



## Strategic Planning for Halal Tourism Development in Gilan Province

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**Abstract**

Tourism as a necessity for economic development in many countries, change that into one of the largest service industry and has provided an opportunity and hope for any destination to take advantage of it. It is clear, that without identifying influential factors and strategic planning management using this opportunity will not be plausible. Therefore, in this study we intended to investigate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Halal tourism in Gilan province, by using SWOT model to introduce strategic solutions to further developments. This study is practical based on questionnaire in terms of practical objectives, in terms of data collection. The population of this study was 25 tourism experts, which according to Morgan table, 24 people were selected as sample size. The result of SWOT analysis in this research indicates that strategies for Gilan provinces according its environmental strengths and opportunities should be offensive strategy. Surveys show that due to the diversity of tourist attractions and geographical location of Gilan province, this province has the necessary capabilities to develop Halal tourism.

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## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the most important contemporary human activities associated with the creating major changes in the expression of earth, has created fundamental changes in economic conditions, culture and traditions. Status investigation of areas and homelands where are visited in different seasons every year by tourists show that changes due to tourism are rather significant and more important than the changes resulting from the development of other economic activities. For instance; the equipment needed for tourists such as inns, restaurants and places of amusement, sea coasts, mountainous areas, forest areas have been established around mineral hot springs seem the role of tourism is changing the expression of earth (Seydayi & Hedayati Moghaddam, 2010).

Basically, economic development of each country requires investment in various sectors and economic activities of the country and it cannot be expected to develop production, employment and economic welfare without investment in infrastructure and superstructure projects. To accomplish this principle, today many countries of the world have a strong tendency to attract foreign investment (Ebrahimzadeh et al., 2011).

Today, the tourism industry allocates an important part of economic and productive activities of developed and developing countries to itself as a dynamic and distinctive characteristics and exclusive industry. Investment in tourism infrastructure and potential use of regional powers is one of the best ways to capture tourist. Tourism development as a set of economic activities, has a significant impact in strengthening the economic foundations of societies and the role of tourism has been confirmed in several studies as a source to create employment, generate income, higher tax receipts, attracting foreign exchange and strengthen social infrastructures that give rise to the development of other industries, (Kazemi, 2008).

Iran is one of the most spectacular countries in the world and it is one of the country among the top ten countries in the world in terms of attractions (culture and civilization) and tourism among the first five countries in the world in terms of diversity (natural environment) and tourism among the three countries in the world in terms of diversity of crafts (ZangiAbadi et al., 2006) having many relative advantages, includ-

ing natural resources, biodiversity and exclusive tourist attractions, heritage, four seasons, health care is in the top position in the world, but so far, it has not been benefitted the its economic development program, because of cultural and beliefs restrictions.

According to the World Tourism Organization in 2008, complete attraction growth travel of foreign tourists to the Middle East and visiting the tourist attractions of the region has led this region become the world's fourth largest tourism hub and finally according the latest estimation, about 2.5 millions of people have travelled to Iran in the year 2008. Iran's share in attracting tourists according to width, history, civilization and tourist attractions is insignificant and therefore attracting tourists requires different measures in the field of hardware (such as making facilities) and software (e.g. providing conditions acceptance and familiarity of tourism in the country in dealing with visitors due to cultural differences) and for this reason, some experts refer to tourism as an industry (Hezarjaribi and Najafi, 2010). Gilan province due to the special geographical position and natural resources such as forests and wide sea tourism is one of the tourism hub of Iran. Based on the TES (Ecotourism Society and the WTO), geographical area or a province is split into four groups with attraction of international tourism (foreign visitors), national (domestic passengers) and local (regional passenger zone) and lack of attractions tourism. Gilan in this division is eligible for tourist attractions internationally, nationally, regionally and locally. It can clearly be stated that its places are eligible that attract any traveler's attention with different orientation. Gilan province is one of the northern provinces where is located about 14 thousand square kilometers. This province to 38 degrees and 34 minutes to 36 degrees 27 minutes north latitude and 48 degrees and 53 minutes to 50 degrees 34 minutes east longitude. Gilan province is restricted to the Caspian Sea from the north and Azerbaijan, from the west to Ardabil, Qazvin province in the south, and the east to Mazandran province. From northwest to southeast, 235 km and its width varies from 25 to 105 km. Alborz mountain range with an average height of 3,000 meters is stretched out like a wall in the west and south of Gilan and this region has no other way

