not only to this research and its examined population, but also to marketers of other travel destinations that face similar challenges. Although research has been conducted in this area (Aziz, Ilhan, Friedman, Bayyurt, & Keleş, 2016; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Dun, 2014; B. Liu, Schroeder, Pennington-Gray, & Farajat, 2016; Sánchez et al., 2016; Schneider & Sönmez, 1999; S. Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998; Sönmez, 1999; Yacout & Hefny, 2015), it is believed more scholarly attention is needed in order to better understand, and potentially alleviate the effects of negative images on tourism to the Middle East Region because negative images of potential tourist destinations have consistently been shown to act as a deterrent to travel

(Galily, Yarchi, Samuel-Azran, & Cohen, 2016; Kaplanidou, Al-Emadi, Triantafyllidis, Sagas, & Diop, 2016; Samuel-Azran, Yarchi, Galily, & Tamir, 2016).

While global demand for tourism products has consistently increased (Deloitte, 2017; UNWTO, 2017a), demand for much of the Middle East Region has remained stagnant, with notable declines to some parts of the region (WTTC, 2016). More importantly, while Western tourists' interest in traveling to the Middle East continues to decrease, potential American, British, German, French, and Italian tourists are reported to comprise some of the most profitable portions of the outbound tourism market in the world, generating $113, $63, $78, $38, and $28 billion dollars from travel, respectively, in 2015 alone (UNWTO, 2017b). This underscores the importance of determining what may be their disinterest.

Some researchers have identified terrorism as one possible cause (Farajat et al., 2017). For example, it has been found that the Middle East's current image by Westerners, especially after recent attacks, is one of an unsafe, hostile region constantly at war (e.g., Arabs vs. Israel, governments vs. terrorists, etc.) (Jalilvand, Ebrahimi, & Samiei, 2013). However, others have argued that fear alone is not enough to deter potential tourists from travelling to a desired location (Liu & Pratt, 2017). Therefore, there could be undiscovered reasons, beyond fear and others mentioned above, that are keeping the Middle East Region from being considered by Westerners when they make travel choices. Thus, the need for a theory-driven study to explore this situation and offer suggestions to scholars and practitioners has been suggested to be important (Karl & Reintinger, 2016).

Qatar has been selected to be the first Middle Eastern destination to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Western tourists, in particular those from the U.S., will likely be key determinants of whether this world event will be considered a success, since they comprised the largest markets in the last two World Cups hosted by South Africa and Brazil (FIFA, 2014). This, in turn, supports the importance of the current study.

Unfortunately, researchers have consistently shown that the West has negative associations with the Middle East in general (Farajat et al., 2017; Galily et al., 2016; Kaplanidou et al., 2016; Samuel-Azran et al., 2016) . Since negative images of travel destinations have consistently been shown to deter travel (George, 2003; Haddad et al., 2015), this research was attempted in order to examine the underlying determinants of the travel intentions of tourists that comprise this potential market including: (1) identifying the potential misunderstandings between East and West perceptions, (2) determining the role played by tourism in intercultural communication between these groups; and (3) identifying the challenges facing Qatar in hosting World Cup 2022 and the role these challenges can play in promoting tourism in the Middle East Region.

It has further been suggested that destination developers should evaluate how tourists perceive their destination before initiating any development plans (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b). Thus, it is believed this study will provide an important starting point for Qatari tourism developers and neighboring Middle East destinations that share similar characteristics. It is also anticipated that the results could lend to a better theoretical understanding of the phenomena studied, by utilizing an extended model of the TPB, to examine travel intentions.

1.2. Objectives

The objectives of the present research were twofold: (1) to test the TPB model in a tourism context; and (2) extend the TPB model by incorporating social identity. It was thus believed that the results of the study would lead to an improved understanding of the core beliefs tourists may consider when searching for a travel destination. In service of these goals, several hypotheses will be empirically tested (see Figure 1). These hypotheses are listed below, and are further justified in subsequent chapters.

H1a: The attitude American tourists have toward the Middle East will be directly related to their behavioral intention towards travelling to the Middle East Region.

H1b: Tourists' social pressure (norms) will be directly related to their behavioral intention towards travelling to the Middle East Region.

H1c: The perceptions of behavioral control for Amrican tourists will be directly related to their behavioral intention of travelling to the Middle East Region.

H2a: The social identity salience of potential tourists "belonging to the American society" will be directly related to their behavioral intention to travel to the Middle East Region.

H2b: The social identity salience of potential tourists "belonging to the West" will be directly related to their attitude towards the Middle East Region as a travel destination.
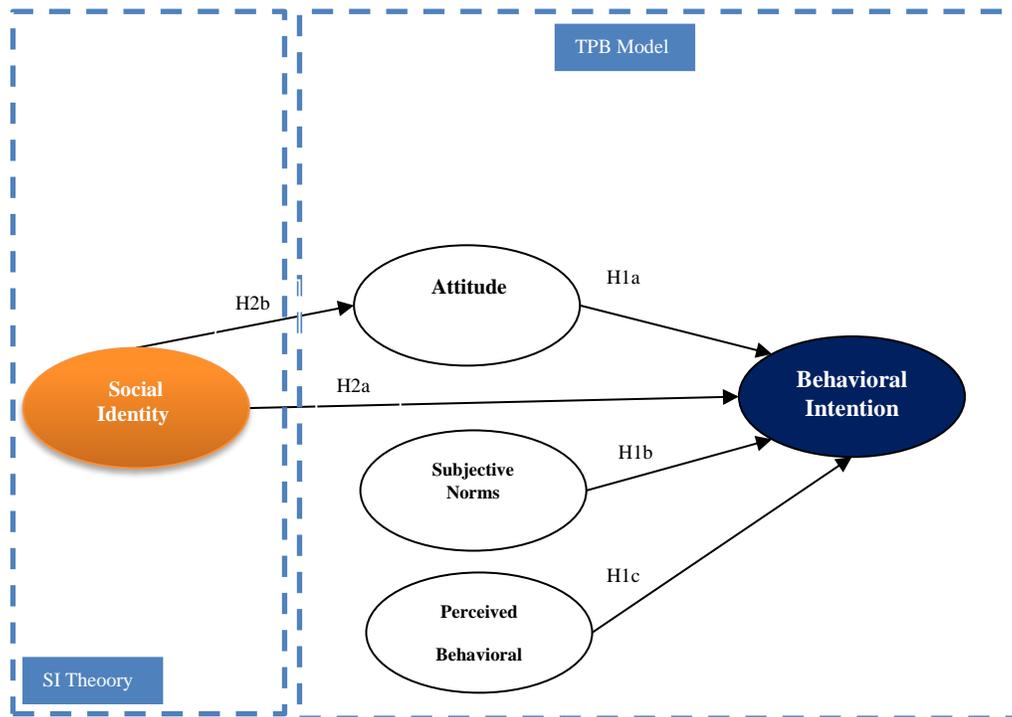
Figure 1. Proposed Model for the Study

1.3. Background of Prolonged Destination image

The "Middle East" is a term that refers to "the countries of southwest Asia [and] north Africa — usually considered to include the countries extending from Libya on the W[est] to Afghanistan on the E[ast]" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1999, p. 1). Active terrorism continues to take place in this region, which has complicated non-Middle Easterners' image of the destination (Farajat et al., 2017). Historically, many issues have contributed to the complexity of outsiders' mental conception of the Middle East, including Western stereotypes, the East-West divide, and the so-called clash of cultures (Avraham, 2015; Said, 1979).

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Some parts of the Middle East Region have, historically, been popular travel destinations for Westerners (Farajat et al., 2017). The region is historically diverse, and houses the birthplaces of several of the world's most prominent religions (Al Mahadin & Burns, 2007). However, as tourism in this region has been challenged (Stephenson, 2014) and in some ways considered to be undeveloped (Henderson, 2006; Zaidan & Kovacs, 2017) Western tourist demand has been affected, in part because of associations of the region with terrorism (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). Yet, Western tourists are important to the area, because they can stimulate the local economy and have been suggested to be able to ease the cultural divide between East and West with their presence (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004). The absence of this intercultural communication has been suggested to have created a region of misfortune, prone to acts of oppression and violations of human rights that should not be allowed to continue (Wilkin, 2017; Young, 2009; Young, 1988).

Said (1979) optimistically believed that societies tend to do what is right. His opinion extended to accomplishments in the research arena, and the capacity of human science to supply contemporary authors with ideas and approaches advocating against unjust practices such as discrimination and other forms of exclusion. Tourism, as a component of human science, has been argued to potentially play a role in enhancing these admirable outcomes by bridging the gap between the West and the Middle East and by offering a way of peacefully engaging with one another (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004; Bryce, MacLaren, & O'Gorman, 2013; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). Tourism

may also potentially be a tool for confronting and reducing the West's negative cognitive images that have developed.

Said (2013) further claimed that it is impossible to understand, or even accurately examine, images of exotic cultures, people, and destinations without first addressing the main drivers of those images. Historically speaking, the clash between the West and East has led to hostile attitudes on both sides (Aydin & Duran, 2015; Cannadine, 2013; Fox, 2001; Huntington, 1993; Karim & Eid, 2012; Simons, 2010). In order to better understand this phenomenon, a discussion of how the West has formed these negative images and some of the forces facilitating this formation are presented in the following sections.

Previous researchers have dealt with tourism-related destination image issues from many perspectives (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004; Avraham, 2013; Avraham, 2016; Bryce et al., 2013; Chen, Lin, & Petrick, 2012; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Morakabati & Kapuściński, 2016; Sharifpour, Walters, & Ritchie, 2014; White, 2004; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010), and have examined a multitude of different dimensions. For example, Avraham (2013) viewed the topic from the media's standpoint, and examined the possibility of using theoretical tools to reframe tourists' images of the Middle East. While this 2013 study focused on the entire region, the researcher narrowed his focus to Egypt in later research by applying a "multi-step model for altering the place image" (p.41) (Avraham, 2016). Jalil and Abd (2009) approached Egypt in a different manner, by directly examining the images that tourists from the UK had of the country and its inhabitants.

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Other researchers have considered the following aspects when taking tourism related destination image issues into account: religion (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010), terrorism (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004; Morakabati & Kapuściński, 2016), controlled versus uncontrolled images (Sharifpour et al., 2014), and future tourism development in the region (Henderson, 2014; Morakabati, Beavis, & Fletcher, 2014). Further, Chen et al. (2012) comprehensively analyzed the issue via holistic and individual images of a destination in relation to worldwide stereotypes. Their case study concerned China and Taiwan, and was recently extended to include the interactions among tourism and conflicts concerning divided countries (Chen et al., 2016).

Scholars from other disciplines, mainly in the humanities, have addressed this issue outside of a tourism context (Abu-Lughod et al., 2001; Jackson, 1996; Merskin, 2004; Said, 1979; Shaheen, 2003). Abu-Lughod et al. (2001) examined Said's (1979) oft-cited book on "Orientalism" through the lens of feminist images. Said's (1979) work can be argued to be the first to introduce the notion of "Orientalism," through which he analyzed how the East is viewed through Western eyes. Other researchers (Jackson, 1996; Merskin, 2004; Shaheen, 2003) have broadly discussed the influence of mass media in forming images and influencing perceptions of the region, within America and abroad.

The above studies have not, however, considered the link between Western images of the Middle East and the roots of those images via an interdisciplinary approach that combined both the existing literature and variables related to tourism. As recommended in Chen et al. (2012), the current researcher hopes to fill this gap by utilizing both theory and empirical data to examine Western images of the Middle East Region and the factors

that foster those images. This issue is not new, and has been suggested as a topic requiring deeper investigation, not only to measure the image of a destination itself, but also the causation leading to these image's formation (Lai & Li, 2014).

Since tourism to the Middle East is currently challenging, due likely in large part to the negative views the West has of many member countries (and since a clear end to the conflicts causing those negative images seems unlikely, at least in the near future), Avraham (2013) encouraged future researchers to pay close attention to restoring positive images of the region through tourism. Therefore, in this study, tourism and its marketing strategies were considered as a means of breeding intercultural communication between the West and the Middle East.

1.3.1. *Formation of Western Images of the Middle East*

Said (1979) also stated that images are created by one's imagination, suggesting that something concrete must be responsible for their formation. Therefore, an attempt to address the formation of images of the ME is likely an important first step in this and related research (Chen et al., 2012; Said, 1979; White, 2004). Thus, as suggested by Bryce et al. (2013) since tourists' images are complex and historically ingrained, tracing their historical background is likely key for tourism planners, in order to assist them in properly confronting negativity that may arise.

The Western images important to the present research are believed to be formed from a variety of drivers, including: collective awareness, mass media (Merskin, 2004; Shaheen, 2003), and historical literature authored by Westerners who have travelled to the Middle East (Bryce et al., 2013). In addition, terrorist attacks that have occurred in the

region have also been found to have negative impacts on these complex Western images (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004; Morakabati & Kapuściński, 2016). However, these attacks been suggested to have had only a short term effect on tourists' views (Morakabati & Kapuściński). Thus, they alone are likely not the sole cause of the long-held images created and held by the Western mindset.

Of the many possible drivers, mass media has potentially had the most significant influence as the media's role in forming resiliently negative images has been found to be substantial (Abu-Lughod et al., 2001; Avraham, 2013). Western news media has been found to often selectively cover negative news related to terrorism and conflicts in the region (Avraham). For example, isolated damaging news stories associated with women and Islam tend to be more frequently shown than other types of news (Abu-Lughod et al.,). It is possible that some Western media outlets may seek to encourage adverse mainstream images about other countries, especially those in which Islam is the dominant religion. This was suggested to be especially evident in the news coverage following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004).

Western movies have also played a substantial role in fostering negative images of the Middle East. According to Shaheen (2003), the people and geography of the ME are frequently victimized by American films. His study revealed that only 45 out of 900 movies portrayed the region and its inhabitants as ordinary humans, while the other 95% represented Middle Easterners as inhospitable, violent, intolerant of non-Muslims, cruel, and/or inhumane. He described the images as a way for Hollywood to defame the region and its people.

Historical writings about the Middle East also highlight the complexity of prominent Western images of the region, and vice versa (Bryce et al., 2013; Said, 1979). For example, Richard Burton and Gertrude Bell, well-known travel writers, have been argued to often have Western prejudice in their writing, in spite of their profound knowledge of the region. This has been suggested to be exemplified by such characteristics as their feeling of superiority (Bryce et al.). It is possible that their bias made it impossible to objectively describe the area in their work.

1.3.2. Common Western images of Middle East and their Impact on Tourism

The above suggests that the media has played a role in the negative images of the Middle East Region. Jackson (1996), as cited by Merskin (2004) argued that the region, and its people, are portrayed by Westerners both holistically and cognitively as violent and dangerous. Additionally, it has been argued that the Middle East is made to appear a breeding ground for crime and immorality (Abu-Lughod et al., 2001; Al Mahadin & Burns, 2007).

The Westerners' poor images of the Middle East extend beyond the geographic dimensions of the region as they have also often been applied to its people, particularly women. This leads to broader assumptions not only regarding gender issues in the Middle East, but also regarding the area and its culture (Abu-Lughod et al., 2001). For example, travelers have been found to avoid visiting the Middle East Region because of images that portray a cultural distance from indigenous people and offer examples of victimization (Sharifpour et al., 2014). Possibly even more problematic is the assumption found in American literature that Middle Easterners are sometimes considered "enemies,"

especially after 9/11 (Love, 2009; Salaita, 2005). It is especially unfortunate that these conditions will most likely continue, because their outcomes have been suggested to be dangerous for global human rights (Merskin, 2004).

From a tourism standpoint, context is essential to crafting a destination's image. Descriptions from multiple sources can encourage or hinder tourism, depending on how tourists construct and perceive the messages they receive (Chen et al., 2012). This is because tourists' cognitive mindsets have been found to be directly impacted by their beliefs about a place (Chen et al.). In the case of Qatar (where the World Cup will be held in 2022), the negative images prompted by mass media may make Western tourists less likely to visit than if the event were held elsewhere (Henderson, 2014). Therefore, it is believed potential tourists' perceptions of the Middle East require further investigation, especially in regard to Qatar, where there is a timely need to meet the expectations of tourists and address their concerns (Morakabati et al., 2014).

1.4. Delimitations

Destination images concerning tourists' attitudes have recently received increased attention in the literature (Lai & Li, 2014). To reduce error associated with extraneous factors beyond the variables examined in the current study, the present study has been delimited. This research only considered tourists who have not visited the Middle East Region; and only included individuals from the United States. Huntington (1993) identified the US as one of the major capitals of Western culture. It is believed that the inclusion of other Western countries might cause error associated with the differences between countries and deter the studies' findings.

1.5. Limitations

The current study also has certain limitations, including:

- This study was not discussed the topic from an ideological perspective, since the Middle East is the birthplace of many of the world's major religions. Approaching the issue from an Islamic viewpoint could be considered subjective or partial by readers. This would likely be an appropriate line of inquiry for an Eastern scholar looking to conceptualize the issue.

- This investigation was limited to those U.S. tourists who had access to the internet, since Qualtrics, a reliable online panel, was employed for data collection.

- Because previous experience with the Middle East Region may affect tourists' assessment of the destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a) and their intention to visit (Lam & Hsu, 2004), the present study only evaluated the beliefs of non-visitors and those predicting a likelihood to visit within the upcoming two-year period. This approach is in contrast to Sparks (2007), who applied the TPB exclusively to those who had previously visited a wine-producing region. Another reason for this exclusion is that the study sample and conceptual components were developed such that they were limited to one type of group. Accepting participants with previous experience in the Middle East Region would require operationalization of another key variable, "past behavior," which is outside the scope of this research. Therefore, the data obtained from this group is considered sufficient to satisfy the study's purpose. A two-group sample is suggested for future investigations looking to compare potential visitors and non-visitors to the Middle East.

- Completing the study survey required participants (e.g., potential tourists) to answer three constructs at the same time, which could cause inflated correlations among IVs and thus endanger the internal construct validity (Lindell & Whitney, 2001).

