

Energy Tourism or Spiritual Tourism:

A New Approach to Sustainable Tourism

Case Study: Takht-e Soleiman, Iran

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Introduction:

- Tourism as a process
- Tourists travel for many reasons.

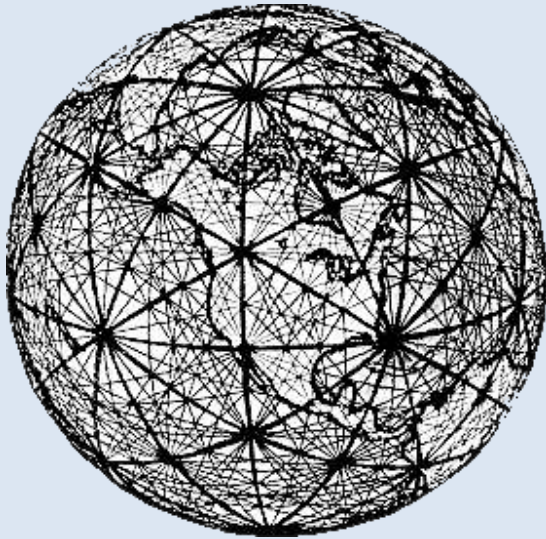




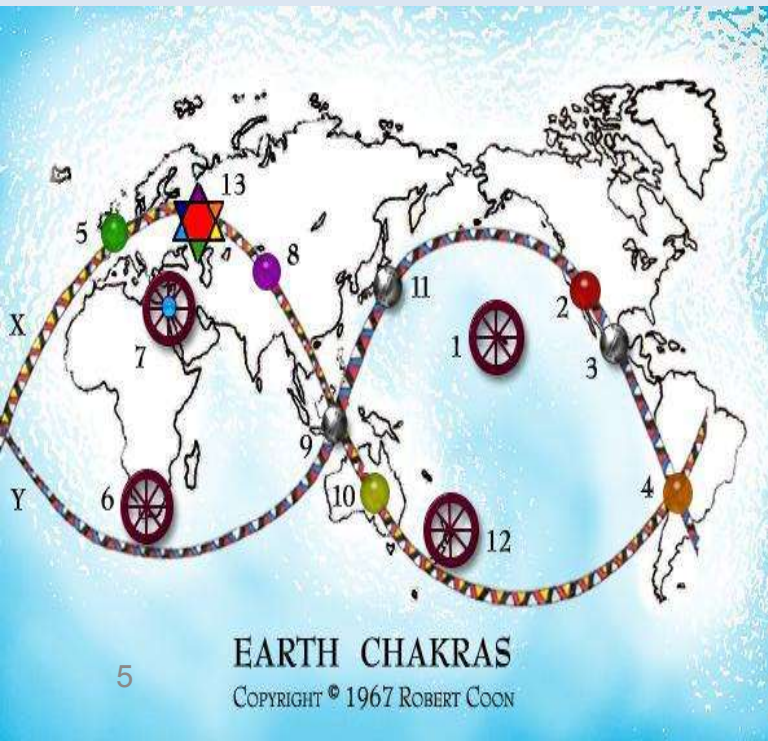
The Sacred sites in the world:



- attract tourists with the special interests.
- have natural attractions such as geographic or geological features for healing, relaxing and spiritual awareness.
- also called "the Earth or planetary chakras" (Coon, 1967).



- The sacred sites also have the archeological, religious and cultural attractions.
- The Earth chakras have the vital energy which enhances physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.
- The earth chakras are the vortices which circulate the energy around the planet. These chakras were determined in 1967 by Robert Coon.





- The idea of the earth chakras have been derived from believing in Gaia Hypothesis.

- The Gaia Hypothesis suggests that our planet functions as a single organism that maintains conditions necessary for its survival.



- Formulated by James Lovelock in the mid-1960s and published in The Gaia Hypothesis in 1979.



- The Earth is alive and as a super existence has a nervous system.
- The web of life on Earth both creates and is affected by electrical currents on the Earth's surface and in the atmosphere.
- The soil with its electrically conducting gases, metals, semiconducting mineral crystals, water-soaked organic matter, and electrolytes offers an excellent medium for producing and maintaining electrical currents.



•The Earth is a living being, with its own creative, evolutionary will, and with its own methods of enacting its purpose.

