Original Research Article

Strategic Tourism Management of Tehran; Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

Problem statement: Today, tourism is one of the most important industries contributing to sustainable development. This industry has created great cultural, social, and economic opportunities for metropolises. Abundant and diverse tourist attractions of Tehran have created a great capacity for this city in terms of tourism. However, this issue has been less investigated so far. Therefore, this study attempts to examine the opportunities and limitations of tourism development in Tehran. It also presents tourism development strategies for Tehran.

Research objective: This study seeks to provide strategies for the tourism development of Tehran.

Research method: This research is descriptive-analytical. Data for this bibliographical research were collected through relevant literature, documents, and interviews. Data were analyzed using content analysis based on the SWOT model. The subjects of the research were experts of tourism, managers, and experts of organizations and institutions in charge of urban tourism in Tehran. The sample was selected through purposive sampling. The sampling procedure was stopped when the theoretical saturation was achieved. A total of 35 experts were interviewed.

Conclusion: Findings of this study show that developing urban tourism in Tehran requires considering different aspects. The most important strategies and suggestions presented in this article are as follows: Strengthening the will power of people and authorities for tourism development, thinking of tourism as networks, forming an integrated destination management system, improving tourism marketing, presenting and promoting a positive image of Tehran, fostering the culture of tourist hospitability and retention, increasing event capacity, and branding Tehran in tourism.

Keywords: *City tourism management, Tehran, Tourism development, Urban tourism.*

Problem statement

In today's scenario, tourism is one of the most important industries contributing to sustainable development. This industry has created great cultural, social, and economic opportunities for metropolises. It plays a crucial role in the economic, spatial, cultural, and social structures of the current urban society of Iran. Currently, developing urban tourism is the most important concern of the executive management of cities. To address this concern, improving the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of tourism and maximizing its efficiency has received attention. Existence of different attractions (i.e. historical places, cultural centers, sporting events, medical facilities, science centers, shopping centers, and markets, etc.) in cities is one of the important parameters contributing to developing urban tourism. Several attractions (e.g. cultural, historical, natural, medical, religious, sporting, political, etc.) in the metropolis of Tehran have increased its capacity for attracting tourists. However, this capacity has not currently been used well. Many growing problems of Tehran, including the low sustainable urban incomes, high unemployment, high social harms, and low social vitality can be addressed by developing urban tourism. This study attempts to examine the opportunities and limitations of urban tourism in Tehran and to provide strategies and suggestions for the improvement and development of this industry.

More specifically, this study focuses on the views of elites and tourism experts in Tehran (managers and experts) and scrutinizes program documents to answer two following questions: "What are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to urban tourism in Tehran?" and in light of the information in the documents and from elites' perspective, "what strategies can be used for the development of tourism?"

Literature review

Different studies exist on tourism. These studies have mainly attempted to develop an analytical model for evaluating the dimensions and components of urban tourism. The existing studies have investigated different aspects of urban tourism such as tourist attractions and infrastructure and access facilities, natural environment, and economic situation (Coban, 2012). Available studies have focused on mental and physical security (Hall, 2002), investment guidance, development orientation, technology, institutional dimensions as well as individual levels. Many studies have been conducted on urban tourism in recent decades. For example, Rogerson and Wisser (2007) have focused on urban tourism in developing countries and explored the urban tourism experience in South Africa. Selby (2004) has investigated the issue of urban tourism from a cultural perspective and examined its effect on the perception of the environment. Page and Hall (2003) have conducted a study on the management and urban planning of tourism. Also, different research exists on urban tourism and each of which is somehow related to the topic of the present article.

Some studies have focused on Iranian cities. For example, in his book, "Urban Tourism Development with an Emphasis on the Center of Tehran City", Azari (2013) has attempted to examine the development of urban tourism in the downtown of Tehran. He has scrutinized strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats from the physical, economic-financial, socio-cultural, managerial-legal perspective and proposed a paradigm model, provided strategies and suggestions for each field. Jamali et al. have also studied the components affecting the satisfaction of tourism destinations and have shown that in the coastal cities of Bushehr province, components such as quality of services, quality of infrastructure facilities, and the quality of behavior of the host community influence tourist satisfaction (Jamali, Sajadi, Razavyian & Heidari, 2018). Reviewing literature (Almasi & Dorfard, 2016; Taghvaei & Akbari, 2009; Movahed, 2007; Hashemi & Mahboobfar, 2013; Mafi & Saghaei, 2008), shows the focus of available studies has been on the issues of different cities of Iran. However, so far no study has investigated the attitudes of experts towards Tehran, and therefore, the originality of the present study lies in addressing this gap.

Theoretical framework

Different studies have attempted to propose a model for assessing the status of tourism. The most important models are the reciprocal model of origin-destination of tourism (Leiper, 2004, 53), the conceptual model of tourism development (Briones-Juarez, Tejeida-Padilla & Morales-Matamoros, 2009, 9), urban tourism management system (Inskeep, 1991), Kaspar's model (i.e. a model explaining the relation) (Kaspar, 1975, 11), and Holden's model which is based on system theory (Holden, 2000, 9).

Of all available different theoretical and conceptual models of tourism and urban tourism, the present study mainly focuses on two models that seem to reflect the conditions of tourism planning in Iran. These two models are proposed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and they focus on the tourism supply and demand system. In the following section, brief explanations of these models are provided (as much as the space of this article allows).

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) divides the tourism system into two main parts; One part deals with the demand factors, including international, domestic (national and regional) tourism markets and local residents, and the other includes supply factors such as activities and attractions, accommodation, tourism services and facilities, transportation, infrastructure facilities, and organizational elements. (World Tourism Organization, 2011, 14-16). The model proposed by the World Tourism Organization (Fig. 1) is based on system theory.

