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MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Programming for development of tourism industry using case studies

Abdol Aziz Shahraki^{1*} and Issa Ebrahimzadeh²

Abstract: This is a research into the assessment of tourism industry quality and programming for its development in Iran. In a tough economic situation, the hypothesis is to grow and develop the national economy with the help of the tourism industry. A unified assessment of tourism industry quality, method is made use of in this study, which is based on the case study of all elements of Iran tourism industry system. Quality assessment by means of unified problems (indicators) that hinder the maximum development of the tourism industry shows the reliability of the hypothesis. SWOT analysis aided to determine the weaknesses and threats aiming at raising the quality of the indicators. In addition, a linear programming from the standpoint of internal and external relations with national economy has been applied. The analysis revealed that the system of the tourism industry is unable to assist the macro economy. The failure corresponds to scarcely favorable natural environmental conditions, capacity for motivating to visitors, tourism marketing, and tourism infrastructures. After remedy actions, prospects for tourism industry development despite the complicated situation are quite favorable due to the advantageous climate, natural characteristics, cultural and ancient heritages, tourism resources, and educated labor. The methods applied by this paper suggest adaptive governance tools suitable to apply for optimization of the tourism industry everywhere similar to Iran.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Abdol Aziz Shahraki

The authors performed this research owing to their interests in regional developments. Although, no funding, it is in line with the author's continuous researches to consider the capacity of the tourism industry in the process of the developments.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Generally, this paper is useful for national decision-makers and private sectors to spotlight the tourism industry under process of the economic development. It discusses the link between economic development and a programmed tourism industry. At a national level, this paper introduces Iran as a certain pattern to use the suggestions and recommendations made by this article. It presents a tourism industry system and classifies the major problems which prevent the development of the industry. The applied methods are classic and feasible. After the analysis and the discussions, the authors have concluded that the tourism industry shall be improved in aspects such as infrastructure, marketing, etc. prior contributing to the macro economy. This is a situation which major underdeveloped countries are forced to despite several tourism resources and attractions. The ideas and the model presented by this paper are interesting, and the contents are informative and useful everywhere.

Subjects: Development Studies; Tourism, Hospitality and Events; Urban Studies

Keywords: Iran; tourism industry; infrastructure; unified assessment; marketing; linear programming; macro economy

1. Introduction

This paper is to see how the tourism industry contributes to the growth and development of national economy in Iran at a problematic time. To know the location of Iran, see Figure 1.

Iran is at the intersection of major Asian, Middle Eastern, and European countries and trade routes. This fact has shaped its diverse cultures and history. The same source reported, "There are thousands of historical sites and monuments scattered across the country as potential tourism attractions. In addition to its rich historical and cultural assets, Iran is endowed with magnificent physical, natural, and ecological diversity" (Bahaei, Pisani, & Shavakh, 2014, p. 4). The recent decrease of petroleum revenues in the economy (Roshani, 2015, p. 8) is a principal cause for utilization of tourism potentials (see e.g. Aref, 2011; Butler, O'Gorman and Prentice, 2012; Ghaderi & Henderson, 2012; Izadi et al., 2012; Jafari & Pour, 2015; Saeb, Hajati, & Rezai, 2012; Yazdi, Emami, & Jafari, 2013). The individualities of Iran's tourism industry with geography, climate and natural attractions, medical tourism possibilities, winter/summer sports sites, cultural and historical heritages, and commercial tourism hubs called forth unfavorable development situation, in particular, the high degradation rate of environmental components and lack of pre-required tourism industry infrastructures. Consequently, there is an urgent need for comprehensive enhancement of the tourism-required infrastructures. At present, the implementation of an efficient strategy due to tourism industry in Iran is delayed owing to accumulation of major obstacles. These hindrances are almost observable under the umbrella of tourism industry analysis. Therefore, a unified approach is essential for the characterization of the tourism industry quality in Iran. This methodology implies the determination of an integral quantitative criterion for the tourism industry quality.

Figure 1. Map of Iran.

Source: Bahaei et al. (2014, p. 3).



