

## Strategies for Development of Iran Cultural Tourism

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**Abstract:** Tourism industry of any country consists of different forms of tourism for which matching and adaptation of strategies with the nature of destination is necessary, because provided policies and strategies for development of any form of tourism in any country are different and even opposite sometimes. Cultural tourism as the most important form of tourism is not an exception and preparing strategies for its development will not be possible without considering its specific and extraordinary environment. The object of preparing and writing this article is to formulate suitable strategies for Iran cultural tourism in a three phase framework consisting of input, matching and decision levels. Provided instruments and techniques in this framework are suitable for different levels of strategic planning )e.g. local, urban, regional, and so on. (Also this research is applied in target and the subjects are all technical managers of tourism agencies in the country and data is gathered by designing and administration of questionnaire. Surveys show that cultural tourism is one of the most powerful forms of tourism in this country and can be the first choice for domestic and foreign tourists. Results show that for development of this industry, hold and maintain strategies are the first priority; in addition, considering lots of strengths of the industry, market penetration and development of products are also suggested among other aggressive strategies. Determining and prioritization of Iran cultural tourism strategies are some practical results of this article.

**Key words:** Cultural Tourism, Strategic Planning, TOPSIS, Forms of tourism, Hold and maintain strategies, Iran Cultural Tourism.

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### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays tourism or the act of traveling with the aim of recreation is one of the big industries and economic sectors in the world and one of the employment sectors in most of the countries and the most important sources of foreign exchange. On the other hand, most of the governments consider tourism as a guideline for development of the country, because of the multiplier effect of tourism income, in which foreign exchange provided by tourists will commence expending for local products and services. Tourism industry as one of the important and global pillars of the economy becomes more important day by day. So, most of the governments consider it as a suitable way to alleviate today's economic crisis. Iran, as one of the developing countries, has a big share of tourism industry and has the potential to become a top destination. Development and enhancing tourism without guiding framework and pre-determined strategies for achieving development goals and in ad hoc manner is impossible (Hall, 1998). Around the world, tourism has been hailed as a panacea: a way to fund conservation and research, protect fragile and pristine ecosystems, benefit rural communities, promote development in poor countries, enhance ecological and cultural sensitivity, instill environmental awareness and a social consciousness in the travel industry, and satisfy and educate the discriminating tourist (Janine A. Farnell, 2002).

Adopting strategic planning to tourism development is necessary, because most of the times after observation of tourism development and emersion of undesired social and environmental effects, it takes a long time to alleviate the effects or control the process of development. There are several examples of tourism destinations affected by negative and undesired effects of tourism development. Negative effects are usually because of the lack or inappropriateness of tourism development plans. So preparing tourism planning is necessary to compensate negative effects of tourism in destinations (Simpson, Ken, 2001).

Strategic planning refers to the process of creating long-term conformity between managerial targets and changing market opportunities. All practices and operations related to tourism must be done on the basis of strategic plan. Strategic planning of tourism industry makes the governments able to recognize strengths,

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weaknesses, opportunities and threats and apply these findings for improving and enhancing the benefits of tourism industry. Strategic planning based on the business or environment of tourism, has an important role in developing tourism industry, which is one of the most important catalyzers of economic development of countries and results in the long-term conformity between business goals and opportunities and sustainable market opportunities. So governments can gain competitive advantage by preparing strategies which are applicable in market.

Culture refers to those activities associated with many private and unknown traditions that are part of the local person's daily life (Reisinger, 1994). In 1985 world tourism organization defined cultural tourism as consisting of two terms (Fridgen, 1996): it includes movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study, performing arts, and travel to festivals, visits to sites and monuments, folklore and pilgrimage. All movements of persons might be included in the definition because they satisfy the human need for diversity, tending to raise the cultural level of the individual and giving raise to new knowledge, experience and encounters.

Reisinger (Reisinger, 1994) defines cultural tourism as a form of tourism based on the exploring and participation in new and deep cultural experiences, whether aesthetic, intellectual, emotional or psychological (Pigram, 1993). The most important motivation for cultural tourists is to understand contrasting ways of life and transferring thoughts and ideas (Silberberg, 1995). Cultural heritage may be defined as the collection of monuments, buildings and archeological sites which have high historical, artistic or scientific value (The International Council on Monuments and sites, 1999). The cultural heritage diversities and living cultures are major tourism attractions. Excessive or poorly managed tourism and tourism related development can threaten their physical nature, integrity and significant characteristics. The ecological environment, culture and lifestyles of local communities may also be degraded; along with the visitor's experience of the place (Gee, 1997) and for this reason strategic planning of the tourism industry is necessary for conservation of attractions and making development sustainable.

Cultural tourism is a sector of tourism industry which is based on cultural attractions. These attractions include live performances, museums and other similar attractions. In developed areas, cultural attractions include museums, plays, and orchestral and other music performances and in less developed areas they include traditional religious practices, handicrafts or cultural performances (Meethan, 2001). A definition which places experience as central is provided by Borley, who defines cultural tourism as a form of tourism which enables people to know, explore ways of life and reflect on customs, religious ceremonies and ideas (Pourafkari, 2009).

Pourafkari in a thesis titled "A Comparative Study of Cultural Tourism Development in Iran and Turkey" (Colin Mercer, 2006) states that craft sector needs to be supported by appropriate policy for training, organization of the artisans and promotion of the crafts. Recommendations related to architectural heritage concern improving the visibility of movements. Adopting some of the historical buildings to tourists use must not overshadow the need to protect them. Holding events or organizing festivals is beneficial use of ruins that revitalizes them.