• The electromagnetic characteristic of the Earth establishes a system of energy around it.

•The greatest concentrations of energy encoded with information emanate from major Earth Chakras.

•The study of Earth Chakras is more akin to acupuncture, in that we are exploring the more subtle energy structures of the Earth.





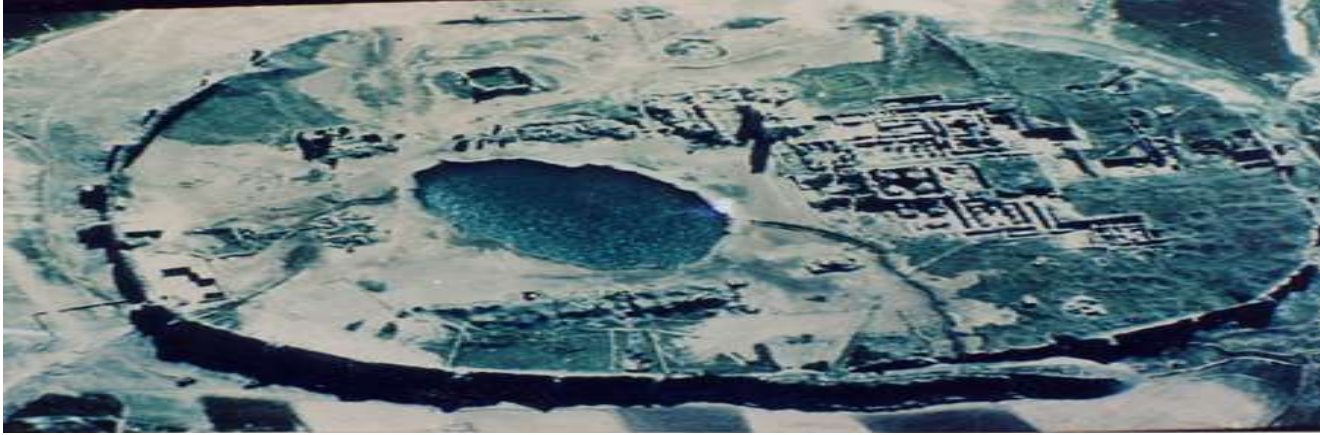
- The entire planetary structure contains 156 sites which create 52 vortices or chakras.
- These 156 sites are called sacred sites and lie on the intersection points of meridians.
- such as Glastonbury in England, Mt. Kailas in Tibet, Lima in Peru, Niagara Falls between the United States and Canada, Uluru in Australia, Lourdes in France and so on.



•According to this, there are three sacred sites in Iran:

- Takht-e Soleiman,
- Mt. Damavand and,
- Kuh-e Malek Siah.





Takht-e Soleiman and Energy Tourism

- An archaeological site located 45 kilometers northeast of the city of Takab in the province of West Azarbaijan.
- It is a heritage site left from the Sassanid era (226–650 AD).
- Takht-e Soleiman was not only registered by UNESCO in 2003 as a world heritage but also introduced as a sacred site in 1967.
- The historic monument in Takht-e Soleiman has been built around a lake in the form of an oval structure and is enclosed by a stone wall.
- The holy lake is absolutely eye-catching with its changing colors.



- In 2004, an environmental movement was formed in Iran by Sanaz Sanaye Goldouz and Seyed Abbas Ataie.
- Many environmentalists who believed in subtle and vital energy of the Earth went to Takht-e Soleiman.
- The purpose of the travel was Ecotourism, but with a twist. The Ecotourist respects the physical body of the Earth but the Energy tourist not only respects the physical body of the Earth but also respects the soul of it (Sanaye Goldouz and Makhdoum, 2009).
- This type of tourist is called the **Energy Tourist**, the Vital Energy Tourist, the Subtle Energy Tourist or the **Spiritual Tourist** (Sanaye Goldouz and Ataie, 2005)

The Hypothesis of this research:

- The vital energy in Takht-e Soleiman is perceptible by tourists.
- The tourists' environmental attitude is positive.