Universal concepts, socioeconomic methods, and tourism marketing approaches, with the use of SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat) technique, analysis of factors of tourism motivations, and development of alternatives to the mismanagement of the tourism industry prevails in the research papers of Iranian scientists and their international colleagues'. There are several researches aiming at the promotion of the tourism industry in the macroeconomic plans of Iran (see as samples Dumazedier, 1967; Ebrahimzadeh, Farzin, & Ziaei, 2007; Hedari & Miani, 2009; Horner & Swarbrooke, 1996; Jarvandi & Forghani, 2008; Reid & Bojanic, 2006). As one example Assadi, Sharivar and Esmaili by a research titled "Passing through sanctions by resistive economy" argued as follows "Development of tourism not only does tourism develop cultures, but also it can lay a role in social and economic progress. Having great tourism opportunities, Iran can get rid of the mono-product economy by correct programing. Moreover, tourism is a rich industry and can make abundant income for the country. This is more important in a country with high unemployment, limited exchange resources, and mono-product economy" (Asadi, Shahrivar, & Esmaili, 2015, p. 14). A characteristic feature of the papers authored by researchers from Iran and their international colleagues such as (Abya, Nasiri Khalili, Ebrahimi, & Movahed, 2015; Bahae & Saremi, 2014; Gilani, Kazemi, Asadi, Samadzadeh, & Atashpanjeh, 2014; Noorossana, Izadbakhsh, & Nayeypour, 2014; Ranjbarian & Pool, 2015; Zamani & Valmohammadi, 2014) alongside with theoretical developments, are the applied methodological approaches. The applied research methods contain rather deep specialization, in particular, a thorough analysis of tourism industry possibilities, motivations of tourists' priorities, tourism marketing and statistical material, as well as a significant focus on the hinder factors. Therefore, this paper will reflect the national question on how does the tourism industry contribute to the economic growth and development? The hypothesis is that the tourism industry will help the national economy if it improves its quality to realize tourists' demands and needs.

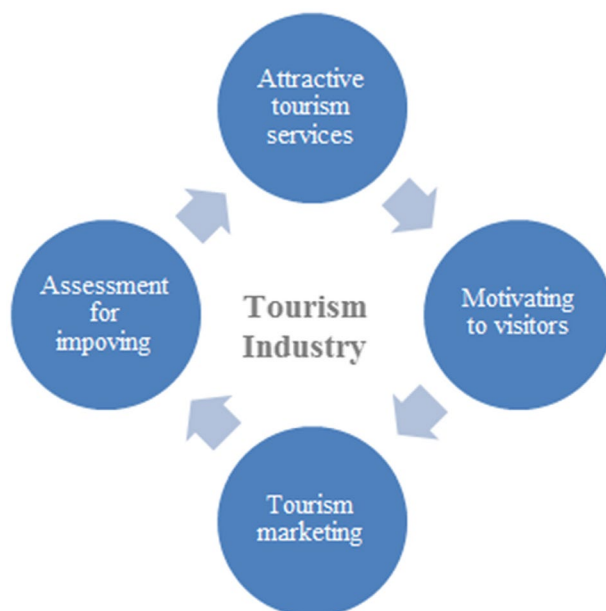
2. Problem addressed

A prospective tourism industry causing economic growth and development is a system encompassing attractive tourism possibilities and services, motivation building to drive the tourists into the possibilities, tourism marketing/management, and assessment of progress. Figure 2 shows a prospective system of tourism industry with its major components.

In Figure 2, the subsystem of attractive tourism services includes natural beauties, climate attractions such as deserts, forests, and sea plus cultural and historical heritages, water treatment facilities, medical tourism services, sport activities, and business centers (Khaksari, Lee, & Lee, 2014). In the figure, the

Figure 2. The system of tourism industry.

