

The Role of Tourists' Offices in the Tourists' Attraction and Their Contentment: Case Study of Isfahan, Iran

Mehdi Momeni¹

¹Department of Geography & Tourism Planning, Najafabad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran

Correspondence: Mehdi Momeni, Department of Geography & Tourism Planning, Najafabad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran. E-mail: momeni100@gmail.com

Received: November 30, 2014 Accepted: February 9, 2015 Online Published: May 16, 2015

doi:10.5539/ass.v11n13p190

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n13p190>

Abstract

The tourists' offices are considered as one of the basic infrastructures for the development of tourism and the function of these offices implies the tourism condition and the related services in each society. These types of organizations try to provide the traveling information and activities and also what are required by the tourists. The main duty of the tourists' offices is the fulfillment of the tourists' demand or motivating people toward touristic attractions and predicting people's incentives for traveling. The purpose of the present study is not only determining the effective factors on the function of such offices, but also evaluating these offices by the foreign tourists in order to state the strengths and weaknesses of the tourists' offices of Isfahan and propose some strategies to improve the quality and quantity of the services presented by these offices. The methodology of the present study is analytic- descriptive, in this regard besides doing some library studies and field studies, the required information has also been collected. The results show that the mere existence of different tourists' offices cannot be regarded as the main factor of attracting the tourists and especially the foreign tourists, but some other factors like proper facilities, organized planning, vast and disciplined advertisements and also the familiarity of the tourists' offices clerks with the international languages can be effective. Consequently, the tourists' contentment is achieved and the economic situation of the country will be developed through attracting so many tourists.

Keywords: tourists' offices, tourism industry, foreign tourist, tourist's contentment

1. Introduction

Having so many historical monuments, Esfahan is regarded as one of the most important touristic places and is known not only in Iran, but also is famous internationally and is always hosting a large number of tourists. Esfahan is also potentially powerful in attracting the tourists; among which are the huge number of natural and historical attractions, cultural varieties, the quite suitable public and urban infrastructures in the transportation section (inside and outside of the city), the proper accommodation, tourists' offices and shopping malls, etc. Furthermore, the scientific, communicative and financial potentials can also be mentioned. The role of tourists' offices in presenting different touristic services is of great importance. There are more than 130 tourists' offices in Esfahan which organize tours, sell tickets, reserve hotels, get visa, organize and tour inside and outside of the country. Nevertheless, there are some deficiencies, problems and obstacles in presenting the above mentioned services and also attracting the tourists especially the foreign tourists in these offices; the improper distribution of these offices in the city, the inexistence of expert and informant clerks, weak advertisement and marketing, lack of harmony among the related organizations and institutes, the complicated rules and also the high price of such services are some examples of problems and obstacles. The present study tries to investigate the problems and obstacles of the tourists' offices in attracting the tourists especially the foreign tourists, and present some strategies to improve the function of the offices and also increase the quality of touristic services and consequently attract more tourists and grow the tourism industry in Esfahan; besides it wants to answer some questions like is it possible to solve the problems and remove the obstacles through suitable planning? How is it possible to improve the quality of services in the tourists' offices? What are the effective strategies to attract more and more foreign tourists?

Conceptually, the tourists' offices have a specific position among the policy making sessions, public institutions, organizations, communities and tourism groups. They have also grown considerably because they are

significantly effective in the tourism viewpoints, sustainable development and creation of situations for making money in Gross national Product (Mahalati, 2001).

Since the present study aims at investigating the problems and removing the obstacles of the tourists' offices (emphasizing on the foreign tourists), so it is a must to explain the technical concepts and theoretical ideologies about the tourism and tourists' offices.

2. Theoretical Bases

Tourism in Iran as an industry has very high capacity for growth and development. According to the World Tourism Organization, Iran ranked tenth in archaeological and historical attractions and fifth in natural attractions in the world. In 2008, about 2 million foreign tourists visited Iran, while in this year a total of 842 million tourists have traveled all over the world. According to experts' viewpoints, development of tourism in Iran has not achieved what it deserves. Iranian financiers' ignorance of the current tourism status, weak advertising and false and negative news of Iran are obstacles to the growth of tourism in Iran (Yousefi, Mokhtari-Malekabadi, & Khadem-Al-Husseini, 2012).

The word "tourism" has been first mentioned in an English magazine called *Margasin Sporting* in 1811. This word was used to mean traveling in order to visit the historical places and also to sightsee (Mahalati, 2001).

