Strategic Planning of Tourism with an emphasis on Spirituality Based on New Integration of Multi-Criteria Decision-Making Techniques

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to identify and prioritize spiritual-based tourism strategies in Qom province. The present study is interpretive from the philosophical foundations point of view and is applied from the point of view of orientation. It is also a survey in terms of data collection and from a methodological point of view, it is qualitative. The statistical population of the study is the experts and managers in the field of tourism and the sampling method is judgmental. ۱۰ experts were selected from among the samples .In order to carry out the research, internal and external factors affecting the spiritual-based tourism in Qom province were identified through reviewing the literature and interviewing experts. After the internal and external factors

were screened, 15 internal and 14 external factors remained. In addition, the nature of internal and external factors was identified in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and the most effective factors were determined by using the DEMATEL technique for preparing the SWOT table. With identifying the final list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, strategies were prioritized from the perspective of research experts by ARAS method. Three strategies to support provincial headquarters, banks and entrepreneurship funds from web-based tourism businesses and social networks, defining research priorities of tourism-related organizations based on civil society support, and strengthening. training programs to justify diversity in the community and its benefits had the highest priority.

1. Introduction

In today's world, attention to the service sector plays an important role in the country's economic growth and job creation for the workforce. Tourism is one of the sectors that many countries in the world have been planning to develop in their country. The emergence of fast and sustainable tourism over the past ٥٠ years is one of the remarkable phenomena in our age. According to Scott et al. (2009), the number of international tourists has risen from 200 million in 1980 to 1,136 million in 2016, and also it is predicted this figure to be 1.6 Billion entries in 2020. According to the World Economic Forum's report on Global Travel and Tourism Competitiveness in 2017, Iran's ranking in the tourism sector between 136 countries is 93, while Iran ranked 1st and 10th respectively in overall price index and in the number of cultural and global heritage sites. Therefore, given the existing capacities and the price index that can be a competitive advantage for our country, it is necessary to carry out the necessary surveys to identify the factors affecting it and invest in these factors to enhance Iran's status (World Economic Forum, ٢٠١٧). Tourism includes various types of tourism, including historical tourism, medical tourism, sports tourism, religious tourism and tourism based on spirituality. Spiritual-based tourism is one of the areas that has recently become important and is seeking to attract tourists with a spiritual approach. Plante and Thoresen (2007) define spirituality as the search for meaning in life, the transcendental relationship with self and God, and universal guidance, creating unity with nature and unity. Coles (١٩٩١) also argues that spirituality is a fluid path through which individuals, through the acquired spiritual experiences, interpret the causes of their lives. Therefore, these interpretations and the answers to these questions will lead to a change of thinking, a pattern of thought, and even a person's life with the community. One of the more closely related and well-known concepts in comparison with spiritual-based tourism are the concept of religious tourism. Religious tourism is defined in two ways. From the perspective of the tourism industry, tourists and small tourist markets, religious tourism, are defined based on the places visited by tourists or the activities they occupy, and with little regard for the motivation of these visits. Therefore, religious tourism is defined as the travel of people to religious sites and destinations. Therefore, from this perspective, religious tourism covers all those who travel to religious destinations for specific religious purposes (Zargham Borojeni & Tohidloo, ٢٠١١). Compared to religious tourism,

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spiritual-based tourism has a broader concept and is of particular importance to diversity and plurality. The present study aims to develop a strategic plan for spiritual-based tourism in Qom province. To this end, the internal and external factors affecting spiritual-based tourism were extracted by reviewing the literature of the subject and interviewing the experts. Then with the opinion of the experts, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and the strategies of spiritual-based tourism were identified. Eventually, the strategies were ranked by ARAS technique.

2. Literature Review

Some philosophers contend that spirit is the essence of being human, considering human being's spirituality is incorporeal, spirituality can particularly be concomitant with human being's investigation in order to find meaning of life, which it can undoubtedly be generalized for all humans (Tanyi, 2002; Miner-Williams, 2006). The dissociation from institutional religious authorities on matters that were traditionally under their control, such as criteria of spiritual life and the articulation of morals, is one of the profound attributes of the modern spirituality. Asserting, "As the influence of religion in the public aspect of society is decreasing, as a consequence the interpretation of the world and social values has altered and religion has become incarcerated to the private aspect", says Okamoto (2015). This issue can be considered as a tendency toward the privatization of religion which has included two outcomes Okamoto (2015). The first one is a shift from the public sphere to the private sphere of the individual, which is concomitant with a shift in social position of religion. The second one is the extent to which, the individual's freedom in accepting or rejecting particular facets of their own religion and also their ability to combining components of various religions in their own faith practice, shaping the other consequence of the privatization of religion which is concomitant with the customization of religion. The broader spiritual dimension of tourism remains under-researched although a considerable scholarly attention centering on the relationship between tourism and religion, especially by emphasizing on the aspects of pilgrimage and religious tourism (Timothy & Conover, 2006). The tourism industry is considered one of the most economical business activities in the national cycles of the countries, especially in terms of creating employment and prosperity in different regions, which also has its own communication, political, cultural and international benefits. For this reason, most countries in

the world use this attractive activity as a strategic tool for their economic development. In the present era, which is also mentioned as the new age of spirituality, pilgrimage and religious trips have been increasingly considered. Religious tourism has developed dramatically so that religion is one of the main motivations of travel. The literature review shows well that there has been a lot of research in the field of religious tourism, but very little research has been done on tourism based on spirituality. Tourism based on spirituality, in comparison with religious tourism, includes a wide range of motivations and values, and individuality and tolerance play a pivotal role in it. The table below shows some of the dimensions that spiritual tourists pay attention to.