Source: Authors' visualization from the tourism industry system with its components.



subsystem of motivating to visitors includes efforts to understand the motivations of tourists aiming at absorbing more domestic, inbound, and international tourists. To understand the tourists' motivations (see e.g. Duk-Byeong & Yoo-Shik, 2009; Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 1999). The subsystem of tourism marketing examines aggregate demand and supply data which will assist the tourism industry planners to understand the effective demand for different tourism possibilities and services. The subsystem of assessment for improving is to find out the problems influencing the tourists negatively. As scholars have been introducing the problems, we have been experiencing the problems in the development of the tourism industry. The problems are many, i.e. Khaksari et al. (2014) are addressing the religious hegemony, while Tavakoli and Mura (2015) are seeing less virtual presence of the women in this industry. See also Asadi, Khazaei Pool, and Reza Jalilvand (2014) who are reflecting the effect of perceived price fairness through satisfaction and loyalty when Manoochehri, Farhangi, Someeh, and Shakibaei (2014) are pointing out to physical and managing difficulties. At the same time, Izadi et al. (2014) identified obstacles for the development of this industry. Regarding the authors' experiences and regional recognition, the problems are classifiable in the following major groups:

Table 1. Major groups of problems with 32 indicators to assess the quality of tourism industry in the Iran

Name of main groups of problems (number of indicators)	Abbreviations	Indicators
Standards, regulations, and acts (5)	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Expectations and responsibilities • Strategic and community planning processes • Ensuring to participate in global decision-making processes • Ideas Generation • Establishing of the customer service
Public participation (5)	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of community involvement • Power of private sector in the industry • Quality of travel and staying security • Contribution of tourism industry to the urban economy • Social satisfaction via tourism
Knowledge-based marketing and planning (5)	K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the real needs of tourists • Keeping promises to consumers • Strategic research principles • R&D in tourism industry • Quality of publicity
Quality of tourism communication infrastructures (8)	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism resources • Tourists access to communication facilities • Tourist information center • Tourists' access to urban traffic networks • Tourists' access to regional transportation networks • Quality of traffic modes, vehicles and devices • Tourists' access to hotels and accommodations • Tourists' access to the sites and services
Quality of natural environments and resources (5)	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of lands in tourism sites • Quality of tourism sites in forests • Quality of tourism sites in mountains • Quality of water in tourism centers • Quality of air in tourism sites
Quality of the built environments (4)	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor quality of hotels, airports, etc. • Indoor quality of hotels, airports, terminals, tourism sites, etc. • Rates of noise and pollutions around tourism places • Degree of comfort and convenience of tourists

Source: Authors' field observation, studies, and surveys.

- Standards, regulations, and acts
- Public participation
- Knowledge-based advertising, marketing, and planning
- Quality of tourism infrastructures
- Quality of natural environments and resources
- Quality of the built environments

Table 1 illustrates six major groups of problems with 32 indicators which assist our evaluations of the tourism industry.

The results, which were obtained from the studies, our field observation, and experiments, have categorized the indicators aiming at assessing the tourism industry, as illustrated in Table 1. The first left column of the table divides the problems into six major groups, indicating the number of relevant indicators. The middle column of the table introduces abbreviations of S (Standards, regulations, and acts), P (Public participation), K (Knowledge-based marketing and planning), C (Quality of tourism infrastructures), N (Quality of natural environments and resources), and B (Quality of the built environments). In addition, the third column in the rightmost side of the table lists those indicators/problems that have been experiencing to prevent the progress of tourism industry in Iran. Let us rewrite the problem addressed by this paper shortly as introducing and assessing the indicators which prevent the successful planning, development, and maximum benefits of the tourism industry to develop it optimally.