Tourism has been translated as traveling and having fun. The word tourism is translated as traveling for recreation in Larousse Dictionary. Valene Smith has got an interesting point of view: the touristic phenomenon takes place when three factors of temporary recreation, extra income and mood of traveling gather together (Bronze, 2006). The World Tourism Organization (WTO) employs the word tourism for those people who leave their place of living for more than 24 hours and less than one year to visit other place except those people who earn money while visiting other places. In Persian literature and culture, tourism is applied to departing to all over the world in order to visit; travel and sight see a place and come back to the original place of living (Kazemi, 2006). Tourism is the activity of those people who travel to the places except their place of living and working in order for recreation, rest and some other affairs and do not reside in those places for more than a consecutive year (Will, 2000). The tourism activities are processes which contain activities like planning the trip, traveling to a destination, staying, coming back to the place of departure and even reminding the trip memories. Some activities such as buying different stuff, interacting with the host and guests are done during the process of traveling (Looms den, 2001). Although tourism is an international activity, so many touristic organizations are working in the national or local markets and a large portion of the activities are done inside the national borders, therefore it has an important role in the national economic cycle (Alvani, 2006). The most common types of traveling are those which are done by the residents of a country and the income of domestic tourism is ten times more than international traveling (Zirakbash, 2007). The tourism industry whose infrastructure is more than other economic activities and the investment of which is more expansive than other economic activities, because most of ancient findings, historical monuments and natural views can be changed to valuable touristic attraction through small amount of investment and also observance of standard criteria of tourism industry (Varesi, 1996).

Therefore, a tourist is someone who travels more than one night and less than one year to a place other than his hometown or his place of living and his purpose in not working and earning money (Yazdi & Saghale, 2007).

Regarding the duration of traveling, the kind of services that are used, the season and the way of organizing the tour and also different impulsion which create a touristic process, various kinds of tourists can be distinguished (Ashrafi, 2013). Using the whole market of tourism is pretty difficult, so specializing in attracting some kinds of tourism is of great importance (Kavousi, 2010). The easiness of domestic tourism has been caused by some factors like short distance, previous familiarity with the environment, language, the lack of existence of laws related to traffic in the duty custom and also the exchange of money, the tourist trust made by being local and low cost of traveling specially transportation system (Bakh, 1976). The entrance of the foreign entities and also their exit from a country with touristic purposes is considered as the international touristic activities of that country (Zadegan, 1996). The mentioned activities are of great importance because of the money that is brought to the country. The tourists' offices play an important role in this field (Momeni, 2013).

The tourists' offices organize the tours, sell tickets, book hotels, get the visa, organize internal and external tours and do other touristic activities. The tourists' offices, as a marketing concept, are mediator companies beyond the transportation companies which provide the requirements of traveling (Nezhad, 2003). Travel agencies are tourism companies whose main activity is selling the tourism products to the customers and getting money (Vela & Bichrail, 2005). The tourists' offices act as the mediators between the main suppliers of the services like tour leaders, the transportation companies or hotels on one hand and the tourists on the other hand. In fact, they are considered as the first entity who encounter with the applicants of the tourism industry. These mediators' success

or failure greatly affects the success or failure of tours and tour providers (Ranjbarian & Zahedi, 2005).

The manager of a travel agency is responsible to attract the customers' satisfaction. It does not matter what the people in charge present to the customers, what they expect or predict about the services and how they people in charge respond to these expectancies is of great importance. On the other hand, the customers' satisfaction depends firstly on the fulfillment of their expectation and then on the presented services (Ahmed, 2005).

Tourism is the most important activity of contemporary human being which along with creating massive changes in the face of earth, has transformed political, economic, cultural and the way of human lives. Moreover, tourism has created fundamental changes in the economic, cultural conditions and people's rituals (Mahalati, 2001). Many countries consider this dynamic industry as a main resource of revenue, employment, growth of private section and development of infrastructure and always tourism is an important factor for economic development (Ebrahimi & Khosravian, 2005). Experts predict that in 2020 this industry will become the most profitable industry in the world so that they call it invisible industry which is economic center of cities (Movahed, 2001). One of important characteristics of this industry is the existence of heavy competition for capturing tourists. Competition in such an atmosphere with the presence of international big companies is representing this point that to be successful in this intense competition, mere investment on infrastructures would not works, but also along with that other success factors such as marketing should be considered.