Another model used in this study is the model of Gunn and Var. As figure 2 shows, Gunn describes the tourism system from two perspectives, supply and demand. In the demand section, the focus is on the people who are interested and able to travel. In the supply sector, the emphasis is on the main elements and sectors such as attractions, transportation, services, information, and promotion. Each of these elements interacts with one another and forms the tourism system of a place (Gunn & Var, 2002, 34).

The conceptual model of this study is based on the commonalities of two models but other concepts such as culture and education, rules and management have been added to the models. The concepts constitute the key issues of the research. Figure 3 shows the conceptual model of this research.

Research method

This research is descriptive-analytical. Data for this bibliographical research were collected through relevant literature, documents, and interviews. Data were analyzed using content analysis based on the SWOT model. The subjects of the research were experts of tourism, managers, and experts of organizations and institutions in charge of urban tourism in Tehran. The sample was selected through purposive sampling. The sampling procedure was stopped when the theoretical saturation was achieved. A total of 35 experts were interviewed

The SWOT analytical model examines strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This model systematically examines the issue under study in its internal and external context it determines strategies
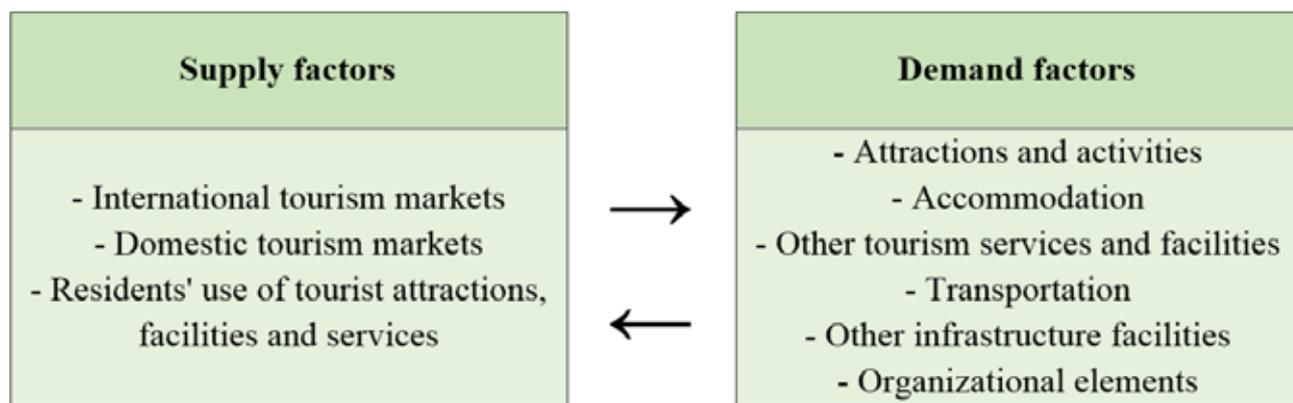

Fig. 1. Elements of the tourism system in the model proposed by the World Tourism Organization. Source: World Tourism Organization, 2011, 15.

appropriate to the issue and aim of the study in a time frame. The main purpose of this study is to develop necessary strategies for achieving sustainable development in the urban tourism of Tehran with reference to its current conditions and characteristics and opportunities. It is hoped using the strategies reinforces the strengths, addresses weaknesses, and eliminates the threats.

Findings and discussion

A conceptual model was developed based on previous research, pertinent theories, programs, laws and definitive documents in the field of urban tourism, and interviews with experts (see Fig. 3). The main categories were developed by examining the dimensions and components of the model and analyzing the contents of the texts (Table 1). The main categories are urban attractions, laws and management, transportation, tourism facilities and services, information and communication, finance and economics, security, and culture and education. Primary and secondary subcategories are shown in Table 1.

Based on the opinions of the experts and reviewing the planning documents, the internal environment (Including strengths and weaknesses) and the external

Fig. 2. Tourism system (Gunn & Var's view). Source: Gunn & Var, 2002, 34.

environment (including opportunities and threats) were examined and based on the analysis, strategies were proposed.

• Analyzing the internal tourism environment

The internal tourism environment of Tehran includes the factors associated with the management, control of tourism management, and management of Tehran city. The issues were analyzed based on the dimensions and components in the conceptual model of the research. Dimensions of tourism development in Tehran are attractions, culture and education, facilities and services, laws and management, transportation, and communications and information. After analyzing the existing planning documents and the opinions of elites and experts in this field, the strengths and weaknesses of Tehran were discussed through the lens of each component then classification and analysis of the data were carried out.

Tehran has many strengths and advantages in the field of tourism. These strengths can be used to fight off competition from other tourist cities in Iran and the West Asian region. Tehran is the capital of Iran. For this reason, it has several political and administrative capacities that can be recognized nationally and internationally. Also, Tehran embraces the citizens of different ethnicities and cultures. That is why it is known as a small Iran, and this has created a capacity for tourism development in this city.