Colin Mercer in an article titled "toward a Cultural Tourism Strategy for the Oresund Region" (Department of Culture and the Arts of the Government of Western Australia, 2004) explains the strategies as follows:

1. Development of a cultural model of enhanced cooperation between the art, culture and tourism sectors based on a broad value scheme.
2. Development of a best practice model regarding what should be understood by sustainable tourism.
3. Development of a strategy for better access to high quality cultural tourism products or remote parts of the region.
4. Development of a model for public-private cooperation.
5. Development of a model for cultural tourism mapping as a basis for establishing a coherent cultural tourism strategy of the Oresund Region.
6. Development of a cooperation scheme with Riga Oresund (Latvia) and Klaipeda Oresund (Lithuania) regarding the above strategy elements including a concept for supporting the development of knowledge and experience based cultural tourism products.

Department of Culture and the Arts of the Government of Western Australia (Office of Cultural Affairs of the Vancouver, 2008) defined cultural tourism strategies as strengthening the perception of Western Australia as an artistic and culturally rich destination; facilitating development opportunities and linkages that better integrate the arts, cultural and tourism sector and encouraging product development which builds on strengths and identified opportunities and is appropriate and competitive for target markets.

Office of Cultural Affairs of the Vancouver city (Iran Tourism Development Corporation, 2006) prepared 4 strategies for development of cultural tourism which are described as follows:

1. Branding and changing current and limited perceptions of Vancouver to develop a unique identity of this city.
2. Product Investment: After branding cultural products it is vital that the city's cultural experiences and infrastructures meet the needs and expectations of the visitors.
3. Marketing: to increase interest in Vancouver as a tourism destination activating the city's cultural brand through marketing efforts.
4. Engagement and participation: it recognizes the importance of driving both visitor and local participation in cultural events and attracting the participation between cultural and tourism organizations.

Iran has a large resource base of cultural, natural and historical sites and so has high potential for attracting any type of tourists (IRCICA, 1999). Iranian handicrafts play an important role in developing the economic, cultural, social infrastructure for tourism in Iran (creating job opportunities and tourism attraction, etc). Iran traditional arts include 300 different types such as carper, kilim, jajim, glassware, ceramics, pottery, miniature, wooden works, engraving and etc (Harrison, 1995).

In comparing Iran with countries like Turkey and India in Asia and Morocco and Tunisia (in Africa) which are similar in terms of the available facilities and infrastructures, a glance at Iran's ancient roots, history, strategic position and climatic conditions shows that we need to develop the infrastructural elements of the cultural tourism industry to take full advantage of its potential (Mc Cool, 2001; Azimi, 2008).

In the writings of both Muslim and non-Muslim sightseers we find indisputable evidence of great attractions in terms of the strategic position, historical background, ancient civilization, tourism attraction and etc (UNESCO, 2011).

Iran has registered 12 historical monuments in UNESCO World Heritage Site list, including Meydane Emem (1979), Perspolis (1979), Tchogha Zanbil (1979), Takhte Soleyman (2003), Bam Citadel (2004), Pasatrgadae (2004), Soltaniye (2005), Bisotun (2006), Armenian Monastic Ensembles (2008), Shushtar historical Hydraulic System (2009), Sheikh Safi al -din Khangah (2010), Tabriz Bazar Complex (2010), The Persian Gardens (2011) (Euromonitor International, 2009).

Iran includes lots of attractions with natural or historical importance, so unsuitable and incorrect policies and strategies can result in deterioration of the attractions and places and even declining of tourism which has potential to create job opportunities for 2/5 million persons and 3% of GDP. Although planning for tourism development in Iran has started from 1858, but because of prioritization of other plans and existence of oil and other resources this industry has been neglected and the need for formulating strategies has been never felt (Bland, 1997).

In today's complicated world, defining the geographical area and the forms of tourists for whom the tourism policy will be prepared is of considerable importance. There are different types of tourism destinations in Iran and each different form of tourists needs different policies and strategies. That's why adaption of the presented policies according to the nature of the destination is a crucial matter.

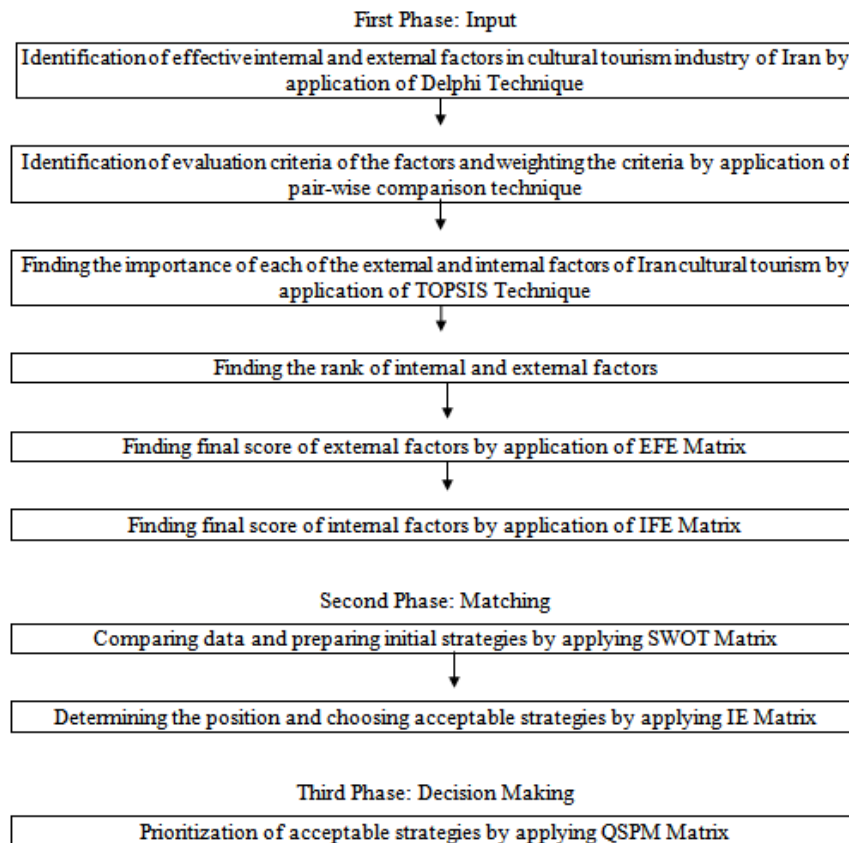
## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present study is of descriptive research type. It is considered as applied type in terms of objective. The present study is of survey research type in terms of collection of information and collection of information and data has been made through studying books and documents. For obtaining necessary information at this study, required data have been collected through library-based studies, questionnaire and obtaining data from resources and documents (for provision of study theoretical fundamentals).