Iran as one of ten countries in terms of tourism attractions has an economy which is dependable on oil and one of contexts of diversification of Iran's revenue sources is development of non - oil revenues which in the meantime tourism industry is very important. Despite Iran's abilities of tourism, unfortunately, so far Iran could not achieve to a competence position in this industry. Therefore, it is necessary that Iran uses its abilities toward developing tourism. One of the factors that can develop and improve tourism industry is effective applying tools and parameters of marketing and advertising (Sardi-Mahakan, 2001).

Systematically studying the tourism, tourism industry is formed through the combination of activities, services and different industries. The quantity, quality and the cooperation of different sections and factors in presenting the products play an important role in the success and development of the industry in a region (Kazemi, 2006). Traveling and tourism have been composed of five main fields. Each field has different subfields which relate considerably to marketing in both the product design and also the demand management (Yavari et al., 2010).

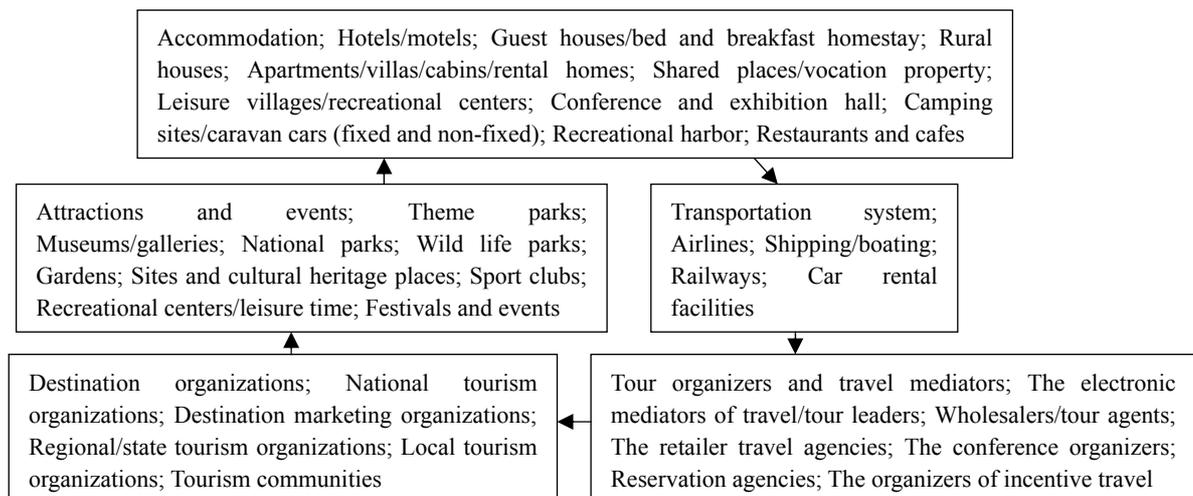


Figure 1.

3. Research Questions

- Are the tourists' offices equally distributed in Esfahan?
- To what extent are the foreign tourists satisfied with the presented services of Esfahan tourists' offices?
- Does the increase of clerks' knowledge affect the attraction of foreign tourists?
- Are marketing, advertising and introducing the touristic attractions effective in the entrance of foreign tourists to Esfahan?

4. Methodology

The methodology of the present research is descriptive-analytic, besides it is an applied- developmental study. The participants of the study are the tourists who have traveled to Esfahan in 2014. The data have been collected through questionnaires, field study and documentary studies. The sampling has been done randomly and the estimation of sample size has been done by the Cochran approach.

$$n = \frac{t^2 pq / d^2}{1 + \frac{1}{N} (\frac{t^2 pq}{d^2} - 1)} \quad (1)$$

180 questionnaires have been distributed among the tourists in the hotels, historical places. After collecting the questionnaires, the SPSS and Excel software have been used in order to analyze the data.

The reliability of the questionnaire has been calculated by using Cronbach Alpha. Cronbach Alpha fluctuate between 0 and 1 ($0 \leq \alpha \leq 1$). The value of Cronbach Alpha computed by SPSS is 0.9 for the present paper questionnaire which shows that the questionnaire is quite valid and reliable.

5. Research Findings

Evaluating the tourists' offices of Esfahan from the foreign tourists' point of view and also collecting the data, the researchers specified a population of 180 people. The questionnaires were distributed among the tourists who have visited Esfahan in the first three months of 2014. Some findings include their age, sex, education level and the place of living.

Among the 180 tourists, 63% were male and 37% were female. Considering their age, 9% of the tourists were between 20 to 29 years old, 18% were 30 to 39 years old, 45% were between 40 to 49 years old and 28% of the tourists were over 50 years old.