Table 1. Dimensions of spirituality

Dimensions of spirituality	
A sense of fear	Relationship (Unity and Consistency)
Gratitude	Go beyond religion
Source of energy and motivation	Forgiveness
Spontaneity	Essence (center or real ego)
Immortality	Be good
Feeling of harmony	Excellence
Looking for answers to existential questions	Values and beliefs
Peace	Introversion
Being immaterial	Love
Meaning and purpose of life	Believing in a higher power
Experience mode	Inspiration
Power of Tolerance	Integrity
Holism	Intuition and Wisdom
Service	Faith and hope

Source: Doumit et al.,2019; Baksi and Sürücü, 2019; Agarwal,2019

In short, spiritual-based tourism is a combination of two concepts of secular tourism and religious tourism. The goals and objectives of religious tourism are religious visits, religious rituals and religious practices, attending holy days and times, creating a sense of unity and integrity, identity, and cultural activities. On the other hand, secular tourists travel for reasons such as personal development, health, curiosity, personal search, leisure and entertainment. In fact, secular tourism on the individual and religious tourism have an internal impact and one attempt to define him in a small collection of

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the whole. Spiritual-based tourism is also a combination of these two concepts (Cheer et al., 2017). In this study, we seek to identify internal and external factors and spiritual-based tourism strategies in Qom province. So, we will continue to provide some research on strategic planning in different areas. Shakermi et al. (2018) in the research entitled "Strategic Tourism Planning of Kurdistan Province based on the Regional Competitiveness Identity Using the Meta-SOWT Technique" followed the following objectives. 1- Determination of the tourist status of Kurdistan province with its regional rivals. 2. Identification of the most important Kurdistan tourism resources and features that possess characteristic of (rare, uniqueness, inimitable and irreplaceable), and 3. Identification of the most important macro factors affecting the tourism of Kurdistan. One of the planning methods in the field of tourism is strategic planning with the Meta-SWOT technique. The Meta-SWOT technique is based on an inside-out approach and a kind of resource-based approach. The data and information has been first prepared through documentary and library studies and then prepared by on-field and polls from 25 specialists and experts in tourism who have been selected through a targeted approach. The results show that the most important macro factors affecting Kurdistan tourism are: macro management, foreign policy of the state and international sanctions. Lack of budget allocation to tourism and lack of attention to the tourism industry in the country are other factors affecting tourism in Kurdistan. The most important regional tourism competitors of Kurdistan in the horizon of the 1404 vision document are Kermanshah and Hamadan provinces. Abbasi et al. (2018), using SWOT method and QSPM quantitative programming method, identifying the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats to find the best strategy for coping with threats and weaknesses and utilizing the strengths and opportunities in the field of tourism of Khorramabad. The results showed that Khorramabad's tourism status is in invasive mode in four of the invasive, defensive, conservative and competitive modes of the SWOT model, namely, it should seek to take advantage of opportunities in the light of existing capabilities. In the next step of prioritizing using a quantitative planning matrix, a comprehensive and appropriate long-term strategy for the preparation a comprehensive plan for tourism in Khorramabad, with reference to the introduction of this city by the UN Office as a superior tourism destination city in Iran, includes establishing facilities and places of welfare for organizing the tourist's accommodation in the vicinity of cultural and

tourism routes, as well as international marketing and advertising for better introduction and recognition of the city of Khorramabad, which are the most effective strategies. Ebrahimzadeh et al. (2011) have proposed strategic tourism development with an emphasis on religious tourism and, using the SWOT technique and concluded that the conservative WO2 strategy, with a score of 6.49, is the best strategy for the development of religious tourism in the city of Qom. In order to achieve this, the strategy can be implemented with the execution of amusement and recreation spaces, green spaces as well as the enhancement of natural attractions as a complementary component of religious tourism throughout the year, in order to avoid seasonal urban tourism and increase the length of residence of tourists in the city. At the same time, So2's aggressive strategy with a score of 7.33 is considered to be the most effective strategy after a conservative strategy. In order to achieve the objectives of the research, tourism development, the development of Islamic sciences, increasing the promotion and attraction of religious scholars and foreign religious-cultural tourists by introducing the religious-cultural functions of the city of Qom to other countries on the one hand, as well as creating employment and other income on the other hand, the use of this strategy is recommended. Jingyi and Chung-Shing (2018), In the study of the impact of cultural tourism on the coastal area of Zhouhai, from the perspective of cultural change, using the Bourdieu Cultural Change model, it has been concluded that there is an internal relationship between tourism development, the import culture of tourists, and the local culture of the host community that needs to be identified. In the end, they also propose a framework based on the experimental results in Zhou, in order to develop cultural tourism by preserving cultural resources. Herrero-Prieto and Gomez-Vega (2017), in an effort to explain the role of cultural resources in cultural tourism in Spain, have analyzed the goals of tourism in analyzing tourism objectives in attracting tourists based on cultural resources. Based on the theory of the adequacy and efficiency of cultural purposes, they have evaluated the relationship between available cultural resources and cultural tourism. Regardıng the proposed model, researchers have claimed thıs model could be a good guide to cultural policy makers . In their studies on the relationship between host society's hospitality, culture and urban regeneration in Budapest, Hungary, Lugosi et al. have been discussing how hospitality is being fostered in a declining community in the old city, what role urban

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regeneration actor's play in these contradictions and how can hospitality be enhanced in the process of urban regeneration of basic culture. They conclude that hospitality of the host society in Budapest has a key role in developing cultural tourism and developing cultural relations with tourists (Lugosi et al., 2010). According to Ambroz (2011), spiritual experiences are different with other types of experiences, because they are non-commercial experiences that cannot be controlled and measured quantitatively. Research shows that the spiritual experience of travel has a direct relationship with the increase of self-esteem of travelers. Travel is inherently spiritual as it moves the tourist to search for meaning. Modern tourists are more aware and cognizant compared to the past and seek to establish a relationship with nature and the growth of non-material dimensions of their lives.

3. Research Methodology

The present research, from the perspective of philosophy, is an interpretative, in terms of purpose is exploratory and from the direction aspect, is applicable. The present study is also a survey research for collecting information and its methodology is qualitative. The statistical population included experts in the field of tourism based on spirituality. Regarding the nature of the research, the sampling method is a judgmental, referring to experts. It should be noted that the sample size in this study is 10 people whose characteristics are described in Table 2.

Table 2. Specifications of research experts

No	Area of expertise	Number of Experts
1	Deputy of pilgrims	3
2	Member of Parliaments	1
3	Management of the holy shrine of Masoomeh	1
4	Management of the Holy Mosque of Jamkaran	1
5	University professors	2
6	Institutions and non-governmental organizations	2

Research Steps

<u>Step one:</u> First, by studying the background of the research and interviewing the experts, we extract the internal and external strategic factors affecting tourism based on spirituality. Due to the high number of these factors, in order to extract the important strategic factors of tourism based on spirituality, we

will select the extractive indexes using a questionnaire of expert assessment and binomial test.