Tehran is located between two mountain and desert valleys. It is surrounded by Alborz mountain range from the north and flat plains from the south. Good weather and snowfall in the northern part of Tehran and plains in the southern part of Tehran have created a capacity for natural tourism in this city. There are a variety of unique tourist attractions in Tehran. For instance, cultural heritage and historical areas of Tehran, natural attractions (e.g. Darband, Darka, Lavizan Park, Chitgar Park, etc.), sporting events (e.g. national and international sports competitions), Political events (e.g. national and international political conferences, presence of political and administrative centers), medical and health issues (e.g. specialized medical centers), religious events (e.g. holy shrine of
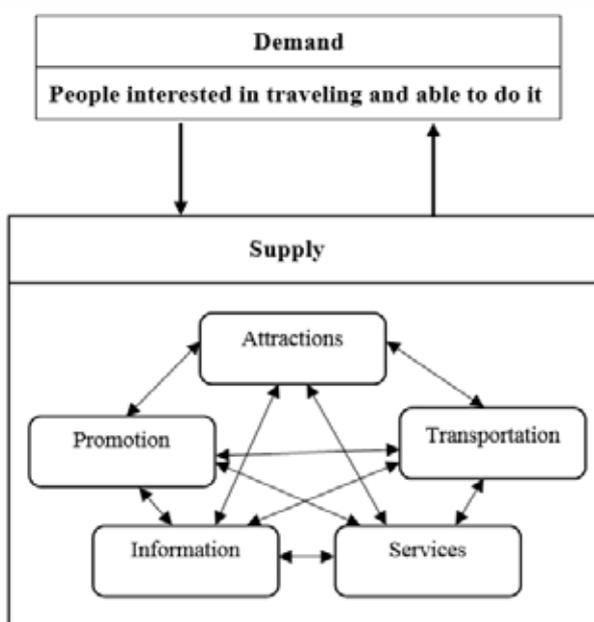
Imam, shrine of Shah Abdolazim Hassani, shrines, holy tombs, and famous Hussinya), Commercial events (e.g. Grand Bazaar, Rumi, Imamzadeh Hassan, Yaftabad Furniture Bazaar, etc.), scientific events (e.g. availability of prestigious universities in the country, holding various scientific conferences), historical attractions (e.g. Azadi Square, Revolution Square, Saad Abad Palace, Golestan Palace, Shohada Square), cultural-artistic (e.g. History Museum, Money Museum, Museum of Time, National Library, National Museum). Unfortunately, this capacity is not used well. Economically speaking, it can be seen as
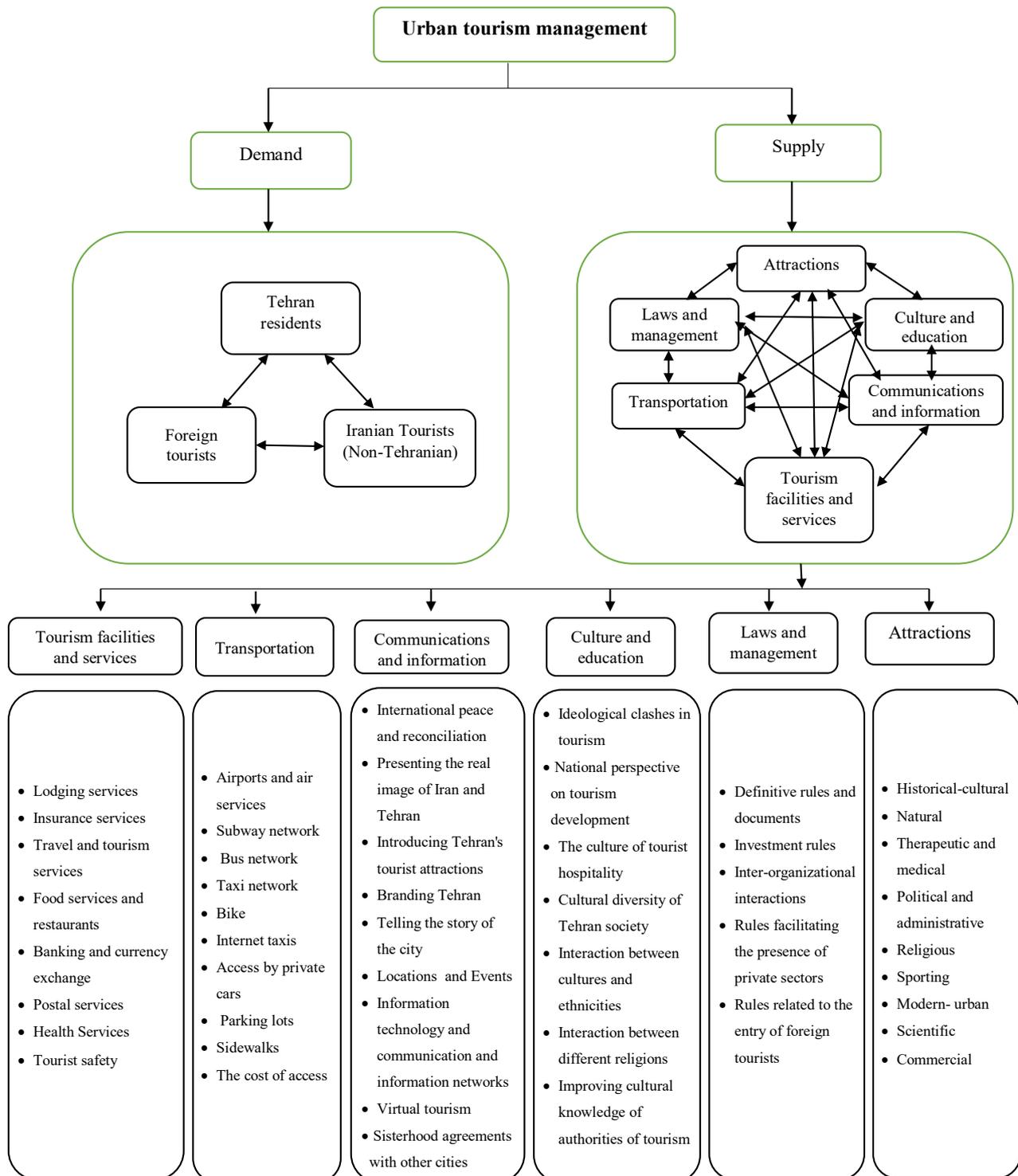

Fig. 3. Conceptual model of the study. Source: Authors.

Table 1. Themes associated with urban tourism in Tehran based on the planning documents and the opinions of experts. Source: Authors.

