

Investigating the Factors Affecting Iran's Tourism Industry through Sustainable Development Approach

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the factors affecting Iran's tourism industry with a sustainable development approach. The statistical population in the qualitative research includes experts and specialists in the tourism organization and professors with proficiency in the field of tourism, and the quantitative research comprises the experts of tourism development in the tourism organizations of Iran. The sampling methods in the qualitative and quantitative studies are purposeful and random stratified, respectively. The method of data collection in this research is based on library studies, review of relevant texts and literature and field-based and data collection is performed through interviews and questionnaires. Non-probability purposive sampling was applied to select the interviewees, and during this process, experts were tried to have practical experience in addition to theoretical knowledge. The results of the research demonstrate that based on the Dalala technique, the institutional criterion is the most effective and the sustainable human resources index has a very high level of effectiveness, and the criteria of sustainable human resources have the most interactions with other criteria studied. Furthermore, based on the structural equation technique, it was determined that all the identified factors have a significant impact on the development of the tourism industry.

Keywords: MAXQDA; Sustainable development; Tourism.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, tourism activity is one of the most significant and dynamic activities in the world, so that at the global level, the number of foreign and domestic tourists and their income generation rate is constantly increasing. Tourism activity has reciprocal and bidirectional effects between the environment and tourism, therefore, tourism basically includes a range of activities related to the environment. Due to this close connection and dependence, the preservation and sustainability of environmental resources is of great importance during the creation and implementation of tourism activities (Darsana and Sudjuna, 2022). Identifying crucially effective variables in the tourism industry is effective in changing the demand pattern of many countries (Tribe, 2020). Tourism has become one of the largest and fastest growing industries (Ahmed and Yulianah, 2022). Firms and industries that become deeply quality-oriented develop both internal culture and external reputation in a way that is intricate for competitors to imitate (Zhang et al., 2014). Since the 1990s, the WTO has been a pioneer in the development and application of indicators for tourism and destinations and has advocated its objectives. Indicators are known as a "fundamental part of management and "destination planning" and as an integral factor in the effort to promote sustainable development for the tourism sector at all scales (Sharply, 2021). If the residents of the host community feel that the costs of sustainable tourism development are greater than its benefits, they oppose this type of development (Alkaniz et al., 2011). The tourism industry is a fast-growing industry globally and helps to increase economic growth as well as create employment opportunities, apart from contributing to development, especially in developing countries (Worker et al., 2021).

In general, development is a complex concept and a multi-layered process that incorporates not only economic growth but also environmental, social, political and cultural factors as well (Jamipour et al., 2019). One of the ways to realize the recognition of tourism in studies is the framework and strategic plans of countries' development (Lasso and Dalles, 2018). Iran has many resources to attract tourists, which can benefit from the positive effects of tourism in reducing unemployment and economic income. The mental image is a vital and influential factor in choosing a tourist destination by tourists (Hamidizadeh et al., 2015). However, according to the statistics available in the World Tourism Organization, it has not reached a rank higher than 75 and it depicts that despite the many natural, historical and cultural