Step Two: By interviewing the experts in the field of tourism based on spirituality, we are going to determine the nature of the internal factors (strength or weakness) and external (opportunity or threat). Then using DIMATEL's questionnaire, we will extract the relationships and select the most influential four main factors (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

Step Three: Then, from the most influential factors and using the internal factors evaluation matrix and the external factors evaluation matrix, we are going to determine the position of spiritual-based tourism in Qom province in the internal-external factors matrix. Finally, considering the most influential factors and interviewing the experts, we will develop a SWOT matrix and formulate a strategy.

Step Four: Using the ARAS Technique Questionnaire, we rank the strategies developed in the previous ste
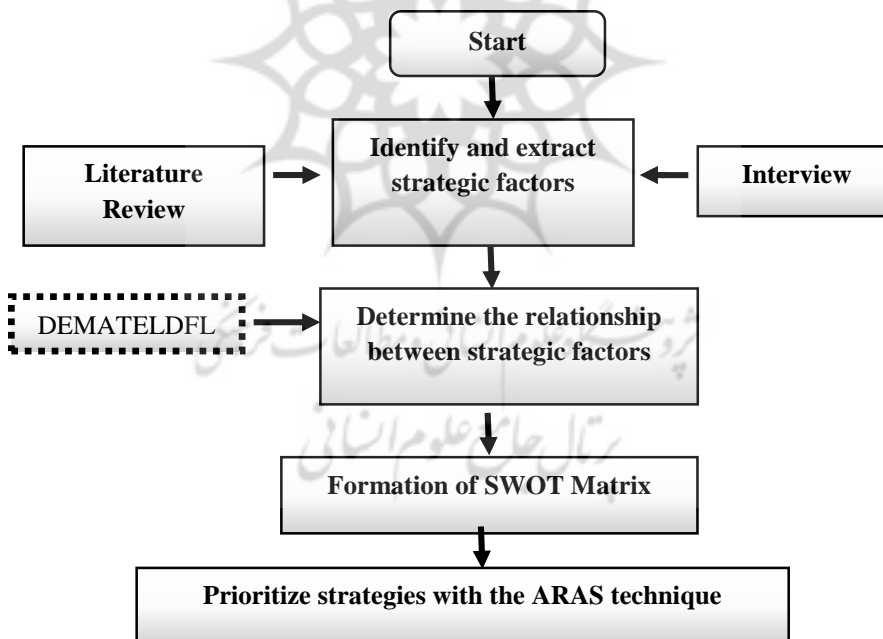

Fig. 1. Research Steps

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4. Data Analysis

Internal and external factors affecting tourism based on spirituality

By reviewing the literature of the research and interviewing the experts, the most important internal and external strategic factors influencing the spiritual-based tourism of Qom province were listed; their list is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Effective Internal and External Strategic Factors on spiritual-based tourism

Internal Factors	Reference
Training The purpose of this factor is to educate how stakeholders, anchors, tourism activists interact with different intellectual and mystical perspectives and approaches.	Literature Review
Availability of qualified and skilled human resources	Literature Review
Soft power Exploiting and using the capacity of diverse intellectual, mystical and spiritual diversities to introduce the beauties and attractions of Iranian culture to tourists	Literature Review
Long-term plans of the Deputy Director of the Pilgrimage Department Lack of unilateral emphasis on the discussion of pilgrimage and religious tourism in tourism programs and attention to the plans of non-governmental groups and institutions on ethics, attention to animal rights, peace of mind, and other spiritual traditions and rituals.	Interview with experts
Way of look to the surrounding (environmental and animal rights) Using the Capacity of Academic and Research Centers to Introduce Different Spiritual Approaches and Ethical Views in Different and Ancient Cultures to Encourage a Holistic View of the World	Literature Review
The look of provincial managers to changes Tourism managers in the province should be familiar with cultural figures that are fluent in the subcultures of Iran, the region and the world.	Literature Review
social media channels	Literature Review
Cultural policymaking Cultural policymaking cannot just consider some of the stakeholders and groups and ignore and exclude other groups and groups of thought, such as women, children, youth, subcultures and local cultures.	Literature Review

Internal Factors	Reference
The way to which provincial directors interact with powerful institutions and groups Using the tools of bargaining, negotiation and ongoing dialogue to persuade powerful groups to modify their views to focus on spirituality, ethics, and pluralism alongside religious discussions	Interview with experts
Transportation facilities	Literature Review
Infrastructure development	Literature Review
Variety of ceremonies and spiritual celebrations Spontaneous rituals and rituals of different intellectual and spiritual groups and attention to the element of happiness and unity	Literature Review
Support for academic research Encouraging academic research on comparative studies of religions, different cultures, local rituals, spiritual celebrations and local music	Literature Review
Educational planning for tourism based on spirituality Development of tourism related disciplines in universities and active centers in the province and enriching their curriculum in various areas such as local languages, spiritual rituals and spiritual and religious music festivals	Literature Review
The way to which dealing with businesses active in this field Encourage and support tourism businesses active in the field of tourism with emphasis on their spirituality and participation in provincial decision making	Interview with experts
Supporting NGOs Supporting non-governmental groups and institutions to balance and balance spiritually active stakeholders in advocating pluralism and diversity	Interview with experts
The existence of a parallel organization in this field	Interview with experts
The kind of look at religion (ethics versus jurisprudence) Using other capacities of religion such as ethics, mysticism and spirituality instead of merely emphasizing its formal and jurisprudential readings. In that case, religion itself will support diversity and plurality. In fact, supporting and encouraging different readings of religion rather than one will play an important role in the use of spirituality in tourism and will also be attractive to tourists.	Literature Review
The degree of tolerance / leniency Activating free-thinking and theorizing on cultural, ethical and religious issues in academic and research settings encourages a spirit of tolerance and tolerance in the community.	Literature Review
Plurality against unity and integrity	Literature Review

