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Systematic Analysis of Development in Iran's Tourism Market in the Form of Future Study: A New Method of Strategic Planning

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Highlights

- Future study is vital for developing tourism and attracting international tourists
- Modern methods of future study are needed in addressing national and regional issues
- The study provided a new and strategic approach based on future study
- This can be useful in tourism planning to attract tourists to a destination
- MICMAC and Scenario Wizard constitute the two main phases of the study

Abstract

Future study is vital now more than ever for countries to develop tourism and attract international tourists. The main purpose of this development is to gain benefits, especially economic ones. Modern methods of future study, especially scenario building, are helpful in addressing issues at the national and regional scale because of their flexible strategies. According to the applied nature of the study, data were collected in two ways: reviewing previous studies and using questionnaires. The questionnaires were in the form of a cross-impact matrix and were self-administrated. The data were analyzed using MICMAC analysis and Scenario Wizard software. The results of the MICMAC method indicated that 10 variables have key/predominant roles in terms of influence in the development system of Iran's tourism market. In the second phase of the study, 34 possible states of the key variables were defined. The results of the Scenario-Wizard method indicated that four scenarios have strong consistencies, and among those only one is a driver that has ideal and desirable characteristics and conditions for implementation.

Keywords: Tourism future, Tourism planning, Tourism strategy, Scenario based planning, Tourism development, Iran tourism

1. Introduction

The ever-increasing growth and development of the tourism industry across the globe has increased the importance of tourism from an economic point of view. Thus, it can be considered an important source of foreign exchange earnings for developed and developing countries. Reviewing the ever-expanding tourism industry over the last decades, it can be seen that a large proportion of planning and investment has fallen within the scope of tourism (WTTC, 2019). Therefore, it can be said that tourism constitutes an important part of the economy. On the other hand, tourism is a widespread socioeconomic phenomenon that has arisen as a result of people's need for leisure time and communication with nature, and a desire to visit new and historic places and cultures (Perdue et al., 2004).

Developing tourism or expanding its status in an area or country requires specific studies. Comparing unsuccessful unplanned tourist destinations with the success of other destinations that have been developed based on logical planning processes shows that planning is vital in tourism development

(Inskip, 1991). In addition, optimized planning of international tourist affairs to provide high-quality services to any group of tourists is one of the most important factors in developing this industry. Iran is no exception when it comes to this rule of planning, because of its vast expanse, historical background, ancient civilization, and many natural and human-made tourist attractions, and should develop its international tourism with integrated and comprehensive planning (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2012). In this regard, strategic planning can be considered one of the planning methods in the field of tourism science (Ruhanen, 2004) that is a fundamental and effective way to advance the goals of, and create a clear and realistic perspective for, the future of tourism in Iran.

Iran's reliance on oil-related revenues has created a one-dimensional economy. Investing in the tourism industry and applying efficient strategic planning methods can be considered one of the most sensible ways to create a more multi-dimensional economy. Tourism could provide an alternative source of income for the country and, from an economic point of view, it could lead to increased GDP and GNP in Iran, boosting the national economy in the long term.

There are many techniques and methods in strategic planning but no one can be preferred over another because each of them is used and specified for specific places and times (Nematpour & Faraji, 2019). Scientific methods and techniques for strategic planning are not always stable and are challenged by new ones over time, so researchers have proposed the use of systematic models over non-systematic ones for the implementation of strategic planning. Meanwhile, future study methods, especially scenario-based planning, can be considered appropriate tools of systematic models for development of Iran's tourism market. Such studies are needed in Iran due to the broadness of its touristic capacities, which have different dimensions and types. In fact, on the one hand, the lack of a sustainable national income and the government's reliance on oil revenues, and the resulting weak economy, call for tourism development in order to pave the way for economic changes, especially in border areas (which have economic difficulties). On the other hand, dealing with the negative impacts of tourism on the environment, culture, and the economy calls for intelligent management and logical guidance.

Generally, future study methods, based on the nature of their procedures, can be classified into qualitative and quantitative (Amer et al., 2013). In this study, we focus on cross-impact analysis as one of the most frequently applied quantitative methods for future study systematic models at a national scale (Gordon, 2009). The study aims to provide a new and strategic approach based on future study that can be useful in planning to attract Southeast Asian tourists to Iran. MICMAC and Scenario Wizard constitute the two main phases of the study. In the first phase, the key factors and main drivers are identified, then possible future scenarios are designed using strategic management and future research approaches based on planning models.

The study objectives are:

1. Identifying the key factors and driving forces that influence the development of Iran's tourism market, in order to attract Southeast Asian tourists
2. Building scenario-based planning that will fit in with Iran's small- and large-scale policies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tourism Development

Governments have been trying to understand how the development trend in tourism is moving, to inform the design and preparation of policies and general plans, in order to sustain the rapid growth of tourism that has been seen in many countries. This rapid growth and the widespread nature of tourism around the world has led to its virtually universal integration into local and national development plans and policies (Sharpley, 2009: 14). The preceding discussion has indicated that there has been considerable debate over the nature of tourism development, how the development should be measured, and how it should be encouraged (Pigram & Wahab, 2005). In some cases, particularly in developed countries, tourism may play only a limited role in development; but in most developing countries, it plays a vital role and represents the only realistic choice (Brown, 1998). In developing countries that have good tourism potential and resources, tourism may be accepted as an economic activity that could rationalize economic policy, especially through balanced growth brought by new or additional business production cycles prompted by tourism expansion. Thus, tourism can become the cause and the effect of rationalizing economic development, along with the economic production sectors of agriculture and industry (Wahab, 1992).

Either way, from a destination point of view, tourism development is perceived as a catalyst for development and more precisely for economic growth (Ekanayake & Long, 2012). From the perspective of sustainable development, Butler (1999) argued that tourism development is the planning and ongoing development of destinations, facilities, and services to meet the needs of current and future tourists. When tourism is effectively planned and managed, tourism development can result in huge improvements and benefits for both tourists and the local community; therefore, the need for strategic planning in tourism, in order to meet the desires of people living in the demanding world, has to be encouraged so as to promote and attract tourists as well as build their confidence with tourism activities (Butler, 1999).

In many communities, economic growth is considered the most pressing reason for adopting tourism as a development strategy, and because of its potential contribution to the local or national economy as a foreign exchange and source of income, government revenues, and employment (Kim et al., 2006; Kreishan, 2010; Lee & Chang, 2008). Nevertheless, tourism remains one of the world's fastest growing industries and, globally, the growth is forecast to continue (Sharpley, 2009: 14). Thus, tourism is seen essentially as a safe development option for communities. In most cases, meeting the future of integrated tourism development with nonprofessional prediction and analysis of trends can cause problems in implementing tourism plans; therefore, a systematic look into the subject and expert analysis of tourism's future trends should be used to bring about desirable development (Nematpour & Faraji, 2019).