Regarding their education level, 24% of them had diploma, 34% had bachelor degree, and 42% had master degree and more. Besides, 49% of the foreign tourists were from European countries, 10% from Arabic countries, 26% were from the countries in south and south-east of Asia and 15% were from other regions.

How the foreign tourists have been gotten familiar with the tourist offices services has been mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1. Tourists' familiarity with the travel agencies services

| Familiarity with the tourists offices | Multimedia | Advertisement brochure | and Websites | Friends relatives | and Total |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Number | 55 | 9 | 61 | 55 | 180 |
| Percent | 31 | 5 | 33 | 31 | 100 |

Table 2 demonstrates the tourists' offices clerks' behavior and function from the point of view of the foreign tourists. 42% evaluated their behavior as very good, 48% as good, 8% as not bad and 2% has said that the clerks behaved and acted very poorly.

Table 2. Tourists' offices clerks' behavior and function from foreign tourists' point of view

| Clerks' behavior and function | Very good | Good | Not bad | Bad | Total |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------|---------|-----|-------|
| Number | 77 | 86 | 14 | 3 | 180 |
| Percent | 42 | 48 | 8 | 2 | 100 |

Table 3. Quality evaluation made by foreign tourists for the presented services by the tourists' offices

| Evaluation of Services Quality | Very good | Good | Not Bad | Bad | Total |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------|---------|-----|-------|
| Number | 58 | 99 | 19 | 3 | 180 |
| percent | 32 | 55 | 11 | 2 | 100 |

Table 3 shows the foreign tourists quality evaluation of the presented services by the tourists' offices. 32% state that the quality of the services is very good, 55% say that the quality is good, 11% evaluate the quality as not bad and the other 2% has evaluated them as very bad.

In Table 4, the function of Esfahan tourists' offices in informing the foreign tourists from the services has been mentioned. 29% has valued it as very good, 49% as good, 20% as not bad and 2% has valued them as bad.

Table 4. The evaluation of Esfahan tourists' offices function in informing the foreign tourists

| Informing the tourists | Very good | good | Not bad | Bad | Total |
|------------------------|-----------|------|---------|-----|-------|
| Number | 53 | 88 | 36 | 3 | 180 |
| Percent | 29 | 49 | 20 | 2 | 100 |

The foreign tourists have evaluated the appearance of both the clerks and the tourists' offices of Esfahan and the results have been demonstrated in Table 5. 35% of the tourists have evaluated them as very good, 51% as good, 11% has said that they are not very bad and 3% have evaluated them as very bad.

Table 5. The evaluation of appearance of clerks and the tourists' offices of Esfahan

| Evaluation of appearance of clerks and offices | Very good | Good | Not bad | Bad | Total |
|--|-----------|------|---------|-----|-------|
| Number | 64 | 91 | 19 | 6 | 180 |
| Percent | 35 | 51 | 11 | 3 | 100 |

In Table 6, the evaluation of the facilities and equipment of Esfahan tourists' offices has been shown. 22% of the foreign tourists have evaluated the facilities and equipment as very good, 58% of them as good, 18% as not bad and 2% of them has stated that the facilities and equipment are in a bad level.

Table 6. The facilities and equipment of Esfahan tourists' offices

| The evaluation of facilities and equipment | Very good | Good | Not bad | Bad | total |
|--|-----------|------|---------|-----|-------|
| Number | 39 | 105 | 33 | 3 | 180 |
| Percent | 22 | 58 | 18 | 2 | 100 |

The foreign tourists have expressed their ideas about the most important weak point of Esfahan tourists' offices and the related findings have been shown in Table 7. 15% of the tourists have said that the high price of presented services, 35% of them stated that the sameness and lack of variety of the presented services, 28% has pointed that weak advertisement and 22% of them have said that the clerks unfamiliarity with the international languages are the most important weak points of Esfahan tourists' offices.

Table 7. The most important weak points of Esfahan tourists' offices from the foreign tourists point of view

| The most important points | High price of presented services | The sameness of the presented services | Improper advertisement | The clerks' unfamiliarity with the international languages | Total |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|--|------------------------|--|-------|
| Number | 28 | 64 | 49 | 39 | 180 |
| Percent | 15 | 35 | 28 | 22 | 100 |

Table 8. The results of the question about having another trip to Iran

| Having another trip to Iran | Yes | No | Total |
|-----------------------------|-----|----|-------|
| Number | 174 | 6 | 180 |
| Percent | 97 | 3 | 100 |

Table 8 shows the results of the question asked whether the foreign tourists want to travel to Iran again or not. 97% of which have chosen yes and the other 3% have said no.