Internal Factors	Reference
Institutionalism and tendency toward religious organization The development of cyberspace and social networks will call into question the hegemony of the dominant religious groups in society.	Literature Review
Business atmosphere / environment	Literature Review
Individual spirituality against organized spirituality	Literature Review
Minimal religion against the highest/extreme religion Restricting the formal reading of religion to individual and religious domains will, in large measure, lead to the freedom of action of various intellectual and spiritual groups in society.	Literature Review
Cultural policies of the country Education at basic ages, the nature of extracurricular programs, the intellectual development of children, and the development of critical thinking in them play an important role in stylizing the cultural environment of the country.	Interview with experts
Foreign policy of the country An open foreign policy and support for de-escalation and removal of some restrictions inside the country will attract tourists from different cultures and countries and will create a suitable environment for the growth of different intellectual and spiritual groups.	Interview with experts
The level of elite consensus on sensitive issues The participation and activity of all political groups and different factions in the political environment and the observance of the rules of the game by all factions and the failure to resort to elimination will play an important role in intellectual security of the various groups active in society.	Interview with experts
The growth of civil society	Literature Review
Governance policies on religious freedom Integrated policymaking in this area and countering personal and factional attitudes play an important role in promoting diversity.	Literature Review
Governance policy on social channels	Literature Review
The way to which government interact with minorities	Literature Review
Degree of consensus among ruling religious groups	Interview with experts

Due to the high number of factors and their localization, to eliminate factors that were less important in relation to the subject of research, the Likert Scale Questions, which included internal and external factors affecting tourism based on spirituality, was designed. After completing the questionnaire by experts in the field of tourism based on spirituality, using SPSS software and

binomial test, a meaningful level was calculated for the factors. After the binomial test, 15 internal factors and 14 external factors remained.

Table 4. The most important internal and external factors affecting tourism based on spirituality

Internal factors	Training
	Availability of qualified and skilled human resources
	Long-term plans of the Deputy Director of the Pilgrimage Department
	Way of look to the surrounding (environmental and animal rights)
	The way to which provincial managers look to changes
	social media channels
	Cultural policymaking
	The way to which provincial directors interact with powerful institutions and groups
	Infrastructure development
	Variety of ceremonies and spiritual celebrations
	Support for academic research
	Educational planning for tourism based on spirituality
	The way to which dealing with businesses active in this field
	Supporting NGOs
	The existence of a parallel organization in this field
External factors	The kind of look at religion (ethics versus jurisprudence)
	The degree of tolerance / leniency
	Plurality against unity and integrity
	Institutionalism and tendency toward religious organization
	Business atmosphere / environment
	Minimal religion against the highest/extreme religion
	Cultural policies of the country
	Foreign policy of the country
	The level of elite consensus on sensitive issues
	The growth of civil society
	Governance policies on religious freedom
	Governance policy on social media channels
	The way to which government interact with minorities
	Degree of consensus among ruling religious groups

To assess the reliability of the questions using Wilcoxon test, which for any question was higher than 0.7, reliability of questions was measured. In the following, after determining the most important internal and external factors affecting tourism based on spirituality, we determine the nature of each of the internal and external factors.

Determining the nature of internal and external factors influencing the tourism based on spirituality

At this stage, we will identify the nature of each of the internal and external factors through interviewing the experts and considering the situation in the province. The nature of internal factors is considered to be strength or weakness, and external factors are opportunities or threats. Table 5 presents the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of spiritual-based tourism in Qom province.

Table 5. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of tourism based on spirituality

Strengths	S1- Attention to the dimension of education in the field of tourism based on spirituality Developing communication skills, teaching local cultures, local music, rituals and mystical topics to tourism users will play an important role in the development of spirituality based tourism.
	S2- Extensive access to expert human resources due to proximity to the center and young workforce
	S3- Long-term and coherent programs of pilgrims' deputies for the development of tourism in different areas
	S4- Strengthening the dialogue on protecting the environment and animal rights among people, especially young people and academics
	S5– Relationship of provincial administrators with powerful institutions and groups to win support in this area
	S6- Support of Plan Organization, Industry, Mine and Trade Organization, and Governorate of Tourism Research
	S7- Support for tourism-related businesses by the provincial resistive economic headquarters, entrepreneurship support funds and banking sector
	S8- An attempt to establish coordination between active tourism organizations in the province through the affairs of pilgrims

Weakness	W۱– Provincial Managers' Resistance Against Changes. Unfortunately, many tourism managers have a technical and mechanical vision and are unaware of cultural issues.
	W2- Restrictions on media and social networks not in line with cultural dominant interpretation
	W3- The weakness of cultural policymaking in the field of diversity and multiplicity of the tastes in the field of culture
	W4- Weakness of tourism infrastructure
	W5- Lack of happy spiritual ceremonies and celebrations Most ceremonies are monotonous and lack the elements of innovation, diversity and joy.
	W6- Non-alignment of educational programs in the universities of the province with the competitive advantage of the province (tourism). In the field of tourism based on spirituality, there are no disciplines and courses. Most management colleges in the province offer traditional and conventional disciplines.
	W7- Weaknesses of NGOs in the province
Opportunity	O1- Strengthening the ethical approach to religion among religious elites
	O2- Expansion of diversity and plurality in the religious and spiritual approaches of community members
	O3- Reducing institutionalism in the religious approach of youth and academics
	O4- Extension of the view and approach of minimal religion in society In the community of authority other classes such as academics, athletes and cultural figures are developing.
	O5- Consensus of political elites about the importance of tourism for the country
	O6- The Growth of Civil Society The diversity and multiplicity of different groups in society has grown significantly compared to previous years.
	O7-Reducion of consensus among religious groups In recent years, compared to the past, differences of opinion and worldview are well visible even in religious groups of society and this will reinforce other intellectual and mystical views in society.
Threat	T1- Low Tolerance among Cultural Managers Powerful groups and institutions are very sensitive to the managers of these departments and their types of worldviews and perspectives, so the views of tourism and cultural managers are closed-sided.
	T2- the decline of the business status/ atmosphere

T3- Closed and integrated cultural policies
Unfortunately, any international document, program or agenda in the field of culture is met with intense resistance from some powerful groups.

T4- Isolation of the country due to widespread Western sanctions

T°- Apply some religious restrictions
Many of these limitations are very tasteful, and the existence of parallel and unregulated organizations reduces the amount of red line imaginable and makes it difficult to change any cultural outlook and diversity.

T6- Pressure of some groups to the government to create restrictions on social networks and cyberspace

Determining the most influential factors using the DEMATEL technique
At this stage of the research, we use the DEMATEL technique to determine the most effective strengths, weaknesses points, opportunities and threats. To this end, a questionnaire was first designed and made available to experts, in which the experts were asked to determine the interactions of the factors according to the values of Table 6.

Table 6. Five-degree DEMATEL Spectrum

Verbal expressions	Equivalent number
Without influence	0
Very little influence	1
little influence	2
high influence	3
very high influence	4

A) Strengths
Step 1: Find the mean matrix

The average matrix $A = \left[a_{ij}\right]_{n \times n}$ is called the initial matrix of direct relations. A indicates direct effects that show the effect of an agent on itself and on other factors. The matrix A is given below.