2.2. Tourism Systems

From a system theory point of view, a tourist destination is a dynamically complicated system that includes many elements (Baggio, 2008; Gunn, 1994; Leiper, 1990; Mai & Smith, 2018; Mill & Morrison, 1998, Nematpour & Faraji, 2019) that interact with each other in a non-linear way (Baggio, 2008; Gunn, 1994). Mai & Smith (2015) stated that the system comprises a diverse but organized array of stakeholders, each of whom has different goals, plans, and interests. Furthermore, various internal factors, such as policy, national laws, and specific circumstances in the community, influence the whole system. Likewise, external indicators from natural disasters to human-made crises, such as terrorism, war, global financial crises, or flood, have the same influence on the tourism system (Mai, 2012). System theory is a basis for structural analysis (Beni, 2001; Leiper, 1990). This theory is a fundamental one with a philosophical framework in scenario and long-term planning (Formica & Kothari, 2008; Nematpour & Faraji, 2019). The

system is a complicated whole whose overall function depends on its components and the interrelationships between them (Jackson, 2003).

There are obvious interrelationships throughout the tourism system. Firstly, the origin and destination depend upon each other for the efficient functioning of the economic tourism system: the businesses and organizations on each side are mutually dependent on each other, while the amenities, facilities, and attractions on the destination side must satisfy the needs of tourists. But where is the origin of these needs? The needs are created or influenced by the tourists' origin environment. Secondly, the origin and destination sides interact collectively with elements of the wider environment in which they are located. For example, tourists as one element of the tourism system affect the local communities in both the origin and destination regions (Sharpley, 2009).

It is worth mentioning that the system approach is different from the specificity approach: in the specificity approach, the components of a whole are divided into more specific elements and each element is studied and analyzed in isolation, but in the system approach a kind of holistic view is dominant (Nematpour & Faraji, 2019). Employing tourism system theory for scenario or long-term planning demonstrates the utility of system dynamics for implementing scenario planning or any kind of long-term planning for a tourist destination. We can determine the nature and construction of the system dynamic models of the tourism system for destinations, and subsequently develop alternative long-term or scenario-based planning for tourism development on a local, regional, or national scale. It is vital to evaluate the sustainability of each tourism development (long-term or scenario) using system dynamic models (Mai & Smith, 2018). Formica & Kothari (2008) stated that the systems approach helps policymakers in tourism organizations or destinations to learn from existing information to deal with the complexity and uncertainty of the future. The fact is that the system approach allows a change of mind that enables planners or decision-makers to see non-linear correlations and interrelationships in processes of change.

2.3. Strategic Tourism Planning Based on Scenario

Countries need to have a specific idea about where and how they want their tourism sector to be in the future and the route it is going to follow to get there (Johnson et al., 2008). Strategic tourism planning is a process that aims to optimize the benefits of tourism so that the result is a balance of the appropriate quality and quantity of supply with the proper level of demand, without compromising the local area's socioeconomic and environmental development or its sustainability. Thus, strategic tourism planning is a framework designed to provide direction for any tourism organization or destination, and it emphasizes quality, efficiency, and effectiveness (Edgell et al., 2008: 297).

It is vital to consider integrated effective management, stakeholders' concerns, efficient development, innovative marketing, and community planning to design effective strategic planning. Tourism strategic planning requires that a tourist destination be able to adapt to new trends and changes in the tourism market and other related fields, and must be able to adjust to a competitive market environment (Pigram & Wahab, 2005). Local, regional, and national destinations that have planned well for tourism development usually have a competitive edge in the marketplace (Ladeiras et al., 2010; Ruhanen, 2004). Strategic planning aims to meet the future sustainability of tourism and tries to ensure a desirable quality of tourism products while yielding the most benefits to the local community or tourist destination. Furthermore, appropriate strategic planning will override short-term goals set solely for profit and focus

on many of the key future attributes that are more useful and desirable for the entire community (Formica & Kothari, 2008).

Scenario-based planning is one of the strategic planning methods that was developed expressly to allow managers and decision-makers to rehearse the future and adapt to or be better prepared for possible future consequences (Mai & Smith, 2018). A scenario is defined as “a set of organized ways to dream effectively about future” (Formica & Kothari, 2008). Scenario-based planning helps to predict multiple, plausible, and uncertain futures and make appropriate decisions about them. Wack (1985) described scenario-based planning as a way to encourage entrepreneurial and creative thinking and action in terms of complexity, change, and uncertainty. Forecasting methods suppose a degree of certainty in future studies, whereas scenario-based planning tries to incorporate the key point that nothing is certain in the future and is therefore an appropriate tool for strategic planning (Bunn, 1993). Chatterjee and Gordon (2006: 255) have described scenario-based planning:

In scenario planning the aim is to develop distinctive depictions of the future. Alternative scenarios are developed from the present situation for a desired time horizon. In a scenario planning exercise a number of driving forces will be identified. By making different assumptions about these driving forces or key influences, different “stories” are formulated about how these interact. The scenarios are effectively those issues.

To build a scenario process, both the internal and the external environment must be taken into consideration. The internal environment includes unemployment, increasing pressure on local resources from mass tourism, land-use conflicts, population decline, environmental deterioration, etc., and the external environment comprises global trends toward more environmentally responsible alternative tourist paths, strategic objectives of tourist development at a national level, and tourist policy directions, among others.

Scenario planning is based on two principles:

1. Systems thinking: Organizations, companies, and others must perceive their physical and mental environment as a complex network of interconnected (external as well as internal) factors.
2. Multiple futures: Organizations, companies, and others should not reduce their strategic thinking to one exact anticipated future. Instead, alternative future studies and scenario planning should be designed and considered during strategic planning.

In tourism, scenario planning has been put forward by several researchers (Gössling & Scott, 2012; Mai & Smith, 2018; Nematpour & Faraji, 2019; Page et al., 2010; Postma, 2015) as a systematic approach to creating and testing possible future scenarios in uncertain environments. Scenario planning is based on two phases: firstly development and application of simulations to anticipate possible futures, and secondly assessing the implications of managerial and decision-making skills to evaluate those futures (Mai & Smith, 2018). In scenario planning of long-range local tourism, McLennan et al. (2012) have determined that it is not possible to use the impacts of changes in the tourism system on the economy, society, and the environment using a counterfactual planning. Hudson et al. (2004) have stated that it is not possible to create an attractive, competitive, and well-functioning tourist destination by relying only on chance; what is required is successful and well-structured planning that tries to capitalize on local assets and promote different forms of tourist development that are compatible with the local and global context. Whittlesea and Owen (2012) investigated the construction and promotion of low-carbon tourist

destinations in southwest England. They applied a destination footprint and scenario tool for their work and found out that greenhouse gases are a prominent concern for all tourist destinations, and reducing them is a significant challenge that demands an understanding of where emissions occur. Gössling et al. (2012) suggested that developing a sustainable tourism scenario in a stakeholder-involvement process can create legitimacy for governance, and governance is a vital precondition for significant change in the national tourism system.