### **2.1. Research Model:**

Basic methods of preparing cultural tourism strategies can be included in a three phase framework including input, adaptation and decision making (Diagram 1). The first phase of preparing strategies includes recognizing effective internal and external factors on the forms of tourism by applying pair-wise technique.

Before applying EFE and IFE matrix to find the final score of Iran cultural tourism industry, we calculate the degree of importance of each factor by applying TOPSIS technique and the degree of reaction (rank) of cultural tourism to the factors by administration of questionnaire. In the first phase (input), basic information for preparation of strategies is determined. In the second (matching) stage, different forms of possible strategies are considered and for doing this balance is made among external and internal factors. Techniques applied in the second phase include strengths- weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) matrix and internal and external matrix (IE).



**Diagram 1:** Strategic Framework to Formulate Strategy.

**2.2 Subject, Sample and Sampling Method:**

All technical managers of tourism companies are subject of the preset study. In this study sample volume is calculated by application of Morgan table and equals 1000 persons according to reports presented in Euromonitor 2009 report (Bland, 1997) about real number of active traveling agencies. The number of sample of this study amounts to 278 persons. The reason for choosing them is that they have enough experience in related matters and are well acquainted with different forms of tourism and internal environment (strengths and weaknesses) and external environment (opportunities and threats) of tourism industry of Iran. Random classified sampling method was used and one technical manager is selected from each company.

**2.3 Validity & Reliability, Measuring Tools:**

At the present study, library based study was applied for preparation of theoretical basis and recording of previous studies and questionnaire is used for determining the affective factors and degree of reaction of tourism industry to these factors.

Provided initial questionnaire was given to university professors and experts in charge, with the aim of presenting their views on validity of questionnaire and whether questions posed at the questionnaire are appropriate or not.

Then, viewpoints of lecturers and officials in charge were considered at questionnaire and consequently, necessary changes were made at questions.

Cronbach's Alpha (Pill, 1971) Test was used for testing reliability of questionnaire of study. For this reason, 76 study questionnaires were distributed among subject (individuals set for this study). Then each answer was studied individually and response rate of each question was calculated. First, the rate of acquired responses was over 90% of the sample. Second, there was no question to which most of the 16 person group didn't answer or gave an unexpected response. In the same direction, Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test was made through the application of SPSS software package. Generally, test reliability rate was obtained 784% at large.

## **2.4 Method of Analysis:**

### **Delphi:**

Delphi method starts with identification of the problem and selected experts (Delphi panel) based on their experience related to the defined problem. A questionnaire is designed and distributed to the Delphi panel. Then data is collected and analyzed to reach consensus in responses. If the respondents have reached consensus a report is developed based on responses, if not, a new questionnaire is developed based on the results of the previous round and again distributed to the panel. This process is repeated until consensus is reached and based on which a final report is developed (Saaty, 1990).

### **Weighting the Criteria:**

The basic procedure to carry out the pair-wise comparison consists of Prioritization of criteria by pair-wise comparison (weighing). Rating the relative priority of the criteria is done by assigning a weight between 1 (equal importance) and 9 (extreme importance) to the more important criterion, whereas the value reciprocal to that is assigned to the other criterion in the pair. The weightings are then assigned a number and averaged in order to obtain an average weight for each criterion (Triantaphyllou, 2000).

### **TOPSIS:**

For ranking and selecting the most appropriate suppliers TOPSIS method is more appropriate due to the following reasons: In this technique, due to permission of desirability exchange between the attributes, it is possible to improve a supplier performance through its comparative advantage in some areas, despite its poor performance in other cases. In TOPSIS decision making technique, interaction effect of attributes is considered. This technique also considers Conflict and compatibility between attributes (Ho, 2010; Shih, 2007; Iranzadeh, 2010; Manikrao Athawale, 2010). TOPSIS decision making technique is less sensitive compared to weighting technique. Considering the subjects covered in this study, compensating models and its constructive subgroup, TOPSIS technique, is used for evaluating and ranking the suppliers (David, 2007).

### **EFE and IFE Matrixes:**

External Factor Evaluation (EFE) Matrix summarizes economic, social, cultural, demographic, environmental, political, governmental, legal, technological, and competitive information (David, 2009; David, 2006; Bradford, 2006). Internal Factor Evaluation Matrix (IFE) summarizes the major strengths and weaknesses in the functional areas of a business. Ratings and Weighted Scores are two important variables in IFE and EFE matrixes. Companies and industries rate each internal and external factor 1-to-4 in EFE and IFE Tables to indicate how effectively the firm's current strategies respond to the factor. Firms assign a weight from 0.0 to 1.0 to each internal and external factor in EFE and IFE Tables. Weights indicate the relative importance of that factor to being successful in the firm's industry.