1.6. Definitions

Table 1 highlights the common definitions of terms used for the present study.

Table 1
Definitions

Terms	Definition	Source
Civilization	"The highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species. It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people. The civilizations to which he belongs is the broadest level of identification with which he intensely identifies. People cab and do redefine their identities and, as a result, the composition and boundaries of civilizations changes" page. 24.	(Huntington, 1993)
Group	"a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about evaluation of their group and of other membership of it" page.40.	(Tajfel & Turner,1979)
Intergroup behavior	"any behavior displayed by one or more others that is based on the actors identification of themselves and the others belonging to different social categories" page.40	(Tajfel & Turner,1979)

Terms	Definition	Source
Destination Image	"the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination" page. 18	(Crompton, 1979)
Middle East	"the countries of southwest Asia & north Africa — usually considered to include the countries extending from Libya on the W[est] to Afghanistan on the E[ast]"	(dictionary, 1999)

Table 1 Continued

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In an attempt to theoretically ground the study in a tourism context, an overview of the research on planned behavior applications in tourism and related disciplines (e.g., hospitality) is thematically reviewed in this chapter. Subsequently, measurements of the theory's constructs are highlighted. Finally, serving as a sub-theory to further explain the study's topic, social identity research and its measurements are discussed.

2.1. Applications of the Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) was developed by Ajzen (1985) as an extension of Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action (TRA). The TPB proposes that a person's behaviors, and intended behaviors can be explained by their attitudes, subjective norms and their perceived behavioral control. He argued that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control directly impact behavioral intentions, while both behavioral intentions and perceived behavioral control have direct impacts on actual behavior (see Figure 2). The proposed relationships between the theory's variables are displayed in Table 2.
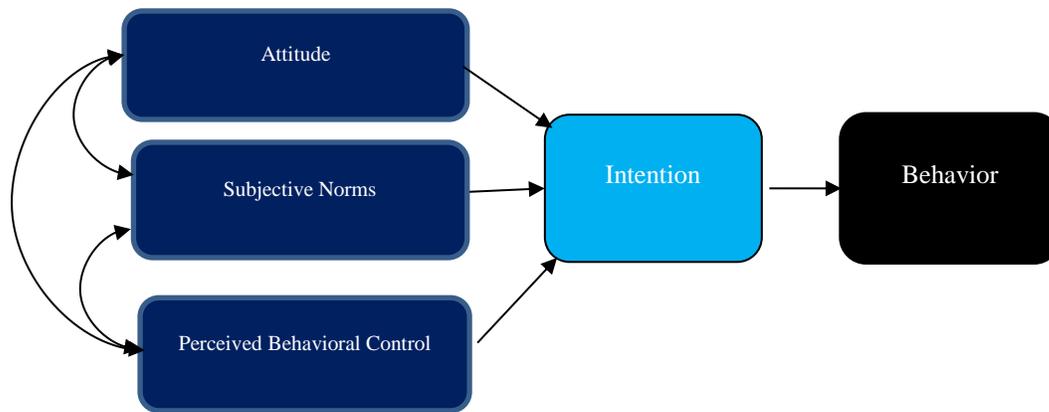
Figure 2. Schematic Representation of TPB Adapted from Ajzen (2006, p. 1).

Table 2

Definitions of TPB Components Adapted from Buaphiban and Truong (2017: P.127)

Component	Description
Attitude	Attitudes can be defined as "cognitions and emotions related to the decision that the individual is considering and the extent to which the individual values the behavior". Attitudes are specific to the object or behavior under consideration. They are determined by specific behavioral beliefs and may vary depending on the strength of the behavioral belief (Ajzen, 1991, 2005).
Behavior	Behavior is the final outcome of the TPB model or the point where the individual acts on the decision. The behavior is the outcome of the cognitive and effective processes where the individual actually takes an action based on the attitudes and other factors identified (Ajzen, 1991, 2005).
Behavioral Intention	The behavioral intention can be defined as "an indication of a person's readiness to perform a given behavior and is considered to be the immediate antecedent of behavior". The behavioral intention is formed at the point where the consumer makes an active decision to engage in the contemplated behavior based on their assessment of the three attitude-related variables (Ajzen, 1991, 2005).

Component	Description
Perceived Behavioral Control	Perceived behavioral control (PCB) refers to "people's perceptions of their ability to perform a given behavior" (Ajzen, 1991). PCB is influenced by control beliefs. For example, this can include whether he or she has the resources or will power to make a particular choice. In consumer decisions, availability of products/services and perceived financial control (whether or not the individual feels he or she has enough money to afford the decision or what the opportunity cost will be) is a relevant understanding of PCB (Cheng et al., 2011). PCB is not directly based on actual behavioral control, although it will probably be related (Ajzen, 2005)
Subjective Norms	Subjective norms are "the perceived social pressure to engage or not to engage in a behavior". They are based on normative beliefs or individual perceptions of the attitudes of others related to the behavior that is being considered (Ajzen, 2005). A number of different types of norms can be included such as injunctive norms (which are what the individual believes other people think they should do) and descriptive norms (which are what the individual believes other people actually do) (Rivis and Sheeran, 2003). Other subjective norms that may play a role in the decision are moral norms and anticipated affect (how the individual thinks he or she will feel after the behavior), especially for morally-laden behaviors (Rivis et al., 2009).

Table 2 Continued

Researchers in disciplines other than tourism (e.g., psychology, health) have extensively applied this theory. For example, according to Ajzen (2016), more than 1,500 studies, from various disciplines, have employed the TPB. Figure 3 is illustrating how the use of the TPB has been increasingly cited in the literature, as indicated by Ajzen (2016).
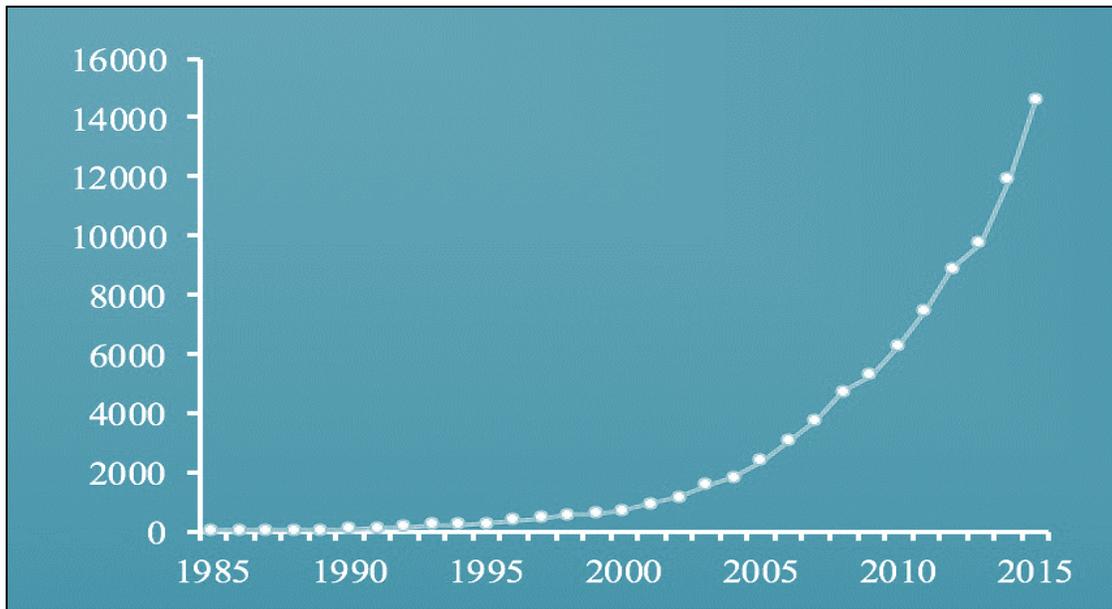
Figure 3. Citations of TPB as adapted from (Ajzen,2016)

Conversely, in social science (particularly in leisure, travel, tourism, and hospitality), the TPB has only garnered the attention of scholars in the last two decades (see Figure 4). Ajzen and Driver (1991; 1992), applied the TPB in a longitudinal study to examine the influence of core beliefs on the intentions and behaviors of college students considering participation in a leisure activity (1991). In a later study, students' modes of choice were investigated, along with the additional dimension of involvement (1992). Statistically, the TPB model was found to significantly fit the data of two studies. However, adding the dimension of involvement did not contribute to explaining the students' beliefs regarding leisure choice; instead, it was found to be influential when added to another type of leisure behavior (e.g., gambling) by Oh and Hsu, 2001.
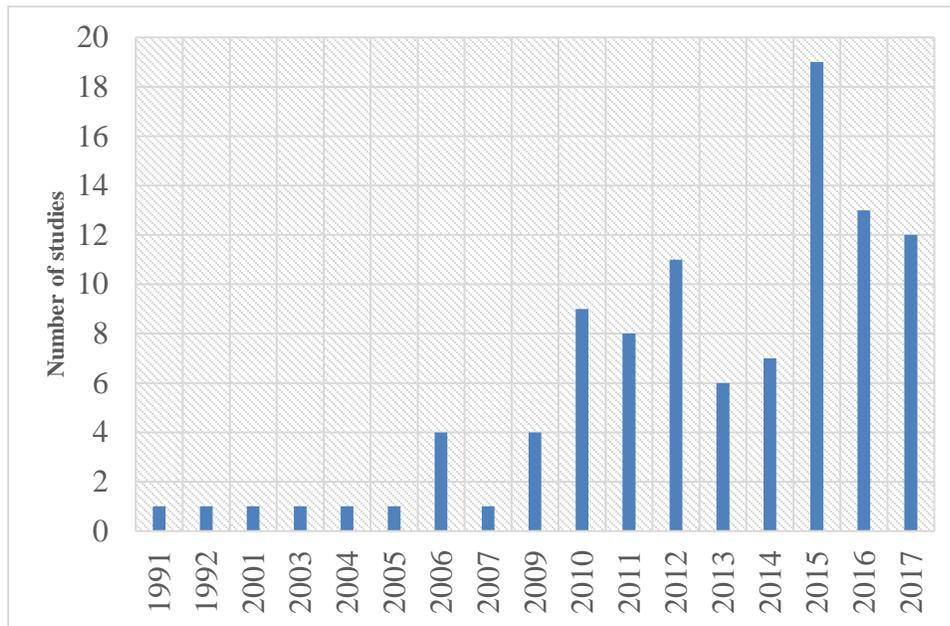
Figure 4. Number of reviewed publications of the TPB in tourism and related fields in the present study.

In line with their earlier applications of the TPB, Ajzen and Driver also utilized the theory's main components to investigate individuals' levels of involvement in gambling behavior. They additionally analyzed the influence of past behaviors, which were not found to be a significant predictor of the attitudes of the 485 gamblers (Oh & Hsu, 2001). It is clear that the measurements used in the first decade when the TPB was employed (1991 to 2001) in the leisure and tourism field fell short in terms of accuracy. This can be attributed to the comparatively small number of applications of the theory in earlier studies, which have been argued to have resulted in insufficient empirical evidence to test the consistency and accuracy of the constructs (Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010). It was thus suggested that more reliable scales for measuring the TPB

constructs were needed (e.g., the internal consistency, or Cronbach's alpha, of the perceived behavioral control construct was .36) (Oh & Hsu).

In the last ten years, the use of the TPB has increased in frequency. Researchers have employed the theory to examine sustainable environmental concerns, among multiple other behaviors (e.g., Brown, Ham, & Hughes, 2010; Mantel & Papathanassis, 2016; Serenari, Leung, Attarian, & Franck, 2012). Brown, Ham, and Hughes (2010) found the TPB to be a useful tool for understanding the "core beliefs tourists held" about sustainability (p. 895). The TPB has also been used to explain subjects' behavioral intention to visit (e.g., Bianchi et al., 2017; Park, Hsieh, & Lee, 2017) and revisit destinations (Choo et al., 2016; McKercher & Tse, 2012; Shen, 2014). The review by the current author of the TPB literature in the tourism field indicated that the most dominant use has been in investigating travel intentions (seventeen studies have been found), which is in line with the focus of the present study (see Table 3).

Table 3
Studies in Which Researchers Applied the TPB to Investigate Travel Destinations

Destination of Interest	Group(s) of Concern	Sample Size	Researcher(s)
Hong Kong	Chinese Tourists	328	(Lam & Hsu, 2004)
Hong Kong	Taiwanese Tourists	299	(Lam & Hsu, 2006)
Phuket, Thailand	Western & Asian Tourists	600	(Phetvaroon, 2006)
Wine Region	Australians	1089	(Sparks, 2007)
Australia	Chinese	548	(Sparks & Pan, 2009)
Suzhou Classical Gardens [a], China	Chinese	366	(Shen et al., 2009)
Australia	Japanese, Korean & Chinese	530	(Quintal et al., 2010)

Destination of Interest	Group(s) of Concern	Sample Size	Researcher(s)
South Korea	Chinese	437	(Han, Lee, & Lee, 2011)
Beach-based resort in Vietnam as a travel destination	International tourists	327	(Chien et al., 2012)
Isfahan, Iran	International tourists	296	(Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012)
Korea	Japanese tourists	237	(Lee, Han, & Lockyer, 2012)
Hong Kong	1st wave: 1524 Chinese residents; 2nd wave 311 from the same group	1524;311	(Hsu & Huang, 2012)
New Zealand	117 surveys and 10 interviews	117;10	(Yuzhanin, 2014)
Turkey	US Citizens	124	(Aziz, Friedman, & Ilhan, 2015)
Turkey	Students from Kyrgyzstan	226	(Aziz et al., 2016)
Chile	Potential Travelers from Peru, Brazil, Spain and Germany	800	(Bianchi, Milberg, & Cúneo, 2017)
Japan	Chinese Students	736	(S. H. Park, Hsieh, & Lee, 2017)

[a] World Heritage Site: on the list of world cultural heritage sites since1997.

Table 3 Continued

2.2. Measurements of the TPB Constructs

2.2.1. Behavioral Intention

Multiple researchers have found support for employment of the TPB paradigm to examine the behavioral intentions of travelers (Lam & Hsu, 2004; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sparks & Pan, 2009). In particular, the TPB has been found to be a sufficient model for examining tourists' behavioral intentions towards a particular travel destination (Bianchi

et al., 2017; Lam & Hsu, 2006). A sampling of some of the behavioral intentions of that

TPB has been employed to examine is examined in Table 4.

Table 4

Measurements of Behavioral Intention in Previous Studies

Variable	Items	Scale	α	Researcher(s)
Behavioral Intention (BI)	Plan to gamble in the following 2 months; Frequency of intention to gamble in the following 2 months	1="definitely plan not to" and 7="definitely plan to" scale; 1="not at all" and 7="almost everyday"	.72	(Oh & Hsu, 2001)
	Likelihood to visit HK in next 12 months; Intend to visit HK in next 12 months; Want to visit HK	strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1).	.82	(Lam & Hsu, 2006)
	How likely would you be to take a holiday based around wine activities in the next 12 months?	(1=very unlikely and 5= very likely).		(Sparks, 2007)
	I intend to take a holiday to Australia within the next 12 months; How likely would you be to take a holiday to Australia within the next 12 months?	5-point semantic scale	.84	(Sparks & Pan, 2009)

Variable	Items	Scale	α	Researcher(s)
	VI1: I am willing to stay at a green hotel when traveling. VI2: I plan to stay at a green hotel when traveling. VI3: I will make an effort to stay at a green hotel when traveling.	Strongly disagree (1)/Strongly agree (7)	.73	(Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010)
	I intend to visit Chile for vacation in the next 2-3 years; I want to visit Chile for vacation in the next 2-3; I will make an effort to visit Chile for vacation in the next 2-3 years	1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)	0.95	(Bianchi et al., 2017)

Table 4 Continued

The present research follows Lam and Hsu's (2004) operational definition of behavioral intention to travel. They defined behavioral intention as "an individual's anticipation of a future trip to a destination (i.e., Hong Kong) for leisure or vacation purpose[s]" (p. 366). This definition is similar to that used in subsequent studies with the same focus (e.g., Bianchi et al., 2017). The number of items that people have used to measure the construct have ranged from one item (Sparks, 2007), to two items (Oh & Hsu, 2001; Sparks & Pan, 2009), to three (Bianchi et al., 2017; Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010; Lam & Hsu, 2006), or even five (Ponnapureddy, Priskin, Ohnmacht, Vinzenz, & Wirth, 2017). Additionally, the bounded time given to respondents have included two months (e.g., Oh & Hsu, 2001), two years (Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010), and two to three years (e.g., Bianchi et al., 2017).

Since single item measures greatly reduce the reliability of constructs, and may not be as valid, multiple item measures are typically preferred (Sparks, 2007). Thus, the present research will utilize three items to measure the behavioral intention of American tourists to travel to the Middle East in the next two years as used by (Bianchi et al., 2017) (Cronbach's alpha = 0.95). This measure was first used by (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The three items are displayed in figure 5.
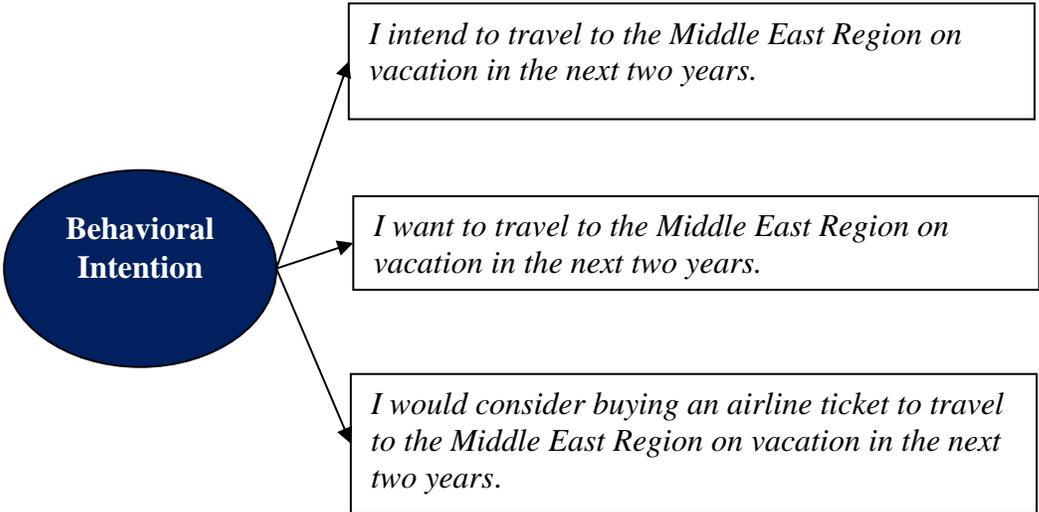
Figure 5. The Construct of Behavioral Intention

2.2.2. Attitude

In the TPB, attitude is used to evaluate a person's favorability of the object's attributes and the related behavioral outcomes (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 2002; Ajzen, 2006;

Ajzen, 1991). In other words, attitude is a production of the dominant correlation between the object's attributes and the behavior's consequences, as perceived by the participant (Ajzen, 1991; Doll & Ajzen, 1992). According to the TPB, attitude has a direct influence on behavioral intentions, and is one of its main antecedents. Researchers have found several factors that affect the attitudes of tourists regarding a particular travel destination, including attachment (Chen, Hung, & Peng, 2011) and the tourist's expectation of a visa exemption (Han, Lee, & Lee, 2011).