attractions, Iran has not used its potential (Sheibani nia et al., 2021). The very reason behind this fact is that the single-product economy is heavily dependent on oil revenues and has mainly prevented attention to this part of the economy in the country. Iran remarkably relies on the export of crude oil to earn its foreign exchange earnings, and in order to solve the problems caused by the dependence of foreign exchange earnings on oil exports, it is necessary to invest in the production and export of those products and services that can generate foreign exchange earnings. This country, among some of the defined products and services, has potential facilities and capabilities that can be converted into actual capabilities with investment and use as a source of foreign exchange income. The tourism industry is one of these precious privileges to create countless entrepreneurial opportunities. Considering the many attractions, our country has a high potential for the sustainable development of tourism and can achieve significant economic growth from the sustainable development of tourism in different cities with the least amount of destructive cultural, social and environmental effects. Coastal cities can derive benefit from tourism facilities and conditions in order to improve their economic situation (increasing incomes, job creation) and also improving the image of the regions (Ramazan Nejad and Roknuddin Iftikhari, 2017). Among the reasons for Iran's lack of success in the development of sustainable tourism industry, one can mention the lack of a strategic framework for the development of this industry, as well as merely relying on and modeling of the development strategies of the foreign sustainable tourism industry. The definition of sustainable development is a guaranteed respect for the environment, cultures and local communities, as it leads to three consequences (economic, environmental and socio-cultural sustainability), this definition is currently widely accepted (Leogoms et al., 2021). It should be noted that development of sustainable tourism is like a charter whose various aspects are shaped by the economic, social, cultural, political, climatic and geographical environments of the society and the expectations of the people of the region (Amrollahi and Nazari, 2016). Sustainable tourism (ST) describes a condition of tourism based on the principles of sustainable development, in which all the possible economic, social and environmental impacts that tourism can bring along with the needs of the beneficiaries are taken into consideration (Breno et al., 2022). Those who put the term tourism between the two words development and sustainability under the title of development of sustainable tourism were most likely sure that under any circumstances, the principles resulting from

sustainable tourism should be the same as the principles of their main paradigm, which is sustainable development (Gordon et al., 2021). In other words, sustainable tourism should be a potential tool for achieving sustainable development at the community level, not just seeking the sustainability of tourism business, in the sense that any type of tourism should:

A- Be environmentally sustainable.

B- Make a significant contribution to the policies and goals of the sustainable development of the society (Baren et al., 2022). According to the issues raised, the purpose of this article is to review the actions taken by local governments in sustainable promotion, to prioritize the development of tourism, to identify problem areas and reach a sustainable development strategy with an emphasis on the tourism industry in Iran.

2. Literature review

It merits mention that Tourism operates in the field of competing interests and needs a profitable service. Service; It is an activity or a benefit that one party offers to another party, which is essentially imperceptible and does not involve the ownership of anything, as a result, it may be physical or immaterial product. In another definition, service is a result that customers want (Amiri et al., 2018); where many economic, social and political forces have influence through politics and management. Transcending traditional organizational boundaries and creating mutual dependence among a wide range of stakeholders is the result of correctly understanding the needs of the audience (Cornell, 2005: 13). Tourism is a global phenomenon and an important factor in political and socio-economic development in many countries, which has become one of the world's major industries today. The excessive demand for the use of resources, and incorrect management, have negative and irreparable effects on local communities and their environment (Klinsrisuk & Pechdin, 2022). If we want to survive and maintain the current standard of living, our business should only be conducted within environmental or ecological boundaries (Brida et al., 2020). Striving for sustainable tourism is a challenge to integrate economic, social and environmental issues in tourism planning, and to implement this method, changes in attitudes and customs among different stakeholders in the field of tourism are investigated (Kernel, 2005:13). The concept of tourism awareness can be integrated with sustainable tourism management and strengthen sustainable work systems (Ehnert et al., 2014).