### **SWOT:**

Surveying internal and external environment is an important part of the strategic planning. Internal factors can be classified as strengths (S) or weaknesses (W), and external factors can be classified as opportunities (O) or threats (T). Such analysis of the strategic environment is referred to as SWOT analysis. The SWOT analysis provides information that is helpful in matching the firm's resources and capabilities to the competitive environment. It is instrumental in strategy formulation and selection.

### **Strength:**

An internal competence, valuable resource or attribute that an organization can use to exploit opportunities in the external environment

### **Weakness:**

An internal lack of a competence, resource or attribute that an organization requires to perform in the external environment.

### **Opportunity:**

An external possibility that an organization can pursue or exploit to gain benefit

### **Threat:**

An external factor that has the potential to reduce an organization's performance (Weihrich, 1982).

- **SO strategies:** pursue opportunities that are a good fit to the company's strengths.
- **WO strategies:** overcome weaknesses to pursue opportunities.
- **ST strategies:** identify the ways that the firm can use its strengths to reduce its vulnerability to external threats.
- **WT strategies:** establish a defensive plan to prevent the firm's weaknesses from making it highly susceptible to external threats (Jobber, 2004).

**Internal-External (IE) Matrix:**

Internal-External (IE) Matrix positions an organization's various divisions in a nine cell display through plotting them in a schematic diagram. The size of each circle represents the percentage sales contribution of each division, and pie slices reveal the percentage profit contribution of each division in IE Matrix (Triantaphyllou, 2000). IE Matrix is based on two key dimensions: IFE total weighted scores on the x-axis and EFE total weighted scores on the y axis. On the x-axis of the IE Matrix, an IFE total weighted score of 1.0 to 1.99 represents a weak internal position; a score of 2.0 to 2.99 is considered average; and a score of 3.0 to 4.0 is strong. Similarly, on the y-axis, an EFE total weighted score of 1.0 to 1.99 is considered low; a score of 2.0 to 2.99 is medium; and a score of 3.0 to 4.0 is high. The IE Matrix can be divided into three major regions that have different strategy implications. First region gives the prescription of grow and build for divisions that fall into cells I, II, or IV. Intensive (market penetration, market development, and product development) or integrative (backward integration, forward integration, and horizontal integration) strategies can be most appropriate for these divisions. Second region gives the prescription of hold and maintain for divisions that fall into cells III, V, or VII. Market penetration and product development are two commonly employed strategies for these forms of divisions. Third region gives the prescription of harvest or divest for divisions that fall into cells VI, VIII, or IX. Liquidation, retrenchment and divestiture are appropriate strategies for these divisions. Successful organizations are able to achieve a portfolio of businesses positioned in or around cell I in the IE Matrix.

**Reorganization of Internal and External Factors in Iran Cultural Tourism:**

In the first phase internal and external factors of Iran cultural tourism were recognized by surveying literature review and research backgrounds. Then all the internal and external factors were analyzed carefully and most repeated and frequented factors in different researches were extracted. After administering 3 round of Delphi method, we acquired expert's attitudes and recognized strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting Iran cultural tourism industry. (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses in Iran cultural tourism

Opportunities	Threats	Strengths	weaknesses
9	6	9	13

**Reorganization and Weighting of Evaluative Criteria:**

Referring to literature review and research background, some criteria which are affecting Iran cultural tourism are recognized and then by administration of questionnaire, aspects and ideas of tourism and geography experts are acquired. Then weight of each criterion is calculated on the basis of pair-wise comparison (Table 3).

**Table 2:** Weights of criteria

Criteria	Weight
Number of Tourists	0.354
Length of Stay	0.303
Second Visit	0.116
Encouraging the Others	0.227

**Finding the Importance of Each Factor in Cultural Tourism:**

In this phase degree of importance of each factor in cultural tourism is calculated on the basis of number of cultural tourists, length of stay, second visit and encouraging others. Weights are given by technical managers of tourism companies in Iran. Degrees are assigned a number between 0 (not important) & 1 (most important). Then by application of TOPSIS technique and considering the weight of each of the determined criteria degree of importance of each factor is calculated.

**Tables of Importance of Iran Cultural Tourism:**

**Table 3:** Table of importance of external factors

Opportunities	Number of tourists	Length of stay	Repetition of visit	Encouraging the others
1. Ever developing demand for cultural tourism across the world.	8.96	8.59	8.40	8.33
2. Existence of a considerable number of potential tourists like Iranian settled in Western countries and neighbor and Islamic countries which have historical, religious and cultural relations with Iran.	8.85	9.06	8.93	9.02
3. Originality, distinction and authenticity of Iran's cultural tourism attractions for some of cultural tourists.	9.84	9.79	9.83	9.89
4. Existence of demand by domestic tourists (domestic potential tourists) and increase of free time.	9.93	9.87	9.81	9.76
5. Geographical position of this country (Closeness to tourist generating countries).	9.09	8.97	8.77	8.89
6. Accessibility by ship, airplane, train and car.	9.04	8.66	8.72	8.47
7. High level of technological development in the world, which can support tourism industry.	6.71	6.33	5.89	6.06
8. Existence of supplementary attractions, beside cultural attractions.	9.06	8.61	8.69	8.51
Threats	Number of tourists	Length of stay	Repetition of visit	Encouraging the others
1. Presentation of an unsuitable image of Iran in international societies (negative advertisement and political and economic prohibitions) to international tourists.	9.08	9.11	9.33	9.46
2. Tensions, restlessness and insecurity in Middle East and especially in neighbor countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, which causes the number of international tourists to decrease.	7.91	7.56	7.08	7.16
3. Increase and intensification of competing in international markets and existence of capable competitors with high capacity to attract tourists (e.g. Turkey, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia and the threat of attendance of potential rivals like newly independent republics and Iraq).	9.97	9.92	9.86	9.88
4. World economic recession which causes the number of travelers to decrease.	6.31	6.57	6.19	6.55
5. Natural disasters like floods and earthquake.	5.22	5.07	5.19	5.32
6. Not choosing Iran by cultural tourists from western and developed countries.	9.13	9.05	9.35	9.37