Data and Methods:

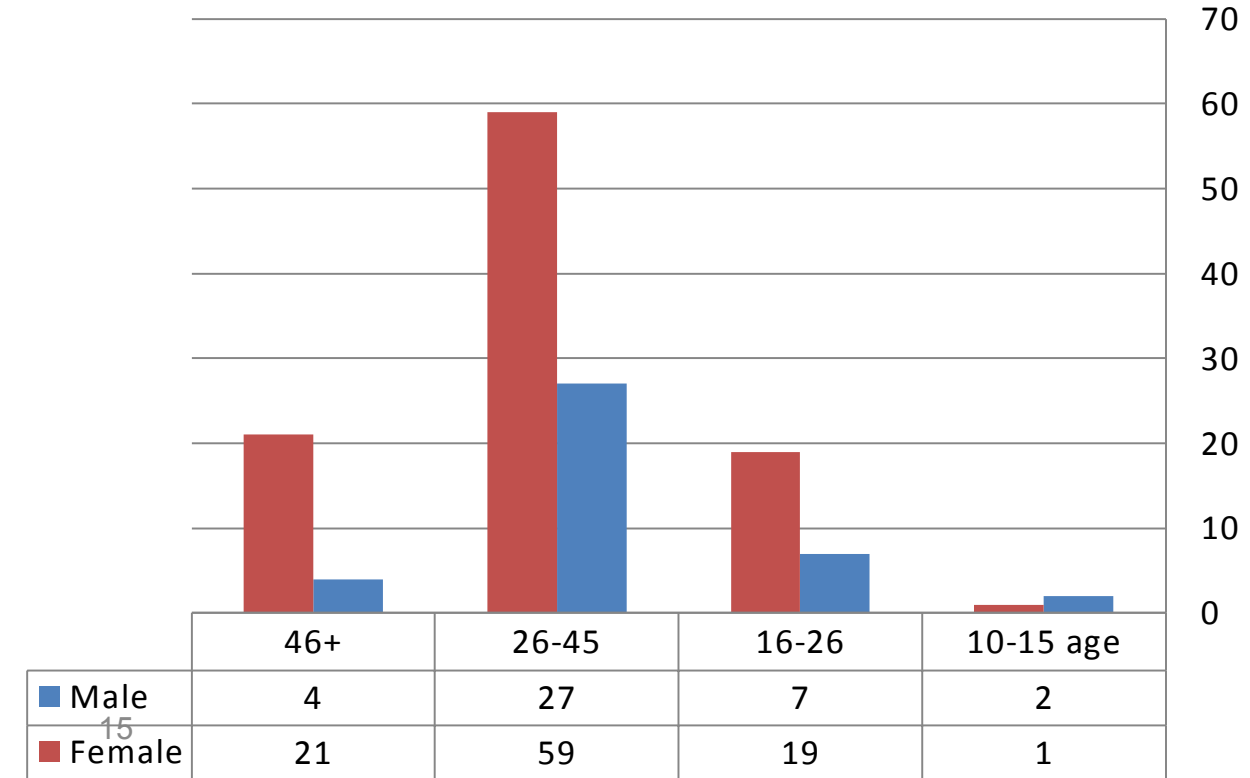
- The survey was conducted in the summer of 2008.
- The focus group comprised 200 energy tourists.
- Having a questionnaire was determined as the method for the survey part of the research.
- 145 questionnaires were distributed to the tourists at random.
- The questionnaires were filled out by 140 people.
- Since the questionnaire was composed of multi-valued questions with ordinal scale, the sample size was estimated as follows (Momeni and Ghayoumi, 2007)

$$n = \frac{N \times z^2_{\frac{\alpha}{2}} \times p(1 - p)}{\varepsilon^2 (N - 1) + z^2_{\frac{\alpha}{2}} \times p(1 - p)}$$