5.1 The Evaluation of Esfahan Travel Agencies Using the SWOT Model

SWOT is a term used in order to introduce the internal weaknesses and strengths and also the external opportunities and threats with which a system is faced. SWOT model is one of the strategic devices used to match the intersystem weaknesses and strengths with the external opportunities and threats. According to this model, a proper strategy is one which maximizes the strengths and opportunities and minimizes the weaknesses and threats. In order to do this, the weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats are related in four general states of SO, WO, ST and WT and the strategic option is chosen among them (Nia & Musavi, 2006).

Table 9. SWOT matrix and determination of strategies (Eftakhri & Mahdavi, 2006)

| SWOT matrix | Strengths S | Weaknesses W |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------|
| Opportunities O | SO strategy | WO strategy |
| Threats T | ST strategy | WT strategy |

5.2 The Process of Matrix Formation of Effective Internal and External Factors on the Function and Development of Esfahan Tourists' Offices

Figure 10. The degradation situation of each internal and external factor in SWOT model

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------|--------------------|--------|---------------------|-----------|
| Very bad | Lower than average | middle | Higher than average | Very good |

Table 11. The analysis matrix of internal factors (IFAS)

| Strengths | weight | gradation | Weight score |
|--|--------|-----------|--------------|
| 1 The existence of natural and humanistic attraction in Esfahan | 0.06 | 5 | 0.3 |
| 2 The existence different fields to encourage investing in various sections of tourism industry | 0.01 | 4 | 0.04 |
| 3 The existence of nice weather in most of the seasons | 0.02 | 4 | 0.08 |
| 4 Natural views of Zayande rud river with historical bridges | 0.02 | 5 | 0.1 |
| 5 The existence of various unique artistic and cultural customs, handicrafts, souvenirs and local food | 0.02 | 5 | 0.1 |
| 6 The existence of administrative department to fulfill their needs | 0.02 | 3 | 0.06 |
| 7 The existence of proper accommodation infrastructure and the sufficient potentials to expand them in Esfahan | 0.03 | 4 | 0.12 |
| 8 The existence of registered works in UNESCO | 0.03 | 4 | 0.12 |
| 9 The closeness of touristic sights with the tourists' offices | 0.01 | 4 | 0.04 |
| 10 The existence of tourist police to provide their security in the touristic places | 0.03 | 2 | 0.06 |
| 11 The existence of architectural original patterns to be studied by the foreign tourists | 0.02 | 5 | 0.1 |
| 12 The popularity of Esfahan touristic places because of the similarity with some important historical and touristic cities in the world | 0.04 | 4 | 0.08 |
| 13 The popularity of Esfahan as the first cultural capital of Islam among the Muslims all over the world | 0.01 | 4 | 0.04 |
| 14 The existence of proper infrastructures in the airline and railroad transportation | 0.03 | 4 | 0.12 |
| 15 The existence of tourists' offices with different functions | 0.03 | 4 | 0.12 |
| 16 Employing the specialist managers and clerks in the tourists' offices | 0.03 | 3 | 0.09 |
| 17 The private section inclination to invest money to establish and develop more tourists' offices | 0.02 | 4 | 0.08 |
| 18 Easy access to the tourists' offices because they are all in a specific part of the city | 0.01 | 4 | 0.04 |
| 19 Using the expert tour guides to lead the foreign tourists to visit the historical places | 0.03 | 4 | 0.12 |
| 20 Giving information to tourists via bilingual (English and Persian) brochures | 0.01 | 4 | 0.04 |
| 21 Selling tickets, booking hotels and presenting some electronic services | 0.03 | 3 | 0.09 |
| 22 Good behavior of clerks while facing the foreign tourists | 0.03 | 4 | 0.12 |
| 23 The familiarity of some of the clerks with the international languages | 0.03 | 2 | 0.06 |
| 24 The reasonable price of some presented services for the foreign tourists | 0.02 | 4 | 0.08 |