**Table 4:** Table of importance of internal factors

Strengths	Number of tourists	Length of stay	Repetition of visit	Encouraging the others
1. Richness and variety of ancient cultural relics of old ages belonging to times of before and after the evolution of Islam.	8.83	8.79	8.66	8.58
2. Iran has registered 12 World Heritage Sites because of its historical and cultural richness.	9.88	9.95	9.93	9.86
3. Existence of monuments and works which according to UNESCO criteria can be registered in the list of WHS.	8.84	8.60	8.34	8.14
4. Ethnic and cultural variety and richness (custom, hospitality, dialects, costumes, ceremonies, migration of tribes and etc).	9.94	9.97	9.91	9.99
5. Extraordinary handicrafts and special and unique traditional arts which are known and accredited in the world.	8.65	8.43	8.36	8.26
6. Old history of Iranian architecture and gardens which have special characteristics, styles and structure.	6.77	7.08	6.86	6.59
7. Inimitable literature and internationally known authors and poets.	5.36	4.78	4.39	4.22
8. Iranian cuisine and foods as one of the most complete, varied and delicious foods in the world.	7.09	6.89	6.84	6.48
9. Public and specialized museums.	8.54	8.45	7.89	8.14
10. Pass of silk Road from Iran.	9.72	9.90	9.82	9.73

**Table 4:** Continue

Weaknesses	Number of tourists	Length of stay	Repetition of visit	Encouraging the others
1. Lack of comprehensive plans and strategies to develop cultural tourism and existence of public and legal restrictions and over incumbent of the government in the field of tourism.	9.89	9.93	9.87	9.91
2. Unsuitable transportation system for easy access to cultural tourism attractions which are located in different parts of the country.	8.37	8.38	8.50	8.47
3. Unsuitable hospitality and accommodation centers to provide good services to cultural tourists.	7.69	7.56	7.32	7.07
4. Inexpert, weak and inefficient human resource and lack of suitable educational system, especially in the field of cultural tourism.	8.71	8.80	8.83	8.67
5. Weak promotion and marketing efforts to introduce cultural tourism attractions to tourists.	9.76	9.84	9.90	9.77
6. Providing unsuitable health services in the vicinity of cultural tourism attractions.	7.58	7.40	7.31	7.90
7. Low access to modern technologies such as internet, express post, mobile phones and guiding software in the areas which have potential to develop cultural tourism.	6.56	6.59	6.17	6.08
8. Not paying attention to cultural tourism attractions ( like famous Iranian literary and scientific figures, unreligious ceremonies and handicrafts), lack of responsibility and increasing destruction of historical monuments.	8.64	8.79	8.95	8.99
9. Limited activity of travel agencies in the field of cultural tourism.	8.75	8.83	9.07	8.97
10. Seasonality of cultural tourism and unequal distribution of tourism volume through the year.	8.97	9.26	9.39	9.51
11. Weakness of social security, especially in remote areas.	8.67	8.50	8.71	8.69
12. High rate of inflation and unsuitable domestic economy which makes the development of health tourism difficult and increases the expense of traveling to Iran.	8.54	8.49	8.63	8.53
13. Cultural and communicative barriers, especially in the vicinity of cultural tourism attractions and negative attitude of government authorities, policy makers and local communities to development of tourism.	9.75	9.85	9.78	9.74

***Finding Final Scores of External Factors (EFE):***

In order to calculate the final score of external factors, we put the opportunities and threat factors for cultural tourism in EFE matrix. Then degrees of importance of each of the factors which was previously calculated via TOPSIS technique were added and each of the degrees of importance was divided to total degree and the result is entered in the column of coefficients of EFE. This helps us to gain the total coefficient equal to one. In the next step we found the ranks of each external factor. The degree of importance (weight) of each factor was multiplied in its rank to find the total score of each factor. After that, the scores of all factors in the matrix were added to find the total final score of external factors.

**Table 5:** Matrix of external factors in cultural tourism.

External Factors		Degree of importance	rank	Final score
opportunities	1. Ever developing demand for cultural tourism across the world.	0.0771	2.37	0.1827
	2. Existence of a considerable number of potential tourists like Iranian settled in western countries, neighbor and Islamic countries which have historical, religious and cultural relations with Iran.	0.0851	2.68	0.2281
	3. Originality, distinction and authenticity of cultural attractions of this country as a special destination for some of the cultural tourists.	0.1113	2.59	0.2883
	4. Existence of demand by domestic tourists (domestic potential tourists) and increase of free time.	0.1126	3.56	0.4009
	5. Geographical position of this country (Closeness to tourist generating countries).	0.0865	2.66	0.2301
	6. Accessibility by ship, airplane, train and car.	0.0801	2.71	0.2171
	7. High level of technological development in the world, which can support tourism industry.	0.0106	3.43	0.0364
	8. Existence of the supplementary attractions, beside cultural tourism attractions.	0.0800	3.17	0.2536