2.4. Iran and Its Tourism

Iran, whose historic name is Persia, is one of the largest countries in the Middle East in terms of land area (1.65 million square kilometers) and population (over 83 million people), according to the most recent data from the Statistical Center of Iran (2019). Iran's history dates back over 7000 years and includes great heritage and rich local culture; 13 cultural sites have been listed in UNESCO's *World Heritage List* (UNESCO, 2012a) and 9 in UNESCO's *World Intangible Heritage List* (UNESCO, 2012b). In terms of geography, Iran has some specific natural phenomena, including two mountain ranges, namely Alborz and Zagros, vast sandy deserts, a high plateau with large salt flats, unique fertile plains, and Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea coastlines. Iran's geographical situation gives rise to a wide variation in climate, from arid and semi-arid to subtropical, and in flora and fauna (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2012). There are some religious places and sites and, being an Islamic republic country, those places and sites have significance to Shia Muslims who visit Iran, and this has great potential for the development of tourism in the country. Iran's geography and history give rise to a wealth of actual and potential tourist attractions and activities, including mountaineering, skiing, trekking, discovering, desert touring, and beach holidays. In terms of ecotourism, there is a National Committee of Ecotourism that correspondingly recognizes the appeal of the environment and promotes and preserves nature. In addition, the Iranian government has paid specific attention to domestic safety and security. In terms of safety and security provision in tourism, Iran's arms industry has an influential role. Iran's military industry is considered strategic and fundamental because it has the most advanced technologies and the most prominent specialists and equipment in the country, and because of its strategic importance, which is very influential in global equations as a symbol of national power. This is an issue that development economists have emphasized, arguing for the utilization of military for the production of infrastructure and parent industries and for macroeconomic growth, to ensure the safety and security of citizens and foreigners (*Mashregh News*, 2019).

Iran's potential as a tourist destination remains untapped because of what can be described as political ambivalence at best and antipathy at worst. At the same time, the image of Iran in the global tourism market has been marred by poor and negative media attention over a sustained period (Khodadadi, 2016). As a result of these unfair images, the main perception of Iran in the minds of international tourists, especially visitors from North America and Europe, is of a troubled country (Khodadadi, 2016). The Iranian government no longer assists in counteracting this image as tourism is not regarded as a "critical project" of the political agenda. The lack of foreign direct investment in the tourism sector can also be seen as a challenge to mainstream tourism, especially in the accommodation sector, where the provision of products and services is insufficient for the international business and leisure market. The allocation of governmental positions in Iran has traditionally operated within a system of political and religious patronage. This means that the governmental leaders of the tourism sector have poor knowledge about tourism science in terms of promotion and operation, and their view of tourism is not based on global trends. Alongside this managerial failing is the absence of coordinated and effective human resource development to support the tourism sector.

Obstacles to Iranian tourism and its growth are related to low infrastructure standards, deficiencies in accommodation and transportation, visa restrictions, and insufficient marketing efforts (Seyfi & Hall, 2018). Iran faces a major problem on an international scale because of negative and unfavorable imagery in the West and a lack of resources to tackle this negative discourse (Khodadadi, 2016). In addition, the Iranian economy suffers badly from the sanctions imposed by the United States' president, Donald Trump (Holpuch, 2018), leading to reduced travel to Iran by international tourists, air transport limitations, and other socioeconomic barriers that result in the "creation of a bad image of Iran in the world" (Khodadadi, 2016; Khodadadi, 2018). In other words, President Trump has killed Iran's tourism boom by ignoring the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that was agreed on July 14, 2015, between Iran and the 5+1 (E3/EU+3, i.e., China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States) (Khodadadi, 2018). Also as a result of the sanctions, poor and out-of-date systems are typically in place. Transportation issues limit tourism development in peripheral regions where indigenous tourist attractions are concentrated. In marketing terms, international tourism to Iran is seriously challenged by issues of national image, relating to local political instability in the Middle East and also national social and cultural matters, particularly the hijab requirement for women and the ban on alcohol (Seyfi & Hall, 2018). Recently, the economic importance of tourism has been appreciated within the Iranian government: tourism is seen as a way to reduce the country's heavy dependence on oil-related revenues and, at the same time, decrease the pressure and influence of sanctions on the national economy. In 2019 the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism was established and has been paying specific attention to the development of tourism in Iran. However, only 7.2 million international arrivals were recorded in 2019 (UNWTO, 2019). Vacationers engage in nature-based and culture tours as well as study trips, and many Iranians living abroad return to visit friends and relatives or for pilgrimage (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2012).

3. Methodology

3.1. Cross-Impact Analysis

There are many future study methods ranging from simplistic to complex and qualitative to quantitative, and there are various criteria for choosing a particular one (Glenn and Gordon, 2003). Although the future is a result of structure-based interactions, the fact that there are many indicators and that they evolve over time and produce information in an isolated way is considered a limitation of many future studies methods (Asan & Asan, 2007). That is, developments and events are formulated without taking into account their possible influence and dependence on each other. To explore the nature and behavior of a system in the future, it is vital to analyze the sets of variables in order to describe systematically the interrelationships between them. The interrelationships between the existing variables are named as "cross impact" and "cross-impact analysis" is the well-known method used to analyze them (Nematpour & Faraji, 2019). Cross-impact analysis applies a cross-impact matrix in order to describe systematically all existing potential modes of interaction between the variables and evaluate the strength rating of the interactions (Schlange & Jüttner, 1997). In other words, cross-impact analysis allows experts (using cross-impact questions) to easily rate the relationships among n variables taken two at a time ($n \times n$) in the form of two comparisons. It is an estimation of the real world, where we assume the further probability of relationships among three, four, etc. variables or any kind of event (Bañuls & Turoff, 2011).

Over time, cross-impact analysis has been progressed by several versions comprising quantitative (based on the construction of a mathematical model relating to the variables), qualitative (estimation of relationships among the variables in the form of a matrix, by an expert panel), and mixed (Asan & Asan,

2007; Godet, 2000; Gordon, 2009). In this study, a qualitative cross-impact analysis is used, based on structural analysis (Duperrin and Godet, 1973). Cross-impact analysis is known as a powerful tool for analyzing a set of binary future events, and is also one of the most commonly used methods for creating and analyzing scenarios with a flexible methodology that can be combined with other methods and techniques like fuzzy (Asan et al., 2004), Delphi (Bañuls & Salmeron, 2007; Bañuls & Turoff, 2011) and multi-criteria methods (Cho & Kwon, 2004).

3.1.1 Structural Analysis

Structural analysis is based on the cross-impact analysis method. In fact, the structural analysis method is a variant of the original cross-impact analysis method considering direct and indirect relationships (Cabrera et al., 2002). Structural analysis can be described as a system that comprises a set of interrelated variables. The system contains a network that should be analyzed using interrelationships between variables by applying an interconnection matrix, to determine the evolution of the system in the future (Nematpour & Faraji, 2019). From the perspective of structural analysis functions, the relationships between the quantitative and qualitative variables that characterize the system should be identified in terms of structure. Identifying the key variables controlling the evolution of the system is the most important result of structural analysis.