| Weaknesses | weight | gradation | Weight score |
|---|--------|-----------|--------------|
| 25 Lack of enough accommodation for the foreign tourists especially in the high seasons | 0.02 | 3 | 0.06 |
| 26 Private section reluctance in investing in the tourism projects | 0.02 | 3 | 0.06 |
| 27 Lack of exact planning for locating the tourists offices in different parts of the city and their centralization in a district | 0.01 | 4 | 0.04 |
| 28 Improper function of accommodation section in presenting services to foreign tourists | 0.02 | 2 | 0.04 |
| 29 Lack of sufficient service departments in the high seasons | 0.02 | 2 | 0.04 |
| 30 The existence of different environmental pollution especially air pollution in Esfahan | 0.01 | 4 | 0.04 |
| 31 The drying of Zayande rud river and the negative effects on the historical bridges, parks and views | 0.01 | 5 | 0.05 |
| 32 The lack of existence of good relationship between Esfahan tourists' offices and international offices | 0.02 | 4 | 0.08 |
| 33 The administrative bureaucratic relations which negatively impact the tourists' offices activities | 0.02 | 4 | 0.08 |
| 34 Disintegrated planning and managing of Esfahan tourists' offices | 0.02 | 3 | 0.06 |
| 35 lack of diversity in presenting the services in the offices | 0.03 | 3 | 0.09 |
| 36 Improper function of the offices in giving exact information to the tourists | 0.01 | 2 | 0.02 |
| 37 Lack of familiarity of most of the clerks with international languages like English, French, German, Chinese, etc. | 0.03 | 4 | 0.12 |
| 38 The familiarity of most of the clerks with only one international language especially English | 0.02 | 4 | 0.08 |
| 39 Improper behavior of clerks and tour guides with the foreign tourists | 0.02 | 1 | 0.02 |
| 40 Poor performance of tourists' offices in planning and organizing the tours | 0.02 | 3 | 0.06 |
| 41 High price of some of the services presented by the Esfahan tourists' offices | 0.02 | 2 | 0.04 |
| 42 Not observing the obligations by the tourists' offices | 0.02 | 2 | 0.04 |
| 43 Lack of updated equipment in the Esfahan tourists' offices to give services | 0.02 | 2 | 0.04 |
| 44 Lack of suitable international advertisements and poor performance in marketing in the world | 0.03 | 5 | 0.15 |
| 45 Lack of training courses for the clerks of Esfahan tourists' offices | 0.02 | 3 | 0.06 |
| 46 Not using local and expert guides for visiting the historical places | 0.02 | 3 | 0.06 |
| Total | 1 | - | 3.55 |

The following processes have been done in order to form the internal and external factors matrix (Tables 11 and 12):

The most important internal factors (weaknesses and strengths) and external factors (opportunities and threats) of Esfahan travel agencies have been mentioned in the first column.

In the second column (weight), regarding the effectiveness of each factor on the current and new strategic situation of Esfahan travel agencies, a weight between 1 (very important) and 0 (unimportant) is given to them. The more the weight is, the more effective the factor on the current and new situation would be (the sum of second column regardless of the factors is 1).

In the third column (gradation), regarding the importance of that specific factor in the current situation, a score between 5(very good) to 1(very bad) is given to each factor. This gradation evaluates the situation of each internal and external factor by the system.

In the fourth column (weight score), the weight is multiplied in the grade of each factor (column 2 multiplies column 3) to achieve the weight score of each factor. So, each factor will have a grade between 5 (very good) to 1 (very bad), the middle of which is 3.

Finally, column 4 is dedicated to the total amount of the weight score of internal and external factors. The total weight score shows that how the Esfahan tourists' offices respond to the internal potential factors and also the external potential factors in the environment. The average weight score of the whole system in a field is always 3 (Hungerjay & Violen, 2005).

Table 12. Analysis matrix of external factors (EFAS)