**Table 5:** Continue

threats	1. Presentation of an unsuitable image of Iran in International societies (negative advertisement and political and economic prohibitions) to international tourists.	0.0914	1.36	0.1243
	2. Tensions, restlessness and insecurity in Middle East and especially in neighbor countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, which causes international tourists to be decreased.	0.0451	1.81	0.0816
	3. Increase and intensification of competing in international markets and existence of capable competitors with high capacity to attract cultural tourists (e.g. turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia) and the threat imposed by potential rivals, like newly independent republics and Iraq.	0.1145	1.26	0.1443
	4. World economic recession which causes the number of travels to be decreased.	0.0112	1.69	0.0189
	5. Natural disasters like floods and earthquake.	0.0033	1.89	0.0062
	6. Not choosing Iran by cultural tourists from western and developed countries.	0.0912	1.32	0.1204
total		1		2.1048

#### ***Analysis of the Results of the Table of Matrix of External Factors of Cultural Tourism:***

Surveying the results of the matrix of the external factors of Iran cultural tourism shows that this industry is facing 8 opportunities and 6 threats among which factor number 4 (existence of demand by domestic cultural tourists and increase of their free time) with degree of importance equal to 0.1126 is the most important opportunity of Iran cultural tourism. Factor number 3 (originality, distinction and authenticity of Iran's cultural tourism attractions for some of the cultural tourists) with degree of importance equal to 0.1113 is the second important opportunity of this industry. On the other hand, factor number 7 (high level of technological development) with degree of importance equal to 0.0106 is the least important opportunity of Iran cultural tourism, which indicates that level of new technologies is not so important for cultural tourists in choosing a destination.

Surveying and studying of the ranks of cultural tourism of Iran indicates that this industry is showing suitable reaction to factor number 4 with degree of importance equal to 3.56 which means high demand by domestic tourists. This industry has shown average reaction to other opportunities, meaning that at the moment this industry is not well exploiting these opportunities to develop cultural tourism in Iran.

Matrix of external factors of cultural tourism shows that the most important threat is factor number 3 (Increase and intensification of competing in international markets) with degree of importance equal to 0.1145. Factor number 5 (Natural disasters like floods and earthquake) with degree of importance equal to 0.0033 is the least important threat of the industry. Also on the basis of the ranks achieved by this matrix, Iran cultural tourism has shown average reaction to the threats of this industry.

At last we can say that cultural tourism industry has shown average reaction to external factors by achieving the total score equal to 2.1048 and to develop Iran cultural tourism and to make maximum use of opportunities and decrease the negative effects of the threats and change them to affective opportunities, reparation of suitable strategies is necessary.

#### ***Calculating Final Score of Internal Factors (IFE matrix):***

To calculate final score of internal factors, the factors which caused strength and weakness were put in internal factors matrix. Then the degree of importance of each factor which was previously calculated by applying TOPSIS technique were added and then each of the degrees was divided to it and the result was entered in the column of coefficients of IFE matrix. This helps us to gain the total coefficient equal to one. In the next step the rank of each of the internal factors was calculated. Then the degree of importance (weight) of each factor was multiplied in its rank to find the total score of each factor. After that, the scores of all factors in the matrix were added to find the total final score of external factors.

#### ***Analysis of the Results of the Table of the Internal Factors of Cultural Tourism Matrix:***

Surveying the results of the internal factors in the matrix of Iran cultural tourism industry shows that this industry is facing 10 strengths and 13 weaknesses. Among the strengths, factor number 4 (Ethnic and cultural variety and richness) with degree of importance equal to 0.0720 is the most important factor. Then factor number 2 (Iran has registered 12 World Heritage Sites because of its historical and cultural richness) with degree of importance equal to 0.0707 and factor number 10 with degree of importance equal to 0.0683 are other important strengths of cultural tourism industry of Iran in which the acquired ranks about all of the factors indicate average and sometimes below average reaction of this industry in exploiting the strengths.

**Table 6:** Matrix of internal factors in cultural tourism.

Internal Factors		Degree of importance	rank	Final score
Strengths	1. Richness and variety of ancient cultural relics of old ages times of before and after the evolution of Islam.	0.0480	3.14	0.1507
	2. Iran has registered 12 World Heritage Sites because of its historical and cultural richness.	0.0707	2.87	0.2029
	3. Existence of monuments and works which according to UNESCO criteria can be registered in the list of WHS.	0.0446	2.55	0.1137
	4. Ethnic and cultural variety and richness (custom, hospitality, dialects, costumes, ceremonies, migration of tribes and etc).	0.0720	2.29	0.1649
	5. Extraordinary handicrafts and special and unique traditional arts which are known and accredited in the world.	0.0426	2.63	0.1120
	6. Old history of Iranian architecture and gardens which have special characteristics, styles and structure.	0.0095	2.83	0.0269
	7. Inimitable literature and internationally known authors and poets.	0.0026	2.32	0.0060
	8. Iranian cuisine and foods as one of the most complete, varied and delicious foods in the world.	0.1112	2.75	0.3058
	9. Public and specialized museums.	0.0408	2.97	0.1212
	10. Pass of silk Road from Iran.	0.0683	2.68	0.1830
Weaknesses	1. Lack of comprehensive plans and strategies to develop cultural tourism and existence of public and legal restrictions and over incumbent of the government in the field of tourism.	0.0710	1.54	0.1093
	2. Unsuitable transportation system for easy access to cultural tourism attractions which are located in different parts of the country.	0.0408	1.89	0.0771
	3. Unsuitable hospitality and accommodation centers to provide good services to cultural tourists.	0.0231	1.56	0.0360
	4. Inexpert, weak and inefficient human resource and lack of suitable educational system, especially in the field of cultural tourism.	0.0476	1.41	0.0671
	5. Weak promotion and marketing efforts to introduce cultural tourism attractions to tourists.	0.0687	1.37	0.0941
	6. Providing unsuitable health services in the vicinity of cultural tourism attractions.	0.0247	1.78	0.0440
	7. Low access to modern technologies such as internet, express post, mobile phones and guiding software in the areas which have potential to develop cultural tourism.	0.0026	1.78	0.0046
	8. Not paying attention to cultural tourism attractions (like famous Iranian literary and scientific figures, unreligious ceremonies and handicrafts), lack of responsibility and increasing destruction of historical monuments.	0.0482	.511	0.0728
	9. Limited activity of travel agencies in the field of cultural tourism.	0.0495	1.33	0.0685
	10. Seasonality of cultural tourism and unequal distribution of tourism volume through the year.	0.0563	1.44	0.0811
	11. Weakness of social security, especially in remote areas.	0.0453	1.77	0.0802
	12. High rate of inflation and unsuitable domestic economy which the development of health tourism difficult and increases the expense of traveling to Iran.	0.0434	1.84	0.0799
	13. Cultural and communicative barriers, especially in the vicinity of cultural tourism attractions and negative attitude of government authorities, policy makers and local communities to development of tourism.	0.0685	1.12	0.0767
total		1		2. 2785