3.1.2. Structural Analysis with the MICMAC Method

MICMAC is a structural analysis technique, known as a variant of cross-impact analysis, that was proposed by Duperrin and Godet (1973). The technique is used to determine key variables in a system by analyzing a given set of variables through a matrix of direct influence (MDI) and a matrix of potential indirect influence, and this is carried out by an expert panel (Villacorta et al., 2014). Each cell of the MDI “ij” shows the impact of each “i” variable on each “j” variable. The numbers from 0 to 3 give a value to these impacts: 0 indicates no relation between variables, 1 indicates weak relations, 2 indicates moderate relations, and 3 indicates strong relations. Collecting the inventory of variables, describing variables’ relationships with each other, and determining key variables are the steps of the technique (Arcade, Godet, Meunier & Roubelat., 1999). In accordance with the nature of the data, analysis has been carried out using a direct method that ranks the variables using their direct influence/dependence on the other variables. The elements of the MDI matrix are formed into a k_{th} row and k_{th} column. Thus, we have the following formula:

$$I_k = \sum_{j=1}^n MDI (k, j) \text{ and } I_k = \sum_{j=1}^n MDI (j, k)$$

The chart obtained from MICMAC has a two-dimensional map with vertical and horizontal axes, which represent the influence and dependence, respectively (see Figure 1) (Asan and Asan, 2007; Godet et al., 2008; Villacorta et al., 2014). As Nematpour and Faraji (2019) stated, there are five zones in every chart:

- Input/influential variables: These variables are inputs and their level of influence on other variables is much higher than the level of their dependence in future. They are defined as determinative and key drivers of the system and therefore the system is strongly dependent on these variables.

- Intermediate/key variables: Due to having an unstable nature, these variables can be very influential and very dependent at the same time.
- Output/dependent variables: Due to their low level of influence and high level of dependence, these variables are sensitive to changes in influential and intermediate variables. Thus, they are considered as resultant or output variables of the system.
- Excluded variables: These are not able to interfere with the system and are known as independents or “out of chart” because their low level of influence and dependence is considered the main characteristic of these variables.
- Clustered/neuter variables: Because of their position in the border areas of each of the four zones, these variables have a high possibility for joining other variables. Thus, the system cannot make certain decisions about them.

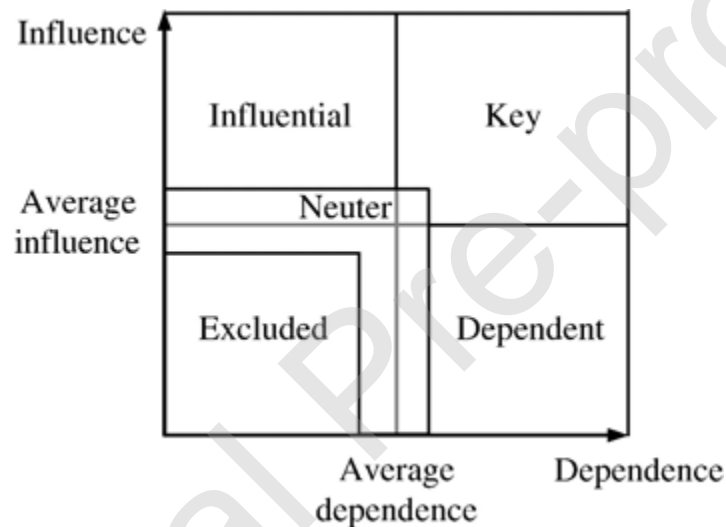


Figure 1. Influence–dependence chart, adapted from Godet (1994)

3.1.3. Building Scenarios Based on Cross-Impact Balance

Cross-impact balance (CIB) analysis is a special and modern form of cross-impact analysis used for qualitative systems analysis of multidisciplinary topics. Scenario Wizard is a typical application field of CIB analysis. The construction and building of scenarios frequently require the evaluation of developments in many different fields (e.g., social, political, economic, or technological). Development of scenarios needs to determine which combinations of favorable, neutral, and unfavorable forecast variants are improved by their net of interrelations. CIB analysis employs a pair-interaction system approach. The starting point is the identification of a set of key factors known as descriptors, which are determined by the MICMAC technique. Descriptors characterize the system for the purposes of a qualitative system understanding. Figure 2 indicates the relationships between the descriptors.

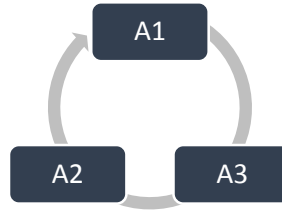


Figure 2. A simple CIB network

Each element of the network is completely connected to the others by one-sided and reciprocal relationships. As a whole, the system will tend toward a configuration in which the web of influences is balanced in an internally consistent way. The steps of the CIB process for building scenario are as follows:

1. Compile a list of the most relevant system factors as descriptors. In this study the most important or key factors are extracted from the MICMAC technique. For example: $X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots, X_n$
2. Define a set of qualitative alternatives (variants) which characterize the possible states of the descriptors. For example:
 - a. $X_1 \{x_a, x_b, x_c\}$
 - b. $X_2 \{x_x, x_y, x_z\}$
 - c. $X_3 \{x_i, x_j\}$
 - $X_n \{x_1 \dots x_n\}$
3. In this step, a judgment (from -3 “strongly restricting influence” to $+3$ “strongly promoting influence”) must be made about the impact of state x_a of descriptor X_1 on state x_x of descriptor X_2 , based on literature reviews, expert interviews, or other appropriate investigations.

$X_{ij} (3,1)$	$X_{ij} (3,2)$	$X_{ij} (3,3)$
$X_{ij} (2,1)$	$X_{ij} (2,2)$	$X_{ij} (2,3)$
$X_{ij} (1,1)$	$X_{ij} (1,2)$	$X_{ij} (1,3)$

3.2. Study Methodology Process

The study period spanned September 2019 to February 2020. In this study, we focused on a structural analysis perspective (Gordon, 2009) based on cross-impact analysis (applying MICMAC software) (Nematpour & Faraji, 2019) to reach the best scenarios (by employing Scenario Wizard) for developing the tourism market in Iran. Scenario writing based on structural analysis is a method that is normally developed in six phases: (1) problem analysis, (2) variables definition, (3) relationship analysis, (4) chart analysis, (5) selection of key variables, and (6) writing possible scenarios for the future of the system (Arcade et al., 1999; Nematpour & Faraji, 2019; Postma, 2015). We used a purposive sampling method (Neuman, 2007) in selecting experts who have a deep understanding and rich information about the field of study (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Purposive sampling (judgmental or subjective sampling) is a non-probability method that is selected based on two criteria: (1) the characteristics of the experts, and (2) the objectives of the study. Avella (2016) suggested that a normal sample size should be around 10 to 100 people in the form of 2 or 3 expert groups. Thus, the study sample consisted of 22 experts as professionals, management experts, academics, and administrators. The data collected via a self-administered

questionnaire designed in the form of a cross-impact analysis matrix whose variables were collected in the preceding phase.

3.2.1. First Phase: Problem Analysis

Within this phase, the scope of the analysis, the scenario field, and the work framework are defined. An alternative classification for the scenario fields is external, internal, and systems scenarios. This phase also comprises the gathering of initial data and information (Asan & Asan, 2007).

3.2.2. Second Phase: Variables Definition

The results of the first phase are collected into variables that represent tools to measure the development of Iran's tourism system, by referring to related previous studies and interviews with experts. Variables can be categorical or non-categorical (Bañuls & Turoff, 2011). Structural analysis is based on experts' opinions; thus, finding people with a rich knowledge of cross-impact analysis and tourism science was vital (Arcade et al., 1999; Nematpour & Faraji, 2019). Then, the final variable list is decided by consensus and finalized exactly as 43 variables, and each variable of the study must be clearly defined, characterized, and understood by all respondents. The 43 strategic variables used in this study cover 7 fields of macro indicators that have affected tourism development in Iran: economic; socio-cultural; political, structural, and organizational; information and technology; law; spatial and infrastructure; and product/service (see Table 1).