| Opportunities | | weight | gradation | Weight score |
|---------------|---|--------|-----------|--------------|
| 1 | Introducing the rich Iranian Islamic culture to the world | 0.07 | 2 | 0.14 |
| 2 | Organizing internal and external exhibition to make the tourists familiar with Esfahan and also introducing the services presented by the tourists' offices | 0.06 | 3 | 0.18 |
| 3 | Establishing a special center for training the interested people and organizing training courses for the clerks | 0.05 | 3 | 0.15 |
| 4 | Creating new job opportunities through the development of offices and increase of the service variety | 0.07 | 4 | 0.28 |
| 5 | Increasing the currency revenues and improving the economic situation of the society | 0.06 | 2 | 0.12 |
| 6 | The improvement and development of the quality of airline and railway transportation and benefiting the subway | 0.05 | 4 | 0.2 |
| 7 | Encouraging the private section investors to invest in tourism projects | 0.04 | 3 | 0.12 |
| 8 | Creating some connection between the domestic and foreign tourists' offices for international tourism | 0.04 | 2 | 0.08 |
| 9 | Expanding the electronic networks for the advertisement and also presenting services in international level | 0.05 | 3 | 0.15 |
| Threats | | weight | Gradation | Weight score |
| 10 | Different organization interference in tourism affairs | 0.05 | 4 | 0.2 |
| 11 | Insufficient budget for the development of foreign tourism | 0.06 | 4 | 0.16 |
| 12 | Recession of tourism industry and inexistence of fair competition in the industry because of the domination of the government on the industry | 0.06 | 5 | 0.3 |
| 13 | Administrative bureaucratic rules in the tourism industry | 0.05 | 4 | 0.2 |
| 14 | The impact of political problem and negative propaganda about the social life and the security of the country on the tourist attraction | 0.06 | 5 | 0.3 |
| 15 | Unfamiliarity of the tourists and clerks with each other's culture | 0.05 | 3 | 0.15 |
| 16 | Economic problems and the decrease in demand for traveling | 0.06 | 4 | 0.24 |
| 17 | The performance of inexpert people in tourism industry | 0.04 | 2 | 0.08 |
| 18 | Monopolization of foreign tourists' offices and their reluctance to cooperating with the domestic offices | 0.04 | 3 | 0.12 |
| 19 | The lack of wide and purposeful advertisement in order to introduce the attractions and services of Esfahan tourists' offices to the world | 0.06 | 4 | 0.24 |
| Total | | 1 | - | 3.41 |

6. The Analysis of SWOT Results

Using the summary of analyzing tables of internal and external factors, the most important strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats were discussed and the best strategy will be presented to the program planners after rating, grading and their combination. Regarding this model, an appropriate strategy will maximize the strengths and opportunities and minimize the weaknesses and threats. In order to do this, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were connected in four general status of SO, WO, ST and WT and the strategic options were chosen among them.

The internal and external matrix tables shows that the SO pattern (strengths and opportunities) among the four patterns is dominated on the tourism condition and Esfahan travel agencies and it means that this pattern propose internal growth strategy.

7. Conclusion

According to the findings of the study and also evaluating the SWOT, the following questions can be answered:

- Are Esfahan tourists' offices equally distributed in different parts of the city?

Regarding the results of the study, it can be said that Esfahan tourism plans are affected by the concentrated planning. This causes the tourists' offices not to be distributed equally in different parts of the city and not to perform well. Most of the offices have been located in the historical part of the city or in the city center. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the performance of tourists' offices in order to find the best location for their development and fairly distribute them to fulfill the applicants' demands.

- To what amount are the foreign tourists satisfied with the presented services by Esfahan tourists' offices?

Examining the questionnaires, the results show that 32% of the foreign tourists evaluate the presented services as very good, 55% as good, 22 as not bad and the other 2% have said that the presented services are bad. So, it can be concluded that the tourists are comparatively satisfied with the presented services.

- Is the tourists' offices clerks' knowledge effective on the foreign tourists' attraction?

Regarding the findings through the questionnaire, 48% of the participants say that the clerks knowledge is extremely effective on the attraction of foreign tourists, 38% state that the clerks knowledge is very effective, 11% evaluate this factor as not that much effective and the other 3% say that it affects very low. So it can be expressed that using knowledgeable and expert clerks in the tourists' offices can lead to the improvement and development of the services and also will result in the attraction of more foreign tourists.

- Are the marketing, advertising and identifying the tourists markets effective on the increase of foreign tourists' entrance to Esfahan?

Regarding the questionnaire of the study, the findings show that 65% of the Esfahan tourists' offices clerks state that advertising and identifying the markets greatly affect the foreign tourists' attraction, 27% recognize this impact as high, 6% say it is not so affective and the other 2% say that it doesn't affect the tourists' attraction that much. Furthermore, the participants have declared that poor advertisement acts as an obstacle in the attraction of foreign tourists. Besides, based on the answers, the effect of poor advertisement has been 30% very much, 19% as not very much and 3% have said that the effect is very low.

Besides, the foreign tourists' idea has been expressed about the most important weak point of Esfahan travel agencies according to which 28% of the tourists have said that the most important weak point is the inappropriate and poor advertising and marketing. So it can be concluded that the tourists attraction and Esfahan tourism capability can be introduced to the world through advertising and marketing and therefore the attraction of foreign tourists to Esfahan will be provided.