Table 7. Primary decision matrix of strengths points

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
S1	0	3.2	1.8	1	3	2	1	4
S2	1.8	0	3.2	3	1	3.2	4	3.8
S3	0	3.3	0	2.1	1.7	3.9	3.8	4
S4	1.2	0	3.2	0	1	0	1	3
S5	0	1.8	1	0	0	3.2	1	3
S6	0.3	3.2	3.9	0.1	2.1	0	4	3.3
S7	2	3.6	3.8	1.2	1.2	3.2	0	3.2
S8	3.2	3.8	2	3	3	1.8	2	0

Step 2: Calculate the initial effect matrix

The initial effect matrix is obtained by normalizing the initial decision matrix. The formula for normalizing the direct relation matrix is as follows:

$$X = m * A$$

Calculate the sum of the rows of elements of the matrix A and multiply the largest inverse of the elements in the matrix A. By doing so, the relative intensity of the ruling relationship on direct influence is determined. This process is the way of calculating "m" in the aforementioned formula.

$$m = \text{Min}\left[\frac{1}{\max_i \sum_{j=1}^{n} |a_{ij}|} \cdot \frac{1}{\max_j \sum_{i=1}^{n} |a_{ij}|}\right]$$

Table 8. Primary Influence Matrix of Strengths Points (X)

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
S1	0	0.132	0.074	0.041	0.123	0.082	0.041	0.165
S2	0.074	0	0.132	0.123	0.041	0.132	0.165	0.156
S3	0	0.136	0	0.086	0.070	0.160	0.156	0.165
S4	0.049	0	0.132	0	0.041	0	0.041	0.123
S5	0	0.074	0.041	0	0	0.132	0.041	0.123
S6	0.012	0.132	0.160	0.004	0.086	0	0.165	0.136
S7	0.082	0.148	0.156	0.049	0.049	0.132	0	0.132
S8	0.132	0.156	0.082	0.123	0.123	0.074	0.082	0

Step 3: Extract the full matrix directly and indirectly

As the power of the matrix of the initial influence increases, the direct influence of the problem decrease, which ensures that convergent solutions to

the inverse matrix are guaranteed? Therefore, we can create an infinite set of direct and indirect influence. The matrix of the total effect called T is derived from the following equation:

$$T = D + D^2 + D^3 + \ldots + D^m = D(I-D)^{-1} , \quad m \rightarrow \infty$$

Table 9. The Matrix of Total Influence of Strengths Points

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
S1	0.110	0.339	0.276	0.174	0.263	0.277	0.241	0.405
S2	0.206	0.275	0.387	0.277	0.224	0.363	0.397	0.461
S3	0.136	0.384	0.260	0.238	0.238	0.379	0.385	0.451
S4	0.114	0.140	0.242	0.084	0.133	0.125	0.158	0.268
S5	0.077	0.222	0.185	0.092	0.102	0.256	0.183	0.284
S6	0.136	0.370	0.380	0.158	0.241	0.233	0.379	0.409
S7	0.202	0.393	0.390	0.260	0.221	0.355	0.245	0.424
S8	0.240	0.380	0.314	0.260	0.278	0.292	0.298	0.296

Step Four: Draw a causal diagram

If the sum of the rows and columns in the matrix T is displayed, respectively, with D and R:

$$D = [d_i]_{n \times 1} = \left[\sum_{j=1}^{n} t_{ij} \right]_{n \times 1}$$
$$R = [r_j]_{n \times 1} = \left[\sum_{i=1}^{n} t_{ij} \right]_{1 \times n}$$

In the next step, the interaction level (D + R) and the net effect (D-R) is determined. If D-R> 0, the relevant criterion is effective and if D-R <0, then the relevant criterion is dependent. The sum of the rows and columns, the degree of interaction and the net effect of the strengths are given in the following table.

Table 10. Total row and column, interaction rate and net effect of strengths

	D	R	D + R	D - R
S1	2.086	1.220	3.306	0.866
S2	2.590	2.503	5.093	0.087
S3	2.472	2.434	4.906	0.038
S4	1.264	1.490	2.754	-0.226
S5	1.400	1.700	3.100	-0.300
S6	2.306	2.280	4.586	0.027
S7	2.437	2.287	4.724	0.149
S8	2.357	2.998	5.355	-0.640

B) Weaknesses

Table 11. Total row and column, interaction rate and net effect of weaknesses

	D	R	D + R	D - R
W1	1.435	1.872	3.307	-0.437
W2	1.647	1.481	3.128	0.166
W3	2.675	2.642	5.317	0.033
W4	1.614	2.157	3.771	-0.543
W5	1.880	1.570	3.450	0.310
W6	2.689	1.627	4.316	1.063
W7	1.532	2.123	3.656	-0.591

C) Opportunity

Table 12. Total row and column, interaction rate and net effect of opportunity points

	D	R	D + R	D - R
O1	1.689	2.818	4.507	-1.130
O2	1.809	1.590	3.399	0.219
O3	0.914	1.968	2.882	-1.054
O4	2.602	2.570	5.172	0.033
O5	2.280	2.299	4.580	-0.019
O6	2.695	0.803	3.498	1.892
O7	1.612	1.554	3.166	0.059

D) Threat

Table 13. Total row and column, interaction rate and net effect of the threat points

	D	R	D + R	D - R
T1	2.270	2.163	4.434	0.107
T2	2.518	3.638	6.157	-1.120
T3	3.446	2.048	5.494	1.397
T4	2.933	3.321	6.254	-0.387
T5	2.036	3.301	5.337	-1.265
T6	3.493	2.254	5.746	1.239
T7	2.355	2.326	4.681	0.029

Finally, the factors that have a positive net effect are considered to be the most influential four major factors. Then, in the next step, with the consideration of these factors, we will develop a SWOT matrix and formulate a strategy.

Formation of SWOT matrix

After analyzing the aggregated data and deducing the results, we construct the SWOT matrix according to the previous sections based on the most influential factors. Then, in the matrix of internal and external factors, we will determine the position of spiritual-based tourism in Qom province. For this purpose, we perform the following steps.