Table 1. Study indicators and sub-indicators

	Indicator	Sub-indicator	Variables
1	Economic	1. Modern marketing	Var1
		2. Allocation of budget for tourism plans	Var2
		3. Economic and financial facilities	Var3
		4. Entrepreneurship in tourism	Var4
		5. Extending privatization	Var5
		6. Competitiveness	Var6
		7. Investing	Var7
		8. Purchasing power of tourists	Var8
2	Socio-cultural	1. Community participation	Var9
		2. Traditional festivals and holidays	Var10
		3. International events	Var11
		4. Carrying capacity of the community	Var12
		5. Create sense of trust in tourists	Var13
3	Political, structural, and organizational	1. International relations with Southeast Asian countries	Var14
		2. Inter-departmental/organizational coordination and integration	Var15
		3. Tourism development master plan	Var16
		4. Large-scale (macro) policymaking in tourism	Var17
		5. Incentives policies for the private sector	Var18
		6. Positive imagery of Iran	Var19
		7. Safety and security	Var20
		8. Scientific education and research in tourism	Var21
		9. Specialized management in tourism	Var22
		10. Tourist language education programs	Var23
		11. Facilitation of visas for Southeast Asian tourists	Var24

4	Information and technology	1. General level of knowledge (general public)	Var25
		2. Specialized level of knowledge (elites)	Var26
		3. New technologies in the tourism industry	Var27
		4. Digital advertising	Var28
		5. E-commerce in tourism and hotel industry	Var29
		6. Comprehensive tourism database of Iran	Var30
5	Law	1. Tourism standard laws and regulations	Var31
		2. Human resource laws and regulations	Var32
6	Spatial and infrastructure	1. Aesthetic attributes of public and human-made spaces	Var33
		2. Communication infrastructure	Var34
		3. Structure and infrastructure properties	Var35
		4. Healthcare network	Var36
7	Product/service	1. Quality of wellbeing	Var37
		2. Tourism facilities and services	Var38
		3. Diversification of incoming tours	Var39
		4. Standardization of tourism organizations and agencies	Var40
		5. Cultural and historical tourism products and services	Var41
		6. Creative tourism	Var42
		7. Medical tourism	Var43

3.2.3. Third Phase: Relationships Analysis

The variables identified in the previous phase were entered into the analysis matrix after experts rated the degree of their influence/dependence. The 43 strategic variables that contribute to Iran's tourism development were categorized and analyzed (Nematpour & Faraji, 2019). There are two types of relationships used for categorizing the variables: direct and indirect (Asan & Asan, 2007). In this study, direct classification was applied, which uses a cross-impact matrix to set up all direct impacts between the variables and evaluate the strengths of these impacts (see Table 2 and Figure 3). In this regard, to assess the rate of relationships between variables a pairwise analysis was performed. The ratings were (Dewangan et al., 2015):

- 0 = no influence
- 1 = weak influence
- 2 = moderate influence
- 3 = strong influence
- 4 = potential influence

An influence interrelation network— $V_i \rightarrow V_j$ and $V_j \rightarrow V_i$ —indicates that V_i influences V_j and V_j influences V_i .

Table 2. Hypothetical sample of cross-impact matrix

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5
V1	0	1	0	1	3
V2	3	0	1	1	1
V3	0	0	0	0	2
V4	0	0	2	0	0
V5	3	0	2	0	0

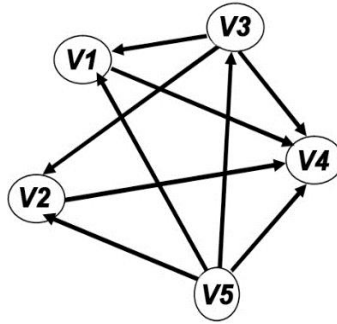


Figure 3. Hypothetical sample of spatial structure of variables

3.2.4. Fourth Phase: Chart Analysis

In this phase, an influence–dependence chart (Asan & Asan, 2007) was obtained from the MICMAC technique to interpret the results. In the chart, each variable according to its influence and dependence values is assigned to a specific and unique position that indicates the individual role and function of the variables in relation to the system as input/influential variables, intermediate/key variables, output/dependent variables, excluded variables, and clustered/neuter variables (Schlange & Jüttner, 1997).

The chart implies the participants' thinking and assessment of the tourism development system and what they perceive to be variables for changing the future. These variables are perceived as:

- Potentialities (variables with high influence and dependence capacity)
- Opportunities (variables with medium influence and dependence capacity)
- Constraints (variables that cannot be influenced)

Structural analysis also determines loops or networks of interrelated variables through the establishment of influence graphs (Nematpour & Faraji, 2019).

3.2.5. Fifth Phase: Selection of Key Variables

Considering the direct and indirect classifications and the chart analysis, the variables with both high influence and high dependence are selected as key variables (Asan & Asan, 2007).

3.2.6. Sixth Phase: Building Possible Scenarios

In this phase, by using the CIB analysis method, the possible scenarios were determined. In the first step of this phase, an expert panel with a rich knowledge about key variables is assembled. In the second step, the expert panel determines the influence–dependence of the seven key factors of the system as a descriptor by using cross-impact judgments in the form of a qualitative judgment scale:

- +3: strongly promoting influence
- +2: promoting influence
- +1: weakly promoting influence
- 0: no influence
- 1: weakly restricting influence

- 2: restricting influence
- 3: strongly restricting influence

In the next step, the consistent configurations of the impact network (“consistent scenarios”) are calculated using the CIB algorithm and the prepared recommendations. The relationship between variables in establishing different scenarios is $F_{ij}(X_i, X_j)$

4. Results

4.1. Identifying Key Variables Based on Cross-Impact Analysis

To determine the most important or key variables of Iran’s tourism development system, 60 variables were collected through reviewing related previous studies and interviewing experts (including academic and administrative experts in Iranian tourism affairs). In the next step, of those 60 variables, 43 variables were re-evaluated and filtered by the expert panel, and were divided into 7 main groups. In the last step, the final variables were adapted in the form of a 43×43 cross-impact matrix. The validation of the structural analysis based on MICMAC was conducted with domain experts (Patidar et al., 2017). After collecting the data from the expert panel, using the MICMAC technique and cross-impact analysis, the data were evaluated. The amount of matrix filtration was 61.60, which indicates that 61.60% of the variables have influence on each other. To summarize, of 1849 matrix-based relationships, 710 (38.40%) had no relationship, 405 (21.90%) had weak relationships, 368 (19.90%) had moderate relationships, and 366 (19.79%) had strong relationships with each other (see Table 3).

Table 3. MDI matrix

Indicator	Value
Matrix size	43
Number of iterations	2
Number of zeros	710
Number of ones	405
Number of twos	368
Number of threes	366
Number of P	0
Total	1849
Filtrate rate	61.602%

The information from the cross-impact matrix based on MDI indicates that most of the variables have an important role in improving relationships within the tourism development system of Iran, but only some of them have maximum influence on the system and are known as key variables of the system (see Table 4).