The internal consistency of the items used to measure attitude in a tourism context have often been shown to be significant and above the acceptable cutoff point (.70), as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Levels have ranged from a low of .78 (e.g., Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010) to a high of .95 (Sparks & Pan, 2009). For example, a high level of reliability (a Cronbach's alpha of .91) was reported in a study in which measuring Russian tourists' attitudes towards traveling to New Zealand were measured (Yuzhanin, 2014). Additionally, in a cross-cultural study similar to the present research, the construct of attitude was found to be highly consistent when measuring Korean, Japanese, and Chinese tourists' feelings regarding travelling to Australia (Quintal et al., 2010).

Measuring attitude in tourism and related contexts has differed slightly from one study to the next. Ajzen and Driver (1991) adapted a ten-item scale and used a seven-point differential semantic scale to measure the attitudes of college students towards participating in a particular leisure activity. The first five items were used to evaluate students' instrumental beliefs, such as if the pastime was "useless/useful," while the other five were used to assess their affective beliefs, such as if they perceived the endeavor as

"unpleasant/pleasant" (p. 191). Their results revealed higher loadings for the instrumental

factors than for affective ones (Ajzen & Driver, 1991). Selected measurement of attitudes,

as adapted in previous studies are displayed in in Table 5.

Table 5
How Attitude Variable as Measured in Selected Studies

Variable	Items	Scale	α	Researcher(s)
Attitude (AT)	Instrumental[1]: Foolish-wise; harmful-beneficial; useless-useful; strong-weak; active-passive Affective[1]: Boring-interesting; Enjoyable-unenjoyable; Unpleasant-pleasant; Good-bad; Attractive-unattractive; Desirable-undesirable; Ugly-beautiful	-3 (extremely unlikely) +3 (extremely likely)	.91: .71	(Ajzen & Driver, 1991)
	Overall attitudes toward casino gambling; Belief about casino gambling; activities; Feeling about participation in gambling in the next two months; Opinions about participation in casino gambling with friends in the next two months; Opinions about the nature of casino gambling	1="extremely unfavorable" and 7="extremely favorable" ; 1="extremely unpleasant" and 7= "extremely pleasant"; 1="extremely unhappy" and 7="extremely happy"; 1="very bad idea" and 7="very good idea"; a 1="very terrible activity" and 7="very enjoyable activity".	.92	(Oh & Hsu, 2001)

Variable	Items	Scale	α	Researcher(s)
	''All things considered, I think visiting the destination would be…: enjoyable–unenjoyable; positive–negative; fun–boring; plesant–unpleasant; and favorable–unfavorable[2]	7-point semantic scale	.92;.91; .95	(Lam & Hsu, 2004; (Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sparks & Pan, 2009)
	For me, staying at a green hotel when traveling is – AT1: bad/good; AT2: undesirable/desirable; AT3: unpleasant/ pleasant (7) AT4: foolish/wise; AT5: unfavorable/favorable; AT6: unenjoyable/enjoyable; AT7: negative/positive	7-point semantic scale	.78	(Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010)
	"Visiting Chile as a vacation destination is: Unenjoyable - Enjoyable Bad -good; Unpleasant - pleasant	5-point semantic scale.	.92	(Bianchi et al., 2017)

[1]The mean of the two instrumental and affective measures combined represents the measurement of attitude construct, 12 item- scale; [2]five items for Lam & Hsu 2004,2006 while 6 items for Sparks and Pan 2009 (liked/disliked)

Table 5 Continued

Because of its high level of internal consistency (alpha = .95), Sparks and Pan's (2009) scale to measure Western tourists' attitudes towards traveling to the Middle East Region was adopted for the current research. Their six-item construct using a seven-point differential scale is displayed in Figure 6.
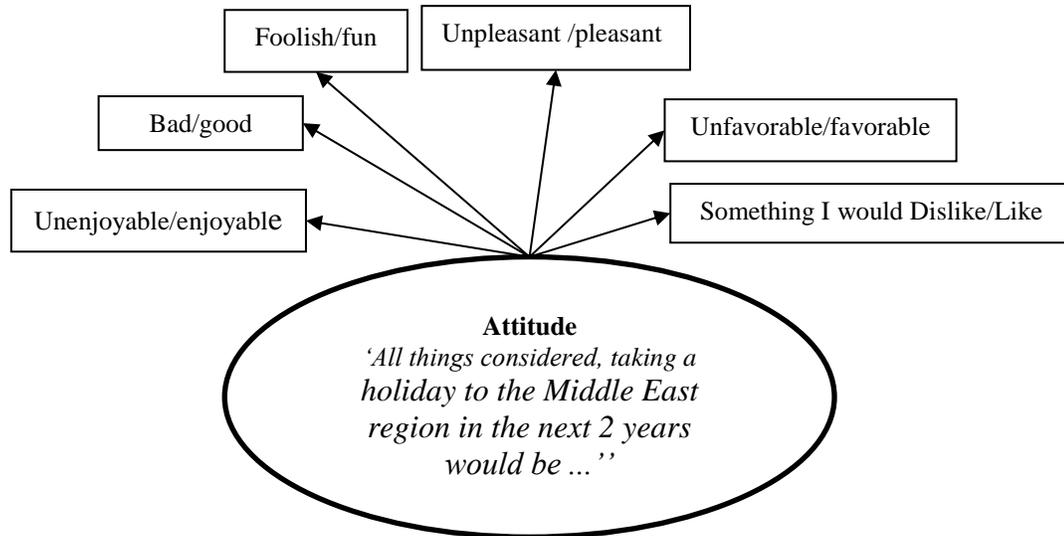
Figure 6. The Construct of Attitude

2.2.3. Subjective Norms

Researchers who have utilized subjective norms within the TPB have rarely examined all five types of norms: collective, perceived, injunctive, descriptive, and subjective (see Table 6 for a definition of each). Instead, at least one of them would be considered based on a study's nature.

The TPB has a wide-ranging conceptualization of the construct of norms, particularly those that are social in nature (Chung & Rimal, 2016). Some researchers have ventured beyond subjective norms to consider other types, such as the injunctive analyzed by Courneya, Conner and Rhods (2006). However, the common practice in this field (and generally in social science) is to pursue social and psychological explanations of norms

(i.e., subjective norms) when employing the TPB constructs and measurements (e.g., Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Oh & Hsu, 2001; Bianchi et al., 2017).

Table 6

Types of Norms, Adapted From Chung and Rimal (2016, P.10)

Type of Norm	Underlying Meaning	Level of Explication	Utility
Collective	Actual prevalence of the focal behavior	Societal	Establish a code of conduct
Perceived	Perception about the prevalence of behavior and pressures to conform	Psychological	Avoid dissonance
Injunctive	Perceived pressures to conform to avoid social sanctions	Social	Gain Social Approval
Descriptive	Perceived prevalence of the focal behavior	Social	Provide Social Information
Subjective	Perceptions about what important others expect one to do	Social/Psychological	Maintain Interpersonal Harmony

Approval or disapproval from the individuals closest to the subject has consistently been found to be an important factor influencing their behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 2002). The magnitude of that importance, however, may differ, depending on the nature of the study. For example, Sparks and Pan (2009) found a significant influence of subjective norms on Chinese tourists intending to travel, which is similar to the findings of Hsu, Kang, and Lam in (2006). Relatedly, a large and diverse group of 1,089 tourists described a moderate level of influence from social pressure on their behavioral intention to visit a wine-producing region (Sparks, 2007). These variations in the magnitude of influence

could be explained by gender discrepancies. For example, women have been found to be more willing to comply with social referents than were males (Sparks & Pan). Therefore, the influence of social norms on a tourist's behavioral intention will likely not be consistent among different studies or populations.

Social influence has still consistently been found to play an important role in affecting behavioral intentions and destination choice (Lam & Hsu, 2006). For example, the behavioral intentions of Russian tourists regarding travelling to New Zealand was found to be highly influenced by social pressure (Yuzhanin, 2014). Although such influence was also found to be significant for tourists with regards to other constructs (Quintal et al., 2010), this may not be valid in all cases. Lam and Hsu (2004), for example, found that social pressure did not have an effect on the behavioral intentions of Chinese tourists considering traveling to Hong Kong. Both studies were part of a meta-analysis conducted by Armitage and Conner (2001). Similarly (but from a broader context), the data collected from 623 baseball fans by Cheng, Chen, Chen, and Lu (2012) illustrated an insignificant influence of social pressure on fans' intention to attend a baseball game.

Identifying the social referents of the population under investigation has been suggested to be an essential step in measuring the influence of social norms, since the importance of each referent is computed in that effect. The results of a pilot study conducted by Ajzen and Driver (1991) revealed that there were five social referents that should be involved in measuring the subjective norms for their study's sample (college students); these included: "friends, boyfriend/girlfriend, parents, family members, [and] brothers and sisters" (p. 191).

Lam and Hsu (2004) found different referents to have importance in their study. Their results were determined according to the results of a 28-resident pilot study, followed by another 20-traveler trial study. Both addressed the statistical concerns, eventually choosing to distribute the respective questionnaires with "family, friends/relatives, and travel agents" (p. 469) as the salient referents. Similarly, in a focus group section, Sparks and Pan (2009) categorized the social referents of Chinese tourists according to four groups, including: "family, friends, co-workers and travel agents" (p. 491).

Conversely, such referents may also differ based on the purpose or nature of a study. For example, in their exploratory attempt to examine social influence on Australian students taking a field trip, Goh and Ritchie (2011) used three different types of social groups, including: classmates, teachers, and former students. Another classification was found by Phillips and Jang (2012) who used "spouses, children and friends" as social referents in their examination of the behavioral intentions of 618 American senior citizens considering visiting a casino (p. 319).

Thus, the next step in the operational process for identifying subjective norms is determining the items that should be used to evaluate the salience of the construct, along with the importance level of their referents. Some of the measurements used in selected studies are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Measurement of Subjective Norms in Selected Studies

Variable	Items	Scale	α	Researcher(s)
Subjective Norms (SN)	Approval of gambling in general by important referents; Approval of gambling in the next two months by important referents; Approval of gambling with friends in the next two months	NA[1]	.82	(Oh & Hsu, 2001)
	Most people I know would choose Hong Kong as a travel destination; People who are important to me would think I should/should not visit Hong Kong; People who are important to me would approve/disapprove of my visit to Hong Kong"	7 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree; with 7 = should and 1 = should not; 7 = approve and 1 = disapprove.	.83	(Lam & Hsu, 2004)
	Choose HK[2] as a travel destination; Should visit HK; Approve my visit to HK	7 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = should and 1 = should not; 7 = approve and 1 = disapprove	.84	(Lam & Hsu, 2006)
	Would like to visit a wine region that I have heard about from friends/family; Would like to take a wine holiday that is popular among my friends /family; Would like to visit wine region that has been recommended by friends /family	Likert type scale from 1; strongly disagree through to 7 strongly agree.	.93	(Sparks, 2007)

Variable	Items	Scale	α	Researcher(s)
	I would like to take a holiday in Australia within the next 12 months because it is popular among my friends or family; People who are important to me would probably think it would be good to take a holiday in Australia within the next 12 months; Friends or family have recommended I take a holiday to Australia within the next 12 months; I would like to visit Australia within the next 12 months because I have heard a lot about this destination from friends or family	1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).	.90	(Sparks & Pan, 2009)
	Most people who are important to me think I should stay at a green hotel when traveling; Most people who are important to me would want me to stay at a green hotel when traveling; People whose opinions I value would prefer that I stay at a green hotel when traveling.	Strongly disagree (1)/Strongly agree (7)	.90	(Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010)

[1] Not available; [2] Hong Kong

Table 7 Continued

   This research borrowed a four-item scale from Sparks and Pan (2009) to measure the subjective norms for American tourists, using their seven-point differential scale; due to the scale's high internal consistency (alpha = .90). The items are presented in Figure 7.
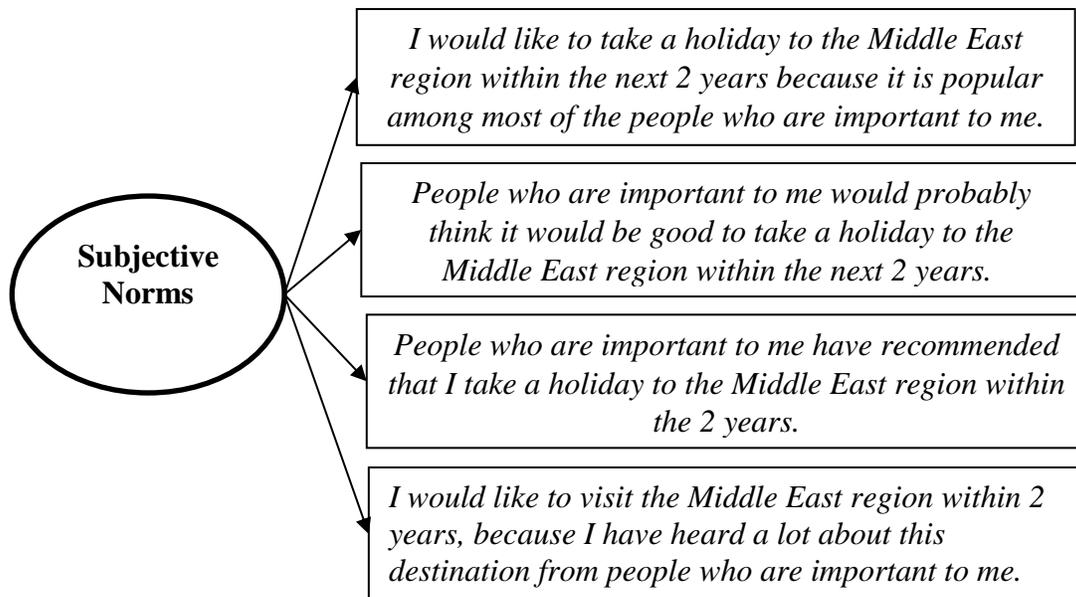
Figure 7. The Construct of Subjective Norms

2.2.4. Perceived Behavioral Control

Ajzen (1985) added another determinant of intent to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) framework; it is the only construct that differentiates this theory from the TRA (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). This determinant was added to measure a person's perceptions of control regarding their ability to perform a focal behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This belief factor has been found to be fundamental in the evaluation of respondents' ability to fulfil a behavioral function (Ajzen, 2006). Ajzen (1991) described this determinant as "the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior" (p. 188). Perceived behavioral control further refers to the necessary resources and opportunities

that a person believes they must possess in order to enact the behavior. "The more resources and opportunities individuals believe they possess, and the fewer obstacles or impediments they anticipate, the greater should be their perceived control over the behavior" (Doll & Ajzen, 1992, p. 756). Therefore, the construct of perceived behavioral control has been found to play a key role in the TPB research (Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Hagger, Chan, Protogerou, & Chatzisarantis, 2016).

In a tourism context, for most travel decisions, the ability to travel is likely to be associated with time, money (resources), and the controllability of factors related to the travel destination and the tourists themselves. Tourists' perceptions of possessing or not possessing these resources may affect their behavioral intentions toward engaging in a given travel behavior. From a tourism standpoint, perceived behavioral control has been suggested to be an important antecedent of tourists' behavioral intentions toward visiting a travel destination (Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sparks, 2007). A brief summary of the measurements of perceived behavioral control that have been utilized in selected studies is provided in Table 8. The perception of behavioral control may have a greater effect on behavioral intention than either attitude or subjective norms. This was found to be the case for Chinese tourists considering visiting Hong Kong (Lam & Hsu, 2004). Additionally, A researcher has been found that tourists considering taking a wine tour were more influenced by their perception of behavioral control (i.e., their personal time availability and the financial affordability of such a trip) than pressure from social referents (Sparks, 2007). However, in rare cases the construct has also been found to have no influence on the behavioral intentions of tourists (Wang & Ritchie, 2012). For example, perceived

behavioral control did not affect the behavioral intentions of a group of international

tourists considering travelling to a beach resort in Vietnam (Chien et al., 2012).

Table 8
Measurement of Perceived Behavioral Control in Selected Studies.