The literature of sustainable work systems conceptualizes sustainability as a social responsibility. Understanding sustainability from the perspective of a sustainable work system leads to the assumption that the responsibility for the negative side effects of the systems' actions on its stakeholders and on society is due to the exploitation of human resources and its development (Greely et al., 2021). When an organization seeks managing sustainable human resources and hires to achieve its long-term goals, it should pay more attention to its hiring process and choose the right people who are in line with long term goals in different and changing conditions (Manzoor et al., 2019). Sustainable tourism management is a pattern of planned or emerging human resources practices and strategies to achieve an organizational goal, while at the same time rebuilding the human resources base in the long term and controlling the feedback and side effects of human resources systems on the human resource base and thus their impact on the company itself (Mathew, 2021). In fact, the pursuit of sustainability issues is neither deeply nor widely pursued in the real world. Lack of widespread adoption means that few tourism companies and organizations are seriously committed to sustainability and the meaning of not being deep is that the implementation of sustainability programs and measures among tourism companies and organizations is more selective and due to economic or advertising reasons (Gupta and Hassanei, 2022). The current need of the market requires the integration of industry with sustainable development (Capra, 2018: 40). For the success of tourism sustainable development, all aspects of development should be considered together. The framework of sustainable development has emphasized the need for balance between these aspects, but newer approaches have leaned toward context-oriented frameworks and emphasize the specific needs of society (Matico et al., 2021). The structure of sustainable tourism management represents the inputs leading organizations to achieve the expected results and the structure of organizational performance represents the outputs expected from the first sustainable tourism management structure (Hisa et al., 2022). Sustainable tourism can provide effective management of resources, while simultaneously has side effects on cultural integrity. In addition, sustainable tourism can generate "green" income and become an important source of export, especially in developing countries (Pen et al., 2018: 635). From an integrated point of view, the perception of sustainable tourism management has a strategic mode means that strategic decisions are considered relevant, active and focused on key aspects of long-term orientation, environmental orientation,

systematic and comprehensive. This integrated and strategic approach also considers the institutional and cultural contexts of organizations (Sheller, 2021). The term sustainable tourism management is relatively new in management discussions and different interpretations have been presented for it. Ideally, human resources management systems have the ability or capability to be efficient and productive and self-sufficient (revival, nutrition and sustainable development) (Yang et al., 2020). Some, such as Alan Fricker, consider sustainability as a kind of attitude towards the future, which is actually a road map that focuses on a set of moral and spiritual values and principles (Munier, 2005: 10). The tourism industry has expanded at an increasing growth rate during the last decade and is a significant source of income for many developing countries. But our country, despite its high capabilities, has allocated a small share of this global business. Tourism plays an important role in the economy of societies. The factor of progress in this field is the precise identification of the market. The tourism industry is a mixture of various activities that are carried out in a chain to serve tourists. Therefore, tourism includes phenomena and relationships resulting from the interaction of tourists, suppliers and sellers of tourism products, governments and sellers of tourism products, governments and societies. The developmental contribution of tourism to the future demand of tourism cannot be predicted and guaranteed, at least conceptually (Mihalik et al., 2021). Traditionally, tourism has negative effects on natural, social and economic environments, and the continuation of wrong practices causes serious damage to these environments. More flexible sustainable development indicators and a permissive approach to sustainable development and changeable tolerance thresholds for urban and modern environments are suggested (McKenzie and Gannon, 2019). On the other hand, sustainable tourism emphasizes on creating a balance in the tourism development through new approaches and policies of the private and government sectors in the future. Sustainable development tries to minimize damages and maximize the profitability of tourism development (Sadaqt, 2021). In this article, sustainability is related to economic, environmental, social and human aspects, because we believe that there is sufficient evidence that predicting the long-term survival of modern organizations depends on their ability to ensure the long-term preservation and supply of natural resources, as well as human and social resources, although few seem to be aware of this. Today, sustainability is widely accepted as a basic approach for any type of development, including tourism development. In

political and environmental issues, sustainable tourism is a new concept to deal with the destructive effects of tourism development (Sharif et al., 2021). The goal of all sciences is to know and understand the world around us. In order to be aware of the issues and problems of the social world, scientific methods have undergone significant changes. These trends and movements have caused the scientific method to be used to investigate various humanities fields (Hafez Nia, 2006).