The development and improvement of tourism in Esfahan need designing and performing suitable advertisements aiming at introducing the attractions and motivating the tourists to travel to Esfahan which will result in providing good situations for the local materialistic and spiritual investments to participate in tourism industry development. The fulfillment of this affair, not only plays an important role in improving the infrastructural level of foundation and related services, but also will provide the situation for the increase of tourists and cultural and economic improvement.

References

- Ahmed, M. N. (2005). *Hotel Organization*. New Dehli : Anmol
- Alvani, S. M., & Masoumeh, P. B. (2006). *The Process of Tourism Management* (1st ed.). Tehran: Cultural Studies Publication.
- Ashrafi, E. (2013). *The Study of the Obstacles and Problems of Esfahan Travel Agencies*. MA thesis. Islamic Azad University of Najaf Abad.
- Bakhsh, H. F. (1976). *Tourism Industry in Iran and the World*. Tehran: the Publication of tourism services and information school.
- Bash, D. Z. (2007). *An analysis of tourism markets of Esfahan and the ways to develop them*. PhD thesis of Geography and city planning. University of Esfahan.
- Bronze, M. P. (2006). *An introduction to tourism ethnography*. Translated by Hajar Hooshmandi. Cultural heritage Ethnography Institute. Teharan: Afkar
- Das Will, R. (2000). *Tourism Management. Theory, Strategies and Effects*. Translated by Mohammad Arabi and Davoud Izadi. Tehran: Cultural studies Publication.
- Ebrahimi, A., & Khosravian, M. (2005). *Effective factors on growth and development of tourism industry in Mazandaran province*. Set of papers in 1st seminar of Role of Tourism Industry in Development of Mazandaran Province. Tehran, Resanesh Publications.

- Eftekhari, R. D., & Mahdavi, A. (2006). The Strategies of Development of Rural Tourism (case study: Lavasan kuchak) using the SWOT Model. *Modares Journal*, 45. University of Tarbiat Modares.
- Hunger, J. D., & Violen, T. L. (2005). *The Strategic Theories of Tehran*. Translated by Mohammad Arabi & Davoud Izadi. Tehran: Cultural Studies Publication
- Kazemi, M. (2006). *Tourism Management*. Tehran: Samt.
- Loomsden, L. (2001). *Tourism Marketing*. Translated by Mohammad Ibrahim Goharian. Tehran: Cultural Studies Publication.
- Mahakan, A. S. (2001). *Investigating the role of marketing in tourism industry, Mashad City*. Master thesis, Tarbiat Modares University, Iran.
- Mahalati, T. (2001). *An introduction to tourism*. Tehran: Shahid Beheshti University publication.
- Momeni, M. (2013). The Problems of Tourism in Iran. *Geography and Environmental Studies Journal* (2nd ed.). Esfahan.
- Movahed, A. (2001). *Investigating and analyzing city tourism space; case study: Isfahan city*. Phd. Thesis, Tarbiat Modares University, Iran.
- Nezhad, H. Q. (2003). *An Introduction to Tourism Development* (1st ed.). The publication of Islamic Azad University of Najaf Abad.
- Nia, H. H., & Musavi, M. N. (2006). *The Application of the Model in Geography (Emphasizing the City and District Planning)*. Yazid: Elme Novin Publication.
- Ranjbarian, B., & Zahedi, M. (2005). *Tourism Marketing* (1st ed.). Esfahan: Chahar Bagh Publication.
- Varesi, H. R. (1996). The Examination of Tourism Industry in Esfahan. *Sepehr Journal*, 5(18).
- Vella, F., & Bicheril, V. (2005). *International Tourism*. Translated by Mohammad Ebrahim Goharian & Mohammad Mehdi Ketabchi. Tehran: Amir Kabir Publication.
- Yavari, K., & Toghyani, M. (2010). *The Obstacles and Problems of Tourism in Iran*. Tehran: Commercial Studies Institute of Publication.
- Yazdi, P., Hossein, M., & Saghaie, M. (2007). *Tourism (Nature and concepts)*. Teharn: SAMT.
- Yousefi, A., Mokhtari-Malekabadi, R., & Khadem-Al-Husseini, A. (2012). The Analytical-comparative investigation of E-tourism development indicators in Isfahan. *Geography and Environmental Planning Journal*, 56(2), 37-40.
- Zadegan, S. A. (1997). *The Study of the Potentials of Ardabil*. MA thesis of Geography and City Planning. Shahid Beheshti University of Tehran.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).