Variable	Items	Scale	α	Researcher(s)
Perceived Control (PC)	Budgetary affordability for gambling in the next two months; Time availability for gambling in the next two months; Perceived self-controllability of gambling activities; Perceived gambling skills	1="can't afford at all" and 7="very affordable" scale; 1="extremely difficult" and 7="extremely easy" scale; 1="extremely difficult" and 7="extremely easy" scale; 1="poor" and 7="excellent" scale	.56	(Oh & Hsu, 2001)
	Five statements: e.g., "there are factors outside of my control that could prevent me from visiting Hong Kong,"	Strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree	.82	(Lam & Hsu, 2004)
	Could easily visit HK; Be able to visit HK ; Have control to visit HK	7-point	.78	(Lam & Hsu, 2006)
	I have enough money to take a wine holiday in the next 12 months; Nothing prevents me from taking a holiday to a wine region if I want to; I have enough time to take a wine holiday in the next 12 months	three-item Likert type scale from 1 strongly disagree through to 7 strongly agree	.88	(Sparks, 2007)

Variable	Items	Scale	α	Researcher(s)
	I feel I have enough time to take a holiday to Australia within the next 12 months; I feel I have enough money to take a holiday to Australia within the next 12 months; I feel there is nothing that prevents me from taking a holiday to Australia within the next 12 months if I want to	7-point	.81	(Sparks & Pan, 2009)
	PBC1: Whether or not I stay at a green hotel when traveling is completely up to me. PBC2: I am confident that if I want, I can stay at a green hotel when traveling. PBC3: I have resources, time, and opportunities to stay at a green hotel when traveling.	7-point	.57	(Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010)

Table 8 Continued
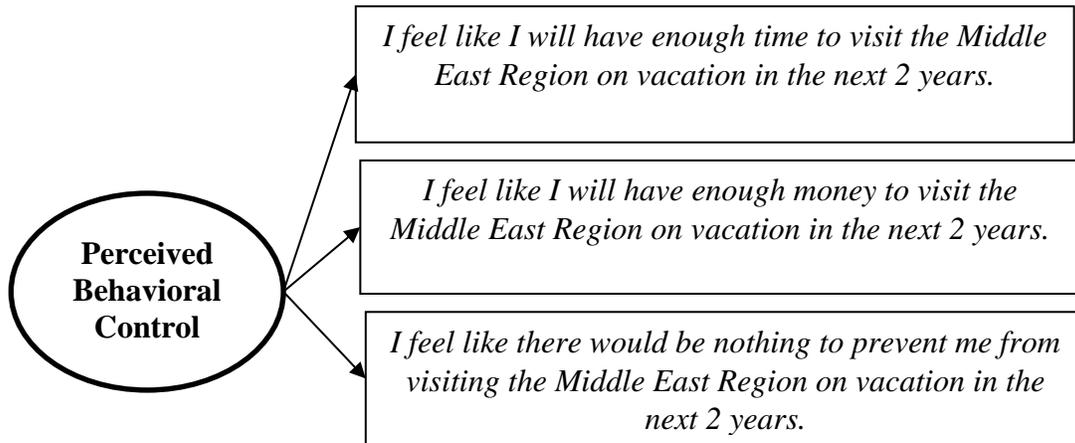
Figure 8. The Construct of Perceived Behavioral Control

In the current research, perceived behavioral control was assessed using three items that are presented in Figure 8, as developed in earlier research (Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Bianchi et al., 2017).

2.3. Social Identity

Since clash of civilizations theory assumes that there are conflicting perceptions of the Middle East (as viewed from the perspective of the West), it may be used to illuminate the role of social identity in influencing people's perceptions, including that of tourists. It has been suggested that the greater the tendency of a given civilization to engage in conflict, the greater the likelihood that social identity governs their actions (Brown, 2000). In other words, when a strong social identity is developed by a certain group, individuals in that group may find themselves adopting attitudes, intentions, and behaviors that validate their membership status (Turner, 1985). Therefore, social identity may contribute to certain judgments made of outgroups before contact even occurs, which

can lead to stereotyping (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In this instance, those casting judgments are, for all intents and purposes, controlled by their identities when making their choices (Kreidie & Monroe, 2002).

In a tourism context, the social identity theory introduced by Tajfel and Turner (1979) has been suggested (among other psychological theories such as International Image theory) as a means of gaining insight into how tourists may develop biased perceptions of travel destinations, especially after conflicts have occurred (Chen et al., 2013). Such conflicts (for example, the ongoing tension between Chain and Taiwan), may lead to negative perceptions of interacting with the other group. The more clearly defined the conflict, the more likely individuals are to behave based on their social (rather than individual) identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Social identity theory is used to explain how a person can be defined, described, and framed within the context of a group with which they are affiliated. This membership may then influence that person's perceptions and behaviors (Abrams, 2015; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, it is believed that is the theory could be useful in explaining how American tourists may perceive the Middle East Region as a travel destination, and may aid the TPB in understanding behaviors of American toward the Middle East Region. The theory has been suggested to be especially attractive because of its usefulness in studying intergroup interaction (de Moura, Leader, Pelletier, & Abrams, 2008; Huddy, 2001).

Empirical measurements of the importance of social identity in tourism research and other disciplines have been few (Smith, Louis, & Tarrant, 2016); only a small number

of scholars have considered the topic (e.g., Chen, Lin, & Petrick, 2013; Choo, Ahn, & Petrick, 2016). One example is Chen, Lin, and Petrick (2013) who investigated how this factor could influence Chinese tourists' behavioral intentions toward travelling to Taiwan. They used three items borrowed from political studies (Hsieh & Niou, 2005; Law, 2002; Sheng, 2002), to which they applied to a different context.

The key findings of social identity measures that were uncovered in the literature review are highlighted in Table 9.

Table 9

Measurements of Social Identity Salience in Selected Studies

Items	α	Researcher(s)
Cognitive social identity (two measures): (1) Please indicate to what degree your self- image overlaps with the identity of the group of friends as you perceive it (seven-point "not at all–very much" scale); (2) How would you express the degree of overlap between your personal identity and the identity of the group you mentioned above when you are actually part of the group and engaging in group activities? (eight-point "not at all–very much" scale) Affective social identity (two measures), How attached are you to the group you mentioned above? (seven-point "not at all–very much" scale) How strong would you say your feelings of belongingness are toward the group you mentioned above? (seven-point "not at all–very much" scale) Evaluative social identity (two measures) I am a valuable member of the group ("seven-point agree–disagree" scale) "I am an important member of the group"(seven-point, agree–disagree scale)	.87; .87;.97	(Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004)
Participants rated their identification with, and whether they felt strong ties with, their rural/regional grower region (e.g. 1, not very much; 7, very much).	.91	(Fielding, Terry, Masser, & Hogg, 2008)

Items	α	Researcher(s)
'I identify myself as a cyclist', 'I can envisage myself as a cyclist', and 'I think I have something in common with cyclists' on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).	.94	(Lois, Moriano, & Rondinella, 2015; Murtagh, Gatersleben, & Uzzell, 2012)

Table 9 Continued

A scale of social identity that was developed by Leach, Van Zomeren, Zebel, Vliek, Pennekamp, Doosje, and Spears (2008) was adapted in the present research. The scale is believed to be appropriate for the current research based on its context and has been found to have good internal consistency. The scale has twelve items that constitute the social identity construct, making it more comprehensive than other single-item measurements (e.g., Fielding, Terry, Masser, & Hogg, 2008). The items for the current study are displayed in Figure 9.

In the above literature, each of the constructs of interest for the current study were discussed, and how each have been assessed and were measured in the current study was presented. Since theories and concepts are the blueprint of academic research (Grant, 2014; Leshem & Trafford, 2007), it is necessary to discuss the resulting conceptual framework. A justification of the purpose of this research are explained of why the application of the TPB model and social identity theory are appropriate, and an indication of how connections among these concepts came to exist are presented in the next chapter.
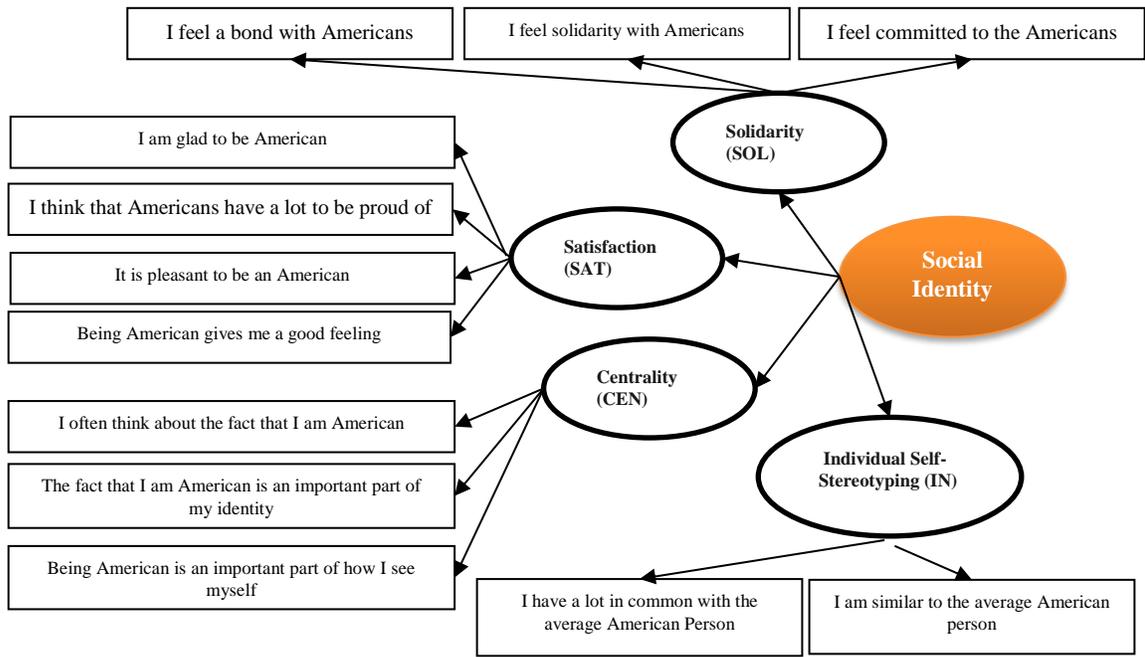
Figure 9. The Construct of Social Identity

3. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter begins by highlighting the efficacy of the TPB model in terms of its predictive functions. A review the empirical literature related to the links among the constructs of the TPB model are presented. Additionally, there is a discussion of the TPB's ability to be extended, potentially to include social identity. Finally, the research hypotheses and proposed model are presented, followed by the presentation of an alternative model.

3.1. The TPB Model

3.1.1. The TPB Model Efficacy

The TPB model has been found to be sufficient to explain behavioral intentions. Ajzen and Driver (1991) utilized the model to explain leisure activity. They found the model to be valid and applicable for predicting the behavioral intentions of college students considering participation in a leisure activity and suggested it could be used to predict multiple other behaviors.

Subsequently, Lam and Hsu (2004) also found the model to be significant and useful for explaining the intentions of travelers considering visiting a tourist location (Lam & Hsu, 2004). The model was determined to be a good fit to the data and capable of predicting travelers' behavioral intentions.

The TPB has also been found to be better than competing models. For example, it was found to be better than the theory of reasoned action (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010), as well as the choice of experiment (CE) theory (Pröbstl-Haider & Haider, 2013). Thus, while the adequacy of the model has been doubted (i.e., Hsu and Huang (2012), the TPB model's

validity has been widely recognized and recommended for explaining tourists' behavioral intentions (Han, Lee, & Lee, 2011; Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010).

3.1.2. Correlations among the TPB Constructs

All of the paths among the TPB constructs have been empirically tested multiple times (Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Al Ziadat, 2015; Chen & Peng, 2012; Chen, Hung, & Peng, 2011; Chen & Tung, 2014; Cheng, Lam, & Hsu, 2006; Goh, Ritchie, & Wang, 2017; Han & Kim, 2010; Han, Meng, & Kim, 2017; Han et al., 2010; Hsu & Huang, 2012; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Kim & Han, 2010; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Lam & Hsu, 2006; March & Woodside, 2005; Oh & Hsu, 2001; Park et al., 2017; Phillips & Jang, 2012; Quintal et al., 2010; Sparks & Pan, 2009; Wang & Ritchie, 2012). They have also been thoroughly established in a variety of disciplines such as psychology (Ajzen, 2011; De Leeuw, Valois, Ajzen, & Schmidt, 2015; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001; Schifter & Ajzen, 1985), health (Armitage, Norman, & Conner, 2002; Conner & Sparks, 2005; Ebrahim, Davis, & Tomaka, 2017), and economics (Abrahamse & Steg, 2009; Kautonen, van Gelderen, & Tornikoski, 2013; Yadav & Pathak, 2017).

Verification of the relationships within the TPB have also been well-supported by the tourism literature (see Table 10). For example, Quintal and colleagues (2010) used the concept in their examination of 530 potential tourists from three Asian countries (Japan, South Korea, and China). Consistent with the TPB, they found that attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control had a significant influence on the behavioral intention of tourists to visit Australia. Additionally, Sparks and Pan (2009) applied the TPB model to examine the extent to which Chinese travelers might be affected by their

attitudes before traveling internationally. They found that "behavioral beliefs influence attitudes toward the behavior; normative beliefs lead to social pressures (subjective norms); and constraint or control beliefs contribute to an overall evaluation [of] perceived behavioral control" (p. 484). Thus, their results serve as confirmation of the utility of the TPB to be used in explaining tourists' intentions.

Table 10
Paths Verifications in Some Selected Tourism Studies

Analyzed Path	Examples of Significant Relationships
Attitude → Behavioral Intention	(Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Oh & Hsu, 2001)
Subjective Norms → Behavioral Intention	(Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Oh & Hsu, 2001)
Perceived Behavioral control → Behavioral Intention	(Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Oh & Hsu, 2001)

Conversely, in rare instances these paths have been found to be unsupported. For example, Bamberg, Ajzen, and Schmidt (2003), in their analysis of 1,039 German respondents, did not find a relationship between attitudes and subjective norms, and tourists' intentions to use a particular travel mode. Similarly, neither Shen et al. (2009) nor Lam and Hsu (2004) found that subjective norms and attitudes were valid constructs for explaining behavioral intentions. However, it is clear from the work reviewed for the present research that more often these paths have been confirmed than not confirmed.

It has been argued that an accurate operationalization of behavioral constructs will explain most volitional (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and non-volitional behaviors (Ajzen, 1985). The theory is used to further postulate that behavioral intentions subsequently lead to the behavior intended (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975 Sheeran, Godin, Conner, & Germain, 2017). Thus, the stronger the intention to engage in a given behavior, the more likely the person is to perform it (Ajzen, 1991). Due to time constraints, however, the present research did not consider actual behavior in the proposed model. Consequently, a decomposed TPB model that excludes actual behavior was employed. In this present study an attempt was made to test these paths in a tourism context via the following hypotheses (see Figure 10):

H1a: The attitudes of American tourists toward the Middle East will be directly related to their behavioral intentions towards travelling to the Middle East Region.

H1b: Tourists' social pressure (norms) related to traveling to the Middle East Region will be directly related to their behavioral intention towards travelling to the Middle East Region

H1c: The perception of American tourists' behavioral control related to travelling to the Middle East will be directly related to their behavioral intention of travelling to the Middle East Region.
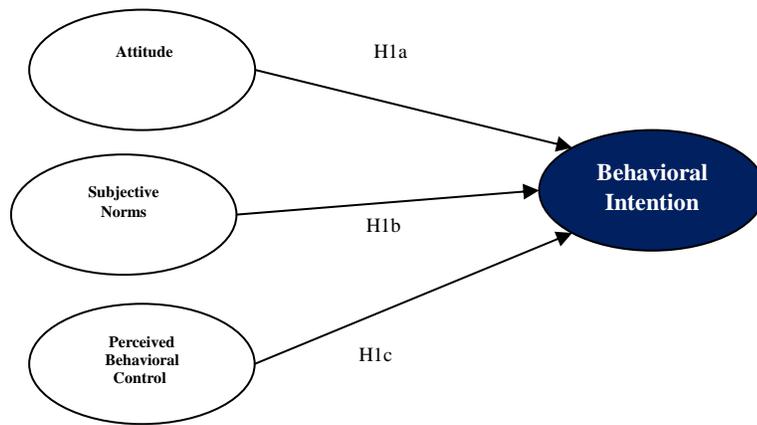
Figure 10. A Conceptual Model of the Structure and Antecedents of Behavioral Intentions (TPB Constructs)

3.2. Extension of the TPB Model

In tourism and related domains, many researchers have attempted to extend the TPB model by including a variety of different variables (Chen & Tung, 2014; Choo, Ahn, & Petrick, 2016; Kim & Han, 2010; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Oh & Hsu, 2001; Park, Hsieh, & Lee, 2017; Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010; Sparks, 2007; Sparks & Pan, 2009; Wang & Ritchie, 2012; Yuzhanin, 2014). One example is the variable of past behavior (Lam & Hsu, Lam & Hsu, Oh & Hsu, Wang & Ritchie). In many studies, past behavior was found to be related to behavioral intention. Though past behavior has been argued to add little to theoretical models as it only shows cumulative inertia (doing a behavior because you already have done it) and doesn't help explain why the behavior is being done (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Sparks (2007) added the past attitude construct to the TPB model (together with emotional attitude) in hopes of enhancing the model's predictive function. The data collected did not support the hypothesized pathway between emotional attitude and behavioral intention. In a contrasting finding, the attitudes of potential wine tourists toward a recent wine holiday were found to directly predict their intention to take another wine trip.

Other researchers have added the construct of environmental concern to the TPB model (Chen & Tung, 2014; Kim & Han, 2010). Chen and Tung (2014) found an indirect relationship between this construct and behavioral intention via all of the other constructs in the model (AT, SN, and PBC). Kim and Han (2010), on the other hand, found both direct and indirect relationships. However, the indirect relationship with behavioral intention existed with two constructs: attitude and environmentally conscious behavior. A related topic was addressed by Quintal, Lee, and Soutar (2010), who explored the influence of perceived risk on international travelers' attitudes toward visiting Australia. Among these travelers, only in Chinese tourists were risk perceptions found not to influence attitude; all others were affected by perceived risk, which indirectly influenced their intention to travel.

Sparks and Pan (2009), and Yuzhanin (2014) attempted to add information sources to the TPB model. Information sources were found to be indirectly related to Chinese travelers' attitudes toward visiting Australia, through their understanding of the destination's positive and negative attributes (Sparks & Pan, 2009). In contrast, Russian

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travelers' intentions to visit New Zealand were directly influenced by their information sources.

