

## **Investigating the Challenges and Opportunities Affecting Tourism Using SWOT and QPSM Techniques (The Case Study of Galugah District)**

**Zainab Karkehabadi\***

*Associate Professor of Geography and Urban Planning, Semnan Branch,  
Islamic Azad University, Semnan, Iran*

**Khezer Shamsi**

*Ph.D. in Geography and Urban Planning*

---

### **Abstract**

One of the regions which has many potentiality and capabilities for developing Tourism from natural aspect is Galugah county. Unfortunately, Tourism sources are useless due to incorrect programming. Accordingly, general objectives of this research were identifying strong and weak points, opportunity and possible threats for developing Tourism. Also, identifying of current Tourism position and, presenting suitable methods for developing potential capabilities of Tourism in Galugah county were the objectives of present study. The research model was applied and goal oriented and the research method was survey-descriptive. The necessity information was collected through field and library methods. A questionnaire was also used for collecting data. Moreover, techniques of QSPM, SWOT were used to describe the research information. Statistical population samples were selected from authorities' community. Since the authorities were busy people and not always available in Galugah county, only 30 questionnaires were distributed among them. Results analysis of this research showed that among external and internal factors i.e. pollution of environment and river and extinction of plants species under the influence of pollution and O<sub>2</sub> i.e. suitable climate for developing natural Tourism efforts in summer were the most important and influential factors. Cold temperature of the region in summer (W3) and existence of unique amusement places (S5) such as Amarg were recognized as effective and most leading factors among internal factors on Tourism development of Galugah county. Presenting methods of the third process showed that a comparison of total grades for attractiveness of methods and ST3 method i.e. initiating new occupational opportunities on the basis of natural potentials and rich culture of regions inhabitants by protecting region cultural identity and nature had the highest score in this process.

**Keywords: Method, Tourism, SWOT, QSPM**

---

*\*Corresponding author: z.karkehabadi@yahoo.com*

*Received Date: 30 April 2017      Accepted Date: 15 July 2017*

***Date of Print: Spring2018***

### **Introduction**

By entering the “postindustrial” era, the nature of the cities has also undergone major changes. The practical removal of the industry from the cities of developed countries, which began and became popular roughly since the seventies, has been accompanied by the relocation and placement of industries in underdeveloped countries and their replacement with services, activities related to international trade, and tourism (Karkehabadi & Shamsi, 2013: 13). Nowadays, the development of tourism is considered one of the potential capabilities of regional development along with other activities, and studies have shown that there is a positive and significant relationship between the growth and development of tourism industry and the economic growth and development of the countries (Lee, 1995: 50). Ranking of touristic areas is a criterion for determining the infrastructure required and mitigating the inequality between the areas (Law Christopher, 2000: 120). The influences of tourism on the economic development and job creation has made this industry turn into the largest industry worldwide and to have a very significant growth. Such that the World Tourism Organization predicts, by 2020, the number of tourists in the world will reach 1.6 billion (Black & Crabtree, 2007: 1).

In order to be successful in attracting tourists, the development of this industry requires a comprehensive and appropriate plan. This industry is used as a tool for the stimulation of marginal economies and promotion and development (liu & wall, 2006: 115). The tourism development as a collection of economic activities has a significant influence on strengthening economic foundations of societies. The development of this industry causes economic benefits to be gained by societies and affects all levels of the societies (Serraghi et al., 2008: 135). Today, the development of tourism in all areas, both nationally and regionally, and internationally, is attracting the attention of government planners and private companies. The development of this industry in industrialized countries leads to the diversification of

incomes and reduces inconsistencies in the economy, and in developing countries, it is considered an opportunity to do export, generate foreign exchange, and create employment (Hall, 1994: 457). The attractiveness of the destination for tourists usually depends on the physical, environmental, social, and cultural features or the features of the primary tourism products of the destination. Physical and environmental features include weather conditions, landscapes and the environment, and social and cultural features include history, politics, art, economic activities, lifestyle, monuments, individual buildings, and the environment (Benur & Bramwell, 2015: 213).

This industry has major achievements that among them the employment aspect and its impact on the developmental and socio-economic operations in the region or country could be mentioned (Holjevac, 2003: 2). The features and characteristics of the tourist attractions in a country or region provide the foundation for the development of tourism. Therefore, in order to provide a suitable basis for the development of tourism, identifying the attractions in the first step and planning for their development in the later steps seems necessary (Behzadfar & Zamanian, 2007: 1).

In this regard, the direct impacts resulted from tourism, by accounting for about 6% of gross global production, is an indication of the allocation of one job to this industry from every 15 jobs in the near future, and if the indirect effects and benefits are also taken into account, about 10% of the gross global product and one job for every nine jobs will be in this industry (Hosseini, 2006:1). Therefore, based on this we can succeed in the area of attracting foreign tourists and tourism development by providing appropriate policies, and answer many of the problems and difficulties that today's society is confronted with, and find some strategies and solutions for them.

In his speech at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Tourism Investment Conference in Tehran, Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), stated that the international tourism revenue in 2007 was \$856 billion, showing an increase of 5.6% compared to 2006 (<http://wto.com>), which eventually, in 2008, the number of international tourists had reached 924 million tourists, showing a 2% increase compared to the year 2007 (<http://Unwto.com>). According to estimates by the World Tourism Organization, about 76.7 million jobs

worldwide are directly related to this industry. If the indirect economic jobs are also added to them, this amount will reach to about 234 million (Benmecheri and Veirier, 2007: 19). Due to the increase in the number of tourists, naturally, the tourism revenue in 2010 will reach to about \$ 1 billion, and in 2020 it will reach about \$ 2 trillion (Serraghi et al., 2008: 135). While the many attractions of this industry in Iran, despite having very little role in the national economy plays (Meshkini & Heidari, 2011: 39).

Being an all-season country, Iran is one of the unique countries in the world in the field of tourism. Utilizing this opportunity requires exploitable planning. One of the approaches that are useful for the development of the tourism industry is to better identify the strengths and capabilities of the places with potentials and to carefully plan to utilize these capabilities and to attract even more tourists (Fazilnia, 2010: 46). This is while, despite having a lot of attractions, this industry plays a minor role in the economy of Iran, therefore, an insignificant share of the revenues of this industry has been enjoyed by this country (Towllaey, 2006: 6). Such that, according to reports and articles that were published in the press on the promotion of the level and growth of the tourism industry in Iran, the reality is that the tourism industry in Iran is not growing well in comparison with other countries in the world.