We believe that sustainability is a concept that can be applied at multiple levels for all important aspects of organizations and subsystems, including human resources management and people. Sustainability in one aspect can reduce or increase sustainability in another aspect, and these interrelationships can be very complex and need to be monitored and controlled or at least identified. In the past research literature, the aspect of human sustainability has not been discussed much. In this article, we intend to focus on human and social sustainability and consider their relationship with economic sustainability, because research on how to improve human and social sustainability in organizations and especially in the perspective of human resources management has been neglected (Peffer, 2010). However, it should be noted that the environmental aspect creates general boundaries that must be considered if we want to have a long-term business. Accordingly, the environmental aspect should also be considered in company decisions and human resource management (Enert and Harry, 2012). Regarding the studies done in this field, the following can be cited. Baker and Annie (2022) presented a study titled *Understanding Residents' Opinions and Support for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Caribbean Case of Saint Kitts and Nevis*. Saint Kitts and Nevis are two islands forming a country in the Caribbean Sea. This article addresses the differences in the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism between residents of St. Kitts and Nevis and residents' attitudes about the speed and direction of sustainable tourism development. A questionnaire was distributed among 296 samples. The data was analyzed by ANOVA statistical method. Finally, it was concluded that most of the residents believe that sustainable tourism, both land and sea, has many economic benefits and has reduced the negative effects on the environment and residents had a favorable perception of the positive socio-cultural impact of sustainable tourism. The results emphasize the importance of understanding and allowing the views of local community members for sustainable tourism development. Local community support for tourism is

vital for effective tourism planning and management. Wang (2022) presented a research titled Sustainable Tourism Development Based on Visitors' Brand Trust. This study examines the trust of tourists in a tourism brand with the initiative of the government from the perspective of the economic sustainability of the tourism industry. Its variables include visitor's visit motivation, visitor's experience perception, and willingness to visit/revisit. Data were obtained from 20 attractions with significant religious themes listed among the "100 Religious Attractions" in Taiwan. Questionnaires were distributed among respondents who had visited or planned to visit the listed attractions. Three hundred and eighty five valid questionnaires were analyzed using SEM method. This study shows that intention to visit/visit determinants; service value perception and spiritual experience significantly affect tourism brand trust. These results provide a better understanding for both researchers and practitioners of religious attractions with a theme of how tourists' visit/revisit and their willingness to consume influence the establishment of trust in a tourism destination brand that is sustainable. Sharif et al. (2021) presented a study titled Sustainable Tourism Development and Globalization: Recent Insights from the United States. Using monthly data from January 1995 to December 2017, this research examines the relationship between tourism and globalization (both overall and in terms of three sub-indices, namely economic, social and political globalization) in the United States (U.S.). The quantile-on-quantile (QQ) regression technique was used to analyze the data. The findings suggest that in the United States in the pre-crisis era, all indicators of globalization and tourism are positively bidirectional related. In the post-crisis era, all globalization indicators have a positive effect on tourism, but tourism has a negative effect on economic and political globalization. Kalabi (2022) conducted a research with the aim of identifying factors affecting the sustainable tourism ecosystem with a metacombination approach. In the current research, 39 researches related to the subject were extracted from different scientific databases from 1994 to 2020, which were analyzed using the seven-step model of Sandelowski and Barroso. By analyzing their content, relevant concepts and categories were extracted, and the importance and priority of the concepts was determined by Shannon's entropy method. The categories of human capital training, culture, individual characteristics, networking and markets, investment and financing, legislation and policies and infrastructures are respectively the most important among the factors affecting the sustainable tourism ecosystem. Empirical studies prove that

perceived benefits have a significant and direct impact on supporting tourism development, while the perceived costs significantly and indirectly affect the support of tourism development. Clearly, the observed benefits and costs are primary variables for residents' support for sustainable tourism development (Amin Bidakhti et al., 2014).