More recently, several scholars have extended the TPB model by including: destination image (Park, Hsieh, & Lee, 2017), personal norms (Han, Meng, & Kim, 2017), and destination familiarity (Bianchi, Milberg, & Cúneo, 2017). Specifically, in order to better understand the antecedents of travel intention, Park, Hsieh, and Lee examined the impact of destination image on the TPB constructs. They found that Chinese college students' destination image of Japan had a direct impact on their attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention toward travelling to the Japan.

Han, Meng, and Kim (2017) found that personal norms not only acted as a determinant of behavioral intentions, they also found that it served as a mediator linking subjective norms to behavioral intention. Finally, Bianchi, Milberg, and Cúneo (2017) added the dimensions of ideal social self-concept and destination familiarity to assess short-haul and long-haul tourists' intention coefficient to visit Chile. They found that ideal social self-concept was directly related to intention, especially for travelers coming from long-haul destinations such as Spain and Germany. Destination familiarity, however, was determined not to contribute significantly to explaining tourists' intentions.

As has been discussed above, many extensions have been made to the TPB model in a tourism context, with the goal being a better understanding of tourists' behavioral intention (see Figure 11). Since the addition of pertinent variables to the TPB model has consistently been found to increase the model's explanation capabilities (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010), and Choo, Ahn, and Petrick (2016) found social identity to be

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important in explaining behavioral intention (consistent with the findings in Choo and Petrick (2016), the current study was designed to incorporate social identity into the TPB model.
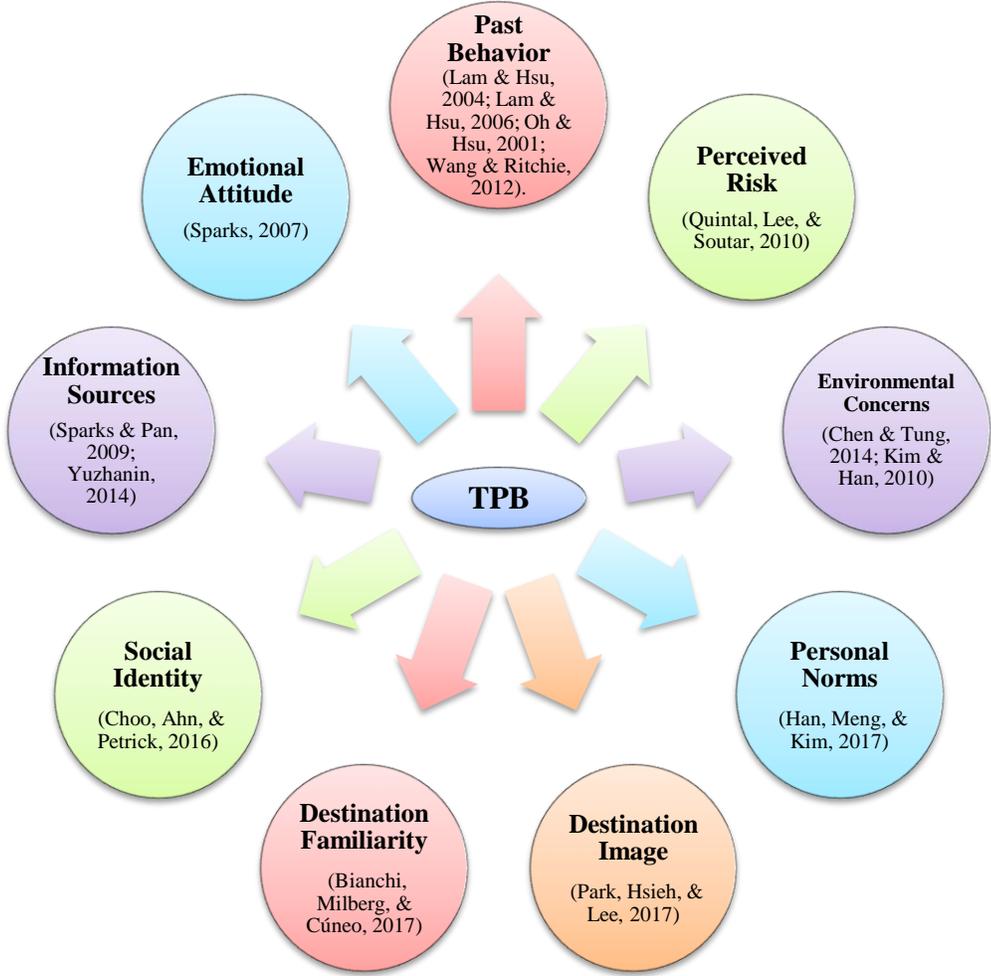
Figure 11. Extensions to the TPB Model in Selected Previous Studies

3.3. Integrating the Construct of Social Identity into the TPB Model

As mentioned above, a number of potential variables can be and have been used to extend the theory of planned behavior. When such variables fit the nature and purpose of the study, they have consistently been shown to increase the explanatory power of the TPB (Conner & Armitage, 1998). Relevant to the current study is the construct of social identity. This construct has been empirically shown to correlate to many TPB constructs such as attitude, subjective norms, and behavioral intention (Chatzisarantis, Hagger, Wang, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2009; Chen, Lin, & Petrick, 2013; Choo et al., 2016; Choo & Petrick, 2016; Lois, Moriano, & Rondinella, 2015; Thorbjørnsen, Pedersen, & Nysveen, 2007). For example, social identity in repeat visitors was found to be the "best predictor" of behavioral intention (as compared to subjective norms) when the intention to revisit a festival was the variable of interest (Choo & Petrick, 2016, p. 279). The authors added the social identity construct to a model built on social influence theory. Similarly (but with current visitors being investigated), Choo et al. found social identity to be the second most important determinant of intention to revisit, followed by subjective norms.

Chatzisarantis and colleagues (2009) also applied the TPB model, together with social identity and self-determination theory, in their research predicting health-related behavior. In their study, social identity was determined to be related to attitude, especially for respondents who strongly identified with a particular group. The authors suggested the inclusion of social identity in the TPB model as a way of more accurately understanding the social influence of respondents on the construction of their intentions. Using the same theoretical framework, Terry, Hogg, and White (1999) found social identity to have an

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effect both on subjective norms and behavioral intention in their attempt to explore the influence of self and social identity constructs on behavioral intention. Thus, in this research, social identity was added to the TPB model, with the hope that it would improve the general understanding of American tourists' intention to travel to the Middle East Region. In service of that goal, this study pursued the following hypotheses (see Figure 12):

H2a: The social identity salience of potential tourists "belonging to the West" will be directly related to their behavioral intention to travel to the Middle East Region.

H2b: The social identity salience of potential tourists "belonging to the West" will be directly related to their attitude towards the Middle East Region as a travel destination.

H3c: The social identity salience of potential tourists "belonging to the West" will be directly related to their subjective norms.
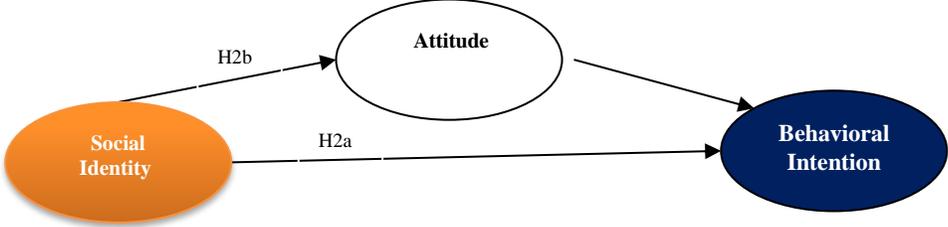
Figure 12. A Conceptual Model of the Structure and Antecedents of Behavioral Intention (Social Identity Construct)

3.4. The Proposed Model

The objectives of the present research are twofold: (1) to test the TPB model's constructs in a tourism context and hopefully contribute to the current knowledge regarding its ability to predict the behavioral intentions of tourists towards a travel destination; and (2) to extend the TPB model by incorporating the component of social identity, in hopes to better explain the intentions American have of traveling to the Middle East Region. It is believed this will lead to an improved understanding of the core beliefs tourists may consider when searching for a travel destination, in this case the Middle East Region (see Figure 13).
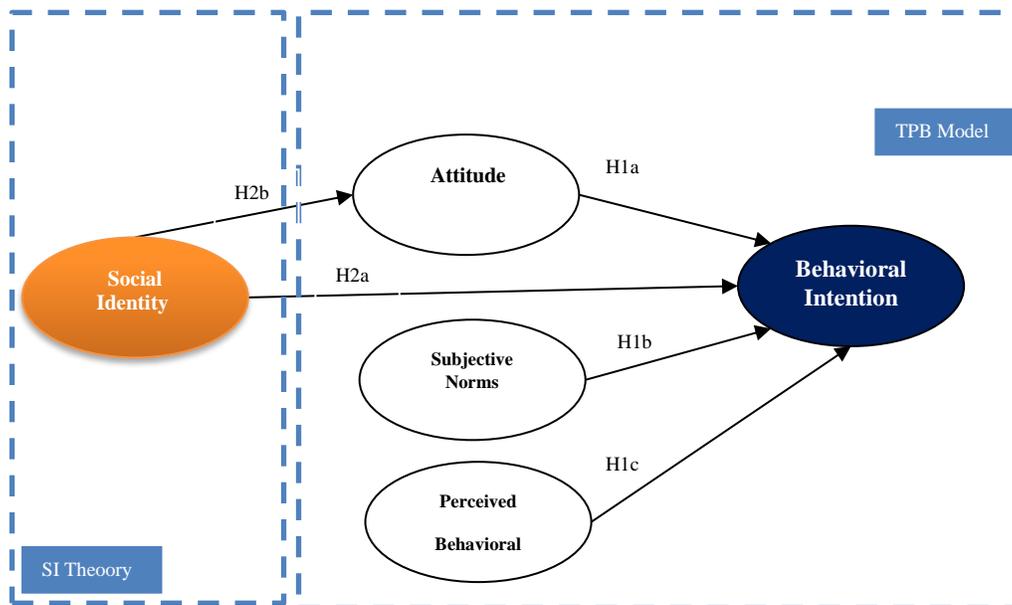
Figure 13 Proposed Model for the Study

The design of this study and the steps taken to obtain data from potential American tourists are presented in the next chapter. It will also describe how the assessment was conducted and statistical considerations made once the data was obtained.

4. METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study was conducted by distributing an online survey that was facilitated via a survey company, in order to obtain data that could be used to better understand how American tourists perceive the Middle East Region as a travel destination. In the following subsections, a detailed description of the methods used to conduct the study are provided. The explanation begins with the development of the study's sample, moves to the survey's design and distribution, and ends with the data analysis.

4.1. Sampling Process

4.1.1. *Selection Criteria*

Lam and Hsu (2006) underscored the importance of carefully considering the sampling selection as a means of achieving a better level of efficacy with regards to the TPB's predictive functions. The goal is a sample that, as much as possible, represents the entire population. By following a screened convenience sampling approach, the potential respondents for this study were selected based on their accessibility, suitability to the study's characteristics, as well as their willingness to be part of the present study. A limitation of the sample is that they had to have access to the internet to be considered. Respondents were limited to only those who were included in the online supplier's, Qualtrics, panelist.

Qualtrics sampled only panelists who satisfied the required characteristics of the sample, as explained in the eligibility section (4.1.3). In doing so, the present study hopes to have a sample that is representative of the Western population.

Since the target was potential Western tourists, the selection criteria for a country that best represents the West are twofold: (1) historical and (2) statistical. For an historic justification (as referenced in Chapter Two), Huntington (1993) named the USA among five countries that together serve as the capital of Western culture. Statistics from the last FIFA World Cup also ranked tourists from USA in the top five of those attending the event (FIFA, 2014). American tourists have also been reported as among the top ten potential international tourists, based on outbound tourism expenditures (UNWTO, 2017b). Yet, vast differences have been found between Western countries in their travel behaviors and decision-making processes. Thus, while a broader understanding of these differences would be beneficial, the current study did not have the resources to determine these differences. Therefore, the current study was delimited to just persons living in the United States. Tourists from this country can be argued to be the most important in terms of representing the Westerners as they are considered the most important source market for outbound tourism as they represented 73 million tourists and over 113 billion dollars spent on tourism in 2015 alone (UNWTO, 2017b). Thus, a sample of Americans, potential travelers from the West. (n=385 or more) were considered in this study to represent the Western tourist population.

4.1.2. *Sample Size*

The sample estimate for the present study was calculated according to two methods. First, the percentage approach was used, as introduced by Burns and Bush (1995). In this formula, the sample size is computed via four main elements: "standard error associated with the chosen level of confidence (z) estimated variability in the

population (p); (100 - p) (q); and acceptable error (e)" (Burns & Bush, 1995, p. 366). The product of $\frac{\chi^2 \, (pq)}{e^2}$ leads to the estimated sample size for the survey.

The appropriate error terms for the present study were set at .05, with a confidence level of .95; the variability of the population was set at .50, and the standard error at 1.96. Applying these values in the above formula yields $\frac{1.96^2 \, (.5*.5)}{.05^2}$, which results in a minimum of 385 participants, according to the proposed statistical determinations. In the second method, a table of sample sizes determined by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used from a specified population; using an alternative to a proportion formula, this table indicates that 384 participants would satisfy a population exceeding 100,000. Thus, the minimum acceptable sample size was set at 385.

4.1.3. *Eligible Respondents*

The following steps were followed to screen respondents for eligibility. The main parameter was that respondents must be familiar with terms such as: the "Middle East", "Qatar", and/or "Arab". Familiarity with these terms make it more likely that respondents properly understand the survey's items and help remove unfamiliarity likely to affect belief-based measures (e.g., the cognition and emotions regarding travelling to such a destination) (Prentice, 2004). Past experiences with or visits to the Middle East also made participants ineligible for the study as past visits might have influences on their intentions beyond the scope of the study (Sparks, 2007).

Another general criterion that was considered was the respondent's potential to be a tourist. Thus, only those aged at least 25 years, with a minimum income of $25,000, and who have taken at least one international trip in the last two-year period were eligible to

be respondents. In sum, eligible respondents included people from the United States who were familiar with the terms "Middle East", "Qatar", and/or "Arab", and who had not yet visited the Middle East but have traveled overseas at least once in their lifetime.

4.2. Instrument for the Study

4.2.1. *Survey Development*

The survey was designed based on reliable and valid selected scales to examine the research hypotheses. It was also designed to be brief so that participants would not grow distracted, which could have an effect on the accuracy of their responses (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Respondents were required to complete a total of three sections of the survey. Beginning with the screening questions, respondents were asked to identify their nationality of origin, and verify if they were familiar with all the following terms "Arab", "Middle East", and "Qatar". Next, they were asked about their previous experience with the region with the following: "Have you ever been to any of the following countries: Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Somalia, or Egypt?". Respondents were then asked about their age, income and travel overseas status "e.g., have you ever travelled outside the USA?". It is important to note that prescreening of respondents to determine those criteria (e.g., age and travel experience) in this current study was done by the online supplier, Qualtrics. This company screened respondents first.

Once eligibility was satisfied, respondents proceeded to the main survey which was divided into two parts to assess all of the variables related to the hypotheses. The third section was used to examine participants' sociodemographic characteristics, to better

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allow for understanding of the respondents' characteristics and to assist in profiling the sample.

The survey measurement items for this study were developed from a review of literature to be consistent with prior studies and are presented in Table 11. The wordings of some of the measures have been slightly modified to be appropriate for the present study. A three-item scale was used to measure the behavioral intention of American tourists to travel to the Middle East Region in the next two years based on items generated by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and used later by Bianchi et al. (2017). Similar to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), the items was placed on a 7-point Likert-type scale that include: I intend to travel to the Middle East Region on vacation in the next two years; I want to travel to the Middle East Region on vacation in the next two years; I would consider buying an airline ticket to travel to the Middle East Region on vacation in the next two years.

The six-items was used to measure American tourists' attitudes towards traveling to the Middle East Region was adapted from Sparks and Pan (2009) and used the same 7-point semantic scale they used. The specific items used were: "unenjoyable/enjoyable; bad/good; foolish/fun; unpleasant/pleasant; unfavorable/favorable; something I would dislike/Like.

In addition, Ajzen's (2001) four items for measuring the subjective norms scale were slightly modified for American tourists. The modifications were made in accordance with the context of the Middle East Region included: I would like to take a holiday to the Middle East Region within the next 2 years because it is popular among most of the people who are important to me; People who are important to me would probably think it would

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be good to take a holiday to the Middle East Region within the next 2 years; people who are important to me have recommended that I take a holiday to the Middle East Region within the next 2 years; I would like to visit the Middle East region within the next 2 years, because I have heard a lot about this destination from people who are important to me. Following Ajzen's (2001) guidelines, the scale were scored on a seven-point differential scale.

The construct of perceived behavioral control was assessed using three items, as developed in earlier research (Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Bianchi et al., 2017). The three items were placed on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree,7= strongly agree) including: I feel like I would have enough time to visit the Middle East Region on vacation in the next 2 years; I feel like I would have enough money to visit the Middle East Region on vacation in the next 2 years; I feel like there would be nothing to prevent me from visiting the Middle East Region on vacation in the next 2 years.

Lastly, social identity was assessed using a twelve-item scale developed by Leach, Van Zomeren, Zebel, Vliek, Pennekamp, Doosje, and Spears (2008). Four of the six items were used to assess the second order constructs of social identity (solidarity, satisfaction, centrality and Individual self-stereotyping) on a seven-point scale including: I feel a bond with Americans; I feel solidarity with Americans; I feel committed to the Americans; I am glad to be American; I think that Americans have a lot to be proud of; It is pleasant to be an American; Being American gives me a good feeling; I often think about the fact that I am American; the fact that I am American is an important part of my identity; being

American is an important part of how I see myself; I have a lot in common with the average

American person; I am similar to the average American person.

The survey items for each construct are presented in table 11.