Galugah County is located in the most eastern part of Mazandaran province on the northern slopes of the Alborz mountain ranges. The area of this county is 396.12 km<sup>2</sup> and the city has an area of 400 km<sup>2</sup>. The county of Galugah, which has been studied in this research, has a pristine nature, quiet beaches, rivers with abundant water, natural landscapes, and numerous springs that fascinate the eyes of any spectator. All these capabilities and potentials, plus considering the location of the county on the pilgrimage route to the Imam Reza shrine in the holy city of Mashhad, can provide a quiet, safe and pleasant place for tourists. But despite this, unfortunately, the county struggles with many difficulties due to the lack of necessary infrastructure for the development and prosperity. In this regard, efforts are made to explore the tourism potential of the Galugah County and to provide a specific plan for enhancing tourism activities in this region.

In this research, we first tried to explore and recognize the potential capabilities of the county of Galugah, and then, to provide strategic planning of tourism development based on attractions and potentials, and by using decision-making models and techniques such as (SWOT) and (QSPM). With the study of the county of Galugah and strategic planning for the development of tourism, this hope is not beyond the reach that by strategic planning, the conditions for the development of the tourism industry is provided and these conditions, in turn, provide the ground for the socioeconomic growth and development; in this regard, this research intends to examine and answer the questions posed below.

- 1- What are the most important internal and external factors affecting the development of tourism in the Galugah county?
2. How is the tourism situation in the Galugah County?
- 3- What are the proper strategies for the development of tourism in Galugah County?

**Definitions, Concepts, Theoretical Foundations:**

Tourism is a comprehensive and extensive concept whose history dates back to 1811 or earlier, and its definition is still undergoing alterations and changes. It is a full range economic activity that includes hundreds of business enterprises, some of which are huge, but the majority of them are small (Landberg, 1995: 7). Considering the fact that today the tourism economy has become one of the most profitable ways of business and income generation for developed and developing countries', achieving this important goal and other benefits of the development of tourism industry requires the development of the infrastructure necessary for the tourism economy in the country. In order to achieve this, it is important to avoid ambitious plans and to content with providing a viewpoint with the title of planning viewpoint; this viewpoint seeks to manage to create a balanced situation in terms of cost and revenue in micro processes and macro processes of the tourism economy. In the cities worldwide, the accumulation of an economy based on the urban knowledge means a point in which knowledge is transformed into production, and this is creative development in experiences and products for tourism (Ashworth & Page, 2011: 1).

With regard to the development of tourism, different viewpoints have been presented. Amongst the important viewpoints in this regard we can mention the following:

**A) A positive Viewpoint:** According to this view, tourism as an industry can play an important role in reducing the economic problems of the country or regions. The main emphasis of this viewpoint is on the full-scale support of the government of the tourism industry and the creation of infrastructures for attracting tourists, and in this regard, it is necessary to adopt the necessary legislation.

**B) The Breakup Viewpoint (Negative):** It can be said that this view has in fact been raised in contrast with the positive supportive viewpoint. The proponents of this viewpoint believe that tourism projects and plans will put all the cultural possessions of the society at the service of money and foreign exchange revenues, and this income is earned at an extortionate price. That is why they show resistance and negative reaction to the tourism ideas and plans.

**C) Oversight Viewpoint:** According to this viewpoint, the development of tourism should be governed by government oversight; otherwise it would be contrary to the foundations for sustainable development and conservation of natural, historical, cultural and human resources of the countries.

**D) Adaptability Viewpoint:** According to this viewpoint, governments should attempt to adopt some kind of adaptation and compatibility between the collective interests and the development of tourism by adopting appropriate tourism policies for their country, and coordinate tourism with the interests and benefits of the country.

**E) Knowledge-based Viewpoint:** In this viewpoint, the political decisions on tourism development are adopted based on scientific studies and research, and logical courses are designed according to the scientific evaluation of the results of the development of tourism. It was based on this view that the discipline of tourism was raised as an independent scientific discipline in the world.

**F) The Sustainable Tourism Development Viewpoint:** The concept of sustainable tourism involves the observation of the needs of current tourists and the host community while maintaining and increasing the opportunities for future generations. This concept is associated with

maintaining natural resources with long-term planning for these resources and sharing the existing resources with future generations.

In general, there are many definitions associated with the sustainable tourism, while most of the definitions provided are based on the definition of sustainable development. It seems that all definitions of sustainable tourism and many other definitions of sustainable tourism have broadly used the provisions contained in the definition of the sustainable development of the Brundtland Commission. However, if we are to provide a simple and comprehensive scheme of the collection of elements associated with the definition of sustainable tourism development, we should consider the following three components:

A) Economic efficiency; b) environmental protection; c) social justice. Tourism has a lot of positive and negative consequences that should be considered in the planning for the development of tourism. Amongst these consequences we can mention the economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental impacts consequences; therefore, since the late 1980s, the development of tourism has moved from an economy driven development to an ever more sustainable development. Sustainable development is the ideal point for the efforts made by the tourism industry in the 21st century (Jayawardena et al., 2008:265).

It can be said that the development of tourism is associated with improving the quality of life of the local residents, and the study of the relationship between these two over the past few years has attracted countless attention. Also, it is an accepted fact that the long-term success of the development of tourism is achieved when the views of local residents in the approach towards development are taken into account; therefore, the integration of tourism development planning and the management with the planning for the development of local communities is a priority and, in this respect, the perception of the development of tourism from the point of view of local residents and authorities gives us a deeper understanding of the purpose of the achievement of sustainable development (Woo et al., 2015: 84). Of course, the development of tourism is largely dependent on the natural environment; and this situation can act as a double-edged sword; that is, on the one hand, it could increase the economic growth and, on the

other hand, if the proper planning is not done, it can cause the pollution of environmental and environmental damages. Accordingly, for the rapid development of tourism, it is necessary to implement development methods based on a sustainable method while maintaining the high quality of the environment through the coordination of tourism and the environment (Tang, 2015: 11). Although the man-made environment, with the reliance on special natural conditions, cultural-historical and social situation and locations, and potential climatic conditions, indicates the motivation of tourists for traveling, on the other side there will be no clean and unchanged environment without high-quality tourists (Stefănica & Butnaru, 2015: 595). Therefore, in order to determine the status and capacity of tourism destinations, and also to determine the opportunities and threats existing in the environment that affect the achievement of the outlook, the analysis of the environment is addressed and dealt with. The environment analysis involves monitoring, evaluating and publishing the information about the internal and external environments of a collection; environmental analyzes will allow the collection to accurately and objectively identify its special merits and competitive weaknesses. Through this analyses and information resulted from them, managers can invest in line with the completion of competitive opportunities and reduce barriers and threats and, consequently, their impacts. The main message of the analysis of the environment is to progress and move forward based on strengths, minimize weaknesses and provide improvable backgrounds, seize opportunities and counteract threats (Mousavi et al., 2016: 2-3).