Main category	Primary sub-category	Secondary sub-category
Urban attractions	- Existence of different attractions and climate - Existence of the largest consumer market for leisure activities in the country - Tourism distribution hub - Being the capital of Tehran - Environmental and contextual constraints in Tehran - Destruction of buildings and historical monuments	Tehran is located between two mountains and desert valleys, It enjoys good weather and snowfall in its northern part, and there are different natural, cultural, historical, religious, medical, political, scientific and sporting attractions in Tehran, Tehran is on the route connecting cities in the north, south and east-west of the country to each other. As Tehran is the capital, to which and from which many people (i.e. those living inside or abroad) travel.
Laws and management	- Lack of integrated management in the field of urban tourism - Lack of coherent planning in tourism - Lack of attention to tourism as one of the main axes of urban development - Weaknesses in tourism-related laws - Sisterhood of Tehran with the metropolises of the world	Different organizations in Tehran are in charge of tourism and are actively involved in this area but there is a minimum of coordination among them, tourism in Tehran does not follow any strategy and written programs. Tehran has 22 sister metropolises around the world
Transportation	- Development of public transport in recent year - Weak public transportation in some areas of Tehran - Development of Internet taxis	Managers' determination to develop public transportation, weak quantitative and qualitative public transportation in some parts of Tehran, development of Internet taxi network, development of subway and bus to Tehran airports, development of subway to conurbations around Tehran.
Tourism facilities and services	- Serious constraints on infrastructure and services - Lack of various accommodations to meet the needs of different tourist groups - Large number of tourist service agencies in Tehran - Tourism services agents' lack of attention to Tehran's capacities	Significant limitations of tourism infrastructure in different fields, including technology and accommodation in Tehran. Lack of diversity of accommodation for different groups of tourists, Tehran has a high capacity in terms of tourism service agencies, Tehran tourism capacity as an opportunity is overlooked by tourism service offices in this city.
Information and communication	- Brand building opportunities - Development and growth of technology and communication and social networks - Weakness in informing urban tourism capacities - Presenting an unfavorable image of Iran - Poor knowledge of Tehran residents about Tehran	Tehran has a high capacity for branding owing to its historical, natural and cultural monuments, Many of the tourist attractions of Tehran are not known by non-Tehranian residents (and even Tehran). In previous years distorted, insecure and underdeveloped picture of the country is provided by hostile media
Finance and economics	- Sustainable income based on tourism development - Opportunity to create jobs through tourism development - Cheap tourist destinations on an international scale - The government's dependence on oil revenues and municipalities' reliance on revenues from the - Seasonality and shocks in the tourism industry	Revenues from the tourism sector increase in some seasons but in some seasons the industry experiences a recession, unstable urban government revenues discourage the officials to pay attention to the revenues of the tourism sector. Urban tourism can generate sustainable incomes, tourism creates different job opportunities for society, Tehran is one of the 10 cheapest cities in the world in terms of cost of living.
Security	- Existence of Muslim and Shiite countries in Iran's neighborhood - High security of the country in comparison with other countries in the region - Existence of social harms in different areas of Tehran	Iran has the capacity to develop Halal tourism since it has Muslim and Shiite countries in its neighborhood. Tehran's security compared to other countries in the region is important to its tourism, some old areas of Tehran (historical or natural areas) suffer from different social harms, development of tourism spaces in areas lead to a reduction in social harms
Culture and education	- Existence of various subcultures in Tehran - Institutional constraints on tourism development at different levels of the system - Tourism development; Conflict with religious and Islamic principles or the opportunity to promote it - Unfavorable global citizenship culture welcomes tourists	Tehran embraces the immigrants with different sub-culture from other countries. That is why it is known as a small Iran. Existing beliefs and views do not consider tourism as the main priorities of the country, One of the barriers in the development of tourism is equating tourism with cultural invasion while tourism can be a useful tool to promote religious and cultural beliefs, the hospitality culture of the people of Tehran in relation with foreign tourists' needs improvement through education.

a development strategy for sustainable incomes in Tehran, and the municipality can generate a source of sustainable income for themselves through the taxes related to tourism development.

One of the necessities of urban tourism development is having access to cheap and available transportation. In recent years, the development of transportation has been on the agenda. Some of the measurements taken include the development of a network of subway and bus lines and the expansion of subway lines to Mehrabad and Imam Khomeini airports, the expansion of public transportation network, especially the subway to the conurbations around Tehran and the development of an internet taxi network with easy, fast and cheap access for tourists.

In contrast to the advantages and strengths highlighted for the development of tourism in Tehran, this city suffers from weaknesses and challenges in this area. One of the main challenges in this area is disintegrated and incoherent management. There are discrepancies in performances and territorial and policy programs. At present, different public, private, governmental management bodies exist. Each of these agencies has formed its tourism committees. Disintegrated and partial measures have been taken and there have been grounds for working in parallel and loss of capital in this area. Lack of coherent planning in tourism is another weakness of this field. Currently, the measures taken by the agencies in charge of urban tourism are not focused on a specific program. The measurements are being taken in Tehran to provide services to tourists, but it is not clear to what extent these measures are effective and which tourism strategies they meet. Weakness in identifying and introducing natural, historical, cultural, religious, and ecological attractions of Tehran is another weakness in this area. Many of the tourist attractions of Tehran are not known by non-Tehranian residents (and even Tehranian). Tehran has received less attention and its tourism potentials are not identified yet. These are the main challenges in this area. Tehran and its development capabilities are overlooked by its officials and managers and its citizens. The culture of hospitability and welcoming

tourists, especially foreign ones still reflect the tradition of hospitality. Though social and cultural awareness of the people has increased compared to the past, this area suffers from weaknesses.

There has been some major improvement in the urban tourism of Tehran. The improvement has been limited to improving the quality of spaces and the level of urban services in Tehran. Tourism services and infrastructure in transportation, technology, as well as accommodations (hotels) of Tehran suffer from significant limitations. Addressing the limitations in the field of tourism is one of the important priorities for tourism development. Another major problem of Tehran is air pollution. It is not surprising that in some months of the year, traffic is severely restricted for the citizens since the health of some groups of people is at risk. Thus, this could be a big challenge for Tehran to host for tourists. Other types of pollution (e.g. noise and visual) and stressors in Tehran decrease the environmental quality of the city. Also, the insecurities and social damage in some old neighborhoods in the historical and natural areas of Tehran have created problems and posed limitations for the development of tourism in these areas. No doubt that social harms and tourism development can be inversely related to each other. Tourism development and especially the development of urban nightlife in vulnerable areas and unprotected urban spaces can contribute to the management of social harms in these areas. Based on what has been discussed, the domestic tourism environment of Tehran and its strengths and weaknesses are summarized in Table 2.