Table 11
Items Utilized in the Present Study

Construct	Items	Researcher(s)
Attitude	''All things considered, taking a holiday to the Middle East region in the next 2 years would be ...''; Unenjoyable/enjoyable; Bad/good; Foolish/fun; Unpleasant/pleasant; Unfavorable/favorable; Something I would Dislike/Like	(Sparks & Pan, 2009)
Subjective Norms	I would like to take a holiday to the Middle East Region within the next 2 years because it is popular among most of the people who are important to me; People who are important to me would probably think it would be good to take a holiday to the Middle East region within the next 2 years; People who are important to me have recommended that I take a holiday to the Middle East region within the 2 years; I would like to visit the Middle East region within 2 years, because I have heard a lot about this destination from people who are important to me.	(Sparks & Pan, 2009)
Perceived Behavioral Control	I feel like I would have enough time to visit the Middle East region on vacation in the next 2 years; I feel like I would have enough money to visit the Middle East on vacation in the next 2 years; I feel like there would be nothing to prevent me from visiting the Middle East on vacation in the next 2 years.	(Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Bianchi et al., 2017)

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Construct	Items	Researcher(s)
Social Identity	Solidarity (SOL)	(Leach, Van
	I feel a bond with Americans (1)	Zomeren, Zebel,
	I feel solidarity with Americans (2)	Vliek, Pennekamp,
	I feel committed to the Americans (3)	Doosje, & Spears,
	Satisfaction (SAT)	2008)
	I am glad to be American (4)	
	I think that Americans have a lot to be proud of (5)	
	It is pleasant to be an American (6)	
	Being American gives me a good feeling (7)	
	Centrality (CEN)	
	I often think about the fact that I am American (8)	
	The fact that I am American is an important part of my identity (9)	
	Being American is an important part of how I see myself (10)	
	Individual Self-Stereotyping (IN)	
	I have a lot in common with the average American Person (11)	
	I am similar to the average American person (12)	
Behavioral Intention	I intend to travel to the Middle East region on vacation in the next two years; I want to travel to the Middle East on vacation in the next two years; I would consider buying an airline ticket to travel to the Middle East region on vacation in the next two years.	(Bianchi et al., 2017)

Table 11 Continued

4.2.2. *Survey Distribution*

With IRB approval (case number: IRB 2017/0296M), data collection was completed by the recruited panel corporation within six days. The proposed respondents had 72 hours to complete the questionnaire. A link to the survey was randomly sent to potential respondents selected from a third-party panel. After accessing the link to the

survey embedded in their email, prospective respondents were first directed to the three screening questions mentioned above. If the familiarity and non-visitation criteria were not satisfied, the respondent was not eligible to complete the survey. A "Thank You" phrase appeared and the session was ended.

Otherwise, respondents were allowed to proceed with the remainder of the survey. The online panel supplier then ran 10% of the data to verify that the process was running smoothly and as intended, called "soft run". At that point, the data were examined to ensure that it was clean and measuring the constructs as intended. For example, no missing data were reported. Once this had been confirmed, data collection resumed until a minimum of 385 complete responses, from eligible respondents, was obtained.

Online Surveys in the Literature

Online research surveys have been widely applied (Göritz & Neumann, 2016; Rath et al., 2016). Adapting an online panel to collect data for tourism research has been associated with operational concerns (Litvin & Kar, 2001, p. 313) as it is limited to only respondents who have internet accessibility (Callegaro, Reginald, & Jelke, 2014); Loosveldt & Sonck, 2008). Since the vast majority of persons from the U.S., who have a likelihood of traveling to the Middle East Region, likely have Internet access, this concern was considered to be minimized.

Questions have also been raised by tourism scholars and practitioners regarding the consistency and accuracy of panel data, as compared to more traditional formats. For instance, one experimental study investigating individuals' perceptions of Australia as a tourist destination yielded 372 participants via traditional data collection, and 158 from

those who were surveyed online. Significant differences between the two samples were found in response rates and in perceptions of variable attributes (Benckendorff, Moacardo, & Murphy, 2016). These differences included biases based on gender and nonresponsive individuals. It is believed that this problem was minimized in the presented study by having the online supplier provide an even gender split sample with completed surveys.

Conversely, online surveys have been suggested to serve as a viable substitution for traditional methods of data collection in multiple behavior experimental studies (Barnhoorn, Haasnoot, Bocanegra, & van Steenbergen, 2015). Moreover, reliability and validity may increase due to the increase of survey completion, quality of data and response rate. To aid in increasing survey completion, the current study required respondents to complete all questions.

This online method has often been utilized in tourism studies and has regularly yielded accurate findings (i.e., (Chen, Petrick, & Shahvali, 2016; Han et al., 2010; Huang & Hsu, 2010; Hung & Petrick, 2011). More specifically, it is worth noting that Han, Hsu, and Shen (2010), who built their study conceptually on the TPB, utilized a web-based survey facilitated by an online supplier. This facilitation yielded valid data from 468 potential American travelers. Addressing an even larger sample from South Korea, China, and Japan, Quintal and her colleagues (2010) used the same methodology in their distribution of a survey examining potential tourists' intention to visit Australia. Thus, it's been suggested that applying such a method can adequately satisfy two components: delivery and cost (Hulland, Baumgartner, & Smith, 2017; Litvin & Kar, 2001). Online methods have been considered to have an advantage for research in general, and

particularly to studies with an inference space highly accessible via the internet (Hulland et al., 2017; Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004; Pedersen & Nielsen, 2016).

4.2.3. *The use of Online Survey in the present study*

Adapting an online survey for the present study is justified for three reasons. First, the data were collected from a geographic area of the respondents that has a high usage rate for the internet. For example, the geographic area from which the data were collected has experienced regular growth in the number of internet users in the US (88%) (see Figure 14) (Internet Live Stats, 2017).
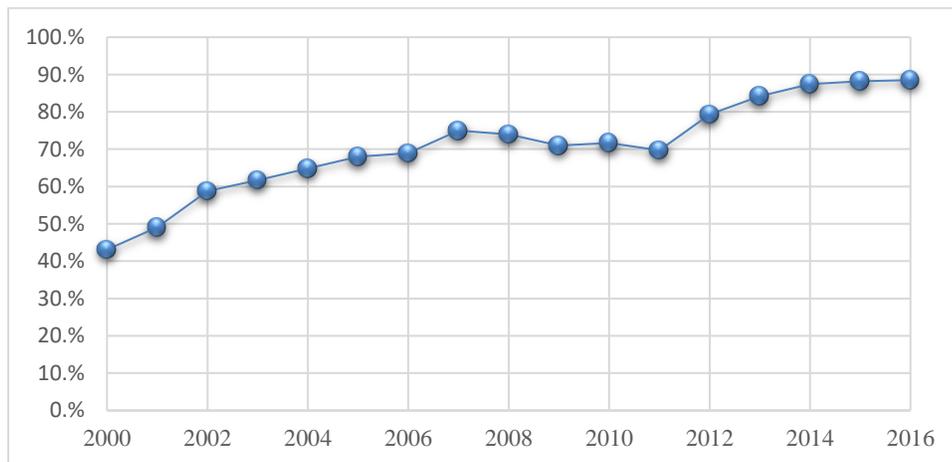

Figure 14. Internet Usage in the U.S.

Secondly, the sample's respondents could be difficult to reach via traditional methods. Lastly, time and cost were crucial elements in the current research, so it was hoped that the proposed method would lead to efficient optimization of both of these factors.

4.2.4. *Qualtrics*

There are a variety of third party data collectors eligible for employment in the present study (e.g., SurveyMonkey, Amazon Mechanical Turk, and Qualtrics), all of which have been used in the research area of interest. Among these, Qualtrics appears well-suited to coping with the limitations of gathering data through an online survey. Qualtrics was found by researchers from Ulster University to be a practical tool for use in a similar study in which different variables were manipulated (Mc Elhinney, Sinclair, & Taylor, 2016). Additionally, Qualtrics has often been applied in and partnered with academic research (e.g., studies conducted by Stanford, Harvard, and Texas A&M University) and industry studies (e.g., Disney, Marriott, and JetBlue) (Qualtrics, 2016). Another competitive advantage is that this company assigns a project manager to all studies. Their responsibility is to help ensure the quality, distribution, and administration of data collection throughout the survey flow process.

4.3. Analytical Determinations (Analytical Method)

4.3.1. *Data Analysis*

To analyze the collected data, both univariate and multivariate quantitative approaches were applied in the present study. These approaches were facilitated via statistical programs sufficient to satisfy the analytical requirements. Appropriate decisions regarding the outputs of these programs were made, based on certain statistical determinations (e.g., error terms, loadings cut-off points, adequacy percentages, etc.) as shown in Table 12.

First, SPSS V.24 was employed to analyze the data (e.g., the descriptive tables). Second, Amos will be used to examine the measurement model via confirmatory factor analysis, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM was utilized as previous tourism studies successfully employed it to examine the TPB (e.g., Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010). Employing such a model-suitability approach (SEM) not only facilitated the data analysis, but also assess the confirmatory factor analysis as well as the path analysis (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010).

Table 12
Statistical Considerations

Statistical Consideration	Cutoff point	Source (s)
Error Term	.05	following the satisfactory match applied in previous studies, i.e.: (Garson, 2002; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994)
Reliability Coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha [1])	.70	
The goodness of model (model evaluation)	CFI ≥ .95 good fit NFI ≥ .95 good fit RMSEA ≤ .05 good fit SRMR ≤.05 good fit	
Adequacy of sample, Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO)	≥ .60	

[1] the name referred to the originator of measurement Cronbach in 1951 (Garson, 2002)

In her attempt to briefly explain SEM, Byrne (2016) stated that:

The term 'structural equation modeling' conveys two important aspects of the procedure: (a) that the casual process study is represented by a series of structural (i.e., regression) equations, and (b) that these structural relations can be modeled pictorially to enable a clearer conceptualization of the theory under study. The hypothesized model can then be tested statistically in a simultaneous analysis of the entire system of variables to determine the extent to which it's consistent with the data. If goodness-of-fit is adequate, the model argues for the plausibility of postulated relations among variables; if it's inadequate, the tenability of such relations is rejected. (p. 3)

Specifically, the present research benefited from using these methods because it allowed for the confirmation the factor loadings of the constructs (via CFA) and an

examination of the casual correlations, paths, and hypotheses (e.g., an examination of the relationships among the DVs of intention to travel to Qatar and the IVs). In short, the objectives of SEM employment include: (1) an examination of whether or not the model fits the data; (2) an assessment of the quality of the measurements proposed (i.e., a factor analysis); (3) the assertion of full control over the observed and non-observed variables; and (4) completion of a path analysis (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2017). It was thus believed that method enabled multiple statistical formulae to function at the same time, which would likely lead to a better understanding of the correlations among both the observed and unobserved variables. The information in Figure 15 is used to illustrate the proposed SEM for the study that was used to examine the hypotheses.
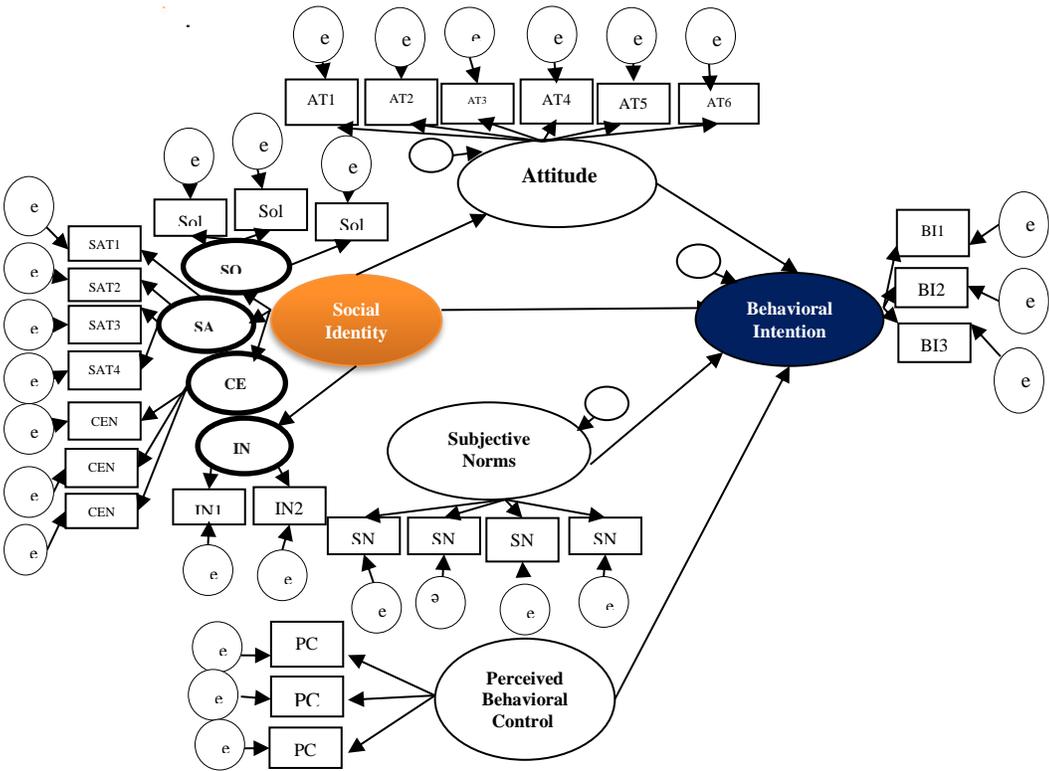
Figure 15. Proposed SEM for the present Study

5. RESULTS

5.1. Demographics and Statistical Characteristics of the Sample

The survey used for this research was conducted by an online firm, Qualtrics; the goal was to reach a population that reflected an accurate representation of potential Western travelers. A total of 3,131 individuals were invited to participate in the study. Of that group, 1,964 responses were received, for a response rate of 62.7%. As mentioned in the Methodology Chapter, there were certain criteria that respondents had to meet to fit the aim of the study (e.g., never travelled to the Middle East Region, American citizen, etc.). After filtering (see Table 13), 630 respondents were determined to be eligible.

Table 13
Unqualified Respondents

Reason for Exclusion	Number Excluded
Has never travelled overseas	571
Has already travelled to the Middle East	199
Not American	36
Age < 25	31
Under $25,000 annual household income	19
Other criteria for validation: missing responses, quality issues, incorrect quota, etc.	478
Total	1,334

The sample had an even gender split of 315 females and 315 males. The average time to complete the survey was 11 minutes. The ages of the respondents ranged from 25 to 82 years old. The mean age was 45.59; the standard deviation was 14.9. The majority of respondents had a college degree, representing 61.6% of the sample (see Figure 16). The next largest group had earned a master's degree (17.3%). The remainder had either attended 12th grade or less (16.8%) or earned a doctoral degree (4.3%).
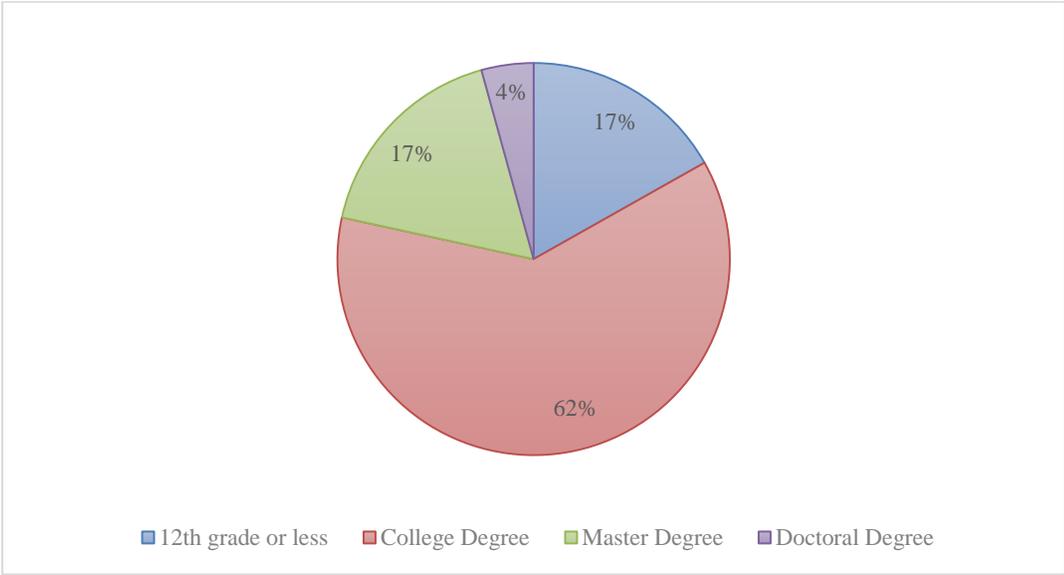
Figure 16. Education Level

With regards to household income, almost one-third of the sample reported earning between $50,000 an $74,999 annually (199 respondents, or 31.6%; see Figure 17). There were 106 respondents who reported earning $25,000 to $39,999 annually (16.8%) and 68 who earned between $40,000 to $49,999 per year (10.8%). Furthermore, 117 respondents reported their household incomes to be between $75,000 and $99,999 (18.6%). Respondents with household incomes between $100,000 and $149,999 represented 16%

of the sample (67 earned between $100,000 to $124,999, comprising 10.6% of the sample, and 34 earned between $125,000 and 149,999, for 5.4% of the sample). Only 39 respondents had approximate total household incomes greater than $150,000 (6.2%). Respondents with annual incomes lower than $25,000 were not considered for the current study.
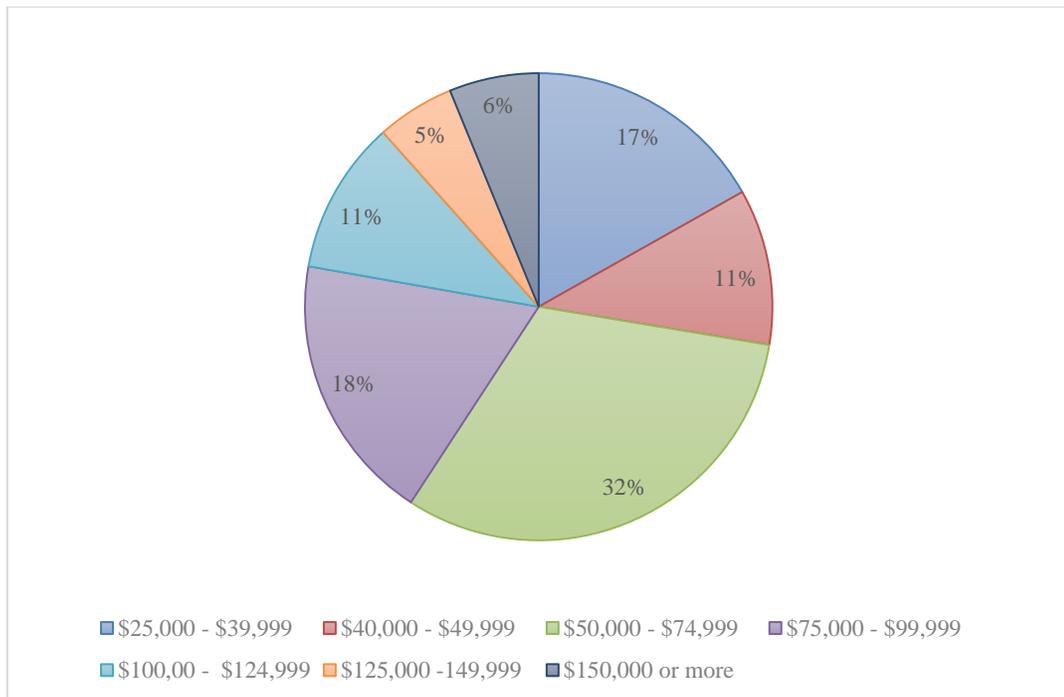
Figure 17. Household Income

In addition to demographics, respondents were queried about their marital status. Two-thirds of the sample were married and either had children (251, or 39.8%) or were childless (158, or 25.1%). Unmarried respondents represented 27% of the sample; 27 had children (4.3%) and 143 did not (22.7%). Additionally, 51 respondents (8.1%) classified themselves as "Other," a category that included those who had been widowed or were separated/divorced.