Table 4. Direct influence and dependence of variables

	Role	Variable		MDI	
				Direct influence	Direct dependence
1	Key variables	Var43	Medical tourism	455	321
2		Var39	Diversification of incoming tours	451	326

3		Var42	Creative tourism	437	348
4		Var41	Cultural and historical tourism products and services	419	348
5		Var19	Positive imagery of Iran	415	223
6		Var38	Tourism facilities and services	401	299
7		Var20	Safety and security	379	250
8		Var37	Quality of wellbeing	357	303
9		Var11	International events	343	370
10		Var16	Tourism development master plan	339	281
11		Var28	Digital advertising	334	183
12	Input	Var34	Communication infrastructure (air, sea, rail, and land transportation)	321	192
13	Input	Var26	Specialized level of knowledge (elites)	317	259
14	Input	Var21	Scientific education and research in tourism	312	169
15	Clustered	Var17	Large-scale (macro) policymaking in tourism	259	227
16	Clustered	Var40	Standardization of tourism organizations and agencies	245	263
17	Resultant	Var7	Investing	241	384
18	Clustered	Var36	Healthcare network	236	214
19	Clustered	Var24	Facilitation of visas for Southeast Asian tourists	232	93
20	Clustered	Var15	Inter-departmental/organizational coordination and integration	218	98
21	Clustered	Var29	E-commerce in tourism and hotel industry	218	281
22	Clustered	Var18	Incentives policies for private sector	214	169
23	Clustered	Var30	Comprehensive tourism database of Iran	214	218
24	Clustered	Var31	Standard tourism laws and regulations	214	209
25	Resultant	Var4	Entrepreneurship in tourism	205	352
26	Clustered	Var27	New technologies in the tourism industry	205	241
27	Clustered	Var2	Allocation of budget for tourism plans	200	183
28	Clustered	Var35	Structure and infrastructure properties	200	205
29	Clustered	Var13	Create a sense of trust in tourists	187	178
30	Clustered	Var33	Aesthetic attributes of public and human-made spaces	169	196
31	Clustered	Var23	Tourist language education programs	156	142
32	Resultant	Var10	Promotion of green architecture	151	370
33	Clustered	Var25	General level of knowledge (general public)	147	142
34	Clustered	Var1	Modern marketing	142	245
35	Excluded	Var14	International relations with Southeast Asian countries	138	165
36	Excluded	Var32	Human resource laws and regulations	125	169
37	Excluded	Var12	Carrying capacity of the community	89	192
38	Excluded	Var5	Extending privatization	84	169
39	Resultant	Var22	Specialized management in tourism	75	384
40	Excluded	Var9	Community participation	58	187
41	Excluded	Var3	Economic and financial facilities	44	151
42	Excluded	Var6	Competitiveness	31	196
43	Excluded	Var8	Purchasing power of tourists	0	84

The final matrix results in five main zones including input, intermediate/key, clustered, resultant, and excluded variables. In Table 4 the variables are distributed in four zones and each of the zones has a specific character. For example, “specialized level of knowledge” and “scientific education and research in tourism” are identified as input variables; “medical tourism” and “diversification of incoming tours” are intermediate/key variables; “investing” or “entrepreneurship in tourism” are resultant variables; “extending privatization” and “competitiveness” are excluded variables; and “e-commerce in tourism and hotel industry” and “incentives policies for private sector” are clustered variables.

Figure 4 indicates that the intermediate variables, which are located in the northeastern part of the map, are considered as important variables, but why? Because of their high degree of direct influence. In other words, intermediate variables always have a high degree of influence and usually high dependence. In

systematic analysis, it is vital to identify key variables in the system. According to previous studies (Arcade et al., 1999; Asan and Asan, 2007; Godet et al., 2008; Nematpour and Faraji, 2019; Villacorta et al., 2014) the criteria for determining key variables are based on degree of influence. In this study, 10 variables (medical tourism, diversification of incoming tours, creative tourism, cultural and historical tourism products and services, positive imagery of Iran, tourism facilities and services, safety and security, international events, tourism development master plan, digital advertising, and communication infrastructure) were identified as key variables for Iran's tourism development system. It must be mentioned that Var 37 (quality of wellbeing) and Var38 (tourism facilities and services) were very similar, and since Var37 was inherent in Var38 we decided to eliminate Var37. According to Figure 4 those variables with the highest degree of direct influence on the development of tourism in Iran are located in northeastern part of the plotted map. Key variables are the most important and influential variables in the system of Iran's tourism development, and the future of tourism development in Iran depends on those variables.