• **Analyzing external tourism environment**

The external tourism environment of Tehran includes factors that are not in the management, control of tourism management, and management of Tehran. The issues were analyzed based on the dimensions and components of the conceptual model of the research. Dimensions of tourism development in Tehran are attractions, culture and education, facilities and services, laws and management, transportation, and communications and information. After analyzing the existing planning documents and the opinions of elites and experts in this field, the threats and of

opportunities Tehran were discussed through the lens of each component then classification and analysis of the data were carried out.

Tourism can create many opportunities for the growth and development of Tehran. Also, there are several opportunities tourism development in Tehran that can contribute to urban development and urban tourism development.

Tourism can be seen as a development strategy for the urban sustainable income, and municipalities can generate a source of sustainable income for themselves through the taxes of tourism development. Also, tourism industry has potential to create diverse and sustainable job opportunities for all members of society, especially young people. Each tourist destination has a special personality and brand.

Table 2. Analysis of the internal tourism environment of Tehran (strengths and weakness). Source: Authors.

Strengths & Weaknesses	Related factors
Strengths	• Existence of tangible and intangible cultural attractions in Tehran • Existence of very old historical areas in Tehran • Tehran art and cultural tourism attractions (Museum of History, the Museum of money, time Museum, Automotive Museum, National Library, National Museum) • Existence of historical tourist attractions of Tehran (Azadi Square, Enghelab Square, Saad Abad Palace, Golestan Palace, Shohada Square, etc) • Existence of religious tourist attractions in Tehran (Holy Shrine of Imam, Shrine of Shah Abdolazim Hassani, Imamzadeh Saleh, Imamzadeh Davood, other shrines and holy tombs, and famous Hussainya • Existence of medical tourism attraction in Tehran (specialized medical centers, experienced doctors) • Serving as the capital, the existence of Tehran's political tourist attractions (holding international national political conferences, existence of political and administrative centers in Tehran) • Existence of scientific tourism attractions in Tehran (Existence of prestigious universities in Tehran, holding various scientific conferences in Tehran) • Existence of commercial attractions in Tehran (Grand Bazaar, Molavi, Imamzadeh Hassan, Yaftabad Furniture Bazaar, etc) • Existence of Tehran sports tourism attractions (Holding national and international sports competitions in Tehran) • Good weather in the northern regions of Tehran and the existence of natural tourist attractions in Tehran (e.g. Darband, Darkeh, Lavizan Park, Chitgar Park, etc) • Serious determination of urban management to develop urban transportation network • Expansion of subway transportation network to Mehrabad and Imam Khomeini airports • Development of internet taxi network with easy, fast and cheap access for tourists • Expansion of the public transportation network, especially the subway to the conurbation around Tehran • Expansion of technology infrastructure networks in Tehran for easy and fast access to information such as navigators and other services • Using internet and telephone systems to guide tourists in Tehran by the city administration • Existence of a suitable number of offices and travel and tourism services agencies in Tehran • Attention to the creation of sidewalks and cultural and artistic lines in the city of Tehran, such as the sidewalk of 30 Tir, 15 Khordad, Hafdeh Shahrivar St. • Expansion of welfare services and municipal services in recent years
Weaknesses	• Lack of a comprehensive tourism management program in Tehran • Lack of inter-organizational interactions in the field of urban tourism development in Tehran and lack of integrated management in this regard • Lack of public transportation network in Tehran for tourists across the city and lack of quick and easy access to tourist attractions • Lack of up-to-date information on tourist attractions in maps and navigators • Lack of exploitation of cyberspace capacities to introduce Tehran's tourist attractions. • Lack of attention to virtual tourism in Tehran • Lack of accommodation based on the international standards for the presence of foreign travelers in Tehran • Lack of accommodation with reasonable prices for travelers and tourists • Lack of advertising the attractions of Tehran and its poor marketing by tourist agencies • Lack of sidewalks and cultural and artistic rows in the city of Tehran • Dissatisfaction with businessmen and residents of walking areas projects • Lack of a written plan for night tourism in Tehran • Low expertise of active human resources in tourism organizations • Limited knowledge of tour operators of various attractions in Tehran • Citizens' limited knowledge and lack of awareness of tourist attractions in Tehran • Existence of social insecurities for tourists, especially in old neighborhoods • Insufficient ancillary facilities of Tehran attractions • Insufficient advertisement and introduction of Tehran's attractions • Lack of a codified plan for health tourism and lack of coordination of responsible organizations

Tehran needs to use the full potential of its historical, natural and religious monuments and take advantages of its political and administrative position.

One of the most important criteria for attracting tourists is travel expenses. Due to the exchange rate, Tehran is currently a relatively cheap tourist destination on an international scale (Tehran is one of the 10 cheapest cities in the world in terms of cost of living). Tehran can develop cooperation with other tourism destinations in the country. For example, by marketing for the cities and major tourism areas of the country, it can serve as a gate and turn into a gravity center for the distribution of foreign tourists to the tourist areas of the country.

Tehran's sisterhood with 22 metropolises of the world will create a significant capacity through interaction with them.

According to international statistics and a report published in 2018 by the Independent newspaper on the most dangerous countries to travel, Iran is one of the safest countries to travel. The insecurity in tourist countries in West Asia like Turkey can provide the opportunity for the growth of tourism in Iran and the city of Tehran. Iran's Muslim and Shiite neighbors provide a great opportunity for Tehran and other cities in Iran to promote Halal tourism Also, the expansion of ICT infrastructure in Tehran and the existence of several tourism agencies in Tehran can increase the opportunity for tourism development in this area.