except through the valley of Lowshan mountain from the Caspian Sea to the Iranian plateau is the shortest distance (in Havigh) about three kilometers and the most of it by the sea (the Holy Hashem) is about 50 km (Ali Pour Shirsvan and Mohammadi pourKhajany, 2012). The tourism industry in this country and consequently in Gilan province, have limitations. Perhaps the most important limitation is that the tourism industry is still not recognized as a profession. In addition, it can be mentioned to the factors such as lack of infrastructure facilities for the reception of tourists, the lack of detailed plan for tourism services, lack of attention of the authorities and lack of the necessary costs to tourism, not entering the private and cooperative sectors and industry. If evolution in beliefs and approaches and readiness related devices with this industry can have a fundamental role in the development of the tourism industry in the province of Gilan with the consequences of economic, social and cultural rights. Swot nature management technique is relatively new method that is used around the world today. Several studies inside and outside the country have been used this model that we can mention the studies such as Sobhani's researches in 2010 entitled "Understanding the tourism potentials of Ardebil province basement spa using SWOT» that in this study deals with tourism potentials identification in the basement spa in Ardebil Province using SWOT. In this model, assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are the best strategy for ecotourism process of strategic planning. The results of the study indicate that summer especially in August in the area with a cool environment and the mild stimulation bioclimatic conditions is the best strengths to tourism. Coldness intensity in the winter, lack of accommodation for more than one day, the lack of hygiene in the warm waters and lack of parking lot are the region's weaknesses. The most important factor to attract tourists in the basement area, primarily environmental factors, such as appropriate natural outlook and cool weather from May to the end of November and the second is hot water. The results of this study may help the improvement and effective organization of ecotourism in the region. In another study Ganjaliet al. did a study entitled "Environmental planning and strategic

potential of nature tourism in Anzali marsh using analysis of SWOT" in 2014. In this study the systematic review of SWOT was mostly used. In this paper based on field studies and questionnaires (in the Anzali Lagoon and the local population) matrix IFEM factors and EFEM (weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats) influencing the development of nature tourism was drafted in SWOT analysis and strategic assessment of lagoon in WT, ST, WO, SO. Based on the obtained results, the final score 3.22 in IFE matrix showed good condition and strong system of internal tourism development in comparison to internal factors and the final score 2.93 EFE matrix reflects the weak state in comparison to the external factors and could not use foreign factors properly and require planning and organizational management practices are against these factors. The following solution research and action and strategic planning priorities are come up with appropriate environmental and local conditions of Anzali lagoon. Considering the tourism industry and particularly Anzali marsh its leading the initial phases of itself in Iran, the consequences of this environmental survey can help local decision makers in estimating the weaknesses, strengths, threats and opportunities and help grow the tourism industry in the region notably.

Among the collected models, strategies, SWOT model is the most efficient model in the planning of the tourism industry (Nohegar & Hossein Zadeh, 2009) SWOT analysis is based on the logic that effective strategy maximize the strengths and opportunities meanwhile this minimizes its weaknesses and threats. If this simple theory is properly accomplished, it will have a major impact on the selection and design of effective strategies. This method which is used in large amounts in strategic planning recognizes and examines all effective operational environmental factors and the key point is that systematic SWOT analysis on all aspects of the institution position has superiority, as a consequence an efficient and dynamic framework is offered to choose the strategy. According to this current study to follow the answer of basic question is: strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of tourism development in Gilan province and what strategies are chosen in order to develop the

tourism industry in this province? The researcher also attempts to provide an overview of the status of the tourism industry as well as proposed strategies to promote tourism in Gilan considering using the SWOT model.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research in terms of objective is practical and its research method is descriptive. Analysis method in this study consisted of 3 main steps: first, to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the industry Gilan province by members of the faculty of management fields and geography that somehow are familiar with tourism industry decision-making or tourism activity and tourism and cultural heritage managers were interviewed. Then regarding the views of experts and scholars' opinions, the weight of each factor is given. Finally, by adjusting internal and external strategic factors that are the bases of eliciting collected strategy. SWOT matrix is identified for Gilan province and approach of this analysis is presented as a useful strategy. Investigated census society in this research were selected from members of the faculty of management fields and geography that somehow are familiar with tourism industry decision-making or tourism activity and tourism industry for 25 people in the province level whom 24 of them are out of Morgan table. These people have been chosen by available unlikely sampling method.