On the basis of the results of the same table, the most important weakness of Iran cultural tourism industry are factors number 1 (Lack of comprehensive plans and strategies to develop cultural tourism) with degree of importance equal to 0.0710 and number 5 (Weak promotion and marketing efforts) with degree of importance equal to 0.0687 and number 13 (Cultural and communicative barriers, especially in the vicinity of cultural tourism attractions and negative attitude of government authorities) with degree of importance equal to 0.0685. Surveys show that Iran cultural tourism industry has shown over average reaction just in factors number 2 ranked 1.89 and 12 ranked 1.84, number 6 ranked 1.78, number 7 ranked 1.78 and number 11 ranked 1.77 and has weak reaction to other issues. Total score equal to 2.2785 shows below-average status and position of Iran cultural tourism industry in taking advantage of the strengths and ineffectiveness of the present strategies in overcoming and elimination of the weaknesses.

***Comparing Data and Preparing Initial Strategies by Applying SWOT Matrix:***

In the matrix of preparing strategies, evaluation stage includes all instruments which are dependent on all acquired data from previous stages (evaluation of internal and external factors) and it compares external opportunities and threats with internal strengths and weaknesses. For this, internal and external factors in SWOT matrix are compared to prepare possible strategies.

In the next step recognized opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses of cultural tourism industry of Iran were put in columns of the matrix. Then internal strengths and external opportunities, internal weaknesses and external threats are compared and the results are entered in the places related to SO (strengths-opportunities), WO (weaknesses-opportunities), ST (strengths-threats) and WT (weaknesses-threats) strategies.

***SO Strategies:***

1. Focus on the domestic cultural tourism, strengthening and developing it.
2. Penetrating in Potential markets, such as Iranians settling in Western and Muslim countries, which have historical, religious and cultural relations with Iran, through development and marketing efforts.
3. Developing new geographical markets and especially attracting cultural tourists from tourist generating markets, such as America and Europe.
4. Developing tourism products with emphasis on cultural tourism attractions by enhancing services and providing quality products.
5. Focusing on target markets, which rivals have a small share of it.

***ST Strategies:***

1. Sustainable and balanced development of cultural tourism regions.
2. Diversifying cultural products (providing varied cultural tourism products in a package to cultural tourists).
3. Providing distinguished and special cultural tourism products for cultural tourists, so that these kinds of products cannot be provided in rival countries especially Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Iraq and countries of Central Asia.
4. Providing other tourism products such as leisure tourism, Spa tourism, ecotourism, urban tourism and so on for cultural tourists.
5. Renovating and developing cultural tourism regions.
6. Renovating and developing cultural tourism corridors, such as Silk Road.

***WO Strategies:***

1. Reinforcing domestic cultural tourism by preparing legislatures and supporting plans and improving the security of cultural tourists.
2. Balanced or sustainable development of Iran cultural tourism, through registration of cultural relics in UNESCO WHS list, reinforcing and conserving ethnic and cultural variety and richness, handicraft and art and restoration of culturally valuable monuments.
3. Decreasing expenses and providing cheap cultural tour packages for tourist generating regions.
4. Attracting cultural tourists all year round and holding cultural tourism festivals in the areas which have different weather, climate and culture.
5. Importing and adaptation of new global technologies to provide support for Iran cultural tourism.
6. Participate in the management of cultural tourism service units, such as accommodation of cultural tourism regions, local and road-side restaurants, and special cultural tourism tours and services related to transportation and transfer them to foreign companies or private sector.
7. Inclusion of other tourism products in cultural tourism packages and establishing complementary attractions beside cultural tourism attractions.
8. Reforming the plans and preparing comprehensive strategies to develop cultural tourism in Iran.

***WT Strategies:***

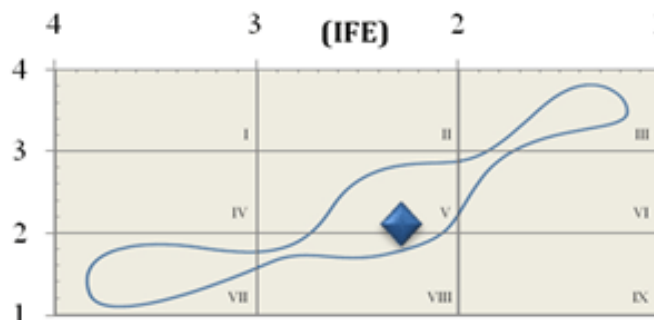
1. Improving the image of Iran in the world, through suitable diplomacy, advertisement, establishing cultural tourism developing offices in Iran embassies located in different countries.
2. Invest to improve the quality of infrastructures, such as road transport systems, hospitality and accommodation centers, medical and health services, increasing access to new technologies, such as Internet, telephone, post, guiding software and so on in cultural tourism regions.
3. Marketing and introducing cultural tourism attractions of Iran.