Apart from the advantages and opportunities mentioned for the development of tourism in Tehran, there are some threats and challenges in this area. The main constraints of the country and especially the city of Tehran in the development of tourism are imposed by the existing rules, beliefs and views about tourism. This industry is not the main priority of the country. Consequently, programs and policies for its promotion have received less attention. The institutionalization of this belief that the advantages of tourism outweigh its disadvantages would align economic, political, and cultural conditions with tourism. Also, tourism is not an axis of development around which programs and can policies revolve. Tourism has the capacity to be prioritized in urban development programs because

of its importance as one of the sources of sustainable income for urban development and different cultural and social reasons.

One of the barriers in the development of tourism is equating tourism with cultural invasion. Apparently, this issue has not been addressed efficiently. In fact, the part of tourism that is characterized by cultural invasion includes a small share of the types of tourism that Tehran does not have to host. However, tourism can serve as a useful tool for the government to promote religious and cultural beliefs. Foreign tourists who come to Iran can be considered as potential cultural ambassadors of Iran who will promote the country and Tehran after returning to their hometown.

Another limitation and threat related to this area is an unfavorable image of Iran and Tehran. Due to the hostilities against Iran in the international arena, Iran's enemies have attempted to present a distorted, insecure and underdeveloped image of Iran to the world through the mass media of the world in the past years and decades. To this purpose, Islamophobia and Iranophobia have been advertised. However, the image portrayed is different from what is happening in Iran.

Other threats in this area include the government's dependence on oil revenues and municipalities' reliance on revenues from selling the density. As long as easy revenues are available to governments and municipalities, the officials and managers of these institutions make less effort to generate revenue from cultural and tourism affairs. Weakness in tourism-related laws is another limitation in this area. The lack of transparency of rules and the absence of effective laws related to the tourism industry is another limitation imposed on tourism development. For example, restrictions in issuing visas for foreign tourists and the lack of necessary laws for attracting foreign and private investment in this area.

Also, the destruction of historical buildings and urban heritage is another challenge in this area. The negligence of authorities in preserving these monuments, destruction and, damage to historic buildings through urban development projects are examples of this challenge. Based on the issues

presented in this section, the results of the analysis of the external tourism environment of Tehran (i.e. opportunities and threats) are presented in Table 3.

Tourism development strategies in Tehran

Urban tourism development has special complexities and it is influenced by different factors. In Iran and especially in Tehran, different organizations play a role in the management and development of tourism in Tehran. In this article, influential factors in management and development from supply perspective are as follows: attractions, laws and management, culture and education, communication and information, transportation and tourism facilities and services. These factors which focus on six areas were used for environmental analysis. The internal environment (i.e. strengths and weaknesses) and the external environment (i.e. opportunities and threats) were scrutinized. With respect to the environmental analysis, strategies were identified and based on the elites' opinions were prioritized. Strategies for tourism development of Tehran were presented in the form of two models including the model of strategies based on measurements (Fig. 4) and the model of strategies based on attractions (Fig. 5). The main focus of the study was to understand the attitudes of experts towards the capacity of environmental factors in developing tourism in Tehran. This study also examined the advantages and limitations of tourism development in Tehran in terms of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities and threats. The tourism development strategies for Tehran were proposed based on the opinions of the experts. The focus of previous studies has been on issues related to different cities of Iran. This study contributed to knowledge by examining the attitude of experts towards Tehran.

• Tehran tourism development strategies based on development measures

Based on the conceptual model of the study, the measures required for the development of tourism in Tehran falls into 5 categories: Laws and management, culture and education, communications and information, transportation and tourism facilities and services. The advantages, disadvantages and limitations associated with each category were examined. The tree diagram in

figure 4 shows the tourism development strategies for Tehran based on the suggested development measures.

• Attraction-inspired tourism development strategies

Each of the tourist attractions of Tehran has its own special characteristics, capacities, merits, and demerits. Therefore, tourism development strategies appropriate to each attraction can be different. In the section, the various attractions of tourism development in Tehran are introduced and strategies associated with the attractions are provided. The types of attractions listed for the city of Tehran include cultural-historical, natural, religious, therapeutic and medical, religious, modern- urban, sporting, political-administrative and commercial attractions. The tree diagram in figure 5 presents the examples of these attractions and provides relevant strategies for each.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the statement of the problem, this article seeks to answer two basic questions: "What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to urban tourism in Tehran based on existing documents and the opinions of experts?" and in light of the information in the documents and from elites' perspective "What strategies for tourism development can be proposed ?" In this article, the advantages and limitations of tourism development in Tehran were examined. The most important advantages are the existence of various attractions, the existence of various subcultures in Tehran, Tehran's sisterhood with the world metropolis, and the high security of the country in comparison with other countries in the region, Tehran the country's tourism distribution hub, Tehran's tourism branding opportunity, and the existence of Muslim and Shiite countries in Iran's neighborhood. Also, the most important limitations of tourism development in this article are the lack of integrated management in the field of urban tourism, lack of coherent planning in tourism, weakness in providing information on urban tourism capacities, and serious limitations in the field of infrastructure and services.

Finally, based on the analysis of the internal and external environment of tourism in Tehran and the advantages and limitations, two sets of strategies for tourism development in Tehran were presented. The first group of the strategies was proposed based on Tehran's development measurements and the second group was based on Tehran's attractions. These strategies include strengthening the will power of people and authorities for tourism development, forming an integrated tourism management system in Tehran, carrying out tourism development measures continuously at local and international levels, thinking of tourism as a network, branding Tehran in the field of tourism, developing a comprehensive plan for night tourism in Tehran and medical tourism.

Table 3. Analysis of the external tourism environment of Tehran (Threats and opportunities). Source: Authors.