3. Research Method

Since the purpose of the present research is to describe the phenomena and help in the decision-making process, it is considered as a descriptive research and on the other hand, the data obtained from the implementation of the research is collected in the form of numbers and figures, which is a proof of the quantitative nature of the research strategy. In this research, we describe the status of each of the variables in the desired statistical community. Therefore, this research can be considered as a descriptive research. Since we use the questionnaire tool in the field to measure the variables, the research can be considered a survey and on the other hand, due to the applicability of the results, this research can be placed in the applied research group. In terms of orientation, this research is a fundamental research in the qualitative step and an applied research in the quantitative step. In the quantitative part, our research is social-constructivist and has an inductive approach. The current research strategy is a systematic review of previous research in the qualitative part and a survey in the quantitative part. In terms of the goal, this research is exploratory research in the qualitative step and explanatory research in the quantitative step. The purpose of exploratory research is to discover phenomena that are not well understood or to identify and discover important variables in that phenomenon and to provide hypotheses for further research. In explanatory research, the goal is to explain the forces that caused the phenomenon in question or to identify the networks that led to the emergence and formation of that phenomenon. The horizon of the current research is single-section and data collection was done in the qualitative part by systematic review of previous researches and in the quantitative part by questionnaire. In terms of the type of data, this research is a qualitative research in the first step and a quantitative research in the second step. Quantitative data does not mean research relying on numbers and figures, because qualitative data can also be analyzed with quantitative tools (numbers and figures). The experts of this research are the managers of the tourism organization and the vice presidents of the tourism organization and experienced professors in the field of tourism and

successful hoteliers, which are determined based on the snowball technique. The selection criteria of experts are as follows:

1. Possessing an education related to the research topic
2. Enjoying more than 20 years of work experience in tourism organizations
3. Knowledgeable in the field of environment and human resources
4. Interested in participating and expressing opinions and experiences

The size of the community of research experts has been determined to be 30 people based on the above criteria. The experts include 10 university professors, 10 vice presidents of the tourism organization, 5 managers of the tourism organization, and 5 prominent hoteliers. Of the total number of experts, respectively, 7 people had a bachelor's degree, 12 people had a master's degree, and 11 people had a doctorate degree. The statistical population also includes 1262 tourism development experts of tourism organizations in Iran, of which 297 people have completed the questionnaire based on the Kerjisi and Morgan table. In this research, which included 205 (69%) men and 92 (31%) women, all the people participated in the interviews with full consent and knowledge of the current research. The work experience of the participants was as follows: 69 people have less than 5 years of experience, 91 people have between 5 and 10 years, 48 people have between 10 and 15 years, 76 people have between 15 and 20 years and 13 people have more than 20 years of work experience.

The most important methods of data collection in this research are as follows: Library studies: In order to collect information in the field of theoretical foundations and research literature, library resources, articles, required books and the global information network have been used. Field studies were divided into two parts, quantitative and qualitative, which were discussed further. In the first phase, in order to collect information and research criteria, library study methods (including the study of books and publications, theses and domestic and foreign articles available in reputable scientific publications and searching in databases and libraries) and field studies method (including observation, interview and questionnaire) have been used. Survey methods will also be used to collect information. Data collection through interviews included numerous interviews with experts and specialists during the research. Also, most of the necessary data and information to analyze the questions have been collected using the questionnaire tool. In the second phase, in order to weight the criteria based on the selected criteria, the paired comparison questionnaire (as described in

the attachment) including the paired comparison matrix was delivered to the experts.

3.1. *Checking the content validity of the test*

Validity basically refers to the correctness of the researcher's measurement (Khaki, 1999). There are two ways to check the content validity of the test:

3.1.1. *Content Validity Ratio index (CVR)*

This index has been designed by Lavshe (2010). In order to calculate this index, the opinions of experts are used in the field of the desired test content and by explaining the objectives of the test to them and providing them with operational definitions related to the content of the questions, they are asked to classify each of the questions based on the three-part Likert scale: "the item is necessary", "the item is useful but not necessary" and "the item is unnecessary". Then, CVR is calculated based on the following formula. Finally, based on the number of experts who have evaluated the questions, the minimum acceptable CVR value is determined using the relevant table. Questions for which the calculated CVR value is lower than the desired value according to the number of experts evaluating the question should be excluded from the test, because based on the obtained CVR, they do not have acceptable validity. For research with 30 experts, the minimum acceptable CVR value is 0.33 and CVR below this value should be discarded. According to Table 3-3, it can be seen that for all variables, the value of CVR is above 0.33 and it is strongly confirmed.