3. Applied methods

This paper is to plan the tourism industry development regarding the existence of adequate willingness and motive to visit the diverse tourism spaces in Iran. The research aimed at assessment of the quality of the tourism industry system by the set of indicators, which has been introduced in Table 1. The applied research methods are intended to perform a unified assessment for finding solutions to the stated problems (indicators). To introduce the problems listed in Table 1, the research is set on the field observation, practical experiences, and the regional opinions. It benefitted from the ideas of other scientists and people involved in the tourism industry. Constructed interviews have been run and their ideas systematically documented. The selection of interviewees, the sample community, based on classical statistical methods, included all scientists and managers. Methods of understanding the strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat in the tourism industry have been used. This paper applied the classical methods of tourism-marketing analysis, scanning of tourism resources, analyzing of tourism incentives, tourism planning, and linear programming as well. General scientific methods, social studies, applied mathematics, and statistical methods have been used too. In addition, the method of systems and structural analysis are applied to assess the quality of the tourism industry system. All the mentioned methods are the theoretical and methodological basis of this study. First, a unified assessment of the tourism industry quality based on the current data and observation of the tourism system has been applied. The related questions were asked in structured interviews conducted with 26 senior Iranian tourism managers, 22 men and 4 women, in December of 2103 and May of 2004. Wide ranges of socioeconomic disciplines including the 32 indicators were represented. This was an experienced and scientist group, having served on an average of 20 years in this industry. Second, the factors that hinder the progress of the tourism industry are determined. Third, some ways for maximization of the tourism industry's results under conditions of the Iran's specific situation are sought. Finally, the six major groups of problems with 32 criteria for a rating of the quality of the tourism industry have been analyzed to maximize the outcomes of the tourism industry. For assessment of one indicator, namely the establishing of the customer service standards (this indicator belongs to the group of S, standards, regulations, and acts, with a certain rate in the country as a whole, we simulate a classic equation of the system component assessed as follows:

$$S_1 = [R/AP_y]_1^{(a_i)} \quad (1)$$

where AP_y is an average yearly permissible value of shortage in this indicator/problem (real numbers), R is the observed failure, concentration during the year (real number), a , is a coefficient related to the obstacle class preventing the development of the tourism industry. We are writing a similar equation for every other indicator in the S group. For unified as a group of indicators measuring the standards, regulations, and acts quality with S_n harmful indicators, here five indicators, we have:

$$TS_n = \sum_{n=1}^5 S_n \quad (2)$$

In the same way, we calculate Equations (3–8) for main groups of problems P , K , C , N , and B considering their associated indicators, respectively.

$$TP_n = \sum_{n=1}^5 P_n \quad (3)$$

$$TK_n = \sum_{n=1}^4 K_n \quad (4)$$

$$TC_n = \sum_{n=1}^8 C_n \quad (5)$$

$$TN_n = \sum_{n=1}^5 N_n \quad (6)$$

$$TB_n = \sum_{n=1}^4 B_n \quad (7)$$

Equations (2–7) make it possible to proceed to the unified assessment of the main groups of problems S , P , K , C , N , and B , respectively, and separately. To plan the tourism industry with maximum positive effect on the national economy, we use a classic linear programming. There is always an association between maximization of a tourism industry and its determinant variables. Our important introduced variables are S , P , K , C , N , and B . To set up the linear programming, let us to begin with the following general classic equation:

$$Y = mX + b \quad (8)$$

Here we substitute the six integrated variables with X to supply the following equation.

$$Z = m_1 \sum_{n=1}^5 S_n + m_2 \sum_{n=1}^5 P_n + m_3 \sum_{n=1}^4 K_n + m_4 \sum_{n=1}^8 C_n + m_5 \sum_{n=1}^5 N_n + m_6 \sum_{n=1}^4 B_n + b \quad (9)$$

In Equation (9), the six variables exist and parameters $m_1 - m_6$ are coefficients that the decision-makers in the tourism industry will specify according to the macroeconomic preferences, b is a constant depending on the particular conditions that will be determined by the planners as well. Call the Z as a target function. Further, we have the limitation equations (Equations 10–12) reporting certain limitations in Iran tourism industry as follows:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 0 \leq Z \leq \frac{3}{100} \times TWTR \end{array} \right. \quad (10)$$

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 0 \leq m_2 \sum_{n=1}^5 P_n \leq \frac{3}{100} \times 330 \times 10^6 \end{array} \right. \quad (11)$$

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 0 \leq m_4 \sum_{n=1}^8 C_n \leq \frac{3}{100} \times TWTI \end{array} \right. \quad (12)$$

In Equation (10), *TWTR* represents the total world tourism revenue (real number) when the country aims at seizing 3% of the total world tourism revenue. Equation (11) specifies the creation of 3% of total 330 million occupation opportunities in this industry and *TWI* in Equation (12) is the total world tourism investment. The limitation equations are helpful tools to drive the industry based on the macro policies of the country.