Threats & Opportunities	Related factors
Threats	• Destruction of the historical buildings of Tehran caused by urban development plans • Destruction of the historical areas caused by the presence of tourists • The government's dependence on oil revenues and municipalities' reliance on revenues from the sale of density • Few investment opportunities to develop tourism infrastructure with the current economic downturn in the country • Lack of transparency of rules and the absence of effective laws related to the tourism industry • Political and economic instability in neighboring countries and the spread of terrorism in the region • Restrictions imposed on issuing visas for foreign tourists • The pervasive wave of Islamophobia in the world by foreign media • Anti-Iranian propaganda and propagation of Iranophobia in some countries • The absence of permission for advertising and providing proper information about Iran's capabilities on the Western and some countries media in the region • Noise pollution in Tehran • Environmental damages and destructive effects of tourism for natural areas of Tehran • Cultural clashes between foreign tourists and residents of Tehran • Existence of social harms in different areas of Tehran, especially areas with historical and natural • Tehran residents' motivation to travel to other neighboring recreational areas such as northern or southern cities of Tehran • Existence of some cultural views against hosting foreign tourists due to the promotion of Western culture • The cultural unpreparedness of the host • Promoting national beliefs about and raising public awareness of the benefits of tourism
Opportunities	• The special attitude of the government and urban management toward reviving the historical areas of Tehran • The government's serious determination to fund the development of the metropolitan public transport network • Development and increasing growth of communication and social networks • High investment capacity in the accommodation and hotel sector for the private sector • Authorities' belief in creating more jobs through the expansion of tourism • The capacity of the tourism industry for economic prosperity and non-oil revenues • The government's special attention to planning and investing in the tourism industry as a clean industry • Facilities in monetary and banking exchanges by creating the phenomenon of globalization • Attention to non-oil revenues, including revenues from tourism due to fluctuations in oil prices • The special attitude of authorities toward the tourism industry with regard to the economic conditions of the country and the growth of unemployment • Emphasis on the issue of improving the country's economy through internal capacities by choosing the slogan of recent years • Providing information on the economic policy of resistance by the supreme leader and emphasis on the domestic economy and reduction in the share of oil revenues • An increase in the motivation of the government to plan and invest in tourism • Private sectors' interest in and motivation to invest in tourism • Low tourism costs in Tehran in comparison to other cities on the international scale (Tehran is one of the 10 cheapest cities in terms of cost of living) • Attention of Tehran urban management to the issue of urban tourism by creating tourism campaign • High security of the country in comparison with the touristic countries of the West Asian region • Existence of Muslim and Shiite countries in Iran's neighborhood and the opportunity and capacity to develop Halal tourism in Iran • Sisterhood of Tehran with 22 metropolises of the world • Authorities' positive attitude towards cultural and tourism issues in recent years • Existence of various subcultures with different customs in Tehran • High capacity of tourism for exchanging and mutual promotion of cultures • Possibility of reducing social harms in vulnerable areas (urban defenseless areas with the development of tourism) • The geographical location of Tehran and its proximity to different provinces (location on important communication routes) • Activities of non-governmental organizations such as ICOMOS in Iran

Urban tourism development in Tehran

Tourism facilities and services
- Encouraging government to strengthen infrastructure and ancillary facilities related to textures and monuments
- Using the private sector investment capacity to develop lodges with international standards at affordable price
- Providing security in old neighborhoods which have a valuable historical areas by reviving these neighborhoods
- Developing tourist insurance services
- Forming tourist police system and developing the services of tourism police

Transportation
- Transforming Imam Khomeini International Airport (RA) into a destination for flight exchanges and transferring Asian air travel to Europe and issuing one-day transit visa for visiting Tehran (International travel hub)
- Utilizing the capacity of the private sector, especially Internet taxis
- Connecting Tehran subway infrastructure to the national railway network (similar to the experience of SNCF France)
- Planning to encourage more participation on neighboring provinces (especially Qazvin, Qom and Semnan) in the development of the subway network between Tehran and adjacent cities
- Using the capacities he government and the private sector to develop the appropriate transportation infrastructure in tourism routes

Communications and information
- Encouraging government to strengthen infrastructure and ancillary facilities related to textures and monuments
- Using the private sector investment capacity to develop lodges with international standards at affordable price
- Providing security in old neighborhoods which have a valuable historical areas by reviving these neighborhoods
- Developing tourist insurance services
- Forming tourist police system and developing the services of tourism police
- Supporting tourism startups with an emphasis on creating collaborative platforms to inform tourists about Tehran's attractions
- Developing sidewalk networks in different areas of Tehran, especially the historical areas of northern Tehran
- Introducing Tehran's tourist attractions at the entrances and international airports of Imam Khomeini and Mehrabad
- Branding Tehran and introducing all kinds of attractions through multimedia and in different languages
- Attracting government, foreign investments, and the private sector to develop public transport, especially in tourism routes
- Utilizing new media for introducing the attractions of Tehran and developing virtual tourism
- acting government, foreign investments, and the private sector to develop public transport, especially in tourism routes
- Utilizing new media for introducing the attractions of Tehran and developing virtual tourism

Culture and education
- Promoting national belief and the raising public awareness of the benefits of tourism
- Improving the knowledge and expertise of human resources active in tourism by promoting cooperation between the government and urban management and by utilizing academic capacities
- Improving knowledge and culture of tourism to preserve natural resources and the environment
- Training drivers and providing them with information in different languages (regarding attractions and routes) to better host foreign tourists

Laws and management
- Creating a mechanism for promoting coordination between organizations and institutions in charge of tourism in Tehran and utilizing all available capacities
- Reviewing the system of legal relations between the government, the municipality and the private sector (agencies, hotels, transportation systems, etc.) for drafting the required legal bills
- Creating the necessary cultural and legal platforms for holding national and international sports competitions in Tehran
- Establishing hosting secretariats for political meetings and international conferences with regard to Iran's security
- Facilitating the issuance of visas for outpatients (non-communicable)