### **Research Methodology**

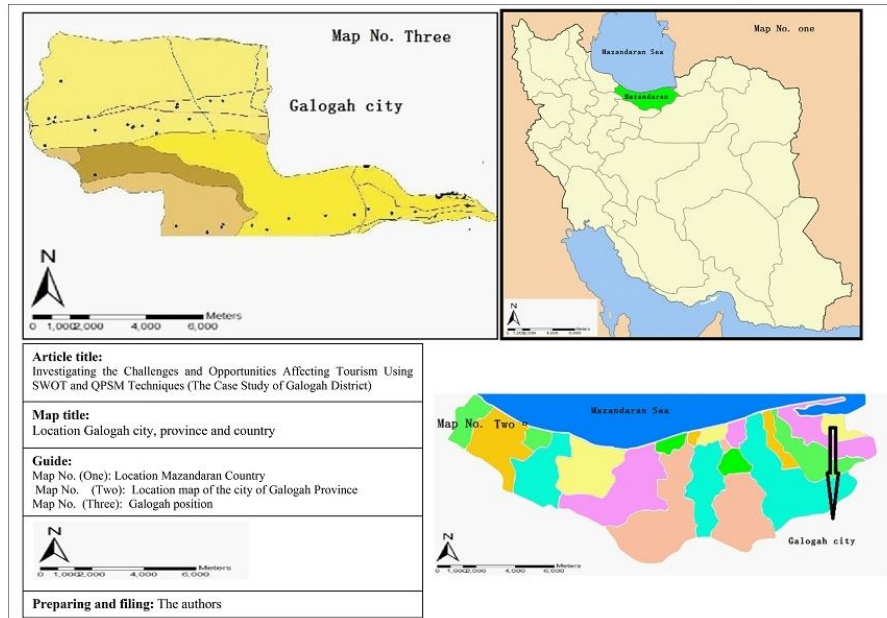
Depending on the subject of the research, the research questions and objectives, there are different research methods. Since this research aims to evaluate the development of potential tourism capabilities of the county of Galugah, therefore, the pattern of the research can be stated as applied and goal oriented, and the research method governing the research can be expressed as survey-descriptive. Documentation and library studies have been used to first collect the information. In the next stage, field studies were performed through direct observation, photographing and interviewing the officials of the



county of Galugah and, finally, designing and compiling a questionnaire was carried out. In the next step, after the completion of the questionnaire by statistical population samples, the questionnaire data were analyzed and described using SWOT and QSPM techniques. By using these techniques, the development strategies for the potential capabilities of tourism in the county of Galugah were implemented in a three-step process, including input, comparative or adaptive, and decision-making steps.

#### **The Area under Study**

With an area of about 396.12 km<sup>2</sup>, the county of Galugah accounts for about 1.7% of the total area of Mazandaran province. The county is located in the most eastern part of the province and is limited from the north to the Gulf of Gorgan, from the south and west to the county of Behshahr, and from the east to the county of Kordkuy in Golestan province; and with the geographical coordinates of 37° 43' 37" N, 53° 48' 31" E, on the northern slopes of Bardena and Sharshari Mountains and on the road from Behshahr to Gorgan. The Gorgan Gulf is located 5 kilometers north of this city. The slopes of the southern heights of the city are covered with dense forests. The Neka River also flows 14 kilometers south of the city in an east-west direction. The county of Galugah, with its center, the city of Galugah, is one of the 17 counties of Mazandaran province that is located in the eastern end of the province. The county is bounded by the Caspian Sea to the north, the Behshahr County to the west and south and Golestan province to the east. The city of Galugah is the only urban area in this county. In the general census of population and housing in 1335, Galugah has been referred to as one of the administrative villages of Behshahr, but since the census of 1966 onwards, Galugah has been introduced as an urban area. From 1966 to 2005, Galugah was one of the urban areas of the Behshahr county and the center of the district of Galugah administered by the aforementioned county. In the year 2005, the county of Galugah was established with two districts and 4 rural areas (Dehestan), with the city of Galugah as its center. The districts of this city in the order of area are the central district and Kolbad district and its rural areas including East Kolbad, West Kolbad, Tuska Cheshmeh, and Azadegan, consist of 26 rural settlements. (Map number 1)



**Map1. Geographic location of the area under study with respect to the city, province, and country**

## Analysis and Presentation of Findings

### The Tourism Potentials of the County of Galugah

The city of Galugah is composed of the two words of “Galu” meaning “rose water” and “Gah” that is a postfix meaning “location” or “place”. Galugah is situated in a region which used to be known as Kabudjama in the early Islamic era and literally means the location of rose water. "This city is, in fact, the successor to the historic city of “Namiah”, which after “Tamisha” in this region was the largest city in the first century AH." There are the historic mound of Geravdin in the northwest, Kolbad trench in the east, and the remains of Shah-Abbasi road in the south of Galugah, which through the path of lush forests, springs, waterfalls, and magnificent and beautiful mineral water springs it is bounded by the Sharshari Mountains and it also of special historical and archaeological importance. Also, historically, the fate of two dynasties of the Iranian historical dynasties has been figured out in this region. From amongst the spectacular attractions of Galugah we can mention the quiet coastline of Galugah, the Tuska-Cheshmeh (alder fountain), Kharbozeh-Cheshmeh and Evan-Cheshmeh, the scenic views of the villages of Niala, Barikela, Cheshmeh Mohammad Behy and Abkhorra can be mentioned as other beautiful and

mountainous places in the county of Galugah, which are very beautiful and spectacular and can attract many tourists; in Table 1, a complete list of the general tourist attractions of the county of Galugah has been presented.