4. Discussions and outcomes

Chon and Weber illustrated the global tourism industry as the biggest and the most booming industry in the world (Chon & Weber, 2014) and World Tourism Organization. Hall and Page have a similar idea and they anticipated that the tourism industry will be the first industry in the world by 2020 (Hall & Page, 2014). Knox, Agnew, and McCarthy by a book titled *The Geography of the World Economy* were discussing the interesting facts on the industry, i.e. they said that the tourism industry has created 330 million jobs across the world and allocated almost 12% of total world investment to itself (Knox, Agnew, & McCarthy, 2014). This is why Iran is considering this dynamic industry as a significant source for revenue, job creation, private sector growth, and development of the national economy. At this time, Iran suffers declining economic growth, economic development, high unemployment rate, and scary recession, inflation rate, lack of investment, high rate of experts' outmigration, decrease in water resources, and degradation of other macroeconomic indicators. For more information concerning the economic difficulties of Iran, see the report titled "Iran overview," published by the World Bank (Iran overview, World Bank, 2015). According to Tasnim news agency, an Iranian vice president said that the country gained only around half-a-percent of the total global turnover generated by tourism in 2013, stressing that Iran's share of that lucrative market should be raised to at least 2–3% (Tasnim News Agency, 2014). So, it seems necessary for Iran to get a larger share in this expanding industry particularly at this time. Despite better target, from the aspects of knowledge-based marketing, planning, managing, production of required services, and necessary technologies, Iran has no competition power with developed countries. The advanced countries pay more attention to the tourism industry and Iran must give more attention to it. While Iran is eyeing higher shares in the global tourism market, it must improve its tourism industry system illustrated earlier by Figure 1. The good news for Iran is its diverse tourism resources, possibilities, and potentials. According to the classification of tourism resources, advised by Roham (Tourism Roham, <http://tourismroham.com/>), Iran can be attributed to the amazing tourism resources with a wide range of resources for rural and farm tourism, eco-tourism, religious tourism, forest recreation, winter sun, sunbathe, ancient urban tourism, game park reserve, literary tourism, nature tourism, factory tourism, etc. With the help of so many tourism potentials, the best plan is to get maximum gain from the resources for a better national economy. For the maximization of the tourism industry, we shall understand the working and failed aspects of its system. The SWOT method has assisted us to specify the aspects. In Section 1, Table 1 listed the six major problems with 32 indicators to assess the quality of the tourism industry in Iran. According to the calculations of unified assessment of tourism industry quality (UATIQ), based on observing of the 32 indicators for a one-year period (2013–2014), it was determined that the standard and regulations, the S group, have considerable defects compared to the international demands, i.e. in the field of personal tastes like dressings and drinks. The UATIQ analysis proved significant shortages in public participations too. During the tourism symposium that took place on 22–23 February 2001 in Geneva held by the World Trade Organization, David Diaz speaking about the improvement of horizontal commitments aiming at the viability and sustainability of international tourism in developing countries suggested: "In preparation of their positions in services negotiations, developing countries must assess to what extent the horizontal commitments of developed countries impede the liberalization of tourism and travel and related services. The major limitation in the horizontal commitments is in the lack of significant trading opportunities, i.e. temporary movement of natural persons, since practically no commitments were made in specific services sectors. The temporary presence of natural persons in all services sectors is undermined by the recurrence at the horizontal level of the economic needs tests, nationality and/or residence requirement and cumbersome administrative and visa procedures to be met by foreign nationals as service providers" (Diaz, 2001, p. 20). Clearly, the presence of the domestic private sector in all aspects of tourism industry shall be enhanced as well. We should say that a large shortage