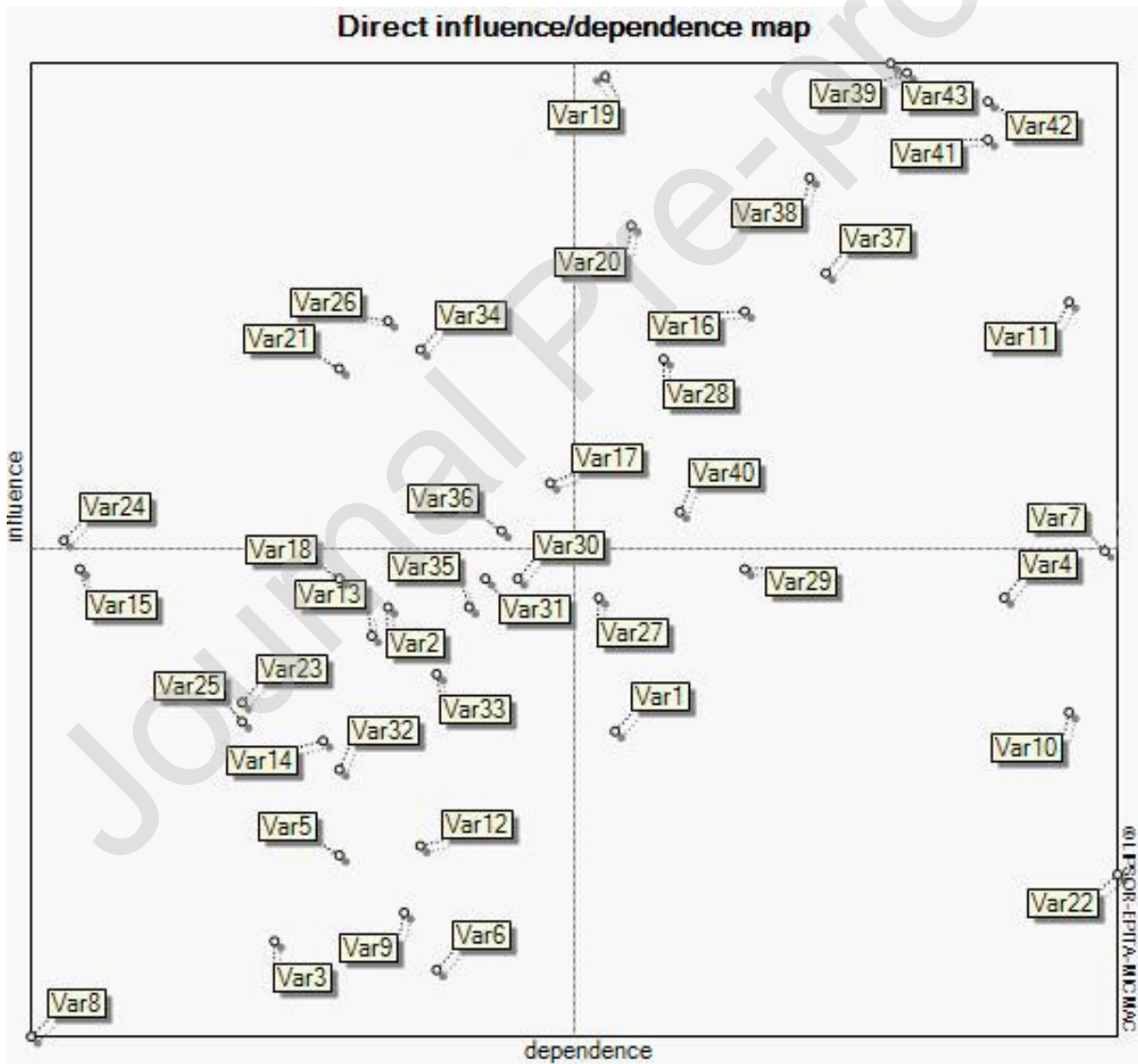
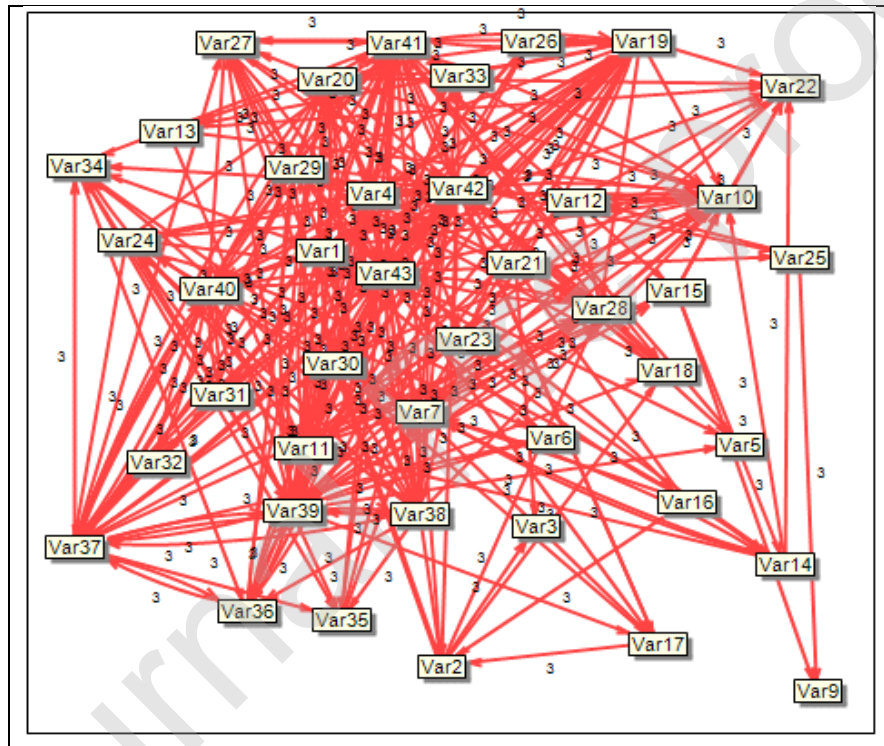


Figure 4. Influence and dependence of variables

Figure 5 indicates that the spatial structure of direct drivers of Iran's tourism development at a 10% rate are constructed by indicators such as international events, positive imaginary of Iran, cultural and historical tourism products and services, quality of well-being, medical tourism, and creative tourism. In other words, these have a high degree of influence on some indicators and may have high dependence on others. The spatial structure of direct drivers of tourism development with a 100% rate contains all kinds of relationships (potential, strong, moderate, weak, and none), including indicators such as international events, specialized level of knowledge, new technologies in the tourism industry, aesthetic attributes of public and human-made spaces, tourist language education programs, economic and financial facilities, and purchasing power of tourists. Those are the most important indicators in the constructed spatial structure of the tourism development system in Iran (Nematpour & Faraji, 2019).



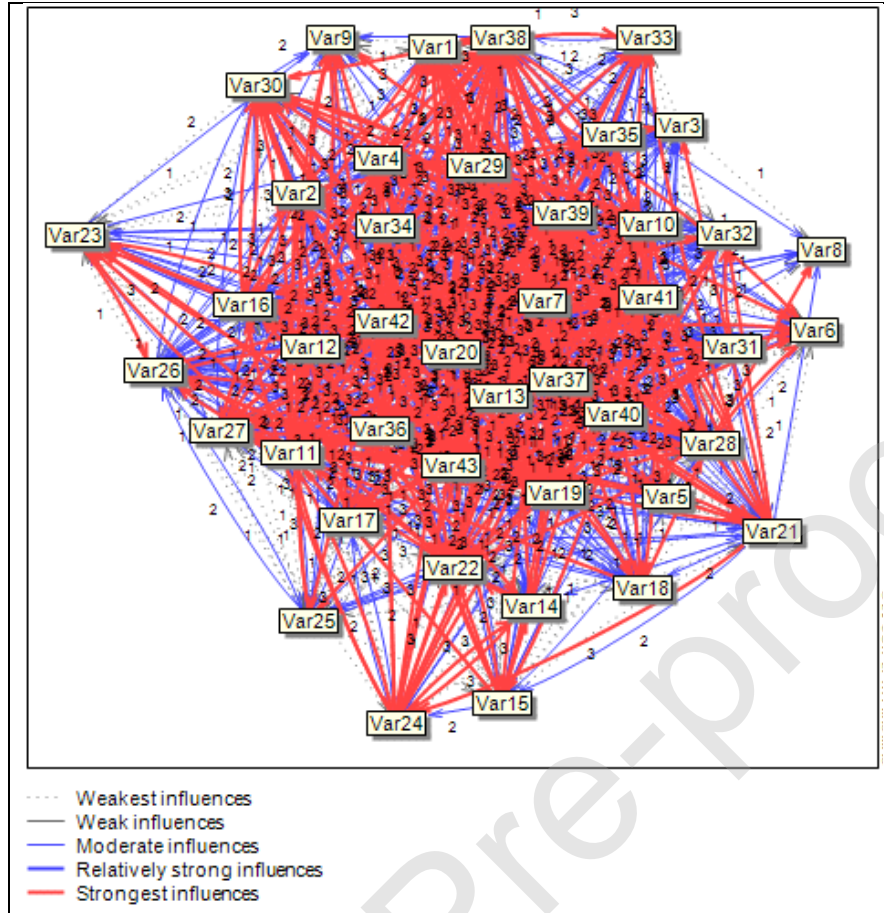


Figure 5. Spatial structure of tourism development direct indicators with 10% and 100% rate

4.2. Building Consistent Scenarios Based on CIB

After filling out the structure of the cross-impact analysis and determining the key indicators of the system, it is necessary to provide an appropriate structure of scenario assumptions to avoid contradictions and inconsistencies in the mutual role of each descriptor to influence origin and purpose. In providing a CIB matrix, it is noticed that the inherent consistency of the matrix of a possible scenario requires the definition of variables in a way that does not allow any variable of the same descriptor to prefer this variable (Weimer-Jehle, 2018). The main aim was to build possible scenarios of the study's 10 key variables identified via the cross-impact algorithm. The key descriptors, with coded rules in the form of the CIB method, were arranged and distributed among the members of the expert panel once again. In order to review the key variables (descriptors), a 34×34 matrix was formulated by considering how the growth and development of the tourism system in Iran would be impacted if a change in any of the descriptor variables occurred. Thus, scenarios were built based on forthcoming judgments, relationships, and interactions of variables and structured processes. After a list of the most relevant system factors ("descriptors") is compiled, it is necessary to define a set of qualitative alternatives (variants) which characterize the possible states of the descriptors and comprise various states of development of Iran's tourism market. In fact, these states could happen in the system and be considered as strategic drivers for the future of tourism development on a national scale. Table 5 shows the study's descriptors with their specific variables that characterize the possible state of the descriptors.