$$\text{CVR} = \frac{\frac{\text{The number of experts who have selected the necessary option}}{\text{Total number of specialists}}}{\frac{\text{Total number of}}{2}}$$

Eq.1

3.1.2. *Content Validity Index (CVI)*

Waltz & Bausell method is used to check content validity index. In such a way that, the experts determine the "relevance", "clearness" and "simplicity" of each item based on a 4-part Likert scale.

Experts rated the simplicity in order from 1 "not simple", 2 "relatively simple", 3 "simple", to 4 "simple relevant" and clearness is also determined from 1 "not clear", 2 "relatively clear", 3 "clear", to 4 "clearness relevant".

$$\text{Eq.2} = \text{CVI} = \frac{\text{The number of experts who rated the item 3 and 4}}{\text{Total number of specialists}}$$

Also, to calculate CVI, experts are asked to determine the degree of relevance of each item with the following four-part spectrum: 1-not relevant 2-needs basic revision 3-relevant but needs revision 4-completely relevant. Divide the number of experts who chose option 3 and 4 by the total number of experts.

Table 1. Statures of CVI

Greater than 0.79	Between 0.7 and 0.79	Less than 0.7
The index is acceptable	The index should be revised	The index is rejected

Different states of CVI are included in Table 2. The value of CVI for our research data is higher than 0.79 for all indicators, so all indicators are confirmed from the point of view of content validity.

CVI and CVR for each research variable is shown in Table 2:

CVI	CVR	Variable
0.80	0.63	Economic index
0.89	0.66	Sustainable Human Resources Index
0.80	0.64	Social index
0.90	0.65	Environmental sustainability index
0.89	0.66	Environmental index

0.80	0.66	Environmental competitiveness index
0.89	0.65	Institutional indexes

Next, in the Delphi phase, the checklists resulting from the research and opinions of various researchers and experts have been used in the direction of sustainable tourism, which were distributed among the experts after taking notes and taking notes related to it. In the following, after knowing the factors and components that will be obtained according to experts' opinion, additional questions and components will be filtered, and criteria and effective components in the strategic framework of factors affecting sustainable development with an emphasis on Iran's tourism industry will be identified and placed in questionnaires related to their style. Based on this, as well as the previous explanations, two different styles of researcher-made questionnaires will be used for analysis, which are as follows:

1. From the questionnaire listed according to the five-option Likert scale, which is scored from very low to very high.
2. From the matrix questionnaire adjusted according to the identified components and according to the Dalala technique, points are scored from 0 to 4 points.

4. Results

After the coding of the components based on the sampling method of various researches and studies, in order to evaluate the identified components to what extent they are approved by the experts, the Delphi technique and the checklist method were used. This stage of the research was done to identify the components and questions based on various researches that have been done in the field of sustainable tourism strategies in the national and international arena, and finally, after reviewing and drawing the conclusions assigned to this research, the components were identified. Finally, after this survey and including the opinions of experts in the checklist and according to the final scores, the first research questionnaire with 129 questions according to the Likert scale was prepared for distribution among people. After that, MAXQDA software was used to reach the effective indicators.

The inferential analysis of this research is divided into two parts, the first part of which is related to the Dalala technique to determine the weight of each category of variables., and this questionnaire is the same as the matrix questionnaires, only with the difference that scoring in this questionnaire is based on zero to four points, and the second part will be related to the method of structural equations to determine the weight of the questions and also to determine the relevance and intensity of the questions. The Dalala technique, which is a method of determining the weight and showing cause-effect relationships between variables, has been used in this research. The mentioned technique is included in Dimetal methods, but with the difference that it finally gives the weight of normalization.