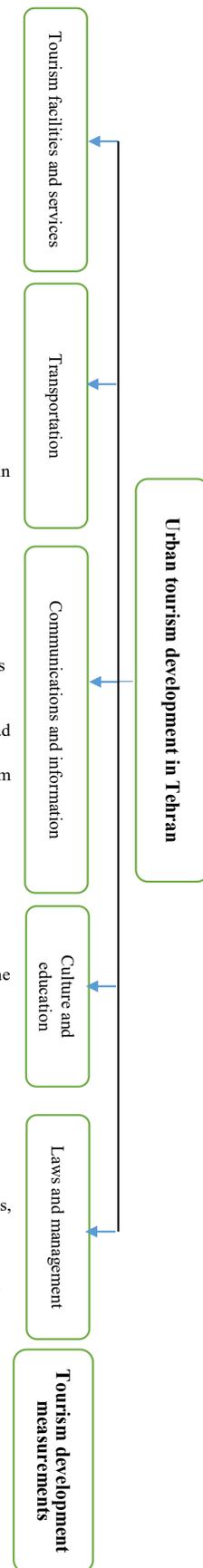**Tourism development measurements**

Strategies

Fig. 4. Tourism development strategies based on development measures. Source: Authors.

- Interacting with universities and scientific centers to introduce Tehran's tourist attractions to foreign and Iranian students from Tehran
- Defining tourist tours along with holding scientific and specialized conferences
- Using the capacity of non-Tehranian students to promote tourism

- Developing urban diplomacy and interaction with advanced cities of the world and cities of the region
- Reaping the benefits of Tehran's political and administrative capacities
- Developing tourism relations with cities near Tehran
- Interacting with different departments to hold tours in Tehran
- Introducing Tehran's tourist attractions for Tehran's political and administrative clients

- Developing a comprehensive plan for sports tourism
- Attempting to host international sports competitions
- Holding local games festivals
- Improving the quality of services in sports centers
- Introducing the capacities of mountain and winter sports tourism in Tehran

- Providing information on modern attractions in Tehran
- Developing tourism infrastructure and services
- Defining tourism and branding routes in this area
- Developing pedestrian infrastructure and modifying urban spaces for vulnerable groups, especially the elderly (according to the current type of tourists)

- Providing Information about the religious attractions of Tehran
- Developing pilgrimage tourism since there are shrines of immamzades (decedents of Imams), Imam Khomeini shrine, and the position of Tehran to serve as a gateway for foreign tourists to go to the holy cities of Mashhad and Qom
- Developing infrastructure and ancillary welfare services of attractions
- Defining religious tourism routes

- Developing a macro strategy for health tourism
- Creating a health tourism brand for Tehran
- Improving Standards of hospital and hotel services and providing facilities to companions
- Facilitating medical visa services and upgrading insurance services
- Improving the knowledge of medical staff to interact with patients with different languages and cultures

- Introducing tourism capacities in the mountainous areas in the north of Tehran and deserts in its south
- Protecting Tehran's natural environments from environmental pollution
- Developing infrastructure and welfare and health facilities of natural attractions
- Rehabilitating river valleys in Tehran and developing their welfare infrastructure
- Providing security in mountainous areas, forest parks, rivers, and valleys of Tehran

- Promoting investment to revive historical areas and provide tourism infrastructure
- Optimizing the management of historical and cultural spaces and introducing them
- Developing national and local cultural and artistic programs and events
- Defining and protect the location of events
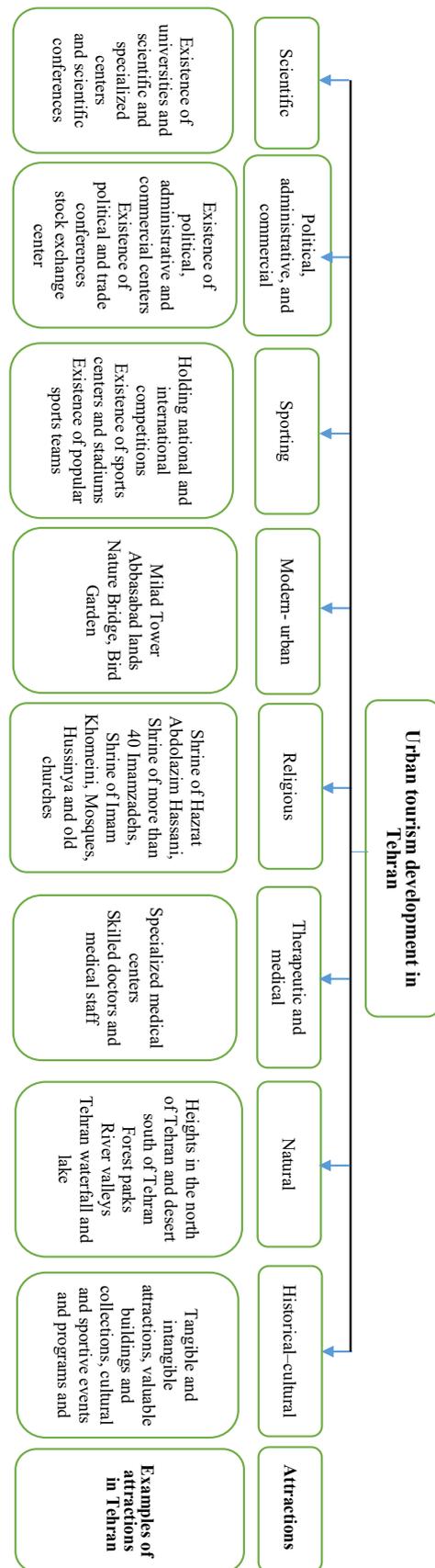- Determining tourism routes and branding them

Strategies

Fig. 5. Attraction-inspired tourism development strategies. Source: Authors.

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