**Table 1: The List and general specifications of the tourist attractions in the county of Galugah**

Row	Name attraction	Kind	Highlights and absorbent	Location of deployment	Type of Activity
1	Beach of Galugah	Natural	Galugah is located 20 kilometers east of Behshahr in the eastern tip of Mazandaran province on the Gorgan-Mashhad Transit route, and the beautiful Gorgan Bay is 4 kilometers north of the small town of Golghah. It is used for the constant relaxation of the water and the shallow depth for swimming and skiing on the water. It is one of the best places to ski.	Galugah	Recreational
2	TuskachshmeH spring and Ykhchalsar	Natural	This spring is located 23 kilometers south of the city of Galugah, and on the road to Damghan and among the forest and mountainous lands and adjacent to the asphalt road above. Because of the abundant water, the temperate weather of summer and beautiful forest lands has always been used by countless tourists.	Southern Galugah	Recreational
3	Melons Springs	Natural	This spring with cool, fresh water 25 kilometers south of the Galugah and 7 kilometers from the village Mhdyrjh and is located in the heart of the forest. Beautiful nature, country weather, forest and mountains are one of the reasons for attracting tourists to the area. The Miancale Peninsula, 15 km away, is one of the most important attractions in this area.	Southern Galugah	Recreational
4	Imamzadeh White wells	Ancient and historical	The white wells are the first Muslim cemetery in Iran. "Villagers and residents of about 44 villages with white wells in the center" believe that the white soil is like the territory of Wadi Salam, and keeps the body healthy for years. Now in the center of the White Chah village, the shrine of three Imamzadeh of the children Imam Musa Kazem is located.	Southern Galugah	Recreation and pilgrimage

Source (Writers, 2016)

### **An Explanation of the Process of the Compilation of Tourism Development Strategies in Galugah**

The SWOT technique is used to provide strategies in this research. This technique is a tool for identifying the threats and opportunities present in the external environment of a system and recognizing its internal weaknesses and strengths for the purpose of the evaluation of the status and compilation of a strategy for guiding and controlling that system. The purpose of using this technique is to create a conceptual framework for performing a systematic analysis for the harmonization of the strengths and weaknesses of a system with the opportunities and threats existing in the external environment. The SWOT technique is formed by a combination of techniques that deal

with the analysis of the internal factors and external environment of the organizations. The SWOT matrix is relevant at various stages of the presentation of the strategies from the stage of the analysis of the situation to the compilation and development of the strategy. The steps for providing strategies are: Initiating the process and reaching an agreement on its content, determining and identifying the orders, clarifying missions and values, evaluating the external environment (opportunities and threats), evaluating the internal environment (weaknesses and strengths), identifying the strategic issues, setting strategies for managing strategic issues, and developing a working and effective viewpoint for the future. These eight steps should lead to the implementation of conclusion and evaluation (Behzadfar & Zamanian, 2008: 90). Important strategies for the compilation of strategies can be fitted into a three-step framework, including the information entry step, the comparison step, and the decision-making step. The first step of the framework for the compilation of strategies includes the internal and external factors evaluation matrix and the competition evaluation matrix. In the first step, which is called the information entry step, the basic information needed to compile the strategies is identified. In the second step, called the adaptation or comparison step, attention is paid to a variety of possible strategies, and, for this purpose, some kind of balance is established between the internal and external factors (Shabani, 2011: 61). The techniques used in the second step include the threats, opportunities, weaknesses, and strengths (TOWS) matrix, and the strategic position and action evaluation (SPACE) matrix. In the third step, which is called the decision-making stage, only a unique method, that is the quantitative strategic planning (QSPM) matrix, is used. In the aforementioned matrix, the information provided in the first step is used in order to be able to evaluate and judge different types of feasible strategies identified in the second step, in an objective manner and without imposing personal preferences. The strategic planning matrix identifies the relative attractiveness of different strategies and thus provides an objective basis for selecting specific strategies. In applying all methods belonging to the strategy development analysis framework, we need to consider the integrity of intuitive judgments and logical analyzes (Ibid, 62).

**The first step (data entry step):** Includes the evaluation of the external environment and the evaluation of the internal environment. The small decisions made at the input step allow the planners to develop different strategies in an effective way. Identifying the content and evaluating the nature of information can be considered as the most important activity in this section.

**External Factor Evaluation (EFE) and Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) Matrices**

Strategic planners can evaluate the economic, social, cultural, ecological, environmental, and political factors using external and internal factors evaluation matrices. External opportunities and threats mean economic, social, cultural, ecological, environmental, political, competitive, physical and other events and processes that can benefit or cost the region to a great extent in the future. Opportunities and threats are largely out of control, that is why the terms external is used for them. However, the internal factor evaluation matrix is the result of a strategic assessment of the internal factors of the system. This matrix compiles and evaluates the main internal strength and weakness point of the system. It should be pointed out that these external factors and internal factors are the same as the questions of the questionnaire in the form of opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses affecting the development of tourism in the county of Galugah, which the importance of these factors has been determined based on the opinions of the respondents (Roberts & sykes, 1999, 20-26). (Tables number 2 and 3)

**In the second step,** the total score of each of the external factors (opportunity and threat) and each of the internal factors (strength and weakness) is calculated by equation (1) based on the responses given by the respondents in the Likert scale.

$R_{ij}$  = Score of factor J in group I Equation (1) Score of factors=  $(S_i F_i R_{ij})$

$S_i$  = Five-level Likert scoring

$F_i$  = Frequency of selections

$Y_{ij}$  = Final score of factor J in group I Equation (2) Normalized coefficient of factors: =  $(R_{ij} / (R_{ij})) Y_{ij}$

**Table 2: External factors influencing the tourism sector of the county of Galugah**

Opportunities	threats
O1 Use of natural resources for tourism development and introduction of the sector as one of the major poles of tourism in Mazandaran.	T1 Destruction of attractions and the environment due to the accumulation and disposal of waste materials and the excessive entry of tourists to the region.
O2 Existence of suitable weather for the development of natural tourism activities in summer.	T2 contamination of the environment and rivers and the destruction of plant and animal species due to contamination.
O3 allows for the development of tourism and the development of recreational activities such as mountain biking and mountain climbing competitions in different seasons.	T3 Increased fossil fuel consumption due to regional cold.
O4 Strengthening and developing infrastructure and road traffic.	T4 Natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, mountain landslides and landslides).
O5 Use of participation and interaction between public institutions and government agencies to protect nature and improve the status of tourism.	T5 Inappropriate disposal of domestic waste, production and workshop.
O6 Attention to handicrafts and customs and the protection of cultural heritage.	T6 Road accidents and damage to tourists.
O7 An appropriate field for economic growth and development based on nature tourism.	T7 Destruction of native culture and cultural mixing due to the arrival of diverse cultural tourists.
O8 The establishment of a sand Factory, and artisan workshop could pave the way for sustainable revenues.	T8 Non-construction of residential centers by private sector.
O9 Increase Native Employment by Entering Tourists.	T9 Non-Investment in the Public Sector for Residential Equipments and Tourism.
O10 Cultivation of medicinal plants through the formation of cooperatives.	T10 Decrease in state budget for tourism development.
O11 Increased support of authorities to planning in the tourism sector of the city of Galugah with regard to its high naturalistic capabilities.	T11 Tonnage of the dam under construction leads to the collection of a large portion of surface water.
O12 Creates the necessary ground for raising the level of human resources to raise awareness of indigenous inhabitants about tourism issues.	T12 An influx of urban tired people from infected cities and unfettered development by these human factors.
	T13 Unlawful Hunters Risk of Destruction of Species.
	T14 Dam construction and damage to the region's eco-tourism.
	T15 Provides timely and appropriate relief to tourists who have been traumatized and natural.