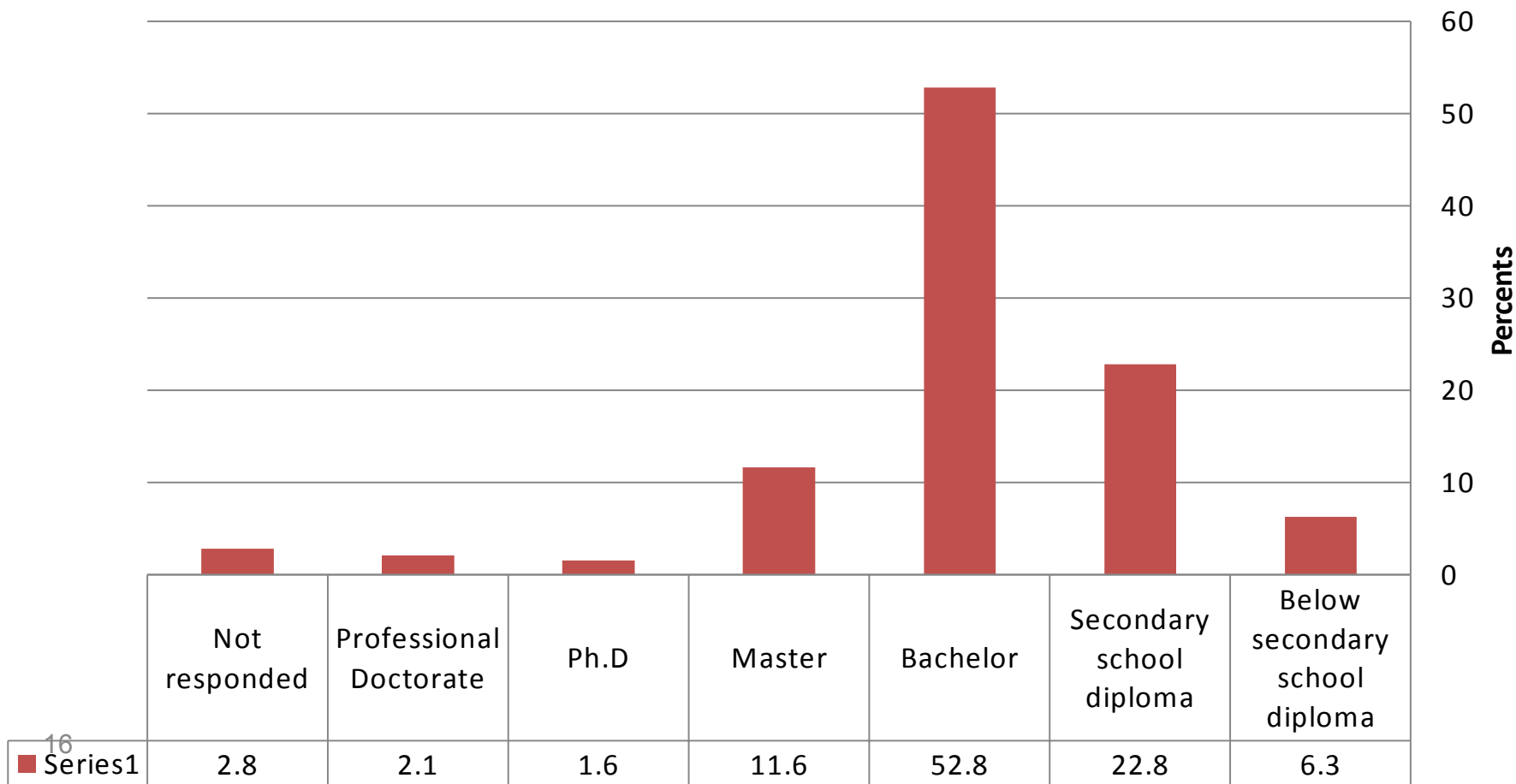


- The sample size was estimated as follows:

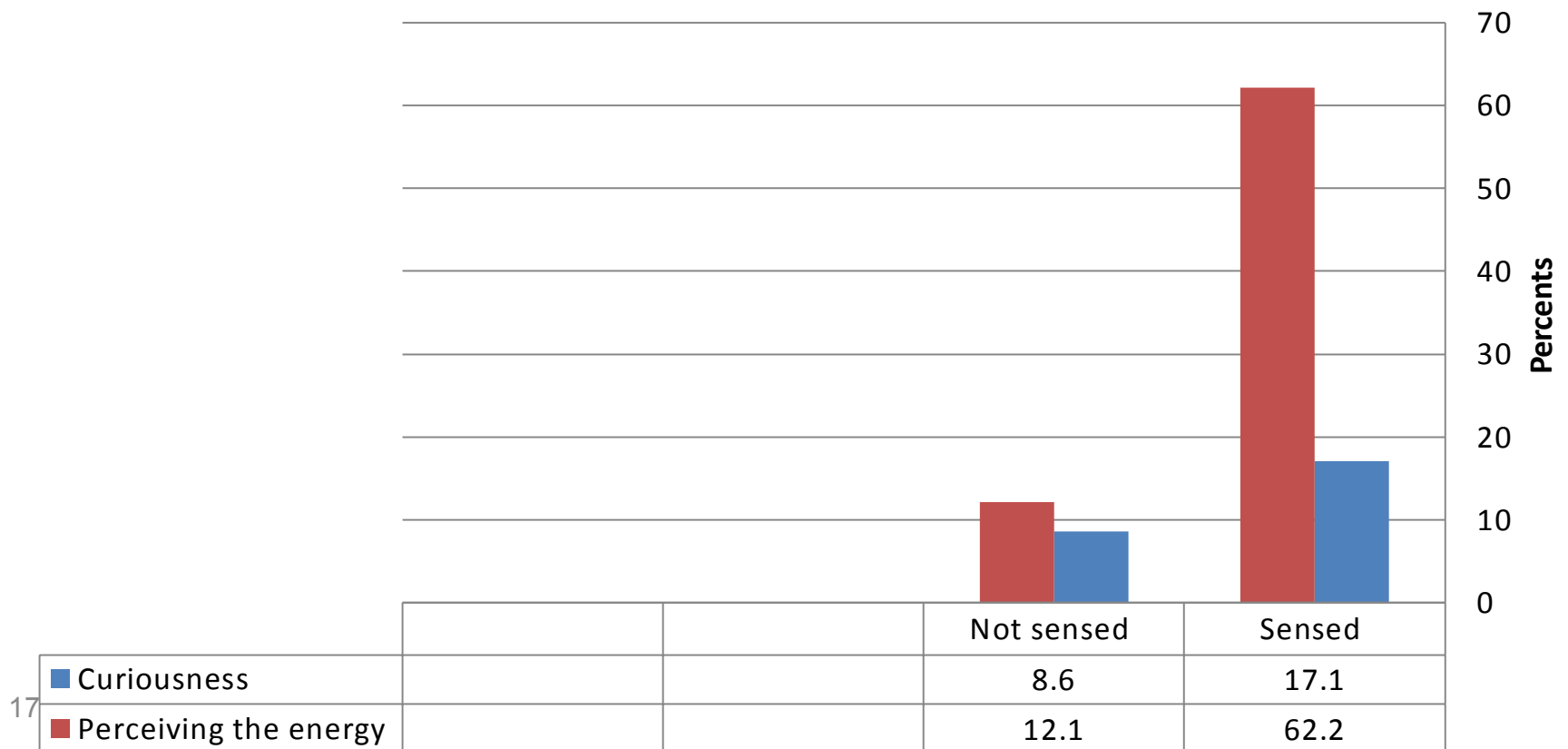
$$N = 131.74 \approx 132$$
- According to 140 > 132 responses received, the results were extensible to the population with a 95% confidence level.
- The questionnaires were analysed.
- The age group and the sex of responders are shown in the Table below.



The abundance of education levels of responders was dedicated as follows:



- After collection and analysis of the data in Excel and SPSS, the contingency table was provided.
- The fisher's test was used for analyzing the table.
- After statistical analysis, with p-value = $0.030 \leq 0.05$, a total of 111 tourists had sensed the energy in Takht-e Soleiman.
- The purpose of travel and sensing the energy are shown in below.



•In this research 111 people both male and female with proper education levels confirmed the existence of energy in Takht-e Soleiman.

•Experiencing this kind of energy was explained as:

- real love,
- spiritual appetite,
- fascination,
- astonishment,
- rapture,
- peacefulness
- awareness,
- high energy,
- and,



- joy and feeling healthy,
- lightness,
- feeling at home,
- Happiness and relieving stress,
- feeling the presence of God,
- complete satisfaction,
- increasing the hope for life,
- admiring nature,
- beauty,
- indescribable feelings and perceptions,
- new and metaphysical experiences
- uncaused emotions,
- unknown fear and so forth.