Table 3. Causal relationship

T	Economic index	Sustainable Human Resources Index	Social index	Environmental sustainability index	Environmental index	Environmental competitiveness index	Institutional indexes
Economic index	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Sustainable Human Resources Index	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Social index	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Environmental sustainability index	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Environmental index	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Environmental competitiveness index	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Institutional indexes	1	1	1	1	1	1	0

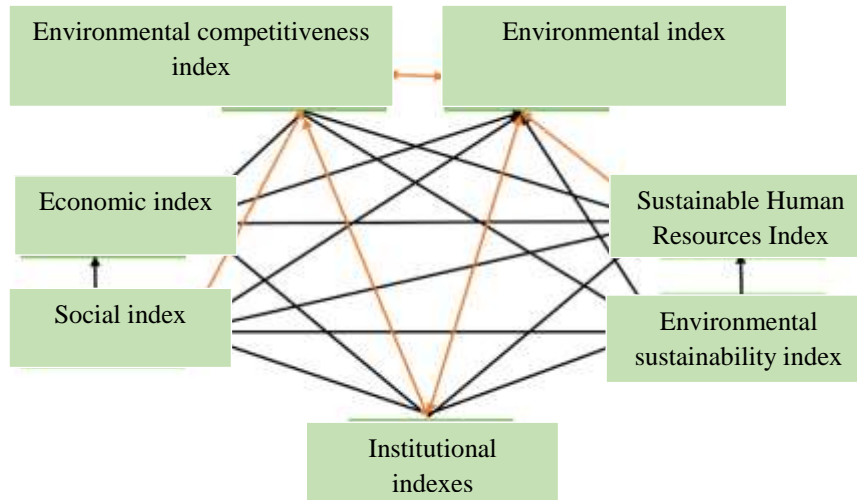


Figure 1. Internal relationships of the main criteria (source: authors)

Table 4. Pattern of causal relationships under criteria (R-J and R+J)

	Economic index	Sustainable Human Resources Index	Social index	Environmental sustainability index	Environmental index	Environmental competitiveness index	Institutional index
R+J	13.74256	15.01967	14.68093	14.04855	14.80648	14.55713	14.47648
R-J	-0.010544	-1.098222	0.340251	0.148222	-0.182019	0.257161	0.545183
R	6.866006	6.960709	7.510591	7.098387	7.312231	7.407144	7.510829
J	6.87655	8.058961	7.17034	6.950165	7.49425	7.149983	6.965646

Chart 1 and Table 3, which express the causal relationships between the variables, actually indicate that each of the criteria is related to which criteria based on the views of the experts. After a thorough review of the research background, the number of each code and MAXQDA output for the indicators are as follows: In Table 4, the sum of the elements of each row is indicated by the expression R, which for each factor indicates the degree of influence of that criterion on other criteria of the model. Accordingly, the institutional criterion has the most influence. In Table 4, the sum of the elements of each column is specified by the expression J, which, for each

factor, indicates the effectiveness of that factor from other factors of the system. Accordingly, sustainable human resources has a high level of effectiveness. The horizontal row of the sum of R+J is the degree of influence and being influenced of the desired factor in the system. (The least and most interactions are specified) In other words, the higher the value of R+J of a factor, the more interaction that factor has with other system factors. Therefore, sustainable human resources criterion has the most interaction with other studied criteria. The vertical vector of J-R shows the rate of being affected of each factor. In general, if the J-R difference is positive, the variable is considered a causal variable, and if it is negative, it is considered an effect. Therefore, economic, sustainable human resources, and environmental indicators are effect and social indicators, environmental sustainability, environmental competitiveness and Institutional indicators are considered causal indicators.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Based on the analysis, it has been determined that the institutional index has the most influence and the sustainable human resources index is greatly affected and sustainable human resources criterion has the most interaction with other studied criteria ,and also, the rest of the criteria have a relationship with each other showing that the criteria are intertwined with each other. The concept of sustainable development based on environmental, social and economic fields is the basis for sustainable tourism (Amerta et al., 2018). The purpose of this article is to investigate the factors affecting Iran's tourism industry with a sustainable development approach, and after analyzing the data, the following suggestions are presented:

5.1. Recommendations for future researchers

According to the research conducted, the following topics are suggested to other researchers who intend to conduct research in the field of sustainable tourism:

- Using other MCDM techniques (multi-criteria decision making) such as VIKOR ELECTRE and comparing the results obtained from different techniques.
- Identifying and prioritizing obstacles to the development of the tourism industry in Iran.
- Paying attention to the hidden issues in tourism that can help the growth and development of this industry in our country.

- Getting into topics related to tourism and exploration so that the researcher can conduct a comprehensive research study.
- Paying attention to the influence of social media operating systems in choosing a tourism destination.
- Innovative word choice to create concepts and categories of sustainable tourism development.
- Trying to localize sustainable tourism development indicators for the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Presenting a comprehensive sustainable development model of the Islamic Republic of Iran, adapted from tourism industry experts.
- Paying attention to the innovative indicators of sustainable tourism development in the framework of the Iranian Islamic model of progress.
- Dealing with the presentation of sustainable tourism development model in order to realize the Iranian Islamic model of progress.

5.2. Recommendation to the government

In order to strengthen and improve the development of sustainable tourism and the results obtained in the research, it is suggested that:

- Given the many capacities in our country in attracting tourists, the tourism industry should become a national brand for Iran.
- Achieving the goal of creating a tourism national brand, even with the continuous efforts of the private sector and the people, will not reach the destination except with the strong support of the government.
- The government's efforts to involve citizens and the private sector in the field of tourism.
- Eliminating obstacles in the entry of investors and tourists to the country.
- Supporting entrepreneurs in the field of tourism and eliminating traditional and tedious paperwork in obtaining a license for this industry.
- Trying to show a positive and valuable mental image of Iran to the people of the world in order to attract tourists.
- Trying to reduce the economic problems in the society and eliminate the class gap that leads to the increase of domestic travel in our country.
- Necessary explanation and training for expert human resources in the country's tourism sector, including government agencies and the private sector (headquarters and security).
- Culture building to deal with foreign tourists and localization of the tourism industry in the country.

- Repairing and revitalizing historical places and preserving and improving the environment and natural attractions.
- Improving the quality of services and products offered to passengers by considering their mood.
- Respecting the rights and establishing the life and financial security of foreign tourists by the tourism police.
- Providing advanced banking services and facilitating the use of international bank cards.
- Strengthening global satellite, radio and television networks.
- Strengthening Iran's position in international affairs with appropriate solutions.

5.3. Recommendation to tourists

- Leave nothing but footprints in nature and take nothing but photos of nature.
- In the tourist routes support local people who have started small businesses with their as much as you can.
- Help the local economy by buying local products. But remember not to buy products made from endangered animals and plants. It is recommended not to buy fossils, soil, coral and even sea shell. It is true that this work can help improve the life of the local community, but in the long run it damages the natural resources. Instead, you can buy local products of local people, such as local handicrafts, local foods, etc.
- In nature, follow paths that have been taken before and be careful not to damage plants, insects, or bird nests while walking.

5.4. Research Limitations

During the research process, the researcher has faced problems and obstacles, some of them were in a situation that was solved by the researcher's efforts, and some of them needed time and help from other people. These obstacles and problems are divided into two parts: limitations within the researcher's control and outside the researcher's control.

- Coordinating with experts for interviews (due to the use of the Delphi technique, we needed to survey them, which was very difficult and time-consuming to determine the time to interview the experts).
- Involvement of respondents' personal opinions in answering questionnaire questions.

- Time limitation for conducting research and lack of financial resources.
- Time-consuming and tedious administrative paperwork for researchers to interview managers.
- Little financial resources and lack of support for researchers by the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts and Cultural Heritage.

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