The internal factors evaluation matrix (IFE): This matrix also includes four columns, the first column of internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) are listed. Then in the second column according to the importance and sensitivity of each factor, significance of coefficients belongs to that factor between zero and one. According to the importance or ordinariness of strength and weakness points in the third column are appropriated ranked 4 or 3 in order (to strengths) and rank 2 or 1 (the weaknesses). In the fourth column, the second column and ranks third column coefficients for each factor are multiplied together to specify the final score of the factors (strengths and weaknesses). If the total in this matrix more than 2.5, it means according to the done forecasts, strengths ahead will overcome weaknesses. If it is less than 2.5, it indicates beating these weak-

nesses over strengths (Erabi, 2006).

External factors evaluation matrix (EFE): The matrix consists of four columns, the first column of Gilan external factors that affect the tourism industry are listed in terms of opportunities and threats. Then in the second column according to the importance and sensitivity of each factor belongs to the factors by comparing these factors (the importance coefficient between zero and one. The third column of the opportunities and threats according to significance or normality orderly is allocated ranking 3 or 4 to the opportunities and ranking 2 or 1 to the threats. In the fourth column, the coefficient of the second column and ranks of the third column are multiplied together for each factor to determine the final score of the factors (opportunities and threats). If the total final score in this matrix is more than 2.5, it means based on matrix of opportunities that lies ahead will beat the threats, if the score is less than 2.5 represents threat beat the opportunities (Kazemizad et al., 2010). In this study, a hierarchical analysis has been used for determining the weight of criteria and model indexes (AHP). First, the main criteria are based on objective have been pair-wise compared. Then pair-wise comparison of each cluster has been carried out from experts' opinion.

## FINDINGS

To provide internal factors evaluation matrix (IFE) the strengths and weaknesses and points are listed and weighting coefficient of each factor using AHP technique has been inserted. It should be noted each criterion weight in each cluster (internal-external) has been made normal. Rating each factor as well as the current situation from the perspective of the strategic has been inserted by management team. To determine each factor final score, the coefficient of each factor is multiplied in its score and the total final score of each factor is calculated to determine the final score of the organization. To prepare external factors evaluation matrix (EFE) is also calculated this procedure.

To specify the organization situation the product scores out from internal factors evaluation matrix external factors evaluation matrix should be placed in its horizontal and vertical dimen-

Table 1: IFE Matrix

Internal Factors	Criteria	Weight	Points Status Quo	Points Weighted
Strengths	Having a strong culture of hospitality	0.087	4	0.3472
	Easy access to attractions across the province	0.081	3	0.2418
	diversity of tourism potentials such as health tourism, hunting, fishing	0.078	3	0.2327
	Benefit from beaches, mountains, forests, wetlands, springs, waterfalls, caves	0.070	3	0.2097
	having border markets	0.060	2	0.1194
	Having air and land easy access to the capital	0.058	3	0.1744
	Having free economic zone areas	0.061	2	0.1215
	Having world class unique cultural and historical attractions	0.062	3	0.1845
	Having Numerous indigenous cultures and customs including festivals, religious celebrations handicrafts , food, music and urban and rural life	0.050	4	0.2020
	Enjoys diversity of agricultural products	0.053	3	0.1592
Weakness	Having protected areas, including national parks, national natural monuments, wildlife refuges,	0.048	2	0.0964
	Located in the Silk Road	0.043	4	0.1731
	Lack of appropriate and standards infrastructure for tourists attraction	0.032	4	0.1276
	Lack of proper informational center in entrances and exits of cities	0.030	3	0.0895
	Non-usable and non-commercial handicraft products	0.031	3	0.0930
	Weakness of planning and investment by the private sector and government	0.025	4	0.1017
	poor quality of road safety and public transportation system in the province.			
	Weakness of marketing activities	0.027	4	0.1061
	Lack of proper and standard tourist facilities	0.024	3	0.0707
	Lack of or poor quality of Complex amenities such as restrooms, parking, and catering facilities on-site attractions	0.020	4	0.0807
	0.022	3	0.0656	
Lack of railroad and low air and seaways capacity	0.022	3	0.0662	
Lack of training centers to train the required manpower for tourism industry	0.018	4	0.0706	

\* The number 13.3 obtained by IFE matrix is represents overcoming strengths against weaknesses.

sions to determine the organization situation in market and appropriate strategies can be specified for it. This matrix which is applicable SWOT matrix and it determine appropriate strategies. It is shown in fig. 1.

The gained results of the internal and external factors evaluation matrix show that the situation is located on the attacking status and the

condition caused internal strengths to overcome internal weaknesses and environmental opportunities over threats. Thus, appropriate strategies for the industry should be used internal strengths to take advantage of environmental opportunities. As the chart above shows the conditions are ready to use attacking strategies.