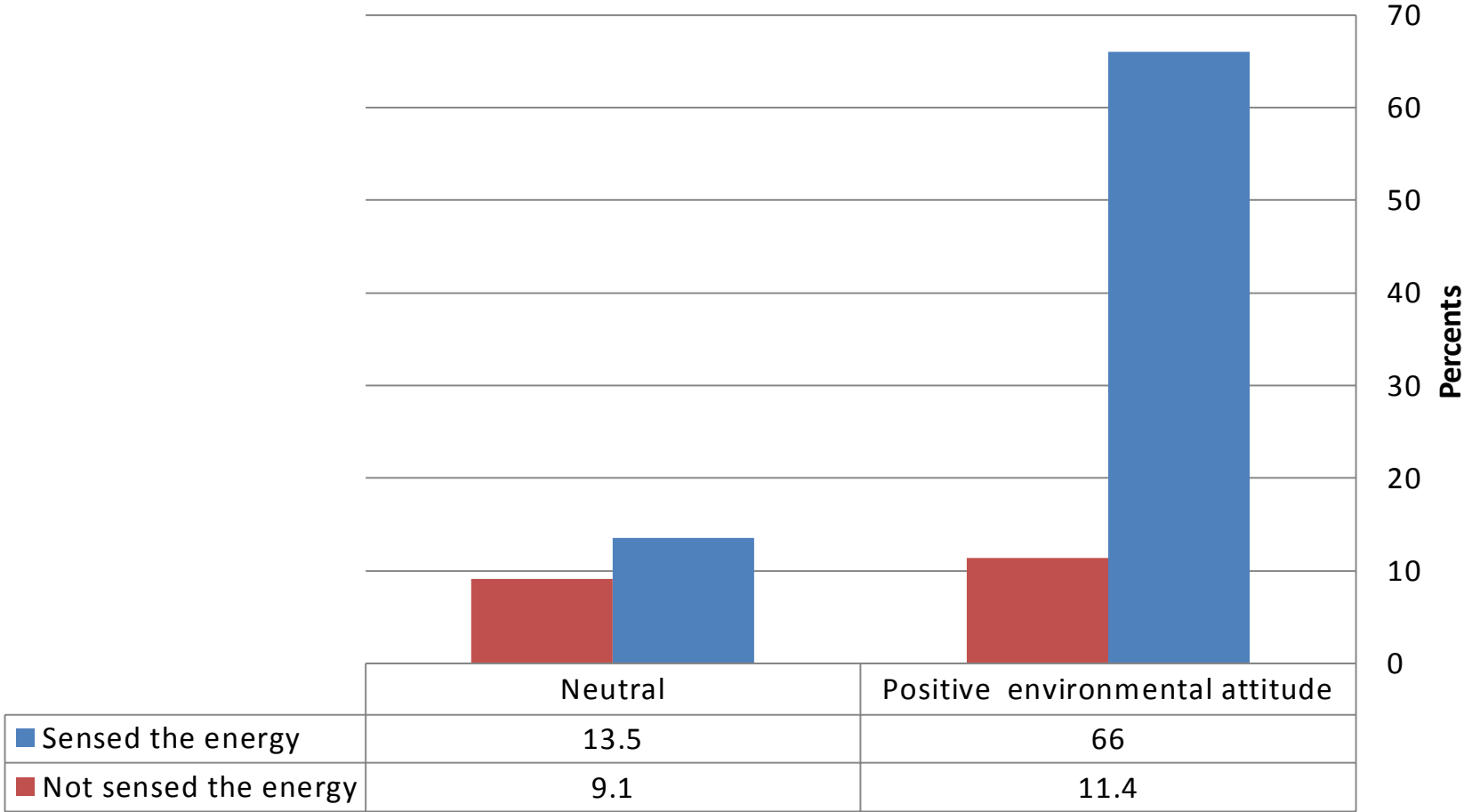




The tourists stated:

- Their approach to life had changed.
- Takht-e Soleiman was very different from other natural attractions in Iran.
- The eye-catching lake of Takht-e Soleiman is very wonderful and amazing.
- They enjoyed being dazed by the lake for a long time as though it was hypnotizing them.

- With $p\text{-value} = 0.038 \leq 0.05$, a total of 92 tourists who had sensed the energy, had the positive environmental attitude.
- The tourists' environmental attitude are shown in below.



72 percents of tourists had no idea about travel costs. They liked the current untouched structure of Takht-e Soleiman and they refused the garbage or trash to be strewn over the landscape.





- This kind of tourist tries to protect the site due to a feeling of ownership and dependence on it.
- The tourists believe that the Earth is alive and has a soul and a purpose for living.
- They feel the existence of the Earth in this site. Therefore, they just can't damage it.



The Energy tourist's style shows content...