Source (Research findings, 2016)

**Table 3: Internal factors influencing the tourism sector of the county of Galugah**

Strengths	weaknesses
S1 located in a region with good weather.	W1 High heights and steep slopes.
S2 Beautiful landscapes and protected areas with wildlife and varied vegetation.	W2 snow slopes and falling snow fall.
S3 Existence of a specific natural environment (rivers, rivers, springs, rare species and plant species with therapeutic properties).	W3 Winter Highland Winter Cooling.
S4 Attractions and sports such as mountain climbing and biking.	W4 Hazardous mountain road.
S5 There is unique hotspots such as the Alley of Tuscany Springs and the Gulf of Gorgan.	W5 Deficiency and inadequacy of facilities and facilities.
S6 nature is unique and its kind is unique and there are morphological forms.	W6 The poor public transportation and low quality of the roads are due to the mountainous nature of the area.
S7 Infrastructure development, including gas, electricity and telecommunications.	W7 Failure to observe some cultural and health issues by tourists (waste disposal at rangelands and rivers).
S8 Attractions and historical monuments such as old baths and white cemetery wells ...	W8 Destruction of agricultural lands and the release of waste by tourists.
S9 is the culture and knowledge of the people of this region, such as the presence of poets and writers in this region.	W9 There is not enough environmentally-minded people in protected areas.
S10 places of honor such as Imamzadeh Bibi Zeinab and ...	W10 Lack of Health Centers.
S11 To bring residents to fish with healthy and appropriate environmental conditions.	W11 Do not installs tourists guide boards.
S12 is free to visit natural attractions.	W12 Inappropriate advertising and lack of proper introduction of attractions.
S13 The presence of young people as active labor forces.	W13 Changing the use of agricultural land and land stock exchange.
S14 Approval of the implementation of the tourism plan of the city of Galugah.	

Source (Research findings, 2016)

**In the third step**, we calculate the normalized coefficient of each of the external factors and the internal factors by means of equation (2). The normalized coefficient or score indicates the relative importance of a factor. In other words, a normalized coefficient closer to one indicates the score of that factor is higher and its importance from the viewpoint of the respondents is more, and vice-versa, a normalized coefficient closer to zero indicates the score of that factor is lower and its importance from the viewpoint of the respondents is less. At the end, the sum of the normalized coefficients of the internal factors separately and the external factors separately each should be equal to one.

**In the fourth step**, from the internal factors and external factors evaluation matrix a ranking or score of one to four is given to each of the factors that contribute to the development of tourism. These numbers show the level of impact that each factor has on improving the performance of the tourism of Galugah; number 4 means the impact is great, number 3 means the impact is higher than moderate, number 2 means the impact is moderate, and number 1 means that the impact is weak. These rankings are determined according to the effectiveness of the strategies of the system. **In the next step**, the normalized coefficient of each factor is multiplied by the corresponding rank or score in order to obtain the **final score**. At this step, by adding up the final score of each of the factors of (opportunity, threat), the total score of the external factors is obtained and by adding up the total score of each of the factors of (strength, weakness) (Table 4), the total score of the internal factors (Table 5) is obtained; and in the end, the total score of each of the external factors individually and each of the internal factors individually does not reach over four and less than one.

**Table 4: External factors evaluation matrix in the population of authorities**

Indicators	External factors				
	Authorities				
		Total points	Normalized score	Score	Final Score
environmental	O1	118	0.039	4	0.156
	O2	128	0.042	4	0.170
	O3	119	0.039	4	0.158
Physical Infrastructure	O4	121	0.040	4	0.160
Socio-cultural	O5	118	0.039	2	0.078
	O6	117	0.039	2	0.078
economic	O7	116	0.038	2	0.077
	O8	125	0.041	3	0.124

	O9	124	0.041	3	0.123
Managerial	O10	120	0.040	2	0.080
Institutional	O11	117	0.039	3	0.116
	O12	125	0.041	2	0.083
environmental	T1	97	0.032	3	0.096
	T2	130	0.043	4	0.172
	T3	120	0.040	3	0.119
	T4	99	0.033	3	0.098
	T5	107	0.035	3	0.106
Physical Infrastructure	T6	123	0.041	3	0.122
Socio-cultural	T7	101	0.033	2	0.067
	T8	91	0.030	1	0.030
economic	T9	84	0.028	1	0.028
	T10	98	0.032	1	0.032
	T11	103	0.034	2	0.068
Managerial	T12	118	0.039	1	0.039
Institutional	T13	120	0.040	3	0.119
	T14	102	0.034	2	0.068
	T15	94	0.031	2	0.062
Total			1		2.63

Source (Research findings, 2016)

**Table 5: Internal factors evaluation matrix in the population of authorities**

Indicators	Internal factors				
	Authorities				
	Total points	Normalized score	Score	Final Score	
environmental	S1	127	0.041	4	0.162
	S2	118	0.038	4	0.151
	S3	121	0.039	4	0.154
	S4	109	0.035	3	0.104
	S5	130	0.041	4	0.166
	S6	120	0.038	4	0.153
Physical Infrastructure	S7	121	0.039	2	0.077
	S8	102	0.033	2	0.065
Socio-cultural	S9	104	0.033	2	0.066
	S10	112	0.036	2	0.071
	S11	125	0.040	2	0.080
economic	S12	124	0.040	2	0.079
	S13	106	0.034	2	0.068
Managerial Institutional	S14	118	0.038	2	0.075
environmental	W1	120	0.038	3	0.115
	W2	111	0.035	3	0.106
	W3	134	0.043	4	0.171
Physical Infrastructure	W4	121	0.039	3	0.116
	W5	118	0.038	2	0.075
	W6	125	0.040	3	0.120
Socio-cultural	W7	117	0.037	2	0.075
	W8	100	0.032	1	0.032
	W9	102	0.033	1	0.033
Managerial	W10	112	0.036	2	0.071
Institutional	W11	109	0.035	1	0.035
	W12	108	0.034	1	0.034
	W13	121	0.039	2	0.077
Total			1		2.53

Source (Research findings, 2016)

**In the final step** and after forming the internal and external factors evaluation matrices, according to the final score obtained from each of the internal (Table 6) and the external (Table 7) factors, we prioritize



them separately from the top to low score. Naturally, if the final score of a factor is higher, it will be placed at a higher priority, and if the final score of a factor is lower, it will be placed in a lower priority; in the end, the tourism development strategies of the county of Galugah have been categorized and presented in Table 8.