of the knowledge-based marketing has been recognized and it calls forth a significant negative impact on the tourism industry. Due to the results of UATIQ determination, the negative impact rate in marketing is noticed. Studies conducted during the period were defined to be confirmed by insufficient marketing. Scholars, i.e. Ranjbarian and Pool, argue that successful marketing of a tourist destination depends on an understanding of tourists' perceptions of quality, and value of that destination (Ranjbarian & Pool, 2015). Bad news, the tourism industry system does not include the motivation of the tourists. The UATIQ analyzed also the tourism infrastructures and the communication quality. The quality gaps between what it is and what it could be were examined. A comprehensive set of eight indicators that encompass the main group problem C, Quality of the tourism communication infrastructures, were observed. The findings imply that the quality of the tourism resources, the tourist information centers, and the tourist access to accommodation indicators are quite well while the service quality gaps with the international standards in urban traffic networks and vehicles and communication facilities. The indicators of the C group should be improved according to the UATIQ controls. In addition, the UATIQ analysis found the quality of natural environments and resources critical indeed. The intensive intake of ground water in the major tourism sites and accommodations (as the whole country) has led to the lowering and quality deterioration and the overall quality is inadequate. The condition of the sewage treatment does not meet the recommended requirements either. Within the metropolitans where the tourism sites are located, there is a lot of anthropogenic load and sand particles in the air. The meteorological station assessments on the bad air quality in the daily news aired constantly are alarming. The situation of the group problem N in all its indicators should be remedied being able to meet tourists. Regarding the last group B, Quality of the built environments, UATIQ suggests a quite good rate compared to the advanced tourism industries. This is because the traffic routes of tourists are on beautiful modern and wooded boulevards and streets. New luxury buildings are eye-catching and the result is at a good rate. The study of the 32 indicators associated with the six groups' problems from the standpoint of SWOT and UATIQ analyses reveal a number of internal and external obstacles, and give an idea on the weaknesses. The analyses provide an opportunity to identify the close relation of finding solution to the tourism industry problems aiming at the national economic growth and development. Application of the classic linear programming, represented in detail by formulas 1–12, made it possible to maximize capacity of the tourism industry system in Iran. At the same time, the adaption strategy for the national economic growth and development should take proper account of the satisfaction of tourists' demands and needs, and the facilitation of the tourism infrastructures including adequate investments and rehabilitation of natural environmental components and resources. To use potentials of the tourism industry in favor of the national economic development requires efficient and sustainable decision-making in line with adaptive governance of the national macroeconomic policies.

5. Conclusion

This paper argued that in the darkness of the recent decrease of petroleum revenues in Iran's economy, utilization of its tourism potentials is a light. In which circumstances and with help of which improvements, the tourism industry assisting the national economy towards growth and development has been analyzed. Linear programming of the tourism industry, SWOT, and the system analysis by means of the UATIQ as well as the indicators for macroeconomic development revealed that the studied tourism industry system is integrally defeated. The fiasco is corresponding to scarcely favorable regulations, standards, public participation, infrastructures, marketing, investment, and high anthropogenic and pollutant loads on the environment. Prospects for Iran tourism industry development, despite the current problems, are quite favorable due to the advantageous climate, nature, possibilities, potentials, people, and good intention to develop this industry. The theoretical and case studies of this paper contributed to the tourism industry with the understanding that a prospective tourism industry needs theoretical and ideological frameworks to lead the tourism industry towards strategic desirable determined goals and to avoid the fiascos. The findings of this research show that for maximizing of the tourism industry outcomes, the decision-makers shall take advantage of the powerful tourism resources potential, the geographical, climate, and natural attractions, and cultural and ancient heritages. It is not less important to find some solutions to the problems related to the rational development of the tourism resources, infrastructures, funding and

investment, and services and to the environmental components conversation amongst minimization of air basin pollution, improvement of water resources, stopping the land erosion that causes sand dune storms, maintaining vegetation, and recycling the waste. The fundamental contribution of this paper to the industry is placing the needs of the future tourists in the center. The research output can be a background for the performance of measures for the tourism industry development and management in Iran and similar countries.

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