- Usually dress in white to attract the energy better and also white is the color of peace,
- have vegetarian diets,
- try to remain quiet,
- meditate and focus within and meditate in a group,
- walk around the lake,
- make a circle of peace surrounding the lake,
- travels with simplicity,
- needs simple facilities and special tour leaders trained for this purpose
- Religion or cultural background of the tourist would not make a difference.



- The goal of the Energy tourist and the Spiritual tourist is the achievement of unification of humanity in the world for peace and for protection of the Earth.
- So, race, nationality, culture, religion and so on are not important. The people of each country where the earth chakra belongs should serve as the protectors and guardians of it.

Target Market:

- People who have participated in Meditation & Relaxation courses.
- people who are interested in sightseeing in historic and / or rural areas .
- Environmentalists.



Service characteristics:

- Training on meditation & relaxation before and during trips
- Updating participants through web site after trips
- Meditation & relaxation exercises during trips
- Training on Environment & History of the site during trips
- Introducing indigenous people's lifecycle
- This characteristics will help indigenous to sell their handicrafts



Pricing Strategy:

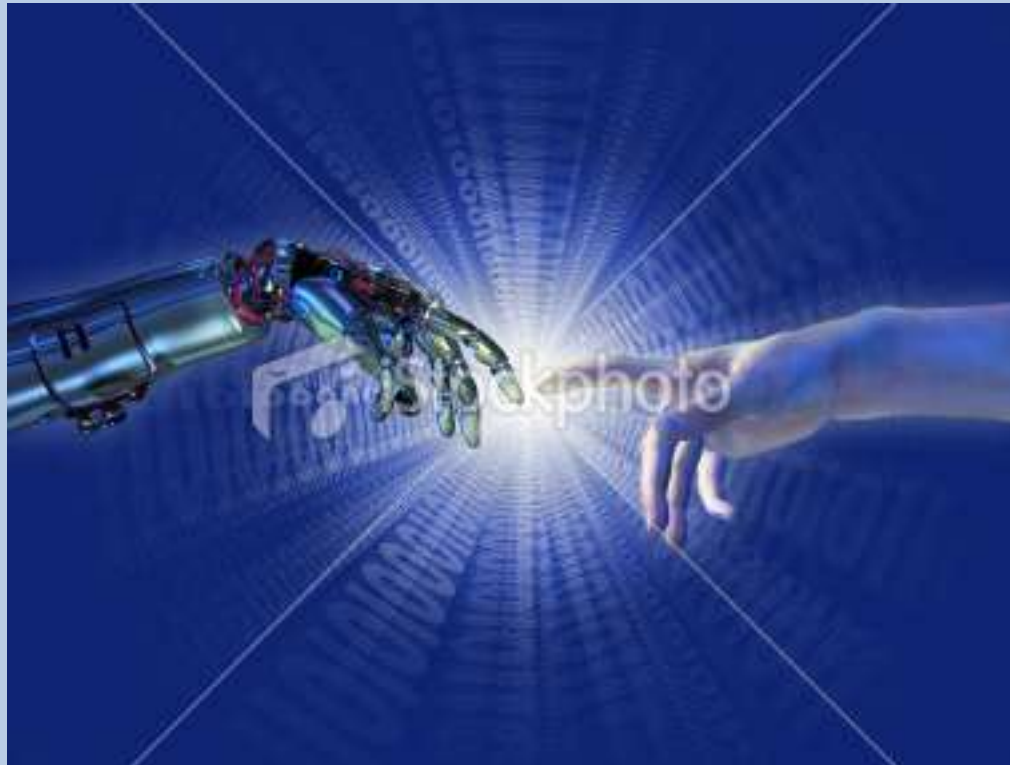
As this activity is not mainly profit oriented, so directors will do their best to maintain the quality standards of service which is suitable for target market with minimum profit.

This profit will help the directors to expand their activities.



Introduction & Expansion Strategy:

As many people have participated in meditation & relaxation courses in recent years so the introduction & expansion will be mainly on Database & Network marketing.





- These heritage and valuable sites belong to all the people the world over.
- The development of this kind of tourism will contribute to
 - ❖ the worldwide peace and,
 - ❖ sodality and,
 - ❖ improve the environmental approach.

Future works:

- Travel to the other sacred sites in the world
- Compare the energy of the different sacred sites
- Training and developing the culture of respectability the spiritual and physical body of the Earth and environmental protection





And the story, as it were, goes on...



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