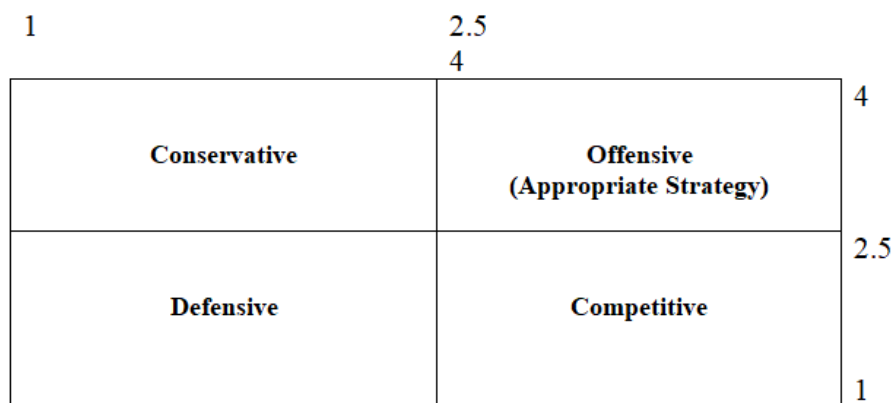


Fig. 1. Matrix analysis of internal and external

Table 2: EFE Matrix

External Factors	Criteria	Weight	Points Status Quo	Points Weighted	
Opportunity	Naming city of Rasht in Gilan prvince as Creative city from UNESCO	0.081	2	0.1626	
	announcing Iran as the first tourist destination in the world in 2016 by National Geographic	0.080	2	0.1609	
	announcing halal tourism as the largest market of the world tourism in 2017 by UNWTO	0.083	3	0.2488	
	Increasing interest of private sector for investment	0.067	2	0.1330	
	Increasing government attention to planning and investment of tourism	0.071	2	0.1419	
	Possibility for attracting international cooperation and collaboration for investment on tourist attraction in Gilan province	0.064	1	0.0639	
	Expandability for divers tourism development such as, ecotourism, health, historical, cultural, sports, village tourism	0.059	1	0.0593	
	Paris agreement on climate change and tourism as a clean industry for sustainable development	0.058	1	0.0581	
	Easy access to capital, Tehran	0.052	3	0.1557	
	Increasing sustainable Job and income for locals	0.051	3	0.1539	
	Increase traffic and noise in the province	0.036	2	0.0729	
	Environmental degradation caused by development projects	0.036	2	0.0715	
	Threats	The rapid growth of tourism development in neighboring countries	0.037	1	0.0371
		The rapid growth of tourism development in neighboring provinces	0.032	2	0.0633
Undermining traditional culture and customs of the local and the loss of some		0.026	2	0.0521	
The conflict between the local community and tourists		0.029	2	0.0587	
The rising cost of land and property		0.030	4	0.1203	
Lack of government cooperation to provide the necessary permits and facilities for the development of tourism projects		0.025	4	0.1003	
Pollution of sea water and the accumulation of garbage on the beach		2.656	1	2.6557	
increase Social conflict by tourist arrivals	0.000	2	0.0000		

\* The number 4.85 obtained by EFE matrix is represents overcoming opportunity against threat.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the obtained results of IFE and EFE matrix that show the position of the province is located in the attacking phase, it means that Gilan has necessary capabilities to develop tourism based on tourism attractions varieties and geographical position. Nohegar and Hossainzadeh (2009) and Ganjali et al. (2014).

Today, we requires strategic view to this industry and long-term plans for making huge profits and long-term exploitation of the tourism industry. According to this and along the preparation for fulfillment the tourism strategy development inside the province, the current study aims to identify the internal factors (strengths and weaknesses), external factors (opportunities and threats) and strategy of tourism development was conducted in Gilan province. Suggested strategies that are offered

according to the strengths and environmental opportunities can help hold food festivals, crafts and globally and attracting tourism, conferences and seminars and distributing advertising brochures inside / outside of the country to make tourists acquainting with the province's facilities and attraction tourist, preparing the theme for the participation of the private sector to invest in tourism sector in the province through the articulation of government policies, receiving taxes procedure, subsidies, bank loans, etc..., using the region's potentials to invest for expanding summer aquaticsports and attracting athlete tourists. It is recommended the further researchers consider this research to conduct separately tourism main spots such as Massooleh historic village, cities such as Bandar Anzali and take into account in a comprehensive format of a study for Gilan province.

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