The Matrix of Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE)

In this section, according to the most influential strengths and weaknesses of the spiritual-based tourism domain of Qom province, the questionnaire of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats was designed and based on that, the analyzes were carried out. Among the strengths, widespread access to qualified an skilled human resource with a score of 0.616 has the highest score, while support for tourism-related businesses by the provincial headquarters, entrepreneurship support funds and banking sectors got the lower score by 0.217. Among the weaknesses, support for tourism-related businesses by the provincial headquarters, entrepreneurship support funds and banking sectors with a score of 0.164 had the highest score and the non-alignment of the educational programs of the universities with the competitive advantage of the province witnessed the score of 0.14.

Table 14. The Matrix of Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE)

Internal Factor	final score	Average rating/rank	Average coefficient
Attention to the dimension of education in the field of tourism based on spirituality	0.418	3.8	0.11
Extensive access to expert human resources	0.616	3.8	0.162
Long-term and coherent programs of pilgrims' deputies for the development of tourism in different areas	0.464	3.2	0.145
Support of Plan Organization, Industry, Mine and Trade Organization, and Governorate of Tourism Research	0.485	3.3	0.147
Support for tourism-related businesses by the provincial headquarters, entrepreneurship support funds and banking sector	0.217	3.1	0.07

Restrictions on media and social networks not in line with cultural dominant interpretation	0.158	1.8	0.088
The weakness of cultural policymaking in the field of diversity and multiplicity of the tastes in the field of culture	0.164	1.1	0.149
Lack of happy spiritual ceremonies and celebrations	0.131	1.9	0.069
Non-alignment of educational programs in the universities of the province with the competitive advantage of the province	0.114	1.9	0.06
Total	2.767		1

The Matrix of External Factor Evaluation (EFE)

In this section, external factors that influence a system from its outside environment are analyzed. These factors include the opportunities and threats facing a system, based on which the questionnaire was designed and external factors were analyzed and analyzed. Among the opportunities, the growth of civil society with a score of 0.564 points and the Extension of the view and approach of minimal religion in society with a score of 0.264 respectively got the lowest and highest score in this section. Among the threats, the closed and integrated cultural policies with the highest score of 0.203 and the lack of tolerance among cultural managers with the lowest score of 0 118, were the maximum and minimum scores among threats.

Table 15. The Matrix of External Factor Evaluation

External Factors	Final score	Average rating/rank	Average coefficient
Expansion of diversity and plurality in the religious and spiritual approaches of community members	0.393	3.3	0.119
Extension of the view and approach of minimal religion in society	0.264	3.1	0.085
The Growth of Civil Society	0.564	3.5	0.161
Reduction of consensus among religious groups	0.545	3.3	0.165
Low Tolerance among Cultural Managers	0.118	1.9	0.062
Closed and integrated cultural policies	0.203	1.5	0.135
Pressure of some groups to the government to create restrictions on social networks and cyberspace	0.185	1.2	0.154
Relatively weak engagement of sovereignty/governance with some minority groups	0.155	1.3	0.119
Total/sum	2.424		1

IE matrix (internal-external)

After identifying internal and external factors, scoring and calculating their final coefficient, appropriate strategies for spiritual-based tourism of Qom province were determined. Within the framework of determining strategies, the comparative step involves information obtained from internal and external factors that compares opportunities and threats to external strengths and weaknesses. For this purpose, internal and external factors were compared in SWOT matrix to formulate suitable and possible strategies. Strategies were presented in four sections as aggressive strategies (SO), conservative strategies (WO), competitive strategies (ST) and defensive strategies (WT). The internal-external matrix of the spiritual-based tourism position of Qom province is depicted in Table 16.

Table 16. The position of the province's spiritual-based tourism strategies based on the IE matrix

			The final score of internal factor evaluation matrix					
			Weak		Moderate		Strong	
			1	2	2	3	3	4
The final score of external factor evaluation matrix	strong	4	I		II		III	
		3						
	Moderate	3	IV		V *		VI	
		2						
	Weak	2	VII		VIII		IX	
		1						

As it can be seen, the proposed strategy of spiritual-based tourism in Qom province is to maintain the status quo.

Development of Strategies (SWOT)

In Table 16, the spiritual-based tourism strategies of Qom province were presented in four sections as aggressive strategies (SO), review strategies (WO), diversity strategies (ST) and defensive strategies (WT). In this section, the focus is more on competitive strategies, or the third part.

Table 17. Matrix for Determining the Tourism Strategy of Qom Province

	Strengths S1- Attention to the dimension of education in the field of tourism based on spirituality S2- Extensive access to expert human resources due to proximity to the center and young workforce S3- Long-term and coherent programs of pilgrims' deputies for the development of tourism in different areas S4- Strengthening the dialogue on protecting the environment and animal rights among people, especially young people and academics S5– Relationship of provincial administrators with powerful institutions and groups to win support in this area S6- Support of Plan Organization, Industry, Mine and Trade Organization, and Governorate of Tourism Research S7- Support for tourism-related businesses by the provincial resistive economic headquarters, entrepreneurship support funds and banking sector S8- An attempt to establish coordination between active tourism organizations in the province through the affairs of pilgrims	Weaknesses W1– Provincial Managers' Resistance Against Changes. W2- Restrictions on media and social networks not in line with cultural dominant interpretation W3- The weakness of cultural policymaking in the field of diversity and multiplicity of the tastes in the field of culture W4- Weakness of tourism infrastructure W5- Lack of happy spiritual ceremonies and celebrations W6- Non-alignment of educational programs in the universities of the province with the competitive advantage of the province (tourism). W7- Weaknesses of NGOs in the province
Opportunities O1- Strengthening the ethical approach to religion among religious elites O2- Expansion of diversity and plurality in the religious and spiritual approaches of community members O3- Reducing institutionalism in the religious approach of youth and academics O4- Extension of the view and approach of minimal religion in society O5- Consensus of political elites about the importance of tourism for the country O6- The Growth of Civil Society O7-Reducion of consensus among religious groups	SO strategies SO1- Defining research priorities of tourism related organizations based on civil society support SO2- Guiding the educated human resources towards the management and implementation of spiritual-based tourism programs SO3- Strengthening educational programs on justifying diversity and diversity in society and its benefits from economic, social and political aspects	WO strategies WO1- Using the capacity of civil society and diverse community groups to participate in tourism programs WO2- Using the space created by the decline of consensus among religious groups to advance cultural policies based on diversity and diversity

The top-left cell of the table contains labels "Internal factors" and "External Factors".