**Table 6: Prioritization of external factors based on final score**

Opportunity Points and Threats	Agent code	Final Score	Priority factors
Contamination of the environment and water of rivers and the destruction of plant and animal species due to pollution.	T2	0.172	1
Existence of suitable weather for the development of natural tourism activities in summer.	O2	0.170	2
Strengthening and developing infrastructure and road traffic.	O4	0.160	3
The possibility of developing tourism and expanding leisure activities such as climbing, cycling and winter sports, and ...	O3	0.158	4
Use of natural resources for tourism development and introduction of the sector as one of the major tourist hubs.	O1	0.156	5
Setting up a sand production workshop could create a sustainable basis.	O8	0.124	6
Increasing indigenous employment with the arrival of tourists.	O9	0.123	7
Road accidents and loss of life to tourists.	T6	0.122	8
Increased use of fossil fuels due to severe regional cold.	T3	0.119	9
The existence of illegitimate hunters threatens the elimination of animal species.	T13	0.119	10
Increasing the support of the authorities to planning in the tourism sector of the city of Golghah with regard to its high nature conservation capabilities.	O11	0.116	11
Inadequate disposal of domestic and industrial waste water and workshop.	T5	0.106	12
Natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, mountain landslides and landslides).	T4	0.098	13
Destruction of attractions and the environment due to the accumulation and disposal of waste materials and the excessive entry of tourists.	T1	0.096	14
Establishing the ground for enhancing the level of human resources to raise awareness of indigenous inhabitants about tourism issues.	O12	0.083	15
Treating medicinal plants through the formation of cooperatives.	O10	0.080	16
Use of participation and interaction between public institutions and state institutions to protect the nature and improve the status of tourism.	O5	0.078	17
Attention to Handicrafts and Adaptersum and the Protection of Cultural Heritage.	O6	0.078	18
A suitable ground for economic growth and development based on nature tourism.	O7	0.077	19
The drainage of the dam under construction leads to a large part of the fertile meadows underwater.	T11	0.068	20
Making dam and damaging the region's eco-tourism.	T14	0.068	21
The disappearance of indigenous culture and cultural mixing by the arrival of diverse cultural tourists.	T7	0.067	22
Lack of timely and appropriate relief to tourists who have experienced natural disasters.	T15	0.062	23
The influx of urban tired people from the air polluted by cities and the unproductive development of these human factors.	T12	0.039	24
Reducing government funding for tourism development.	T10	0.032	25
The lack of construction of residential centers by the private sector.	T8	0.03	26
The lack of public sector investment in residential equipment and tourism.	T9	0.028	27

Source (Research findings, 2016)

**Table 7: Prioritization of internal factors based on final score**

Opportunity Points and Threats	Agent code	Final Score	Priority factors
The severe snowfall in the snowy mountains in winter.	W3	0.171	1
There are unique hotspots, such as the alley of the alder fountain	S5	0.166	2
Being in an area with good weather.	S1	0.162	3
The existence of a particular natural environment (rivers, rivers, springs, rare species and plant species with therapeutic properties).	S3	0.154	4
The nature of nature is unique in its kind and the presence of morphological forms.	S6	0.153	5
Beautiful landscapes and protected areas with a variety of wildlife and vegetation.	S2	0.151	6
The poor public transportation and low quality of roads are often due to the mountainous nature of the area.	W6	0.120	7
Hazardous mountain roads in the city of Galugah.	W4	0.116	8
High heights and steep slopes.	W1	0.115	9
Snowy slopes and exposed snow fall.	W2	0.106	10
Recreational and sports attractions such as climbing and cycling.	S4	0.104	11
Bringing residents to fish with healthy and appropriate environmental conditions.	S11	0.080	12
Free to visit natural attractions.	S12	0.079	12
Development of infrastructure such as gas, electricity and telecommunication systems.	S7	0.077	14
Land use change and land bourgeois.	W13	0.077	15

Approval of the implementation of the tourism plan of the city of Galugah.	S14	.075	16
Lack of facilities and facilities.	W5	0.075	17
Failure to adhere to some cultural and health issues by tourists (dumping of residues at rangelands and rivers.	W7	0.075	18
Mubarak places like Imamzadeh Bibi Zeinab and ...	S10	0.071	19
Lack of health centers.	W10	0.071	20
Presence of young people as active labor force.	S13	0.068	21
The culture and knowledge of the peoples of this region, such as the presence of poets and writers in this region.	S9	0.066	22
Attractions and historic buildings such as the white cemetery of wells and old castles and ...	S8	0.065	23
No installation of tourist guides.	W11	0.035	24
Inappropriate advertising and lack of proper introduction of attractions	W12	0.034	25
Lack of sufficient shelter in protected areas.	W9	0.033	26
Destruction of agricultural lands and the release of waste by tourists.	W8	0.032	27

Source (Research findings, 2016)