5.2. Reliability of the Constructs (Cronbach's Alpha)

As discussed in the Methodology Chapter (see Table 12), a Cronbach's Alpha is used to examine the reliability coefficient of a construct before moving forward with the analysis. The cutoff point should be $\geq .70$, as has been suggested in previous studies (Garson, 2002; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). As seen in Table 14, Cronbach's Alpha values were determined for each construct used in this research, along with statistics such as means and standard deviations.

Table 14
Internal Consistency of Constructs

Variable	α	Mean	SD	Number of Items
Behavioral Intention (BI)	.96			3
BI1		2.82	1.82	
BI2		3.13	1.94	
BI3		3.19	1.96	
Attitude (ATT)	.96			6
ATT1		3.89	1.96	
ATT2		3.82	1.89	
ATT3		3.29	1.59	
ATT4		3.87	1.80	
ATT5		3.89	1.89	
ATT6		3.74	1.98	
Subjective Norms (SN)	.95			4
SN1		2.87	1.78	
SN2		2.76	1.75	
SN3		2.49	1.75	
SN4		2.93	1.87	

Variable	α	Mean	SD	Number of Items
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	.84			3
PBC1		3.26	1.36	
PBC2		2.97	1.40	
PBC3		2.54	1.28	
Social Identity (SI)	.96			12
SI1		5.59	1.38	
SI2		5.56	1.32	
SI3		5.73	1.31	
SI4		6.08	1.24	
SI5		5.90	1.26	
SI6		5.83	1.24	
SI7		5.73	1.30	
SI8		5.03	1.55	
SI9		5.52	1.49	
SI10		5.40	1.52	
SI11		5.39	1.44	
SI12		5.32	1.49	

Table 14 Continued

All of the constructs utilized in this research had reliability coefficients above .70. With the exception of the construct scale for perceived behavioral control (three items: α = .84), all reliability levels were ≥ .95, including behavioral intention (three items: α = .96), attitude (six items: α = .96), subjective norms (four items: α = .95), and social identity (twelve items: α = .96). All of the coefficients satisfied or matched the statistical considerations outlined in the early stages of this work. Therefore, the constructs could be considered reliable and appropriate for use in the statistical examination.

## 5.3. Validity of the Measurement Model (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the quality of the measured variables for each construct in the theory-based model of this research (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2017). CFA is an analytical tool that helps in examining a measured variable's ability to represent each latent variable which in the present study included social identity (twelve items), attitude (six items), subjective norms (four items), perceived behavioral control (three items) and behavioral intention (three items). This step is an essential part of the structural equation model and must be completed before proceeding with the path analysis. In doing so, the adequacy of the sample (N = 630) was also examined by a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test, along with a Bartlett's test of sphericity, to determine if the data were suitable for a factor analysis (i.e., factorability; see Table 15). Considering the satisfactory match outlined in the previous chapter, the information in Table 15 was used to indicate that the current study used a sample sufficient to consider the factors analyzable (KMO > .6; Bartlett's test of sphericity: significant). Therefore, it was appropriate to run the factor analysis.

Table 15
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test		Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.940
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	21091.281
	df	378
	Sig	.000

The CFA results were robust (see Figure 18). All measured variables were well-linked to their latent variables (constructs); the results indicate that satisfactory factor loadings were achieved for each the measured variables (see Table 16). All t-test values linked to the factor loadings were significant at > .001. That is, the measured variables were convergent and valid for measuring the constructs (i.e., convergent validity of the instrument). Overall, all of the factor loadings were higher than .7, indicating that the constructs had good convergent validity. In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) was also calculated (see Table 16). The results indicate that all AVE values for the constructs were > .7 that showed good convergent validity with the exception of perceived behavioral control > .57 that remains to be an acceptable convergent validity.

The discriminant validity for each construct was examined by comparing the maximum shared variance (MSV) with the AVE of each construct. This revealed that the AVE for each construct was greater than the MSV for all mutual correlations occurring among the constructs (see Table 17).
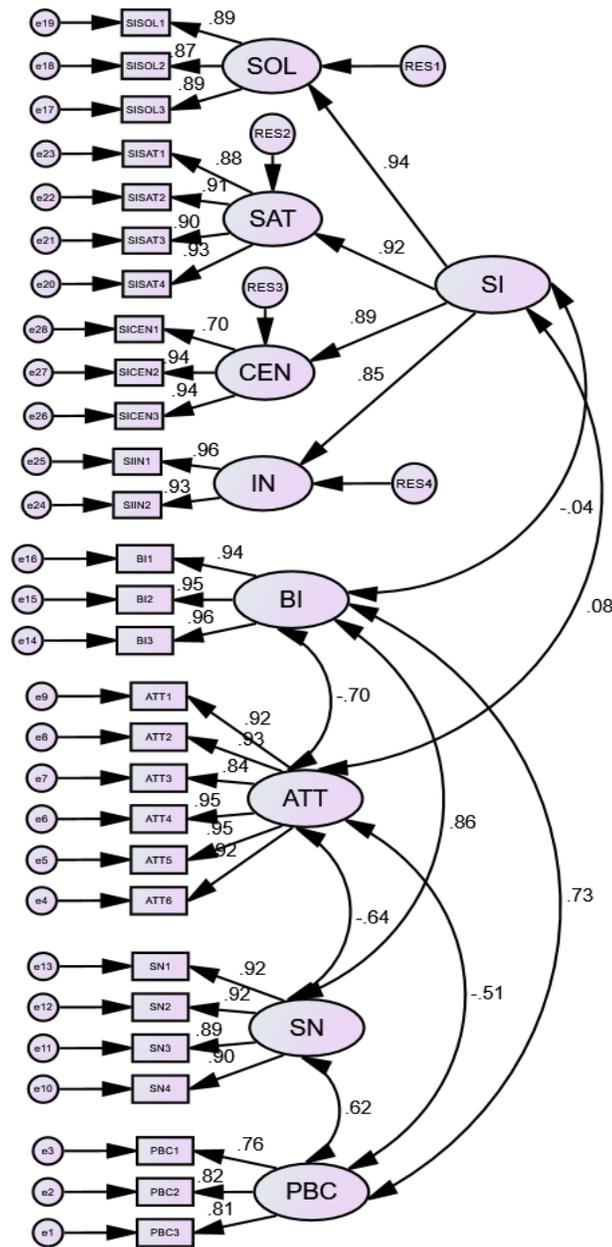
SI: Social Identity, SOL: Solidarity, SAT: Satisfaction, CEN: Centrality, IN: Individual self-stereotyping, ATT: Attitude, SN: Subjective Norms, PBC: Perceived Behavioral Control, BI: Behavioral Intention.

Figure 18. Measurement Model

Table 16

Factor Loading and Convergent Validity

Construct			Estimate	AVE[1]
Social Identity (2nd order)				.797
SOL	<---	SI	.961	
SAT	<---	SI	.935	
CEN	<---	SI	.855	
IN	<---	SI	.813	
Perceived Behavioral Control				.579
PBC3	<---	PBC	.908	
PBC2	<---	PBC	.718	
PBC1	<---	PBC	.631	
Attitude				.838
ATT6	<---	ATT	.917	
ATT5	<---	ATT	.957	
ATT4	<---	ATT	.952	
ATT3	<---	ATT	.835	
ATT2	<---	ATT	.922	
ATT1	<---	ATT	.906	
Subjective Norms				.814
SN4	<---	SN	.912	
SN3	<---	SN	.867	
SN2	<---	SN	.901	
SN1	<---	SN	.928	
Behavioral Intention				.902
BI3	<---	BI	.964	
BI2	<---	BI	.953	
BI1	<---	BI	.933	
Social Identity (1st order)				.802
SISOL3	<---	SOL	.887	
SISOL2	<---	SOL	.862	
SISOL1	<---	SOL	.885	
SISAT4	<---	SAT	.929	
SISAT3	<---	SAT	.903	
SISAT2	<---	SAT	.910	
SISAT1	<---	SAT	.875	
SIIN2	<---	IN	.926	
SIIN1	<---	IN	.960	

Construct			Estimate	AVE[1]
SICEN3	<---	CEN	.941	
SICEN2	<---	CEN	.940	
SICEN1	<---	CEN	.708	

[1] average variance extracted

Table 16 Continued

Overall, the proposed model was a good fit to the data. The value of Chi-square (x^2) was 966.219. In addition, different incremental fit measures that confirm the goodness of fit are presented in Figure 19. Following common practice in the field (Byrne, 2010), the target in this research was to report four fit indices, including the: comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and root mean square residual (RMSEA). All reached the satisfactory levels suggested in the Methodology Chapter: CFI > .95, NFI > .95, GFI > .90, and RMESA < .052. Therefore, the measurement model was acceptable. The next step was to engage in a detailed examination of the path coefficients and examine the proposed method of testing the hypotheses.

Table 17
Maximum Shared Variance (MSV)

Correlations			MSV
BI	<-->	SI	0.001
ATT	<-->	SI	0.003
ATT	<-->	BI	0.483
SN	<-->	BI	0.721
PBC	<-->	BI	0.562
PBC	<-->	ATT	0.286
ATT	<-->	SN	0.455
PBC	<-->	SN	0.461

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.109	.903	.881	.738
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	1.232	.151	.088	.141

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.958	.952	.973	.969	.973
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.052	.048	.056	.170
Independence model	.298	.294	.301	.000

Figure 19 Fit Indices

5.4. Testing the Hypotheses

As mentioned above, the model was a good fit to the data, matching the desired initial statistical considerations. Therefore, structural equation modeling was performed to examine the proposed hypotheses. The objectives of the present research were twofold: (1) to test the TPB model in a tourism context, and (2) extend the TPB model by incorporating social identity. The results of this study could lead to an improved understanding of the core beliefs American tourists consider when searching for a travel destination. In service of these goals, several hypotheses were empirically tested, including: (1) the attitude American tourists have regarding the Middle East are directly related to their behavioral intention to travel to the Middle East Region (H1a); (2) tourists'

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experiencing of social pressures (norms) is directly related to their behavioral intention to travel to the Middle East Region (H1b); (3) American tourists' perception of behavioral control is directly related to their behavioral intention to travel to the Middle East Region (H1c); (4) the salience of "belonging to the West" to potential tourists' social identity is directly related to their behavioral intention to travel to the Middle East Region (H2a); and (5) the salience of "belonging to the American society" to potential tourists' social identity is directly related to their attitude regarding the Middle East Region as a travel destination (H2b).

The SEM results indicate that four of the five proposed paths were statistically significant on two levels: (1) the paths linking attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to behavioral intention ($p = .001$); and (2) the path associating social identity with attitude ($p = .01$; see Figure 20 and Table 18). However, the remaining path linking social identity to behavioral intention was found to be not significant ($p > .05$). Therefore, a summary of the tested hypotheses (statistical findings) is displayed in Table 19.

Table 18
Regression Weights

Correlation			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
ATT	<---	SI	.111	.047	2.378	.017
BI	<---	ATT	-.163	.029	-5.633	<.001
BI	<---	SI	-.036	.030	-1.191	.234
BI	<---	SN	.677	.039	17.469	<.001
BI	<---	PBC	.602	.071	8.459	<.001
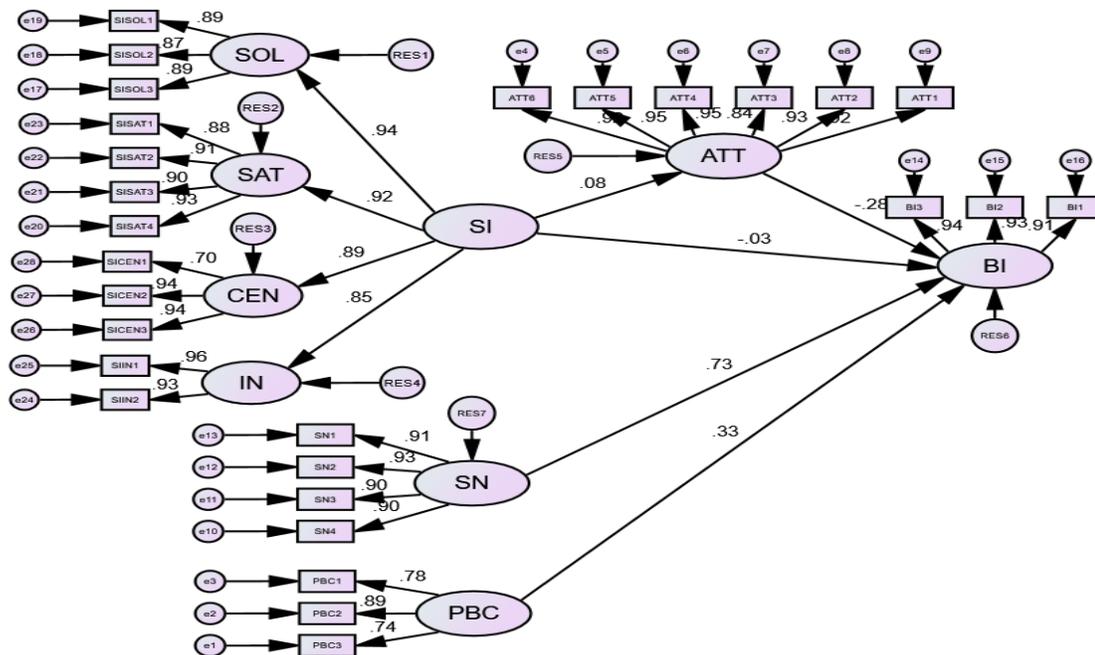
SI: Social Identity, SOL: Solidarity, SAT: Satisfaction, CEN: Centrality, IN: Individual self-stereotyping, ATT: Attitude, SN: Subjective Norms, PBC: Perceived Behavioral Control, BI: Behavioral Intention.

Figure 20. Full Model

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Table 19
Summary of Statistical Findings

Hypothesis	Findings
H1a: The attitude American tourists have toward the Middle East will be directly related to their behavioral intention towards travelling to the Middle East Region.	Supported
H1b: Tourists' social pressure (norms) will be directly related to their behavioral intention towards travelling to the Middle East Region.	Supported
H1c: The perceptions of behavioral control for American tourists will be directly related to their behavioral intention of travelling to the Middle East Region.	Supported
H2a: The social identity salience of potential tourists "belonging to the American society" will be directly related to their behavioral intention to travel to the Middle East Region.	Not Supported
H2b: The social identity salience of potential tourists "belonging to the West" will be directly related to their attitude towards the Middle East Region as a travel destination.	Supported

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study assessed the behavioral intention of American tourists towards visiting the Middle East Region as a potential travel destination as well as how this intention could be predicted or influenced by other factors. The aim here was to examine the role of social identity, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on potential Western tourists' (Americans') intention to travel to the Middle East Region. The theory of planned behavior (TPB), postulated by Ajzen (1985), was extended to include the construct of social identity salience as developed from social identity theory, serving as the theoretical model for the study. The results obtained from American tourists (n=630) indicated that the theoretical model had a good fit to the empirical data. Additionally, the theoretical constructs (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, behavioral intention and social identity) had a robust validity and reliability. From the reliability standpoint, the constructs have Cronbach's alpha values that range from .84 to .96 as well as composite reliability ranging from .74 to .96. On the other hand, all constructs have good convergent and discriminant validity, where their values of average variance extracted were from .79 to .90 and that were greater than the values of maximum shared variance (MSV) of all mutual correlations occurring between the constructs. The behavioral intention of American tourists towards visiting the Middle East Region was directly and significantly affected by their attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control while their attitude to the region was influenced by their social identity. While these tourists have never visited the Middle East Region, their perceptions of the

Middle East Region as a travel destination were found to be most likely negative. Therefore, the current study is believed to have theoretical and practical implication drawn from these findings that will be an important contribution to the body of tourism knowledge and industry.

6.1. Theoretical Implications

An extended TPB model was tested here in a tourism context as one of the major objectives of the current study. The empirical findings demonstrate the utility of the extended TPB as a conceptual framework. Thus, this made various advances for research. In general, empirical evidence that was delivered from this research led the researcher to suggest (1) the effects of social identity of tourists on the attitudinal beliefs towards a travel destination; (2) the appropriateness of the TPB model in a tourism context; (3) the non-significant effect of social identity on behavioral intention; (4) the effects of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control on the behavioral intention level of tourist.