4. Reinforcing local societies, through education and management of cultural tourism attractions and suitable interaction with tourists, so that besides providing maximum profit for local communities, it will result in the least negative effects on the environment, customs and indigenous culture.
5. Participating with neighbor countries such as Turkey, Iraq and countries of Central Asia and so on, in order to arrange joint cultural tourism packages.
6. Investing in cultural tourism areas through devoting public funds, encouraging the local community to participate; and demanding loans from international financial institutions.
7. Encouraging volunteer associations, domestic and foreign related organizations, local communities and so on to recognize, protect, conserve, reinforce, develop and exploit cultural tourism attractions.
8. Developing global technical and technological and also research and development cooperation and participation with research centers and global experienced universities.
9. Participating with leading countries in the field of cultural tourism to perform grand projects through arranging midterm and long-term treaties and attract foreign investors to provide financial support for these projects.

**Determining the Position and Selecting Acceptable Strategies by Applying IE Matrix:**

After preparing initial strategies by comparing internal and external factors in the matrix of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) acceptable strategies were selected among them. The process of selecting acceptable strategies of Iran cultural tourism industry is as follows:

Preparing internal and external matrix (IE) includes two main dimensions. Final scores of matrix of evaluation of internal factors are shown on X axis and sum of final scores of matrix of evaluation of external factors of Iran cultural tourism industry is shown on Y axis. The incidence point of sum of scores of internal and external factors of Iran cultural tourism on X and Y determines the status of Iran cultural tourism industry in internal and external matrix.



**Diagram 2:** Internal and External Matrix of Iran cultural tourism (IE).

**Choosing Acceptable Strategies:**

Acceptable strategies of Iran cultural tourism industry with attention to its place in cell 5 of internal and external matrix (IE) are known as hold and maintain (conservation) strategies. Considering a lot of strengths of this industry and its external opportunities, we can utilize ST, SO and also WO strategies, too.

**Table 7:** Final strategies for Iran cultural tourism

No	Final Strategies in cultural tourism	Total attractiveness Score
1	Focus on the domestic cultural tourism, strengthening and developing it.	3.87
2	Renovating and developing cultural tourism regions, such as cultural cities.	3.70
3	Sustainable and balanced development of cultural tourism regions.	3.52
4	Developing tourism products with emphasis on cultural tourism attractions by enhancing services and providing quality products.	3.37
5	Renovating and developing cultural tourism corridors, such as Silk Road.	3.28
6	Diversifying cultural products (providing varied cultural tourism products in a package to cultural tourists).	2.89
7	Providing other tourism products such as leisure tourism, Spa tourism, ecotourism, urban tourism and so on for cultural tourists.	2.63

**Discussion and Conclusion:**

Surveys show that domestic and foreign cultural tourists consider Iran cultural attractions as distinguished, unique and untouched and since this country has geographically suitable position because of closeness to tourist generating areas and is high accessible, it can have a big share of the market of global cultural tourism. Also

existence of supplementary attractions besides cultural attractions is considered as unique opportunity and other internal strengths such as ethnic and cultural richness and variety such as customs, migration of tribes, different dialects and languages, costumes, rich and varied music and dance and other ceremonies, variety of ancient and historical relics, special handicrafts, Iranian architecture and garden's style and Iranian cuisine has transformed Iran to a unique museum for cultural tourists. However at the moment Iran has a small share of global cultural tourism industry.

Presenting an unfavorable image of Iran in global society, tension, insecurity and restlessness in Middle East and threat of evolution and attendance of competent rivals with rich culture and history in a close distance to this country has overshadowed Iran cultural tourism so that not only domestic cultural tourists, but also cultural tourists of the countries which have cultural and historical relations with Iran do not wish to visit its cultural attractions. Here we should not ignore the role of internal factors such as lack of attention of the government, lack of strategic planning, unsuitable accommodation, lack of human resources and experiment, weak promotional efforts and above all cultural and communicative barriers between communities and tourists and also negative attitude of authorities to cultural tourism industry.

What is obvious is that we can speed up development of Iran cultural tourism by correction and reformation of plans and preparing comprehensive strategies. Focus on strengthening and developing domestic tourism can make provisions to attract foreign cultural tourists, especially European and American expecting tourists.

Improving the services and providing high quality cultural products, attracting potential tourists and focus on the countries which rivals have not been able to penetrate, are other strategies to develop this sector.

We can barely say that sustainability and balanced development of cultural regions are of special importance for this industry. Reinforcing and conserving ethnic and cultural richness and variety, handicrafts, art and repairing and renovating historically and culturally valuable monuments are other affective practices in cultural tourism.

Also by renovating and developing cultural tourism regions such as cultural cities (Tabriz, Shiraz, and Esfahan and ...) and cultural corridors such as Silk Road and diversification of cultural products and providing special and distinguished cultural products to cultural tourists, holding festivals and artistic and cultural ceremonies in all parts of the country, reinforcing local communities by teaching principles of management of cultural attractions and good interaction with cultural tourists and also by reorganization, conservation, protection, reinforcement, developing and exploiting cultural attractions we can achieve determined targets in cultural tourism.

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