**Table 8: Tourism development strategies of the Galugah County**

Offensive Strategies (SO)	Revision Strategy (WO)
So1- Investing more and more emphasis on historical, cultural and religious places and beautify these places to attract more tourists. (s8 -s9 -s10 -o6)	Wo1- Adaptation and development of communication network, due to the weakness of the communication network and the expansion of public transportation in this region.
So2- Creating the motive for traveling to the nature that travels to this area through the construction of recreational and service spaces (s1 -s2 -s3 -s5 -s6-o1 -o2)	Wo2- Review of advertisements and awareness-raising activities in the media and the creation of websites for the proper introduction of attractions, naturalistic, religious and cultural capabilities of the city of Galugah (w4 -w6 -o4)
So3- The proper use of natural attractions and potentials as the main tourist destination of the city of Galugah (s1 -s2 -s3 -s5 -s6 -o1 -o2)	Wo3- Improvement and promotion of tourism products and joint investment of public-private sector (w5 -o1- o5 -o7 -o11)
So4- Development of tourism resources and establishment of nature tourism tours in the city of Haloogh (s2 -s3 -s5 -s6 -o1-o2 -o4)	Wo4- Conducting training courses on educating knowledgeable guides about the tourism capability of these areas with regard to the high capacity of nature tourism in it. (w11 -w12 -o1 -o2 -o7)
So5- Use of the region's potential for expanding mountain sports and climbing and attracting sports tourists (s1 -s2 -s3 -s4- s5 -s6 -o1 -o2 -o3)	Wo5- Regulations for protecting the environment and revision of the land regulations for exploitation and use of various parts of it for the general public, as well as the prevention of land bourgeoisie. (w8 -w13 -o1-o2 -o11)
Competitive strategy and diversity (ST)(	Defensive Strategies (WT)
St1- Development of information network and informational and educational services for tourism in the degradation of the natural environment of the city of Galugah. (s2 -s3 -s5 -s6-t1 -t2 -t5)	Wt1- Considering the negative effects of tourism development and trying to minimize these impacts. (w7-w8 -w13 -t1-t2-t5-t11 -t7 -t12 -t14)
St2- increased funding for development of executive tourism attractions. (s1- s2 -s3 -s4 -s5 -s6 -t10)	Wt2- Promoting the level of health in the region and the development of health centers in the city of Galugah. (w7-w10 -t5 -t6-t15)
St3- Creating new job opportunities based on the natural potential and rich culture of the natives of the region with the aim of preserving the nature and cultural identity of the region. (s9 -s8 s10 -s13- -t1 t2- t14 - t11- t7-t5)	Wt3- Organizing meetings and seminars for nature development by the responsible organizations and creating special facilities and privileges for investment in the construction of hotels, residential complexes and recreational facilities. (s5 -w11-w12-t8-t9-t10)
St4 -Preventing environmental degradation and vegetation and eliminating animal species. (s2 -s3- s5- s6 -t1 -t2-t5 -t11 -t13 -t14)	Wt4- Establishing regulations and regulations in the field of management development and implementation and implementation of short-term and long-term plans to prevent damage to the nature of the city of Galugah. (w7 -w8-w13-t1-t2-t5-t11-t14)

Source (Research findings, 2016)

### **Formation of Internal and External (IE) Matrix (Determining the Tourism Status of the Region)**

The internal and external matrix is used to simultaneously analyze the internal and external factors. To form this matrix, the scores derived from the internal and external factors evaluation matrices must be substituted in the horizontal and vertical dimensions of this matrix in order to determine the status of the region in the cells of this matrix

and to be able to adopt a suitable strategy for it. The internal and external matrix is presented in two forms: nine-cell matrix and four-cell matrix. (Figure 1)

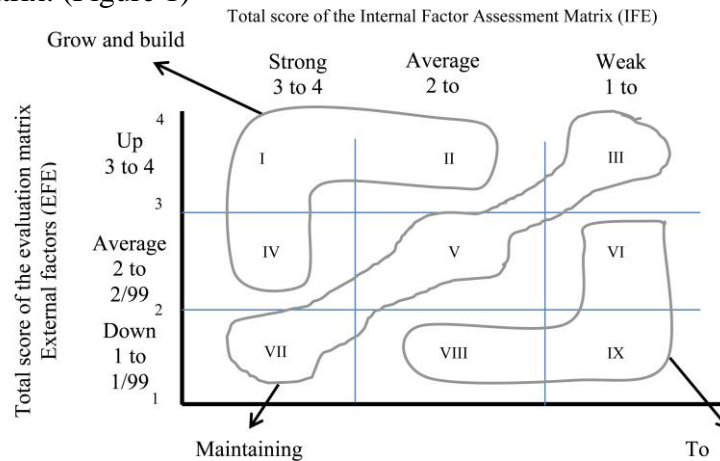


Figure 1: The nine-cell internal external matrix  
Source (HekmatNiya & Mousavi, 2011: 320)

The numbers resulting from the summation of the final scores for the internal and external factors evaluation matrices, which are 2.53 and 2.63, respectively, indicate that the factors under study are located in the second area and the fifth cell (V); the status of the positioning of the region shows that in terms of tourism the county of Galugah has an average status.

**Step Five: Decision-making Step (Prioritizing the Acceptable Strategies)**

At this step, the final strategies of this section are determined by prioritizing the acceptable strategies through intuitive judgment and scientific analysis.

**Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM):** In addition to the strategies identified by determining priorities, there is another analytical method that by using it the relative attractiveness of the strategies is identified. This method is called a quantitative strategic planning matrix and is used in the third step to compile strategies as an analytical framework. Using this method, the various strategies that are among the best strategies can be determined objectively. In the implementation of the quantitative strategic planning matrix, the analyzes of the first step and the results of the comparison of the internal and external factors in the second step are used in order for

the implementable and applicable objective methods to be determined (Nourbakhsh, 2010: 99).

In the last step of the quantitative evaluation matrix, by comparing the total sum of the attractiveness scores of each of the strategies for the development of tourism, they must be divided into three categories based on priority, respectively, from high attractiveness score to low attractiveness score, and according to a definite time interval, and each strategy must be implemented with regard to the precedence of its priority. Thus, the major strategies in priority order according to Table 9 are:

**Table 9: Final Prioritization of Strategies based on the Final Sum of Attractiveness Score**

	Strategy Score	strategy Score	strategy Score	strategy Score	Strategy Score	Strategy Score
First priority	St3 2.61	So3 2.45	So4 2.24	So5 2.13	St4 2.07	St1 2.00
Second priority	So3 1.94	Wt1 1.71	Wo2 1.67	St2 1.62	St3 1.61	Wt4 1.60
Third priority	Wo1 1.36	Wo5 1.35	Wo3 1.57	Wo4 1.54	Wt3 1.18	Wt2 1.17

Source (Research findings, 2016)

### Summary and Conclusion

After a general review of the results of the research, it can be concluded that, with regard to the capabilities of ecotourism in this sector, the majority of internal and external factors affecting the development of the potential capabilities of the tourism in the county of Galugah, have mostly been concentrated on the environmental and natural index influencing the development of tourism, such that from 52 sub-indices related to the development of tourism, 17 sub-indices are associated with the environmental and natural index, which this is an indication of the importance of this index for the development of tourism in the county of Galugah.