This is the first study examining the effect of tourists' social identity salience on their behavioral intention towards visiting a travel destination in the presence of behavioral beliefs. For example, American tourists overwhelmingly responded that they would not consider traveling to the Middle East. Influencing their attitude directly, Americans' social identity played a major role in their decisions to avoid traveling to the Middle East. It confirms that social identity can be conceptualized as a second order factor composed of four distinct dimensions including solidarity, satisfaction, centrality and individual self-stereotyping. The findings demonstrate that when the social identity was found to be

salient for potential tourists, their attitudinal beliefs towards that destination are directly affected. This conclusion is consistent with Choo, Ahn, and Petrick's study (2016). While they found social identity had a significant direct influence on behavioral intention, the intent level for American tourists towards visiting the Middle East Region for the first time was partially and indirectly affected by their social identity. Therefore, it is evident that social identity is a significant predictor for attitudinal beliefs of tourists, and it can be an important factor in explaining some of their behavioral intention towards a travel destination. The empirical evidence supported by the extended TPB model, in turn, guides researchers to better understand the formation of behavioral intention differently by adding the social identity salience variable. Together, they can provide a clear comprehensive view of tourists' decision-making process in favoring a certain travel destination over other ones.

The correlations of the main components of the TPB to the behavioral intention of tourists were identified. That is, consistent with previous research in which the model was applied in a similar context (Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Al Ziadat, 2015; Chen & Peng, 2012; Chen, Hung, & Peng, 2011; Chen & Tung, 2014; Cheng, Lam, & Hsu, 2006; Goh, Ritchie, & Wang, 2017; Han & Kim, 2010; Han, Meng, & Kim, 2017; Han et al., 2010; Hsu & Huang, 2012; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Kim & Han, 2010; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Lam & Hsu, 2006; March & Woodside, 2005; Oh & Hsu, 2001; Park et al., 2017; Phillips & Jang, 2012; Quintal et al., 2010; Sparks & Pan, 2009; Wang & Ritchie, 2012), those components (attitude, social influence, and perceived behavioral control) made a significant contribution to behavioral intention. Particularly, the current study provides an insight

towards the relationship between potential American tourists' intention to visit the Middle East Region and their attitude where found to be significantly negative. In addition, their important referents including family members, friends, co-workers and travel agents were found to have the significant influence on their overall behavioral intention to visit the Middle East Region. Another determinant of behavioral intention that was significant was the American perceptions of control regarding their ability to visit the Middle East Region (their perceived behavioral control). Although all of them are significantly related and predict the behavioral intention, social influence (subjective norm) was found to be the most important determinant of their behavioral intention coefficient towards visiting the region. In short, verification of the relationships within the TPB have also been well-supported in the current study. Thus, it is suggested to be an appropriate conceptual framework to explain some of the main belief indicators of behavioral intention of tourists towards a travel destination.

In fact, the TPB model has been employed widely in different arenas (Kim & Han, 2010). In most cases, the model was sufficient to explain behavioral intention in a variety of different disciplines such as health and psychology. Subsequently, in a tourism context, previous reaserchers (e.g., Lam and Hsu, 2004) also found the model to be significant and useful in explaining the intention coefficient of travelers considering visiting a tourist location. For example, it was found to be better than the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Han et al., 2010), as well the choice of experiment (CE) theory (Pröbstl-Haider & Haider, 2013). Consistent with the previous studies, the TPB model was determined to be a good fit to the empirical data and capable of predicting behavioral intention of potential Western

tourists (Americans) to travel to the Middle East Region. Consequently, the appropriateness of the TPB model in a tourism context was confirmed in the current study.

Fishbein and Ajzen, (1975) argued that accuracy of behavioral constructs as well as aggregation of potential constructs could lead to a better valid explanation of behavior. In this sense, since the integration of two theories has been validated, the current research advances the theoretical understanding of tourism by extending the theory of planned behavior (TPB), postulated by Ajzen (1985), to include the construct of social identity salience as developed from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This inclusion led to enhancing the validity of the TPB model as well as the explanation of tourists' attitudinal beliefs towards a travel destination as Ajzen (1985) indicated that the aggregation of more constructs with attitudes and other components of TPB model (subjective norms and perceived behavioral control) would lead to more valid results that reflect the actual behavior which is visiting the Middle East Region in this case.

6.2. Practical Implications

The Middle East Region is in desperate need of growth in its tourism industry. However, the system of tourism cannot grow without the existence of one fundamental element: tourists (Leiper, 1979). To the extent that Americans represent Western tourists, Western tourists are potential targets for growth, but their notions of the region seem to be subtly negative due to recent incidents of terrorism and the region's history of political instability. Therefore, this research sheds light on factors that contribute to the formation of perceptions held by some Western tourists (Americans) towards the Middle East Region that might influence their eventual travel destination choice. To be an asset in evolving

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the industry in the Middle East Region, the current study provides practical implications to destination authorities and people who account for promoting tourism in that region (e.g., practitioners and tourism leaders) to advance their understanding of the Western perceptions.

In general, there is a need for quality procedural knowledge in the tourism industry, especially in its market component. For example, it is recommended to inform stakeholders on how to control their relationships with tourists, while also promoting the tourism industry in general (Cooper, Le, Claster, Vafadari, & Pardo, 2015). In the area of study (Middle East Region), this type of knowledge is not present in an efficient capacity. This can be both an advantage and a disadvantage for the current study's implications. For example, the absence of efficient knowledge may cause the study to be inconsistent in terms of comparing results (Rudez, Sedmak, Vodeb, & Bojenc, 2014). Nevertheless, the market in the Middle East Region is still thirsty for implications drawn from the tested hypotheses. Marketers there, for instance, will especially benefit from this as it guides them to make more precise and efficient decisions regarding their targeted market, Western tourists.

Supported hypotheses such as the significant and negative influence of attitude on the behavioral intention lead to an understanding of a part of the construction of the image of Western tourists, particularly American, towards the Middle East Region. In addition, the indirect effects of American social identity on behavioral intention that is represented in their solidarity, satisfaction, centrality and individual self-stereotyping have an impact on the tourism industry in the region. In this sense, tourism management (tourism decision

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makers in the Middle East & FIFA World Cup 2022 organizers) would benefit most from these findings because the construction of images is a very important instrument for decision-makers in promoting positive perceptions of a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, (1999a). The implication is signified by developing a well-designed plan of action for the region that significantly accommodates such concerned variables by promoting the region to the West and Westerners. In doing so, the image of the Middle East Region should be positively influenced by the suggested marketing strategy. This enhancement will result in increasing the interest of Westerners to visit the Middle East Region, while also generating enthusiasm for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Building on social identity theory, Chen et al. (2013) found that the hosting location's image received a prejudiced perception from tourists whose social identity is more salient than that of hosting residents. The hypothesis's implication driven by the social identity factor will aid tourism practitioners, especially from the supply side, of the tourist destination in understanding that being introduced to one factor may not only lead to an unfair assessment of the destination, but may also influence the quality of tourists' experience during their visit. Therefore, the findings lead the researcher to suggest that tourism authorities in travel destinations should be fully aware of the social identities of their prospective tourists and prepare accordingly. In other words, in the event that marketers would promote an event intended to draw American travelers in particular and Westerners in general, they might need to consider the components of social identity for each targeted market (e.g., tourists self-stereotyping). The awareness of this variable requires an advanced design for their target markets. In the case of the Middle East Region

and Qatar, tourism developers should focus on their marketing descriptions (e.g., the message content) when they approach the Western markets such as the American market. Replacement strategies should focus on the recognition images' formation, as well as the creation of an altered message to appeal to Western tourists. This would be a potential asset to the industry and most likely enhance the overall image of the Middle East and help reassess current strategies efficiently and financially.

Tourism developers in that region should be examining the intention level of tourists to attend the event. This examination will lead them not only to increase demand in the West to travel to the Middle East but will also allow international mega events such as World Cup 2022 hosted in the region to perform exceptionally well in comparison to previous ones. In addition to the competition's benefits, supplier stakeholders should be knowledgeable about the ways the overall image of the region may have been responsible for the tourism industry not experiencing its fair market share from the West. This may encourage tourism stakeholders in the whole region to work collaboratively to achieve a mutual goal: enhancing the overall image of the region, which of course cannot be done without considering all the variables that formed the overall image. Therefore, tourism products, programs, activities, and policies should be positively impacted by the findings for this study.

Finally, from the researcher's prospective, two of the most meaningful descriptions of tourism were introduced by de Kadt (1979) and Jafari (1989): the path of "peace" and "development," as cited in (Xiao & Smith, 2006). These two concepts are widely needed throughout the world. While development is extremely important, peace is prioritized at

this time for specific areas. The Middle East Region needs nothing these days but peace and development. In fact, all countries in the region are interested and believe in tourism as a vehicle for change and development. Thus, they should work on producing a high quality experience for the targeted market. A quality experience is guaranteed to increase the satisfaction of tourists and build a unique relationship between them and the destination. The findings should inform them to work more closely with all suppliers in the service industry to ensure that they are all aware of tourists' preferences to create an unforgettable experience that will improve the image of the region and have Western tourists not only intend to visit but also return to Qatar and the neighboring countries in the Middle East Region.

6.3. Future Studies

As mentioned in the introduction, the current study has certain limitations, such as it is limited to only American tourists who have never visited the Middle East. Future researchers are encouraged to consider examining tourists who have already visited the Middle East and include the factor (construct) of past behavior to the conceptual framework. It also should replicate the same conceptual framework to other Western countries such as United Kingdom, France, Italy or Germany. Additional factors could be considered along with the existing ones (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and social identity) to examine other key predictors of behavioral intention of tourists towards Middle East Region.

Out of many, future researchers could test the influence of information sources and destination image to the behavioral intention to visit the region because information

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sources, which has been found to have a significant impact on tourists perceptions towards a travel destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; González-Rodríguez, Martínez Torres, Toral, Okumus, & Okumus, 2016; Stern & Krakover, 1993; Ward & Russell, 1981). That impact could produce the construction of touristic image of a travel destination (Ward & Russell, 1981). In the relationship between the Middle East and the West particularly, for example, researchers found that information sources have played a significant role in creating images of the Middle East in the mindsets of Westerners. These images likely influence tourists when choosing their travel destination (Gibson, Qi, & Zhang, 2008). Consequently, future researchers should exert that factor more to examine the effects of information sources with the presence of other factors proposed in the extended TPB model (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, social identity and behavioral intention).

On the other hand and due to the time constraints, the current study did not consider testing socio-demographic factor effects of tourists on other factors, but previous researchers found that demographic features for tourists could affect their overall behavioral intention to visit a travel destination. For example, gender has been suggested to have some effect on interacting with diverse people, as it has been found that women are affected less than men in relation to the perceptional/rational component that tourism-targeted information and travel stimuli trigger. Considering that effect can help to show the dissimilarity between genders (Wang, Miao, & Mattila, 2015). Thus, future researchers should investigate those effects by testing the extended model of TPB proposed in this study with the effects of personal characteristics. Lastly, further

researchers should endeavor to find different theories and models that explain the situation

of the Middle East Region as a depreciated tourist destination. However, it may also be

beneficial to employ these same theories in a different contexts, as well.

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Dissertation's Survey

Information Sheet

AMERICAN TOURISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST REGION AS A TRAVEL DESTINATION

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by a researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.

Your participation is voluntary and all responses are anonymous. The survey is expected to take no longer than 20 minutes. Thank you in advance for your valuable input to this research study.

Why Is This Study Being Done?

The purpose of this study is to gain an initial understanding of images, perceptions that you may hold towards the Middle East region as a travel destination.

Why Am I Being Asked To Be In This Study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you meet the criteria of respondents for this study: you have traveled outside your country at least one time in your life, you are over 25 years of age and you are from United States. Lastly, you have not visited the Middle East region yet.

How Many People Will Be Asked To Be In This Study?

1000 people (participants) will be invited to participate in this study.

What Are the Alternatives to being in this study?

The alternative to being in the study is not to participate.

What Will I Be Asked To Do In This Study?

You will be asked to complete a survey hosted online. Your participation in this study will last up to 20 minutes.

Are There Any Risks To Me?

The things that you will be doing are no more risk than you would come across in everyday life.

Will There Be Any Costs To Me?

Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.

Will I Be Paid To Be In This Study?

You will receive 1,500 points, which equates to $.50/completed survey.

Will Information From This Study Be Kept Private?

No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Your responses are not linked to you and cannot be identified to you by the researcher in any manner. Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law.

Who may I Contact for More Information?

You may contact the investigator, Sultan Alharbi, PhD if you have questions about this research at (305) 790.9258 or sultan@tamu.edu. For questions about your rights as a research participant; or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program office at (979) 458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

What if I Change My Mind About Participating?

This research is voluntary and you have the choice whether or not to be in this research study. You may decide to not begin or to stop participating at any time. If you choose not to be in this study or stop being in the study, there will be no effect on your relationship with Texas A&M University

Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this information sheet for your records. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

Q 1 How likely are you to take a vacation in another country (overseas) in the next 2

years?

- ○ Extremely unlikely (1)
- ○ Somewhat unlikely (2)
- ○ Neither unlikely nor likely (3)
- ○ Somewhat likely (4)
- ○ Extremely likely (5)

Q 2 How many international/overseas Trips have you taken in your lifetime?

Q 3 What Images or characteristics come to mind when you think of taking a vacation to

the Middle East? Be as specific as possible

Q 4 Who do you prefer to travel with?

- ○ Traveling alone (1)
- ○ Partner (2)
- ○ Friend(s)/Relatives other than immediate family (3)
- ○ Immediate family (parents and children) (4)
- ○ Work colleague(s) (5)
- ○ Organised group (6)
- ○ Other (please specify) (7) _____

Q 5 Below are a number of statements about your attitude towards travelling to the Middle East. Please select the response that best represents your opinion.   All things considered, I think travelling to the Middle East would be ....

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)
Enjoyable:Unenjoyable (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Positive:Negative (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Fun:Boring (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Pleasant:Unpleasant (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Favorable:Unfavorable (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Something I would like: Something I dislik (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q 6 Please rate your agreement or disagreement with these statements below

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I would like to take a holiday to the Middle East within the next 2 years because it is popular among most of the people who are important to me. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who are important to me would probably think it would be good to take a holiday to the Middle East within the next 2 years. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who are important to me have recommended that I take a holiday to the Middle East within the 2 years. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to visit the Middle East within 2 years, because I have heard a lot about this destination from people who are important to me. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q 7 Please rate your agreement or disagreement with these statements below							
	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I feel like I would have enough time to visit the Middle East on vacation in the next 2 years. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel like I would have enough money to visit the Middle East on vacation in the next 2 years (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel like there would be nothing to prevent me from visiting the Middle East on vacation in the next 2 years (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q 8 Please rate your agreement or disagreement with these statements below							
	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I intend to travel to the Middle East region on vacation in the next two years; (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I want to travel to the Middle East on vacation in the next two years	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would consider buying an airline ticket to travel to the Middle East region on vacation in the next two years.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q 9 Below are a number of statements about your social identity. Please select the response that best represents your opinion.					
	Not at all (1)	Slightely (2)	Moderately (3)	Very (4)	Very much (5)
How attached are you to the American society/group? (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
How strong would you say your feelings of belongingness are toward the American society/group? (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Indicate to what degree your self-image overlaps with the identity of American society/group? (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
How would you express the degree of overlap between your personal identity and the identity of your American society/group? (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q 10 Please rate your agreement or disagreement with the two statements below					
	Agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Disagree (5)
I am a valuable member of the American society/group (1)	○	○	○	○	○
I am an important member of the American society/group (2)	○	○	○	○	○

Q 11 Please rate your agreement or disagreement with the two statements below							
	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I feel a bond with Americans (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel solidarity with Americans (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel committed to the Americans (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am glad to be American (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I think that Americans have a lot to be proud of (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is pleasant to be an American (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Being American gives me a good feeling (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often think about the fact that I am American (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The fact that I am American is an important part of my identity (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Being American is an important part of how I see myself (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have a lot in common with the average American Person (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am similar to the average American person (12)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q 12 Are you?

○ Male (1)
○ Female (2)

Q 13 What is your current age?

_____ Age (1)

Q14 Ethnicity origin (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity.

☐   White. (1)

☐   Hispanic or Latino (2)

☐   Black or African American (3)

☐   Native American or American Indian (4)

☐   Asian / Pacific Islander. (5)

☐   Other (Please specify) (6) _____

Q15 Among the options below, what best describes your religious beliefs?

- ☐ Christianity (1)

- ☐ Judaism (2)

- ☐ Atheism (3)

- ☐ Islam (4)

- ☐ Agnosticism (5)

- ☐ Aboriginal (6)

- ☐ Hinduism (7)

- ☐ Hainism (8)

- ☐ Hedonism (9)

- ☐ Ceremonial Magic (Kabbala, OTO, etc.) (10)

- ☐ Confucianism (11)

- ☐ Druidry/Faerie/Old Gods (12)

- ☐ Discordian (13)

- ☐ Goddess Worship (14)

- ☐ Baha'I (15)

- ☐ Buddhism (16)

- ☐ Other (17)

Q16 What is your marital status?

- ☐　　Single no child (1)
- ☐　　Single with child (2)
- ☐　　Partner no child (3)
- ☐　　Partner with child (4)
- ☐　　Sep./div./widow (5)

Q 17 What is your educational level?

- ☐　12th grade or less (1)
- ☐　College Degree (2)
- ☐　Master Degree (3)
- ☐　Doctoral Degree (4)

Q 18 What was your approximate total household income last year? (please choose one)

- ☐　Under $25,000 (1)
- ☐　$25,000 - $39,999 (2)
- ☐　$40,000 - $49,999 (3)
- ☐　$50,000 - $74,999 (4)
- ☐　$75,000 - $99,999 (5)
- ☐　$100,00 - $124,999 (6)
- ☐　$125,000 -149,999 (7)
- ☐　$150,000 or more (8)