Threats T1- Low Tolerance among Cultural Managers T2- the decline of the business status/ atmosphere T3- Closed and integrated cultural policies T4- Isolation of the country due to widespread Western sanctions T5- Apply some religious restrictions T6- Pressure of some groups to the government to create restrictions on social networks and cyberspace	ST strategies ST1- Seminars and meetings on different religious and spiritual groups and perspectives at provincial and national level ST2- Provincial headquarters, banks and entrepreneurship funds support web-based tourism businesses and social networks ST3- Extensive communication with powerful groups and institutions across the province to reduce barriers to spiritual-based tourism programs ST4- Using the views of academics to formulate and implement cultural programs and policies	WT strategies WT1- Modify curricula of provincial universities to promote religious and tourism based on spirituality WT2- Using the experiences of successful countries in the field of tourism to refine cultural policies WT3- Support organizations and agencies involved in tourism with special ceremonies and rituals, taking into account different tastes

Prioritization of strategies using the ARAS technique

In this section, using the ARAS technique, the prioritization of the spiritual-based tourism strategies is explained. This method is one of the best multi-criteria decision-making methods for prioritizing options. The best option is to have the maximum distance from the negative factors and the least distance from the positive factors.

Stage One: Formation of Decision Matrix

This step consists of two steps: in the first step, according to the results of distributed questionnaires among experts, we will make decision-making matrix. In the next step, we will determine the optimal value of each criterion. The optimum amount for strengths and opportunities is maximal and minimum for weaknesses and threats. The decision matrix according to the points given by the experts is described in Table 18.

Stage Two: Normalization of the Decision-making Matrix

In this stage, the normalization of the decision matrix is done by linear method in which the normal values of the elements related to the? Incremental/ additive/ increasing? Criteria are as follows:

$$\bar{x}_{ij=}\frac{x_{ij}}{\sum_{i=o}^{m}x_{ij}}$$

And the normalized values of the elements related to the decreasing criteria are as follows:

$$x_{ij}=\frac{1}{x^*_{ij}}:\ \bar{x}_{ij}=\frac{x_{ij}}{\sum_{i=o}^{m}x_{ij}}$$

The normalized decision-making matrix is described in Table 19.

Table 18. Decision-making matrix

	S1	S2	S3	S6	S7	W2	W3	W5	W6	O2	O4	O6	O7	T1	T3	T6	T7
Direction of optimality	MAX	MAX	MAX	MAX	MAX	MIN	MIN	MIN	MIN	MAX	MAX	MAX	MAX	MIN	MIN	MIN	MIN
Weight of criteria	0.035	0.055	0.081	0.0725	0.0735	0.0745	0.0345	0.03	0.044	0.0595	0.0825	0.0805	0.0425	0.031	0.0675	0.0595	0.077
Optimal value	4.9	5	5	4.8	4.9	1	1	1	1	4.9	4.1	5	5	1	2	4	1
SO1	4.8	4.8	4.9	4.3	4.2	1.1	4.1	1.9	1.7	4.9	4.1	4.8	4.9	1.9	3	5	4
SO2	4.9	5	1.1	2	4.9	4.2	4.9	1.1	3	4	3	5	5	3	4.9	4.9	2
SO3	4.1	4.9	5	4	4.1	3	4.1	5	1.9	4.9	4	4.9	5	4.1	2	5	3
WO1	2.9	3	3	2	1.9	1.9	2	4.9	1.1	4.1	3	4	4	4.9	3	4.8	2
WO2	4.1	4.9	4.1	4.1	4.1	1.9	4.9	1	2	3	2	4.1	3	1.1	4	4.2	5
ST1	1.9	2	3	3	1.9	3	4.1	4.9	1.9	4	3	4	4	1.9	3	4.8	3
ST2	2.9	4.1	1	4.8	4.9	1	1	1	1.1	4.1	3	4	4.1	4.9	2	4.2	1
ST3	1.9	3	1.2	1	1.9	1.2	3	3	1.1	4.1	4	4	4	2	4.1	4.9	3
ST4	4.9	3	1.8	1	1.1	1	4.9	1.9	1	4.1	3	5	4	1	5	4.1	5
WT1	4.1	4	1.9	3	2.9	2	4.9	1.1	1	2.9	4.1	4	4.1	1.1	5	4	5
WT2	2.9	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.9	4.9	4.1	4.1	4.1	2.9	4.1	4.1	2.9	4.1	4.9	4.9
WT3	4.9	2.9	1.9	1.9	4.1	4.8	4.2	1.2	2.1	2.9	1.1	2.9	2.9	1.1	4.9	4.1	4.9

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Table 19. Normal decision-making matrix

	S1	S2	S3	S6	S7	W2	W3	W5	W6	…	T1	T3	T6	T7
Direction of optimality	MAX	MAX	MAX	MAX	MAX	MIN	MIN	MIN	MIN	…	MIN	MIN	MIN	MIN
Weight of criteria	0.035	0.055	0.081	0.0725	0.0735	0.0745	0.0345	0.03	0.044	…	0.031	0.0675	0.0595	0.077
Optimal value	0.100	0.102	0.102	0.098	0.100	0.126	0.126	0.126	0.126	…	0.131	0.066	0.033	0.131
SO1	0.098	0.098	0.100	0.087	0.085	0.115	0.031	0.066	0.074	…	0.069	0.044	0.026	0.033
SO2	0.100	0.102	0.022	0.041	0.100	0.030	0.026	0.115	0.042	…	0.044	0.027	0.027	0.066
SO3	0.083	0.100	0.102	0.081	0.083	0.042	0.031	0.025	0.066	…	0.032	0.066	0.026	0.044
WO1	0.059	0.061	0.061	0.041	0.039	0.066	0.063	0.026	0.115	…	0.027	0.044	0.027	0.066
WO2	0.083	0.100	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.066	0.026	0.126	0.063	…	0.119	0.033	0.031	0.026
ST1	0.039	0.041	0.061	0.061	0.039	0.042	0.031	0.026	0.066	…	0.069	0.044	0.027	0.044
ST2	0.059	0.083	0.020	0.098	0.100	0.126	0.126	0.126	0.115	…	0.027	0.066	0.031	0.131
ST3	0.039	0.061	0.024	0.020	0.039	0.105	0.042	0.042	0.115	…	0.066	0.032	0.027	0.044
ST4	0.100	0.061	0.037	0.020	0.022	0.126	0.026	0.066	0.126	…	0.131	0.026	0.032	0.026
WT1	0.083	0.081	0.039	0.061	0.059	0.063	0.026	0.115	0.126	…	0.119	0.026	0.033	0.026
WT2	0.059	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.066	0.026	0.031	0.031	…	0.045	0.032	0.027	0.027
WT3	0.100	0.059	0.039	0.039	0.083	0.026	0.030	0.105	0.060	…	0.119	0.027	0.032	0.027