The tourism situation of the county of Galugah is in the mean and average state, that is, the situation in the region is such that it both has many strengths and also has major weaknesses for the development of tourism; and on the other hand, it also has several opportunities for the development of tourism, but unfortunately the county has not been able to use these potentials for the development of tourism. Also, various threats, especially in terms of environmental and natural conditions, can affect the tourism aspect in the county of Galugah. The conclusion that can be made from the evaluation of the total internal and external factors is that in terms of environment the county of Galugah possesses the necessary strengths and potentials for development, and this reflects the importance of the

environmental-natural index with respect to other indices. In a way, this issue could indicate the dependence of tourism in the county of Galugah to its ecotourism. Although the cultural, historical, and religious attractions can also be mentioned along with ecotourism and natural attractions, however, we can point to the importance of natural attractions and the ecotourism of the county of Galugah compared to other attractions.

The strategies offered in this research that have been presented under four categories have different features, which the general results achieved from the strategies are as follows:

As can be conceived from the strategies presented the role of planning and advertising has been highly emphasized. Conducting training courses, revising the advertisements and awareness-raising activities, tasks associated with advertising and awareness-raising activities such as holding various tourism conferences, tourism planning and management and the utilization of scientific human resources, and introducing attractions at different levels are amongst the affairs associated with advertising and planning.

### **References**

- Ashworth, G., & Page, S. J. (2011). *Urban tourism research: Recent progress and current paradoxes*. *Tourism Management*, 81(2), 2–22
- Behzadfar, M., & Zamanian, R. (2007). *Application of Multi-Criteria Decision Making Process for Analyzing Hierarchical Processes in Tourism Planning Case: Neyshabour County*. *International Journal of Engineering Sciences (Specialty Architecture and Urban Development, University of Science and Technology)*, Volume 18, Number 5.
- Behzadfar, M., & Zamanian, R. (2008). *Strategic planning of tourism development based on product sector. Case Study: Neyshabour City*. *International Journal of Engineering Sciences, (Specialty Architecture and Urban Development, University of Science and Technology, Tehran)*, Volume 19. No. 6.
- Benmecheri, S. & L. Veirier. 2007. *Sustainable development of tourism in deserts: guide for decision makers*. World Tourism Organization Pubns.
- Benur, A. M., & Bramwell, B. (2015). Tourism product development and product diversification in destinations. *Tourism Management*, 50, 213-224.
- Black, R., & Crabtree, A. (2007). *Quality assurance and certification in ecotourism* (Vol. 5): CABI.
- Fazilnia, G., & conductive, Salah. (2010). *Appropriate strategies for tourism development in Zarivar Lake*. *Journal of Geography and Development*. No. 19.
- Hall, P., & Stephan, F. (1994). *Witt and Luie Management Handbook*. *Rutledge, New York*.

- HekmatNiya, H., & Mousavi, M.N. (2011). *Model Application in Geography with Emphasis on Urban and Regional Planning*, New Science Publishing. Tehran. Iran.
- Holjevac, I. A. (2003). A vision of tourism and the hotel industry in the 21st century. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 22(2), 129-134.
- Hosseini, A. (2006). *Tourism cluster: a new approach to the tourism industry in Iran*. First Edition. Institute of Business Studies Studies. Management of Foreign Trade and International Economics. Tehran. Iran.
- Jayawardena, C., Patterson, D. J., Choi, C., & Brain, R. (2008). Sustainable tourism development in Niagara: Discussions, theories, projects and insights. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 20(3), 258-277.
- Karkehabadi, Z., & Shamsi, Kh. (2013), *An analysis of urban creativity with an emphasis on competition strategy*, The first national conference on creative city, ideas and challenges in Iran, Qeshm, Iran.
- Law Christopher, M. (2000). The tourist city review. *Urban studies*, 37(7).
- Lee, C.-K., & Kwon, K.-S. (1995). Importance of secondary impact of foreign tourism receipts on the South Korean Economy. *Journal of Travel Research*, 34(2), 50-54.
- Liu, A., & Wall, G. (2006). Planning tourism employment: a developing country perspective. *Tourism Management*, 27(1), 159-170.
- Lundberg, D. E., Krishnamoorthy, M., & Stavenga, M. H. (1995). *Tourism economics*: John Wiley and sons.
- Meshkini, A., & Heidari, T. (2011). *Evaluation of Tourism Development in Zanjan City Using Sample SWOT Model: Zanjan Rood area*. Quarterly Journal of Geographical Space, 11th Year.
- Mousavi, M.N.; AbdollahZadeh, M; Zainalpour, O., & BagheriKashkoli, A. (2016). *Presentation of an Environmental Analysis Model with a System Approach in Tourism Planning (Case Study: Maku Town)*. Quarterly journal of human geography research. Volume 48, Issue 1. Spring, pp. 18-10.
- Nourbakhsh, S.F. (2010). *Feasibility study of development of ecotourism in Maranjab region with emphasis on geomorphological forms*. Master thesis of geomorphology. Supervisor: Mehran Maghsoudi. Faculty of Geography. University of Tehran. Tehran. Iran.
- Roberts, P., & Sykes, H. (1999). *Urban regeneration: a handbook*: Sage.
- Serraghi, J; Maleki, H. & Abu al-Fati, D. (2008). *The role of ecotourism attractions in Nahavand tourism development with emphasis on SWOT model*. Journal of Geographic Sciences. Volume 8. No. 11.
- ShabaniPour, C. (2011). *Strategic Planning of Tourism Development in the Karoon River Axis (Case Study: Gotvand County)*. Master Thesis, Supervisor: Hassan Ali Faraji Sabokbar. Faculty of Geography. University of Tehran. Tehran. Iran.
- Stefănică, M. & G. I. Butnaru (2015) Research on tourists' perception of the relationship between tourism and environment. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 20, 595-600.

*Investigating the Challenges and ... 97*

- Tang, Z. (2015). An integrated approach to evaluating the coupling coordination between tourism and the environment. *Tourism Management*, 46, 11-19.
- Towllae, S. (2006). *Indoor tourism with emphasis on tourist attractions in Gilan province*. Geographical Research, No. 38.
- Woo, E., H. Kim & M. Uysal (2015) Life satisfaction and support for tourism development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 50, 84-97.
- (<http://Unwto.com>)
- (<http://wto.com>)