Stage Three: Formation of Normalized Weighted Decision-making Matrix

In this step, the normal matrix must be converted to a normalized weighted matrix. In order to obtain a normalized weighted matrix, we must have the weights of the indexes/ indicators. The weight of each of the indicators has been calculated using the internal and external factors evaluation matrix. Calculated weights are multiplied in the normalized matrix. The resulting matrix is a normalized weighted matrix. The normalized weighted matrix is described in Table 20.

Table 20. Normalized weighted Decision-making Matrix

	S1	S2	S3	S6	S7	W2	W3	W5	W6	...	T1	T3	T6	T7
Direction of optimality	MAX	MAX	MAX	MAX	MAX	MIN	MIN	MIN	MIN	...	MIN	MIN	MIN	MIN
Optimal values	0.003	0.006	0.008	0.007	0.007	0.009	0.004	0.004	0.006	...	0.004	0.004	0.002	0.010
SO1	0.003	0.005	0.008	0.006	0.006	0.009	0.001	0.002	0.003	...	0.002	0.003	0.002	0.003
SO2	0.003	0.006	0.002	0.003	0.007	0.002	0.001	0.003	0.002	...	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.005
SO3	0.003	0.005	0.008	0.006	0.006	0.003	0.001	0.001	0.003	...	0.001	0.004	0.002	0.003
WO1	0.002	0.003	0.005	0.003	0.003	0.005	0.002	0.001	0.005	...	0.001	0.003	0.002	0.005
WO2	0.003	0.005	0.007	0.006	0.006	0.005	0.001	0.004	0.003	...	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.002
ST1	0.001	0.002	0.005	0.004	0.003	0.003	0.001	0.001	0.003	...	0.002	0.003	0.002	0.003
ST2	0.002	0.005	0.002	0.007	0.007	0.009	0.004	0.004	0.005	...	0.001	0.004	0.002	0.010
ST3	0.001	0.003	0.002	0.001	0.003	0.008	0.001	0.001	0.005	...	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.003
ST4	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.001	0.002	0.009	0.001	0.002	0.006	...	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.002
WT1	0.003	0.004	0.003	0.004	0.004	0.005	0.001	0.003	0.006	...	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.002
WT2	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.005	0.001	0.001	0.001	...	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.002
WT3	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.006	0.002	0.001	0.003	0.003	...	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.002

Step Four: Identify the optimal option

At this stage, the utility of each option is calculated by the utility function with the following equation:

$S_i = \sum_{j=1}^{n} \hat{X}_{IJ}; \ i = 0 \dots m$

The sum of S_i is equal to one. The best option is that it has a larger S_i. Finally, the degree of utility must be calculated. The degree of utility of the A_i option is based on the comparison of S_i with an optimal value. The optimal value (SO) is based on expert judgment, norm of industry or the best values of the weighted matrix. The degree of utility of the A_i option is shown in K_i and can be calculated as follows:

$$K_i = \frac{S_i}{S_O} \ ; i = 0 \dots m$$

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The value of K_i is between [0 and 1]. These values are given in Table 21.

Table 21. The optimal matrix, the degree of utility and the rank of each option

Strategy	S_i	K_i	Rank
SO_1	0.077	0.776	2
SO_2	0.061	0.610	7
SO_3	0.071	0.710	3
WO_1	0.058	0.589	8
WO_2	0.065	0.654	4
ST_1	0.053	0.529	10
ST_2	0.081	0.821	1
ST_3	0.056	0.566	9
ST_4	0.061	0.614	6
WT_1	0.063	0.631	5
WT_2	0.043	0.430	12
WT_3	0.049	0.493	11

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to develop spiritual-based tourism strategies in Qom province. To do this, at first, 17 internal factors and 15 external factors were identified by reviewing the background and interviewing the experts. After screening, the most important internal and external factors, weaknesses and strengths, opportunities and threats facing spiritual-based tourism were identified. In the following, using the DEMATEL method, the most influential factors in each group (strength, weakness, opportunities and threats) were obtained. After determining the most influential factors in each category of implementation of the SWOT matrix, spiritual-based tourism strategies were determined. After determining the strategies, the decision matrix to prioritize the spiritual-based tourism strategies was arranged with ARAS technique. The ranking results were as follows: Support for web and social networks based tourism-related businesses by the provincial headquarters, entrepreneurship support funds and banking sector, defining the research priorities of tourism-related organizations based on the support of civil society, strengthen educational programs on the justification of diversity and plurality in society

and its benefits from the economic, social and political aspects, the use of the opportunity created by the decline of consensus among religious groups to advance cultural policies based on the diversity of tastes and plurality and modifying the educational programs of the universities of the province in order to develop religious and tourism based on spirituality. It seems that the provincial resistive economic headquarters should often define provincial projects based on the province's competitive advantage meaning, religious and tourism based on spirituality. The banking sector should also provide cheap facilities for virtual businesses that are active in this field. The organization of the plan, organization of cultural heritage and deputy of pilgrims' affairs, by defining provincial research priorities around religious and tourism based on spirituality, can illustrate different dimensions of the field and change the mentality of the people and other stakeholders, especially the powerful groups, and facilitate development in this field. It is also necessary to prepare and review cultural policies at the provincial level with the approach of stakeholder analysis, the use of academic capacities, the experiences of other countries, and negotiation with influential groups at the provincial level. Providing seminars and meetings at the provincial level, informing about the benefits of tourism based on spirituality, and using the capabilities of cyberspace to change the mentality of people in the development of tourism based on spirituality, is important. Finally, one of the problems and challenges facing tourism development in the province is the lack of alignment of universities with the priorities of the province. Despite the fact that tourism is a competitive advantage in the province, universities at the level of educational and research are not harmonized with mentioned advantage. Therefore, the development of educational fields in the universities of the province based on the need-based logic, instead of centralized planning, will play an important role in the development of human resources in this area.

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