Table 5. Possible states of descriptors

Descriptor	Variable				
A. Medical tourism	A1. Modern treatments with high quality and low prices		A2. Developing medical tourism without any quality		A3. Not developing any medical tourism
B. Diversification of incoming tours	B1. Considering both primary and secondary attractions in package tours		B2. Diversification based on local destinations		B3. Not considering any diversification
C. Creative tourism	C1. Unique local cultural assets and crafting activities		C2. Nature-based activities		C3. Developing creative tourism without any planning
D. Cultural and historical tourism products and services	D1. Historic and artistic cultural tourism products	D2. Religious cultural tourism products	D3. Regional cultural tourism products	D4. Recreational cultural tourism products	D5. Commodification of cultural assets
E. Positive imagery of Iran	E1. Special mutual tourism-related relationships with Southeast Asian countries		E2. Providing facilities to issue visas easily, such as airport visas	E3. Pay less attention to increasing Western countries' sanctions on Iran	E4. Antagonistic diplomacy approach on an international scale
F. Tourism facilities and services	F1. Accommodations, support, and auxiliary facilities considering quality and quantity		F2. Upgrading tourism facilities in terms of quantity		F3. Continuing current situation of offering facilities
G. Safety and security	G1. Political and legal security of tourists to create mental security	G2. Physical safety in public such as by a tourism police department	G3. Lack of attention to other elements of security such as health and sanitation security		G4. Increase in political instability of Iran
H. Event tourism	H1. Business sector events		H2. Sport, entertainment, festivals, and other cultural events		H3. Developing event tourism without considering physical and mental capacity of the community
I. Tourism development master plan	I1. Formulation of a tourism development master plan based on demand and supply			I2. Developing tourism without any tourism development master plan	
J. Digital advertising	J1. Social media advertising	J2. Video content advertising		J3. Search engine marketing	J4. Developing digital advertising only by governmental sectors

In the next phase, judgments about the impact of state x of descriptor X on state y of descriptor Y were made, based on literature reviews and expert interviews. Only direct influences were accounted for in these judgments. This procedure results in a cross-impact matrix in Scenario Wizard software, with 34 possible states for 10 key variables (descriptors) that influence development in Iran's tourism market. From this number of possible states, 155,520 possible combining scenarios were extracted (from $3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 4$). The scenarios were presented in Scenario Wizard, including 4 scenarios with strong consistencies, 2101 scenarios with weak consistencies, and 871 inconsistent scenarios. The results demonstrate that four scenarios are highly likely to occur in the future of developing tourism in Iran, focusing on attracting Southeast Asian tourists. The four strong consistent scenarios are characterized according to specific features; among these four scenarios, the first scenario has ideal and desirable conditions (driving scenario), the second and third scenarios are appropriate and have an intermediate status, and the fourth scenario has a critical and undesirable status and is inappropriate for developing the tourism system in Iran to attract Southeast Asian tourists. In Table 6 scenarios with strong consistencies and the possible states of each key variable in every scenario are indicated.

Table 6. Scenarios with strong consistencies in the future of developing the tourism market in Iran

Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
A1	A2	A2	A3
B2	B2	B3	B3
C1	C2	C3	C3
D3	D1	D4	D5
E1	E2	E3	E3
F1	F2	F3	F3
G1	G2	G3	G4
H1	H1	H2	H3
I1	I1	I1	I2
J2	J1	J3	J4

In Table 7, the consistency value of every possible state is indicated. According to the results, creating positive mental imagery and visualization through improving special mutual tourism-related relationships with Southeast Asian countries (E1) has the highest consistency value. In fact, it is vital to create a positive image and strong national brand of Iran, promoting in particular that Iran has great natural, historical, and cultural potential to attract international tourists, especially from Southeast Asian nations.

Table 7. Value consistencies of every possible state

Key variables (descriptors)	Possible states	Value consistency
Positive imagery of Iran	E1	316
Event tourism	H1	210
Digital advertising	J2	201
Tourism facilities and services	F1	151
Cultural and historical tourism products and services	D3	70
Creative tourism	C1	51
Tourism development master plan	I1	32
Diversification of incoming tours	B2	19
Medical tourism	A1	9
Safety and security	G1	2

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Tourism is one of the greatest industries in the world and has a remarkable influence on the economic, social, cultural, and environmental situation of communities, so it is vital to have strategic plans and targeted management in every tourism destination, to reap the numerous benefits and advantages of these. Nowadays, it is helpful to utilize new future study methods, especially building scenarios in tourism development planning and management, to build flexible strategies to solve national-scale issues. Cross-impact analysis (CIA) and CIB as tools of future study reveal the characteristic roles and importance of each variable in relation to all other variables in the tourism system by examining all potential interactions and finally designing appropriate scenarios (Asan & Asan, 2007; Weimer-Jehle, 2018). In the present study, a contextual relationship among the 43 tourism development variables of Iran's tourism industry was obtained through a systematic framework based on CIA. Based on the CIA findings, an integrated model was developed with a fuzzy MICMAC analysis for evaluating the interaction among development variables in Iran's tourism system. After analysis, 10 variables were determined as key variables. The main aim was to build possible scenarios of the study's 10 key variables identified via the cross-impact algorithm. According to these classifications and the subjective influence of the experts, the final list of key variables is identified as:

- Var11 International events
- Var16 Tourism development master plan
- Var19 Positive imagery of Iran
- Var20 Safety and security
- Var28 Digital advertising
- Var38 Tourism facilities and services
- Var39 Diversification of incoming tours
- Var41 Cultural and historical tourism products and services
- Var42 Creative tourism
- Var43 Medical tourism

The results of the CIA confirmed that key variables that were previously thought to be unimportant do in fact play a leading role in developing Southeast Asian tourism in Iran (Arcade et al., 1999; Asan and Asan, 2007; Dewangan et al., 2015; Godet et al., 2008; Nematpour and Faraji, 2019; Patidar et al., 2017; Villacorta et al., 2014). It is certain that any improvement in our understanding of the key variables of the tourism development system will lead to better scenarios and strategies for development of that system.

Based on CIB, we found four scenarios with strong consistencies: scenario 1 is ideal and desirable for the future of Iran's tourism market development to attract Southeast Asian international tourists; scenarios 2 and 3 have stable characteristics and are not appropriate to the design strategy; and scenario 4 has inappropriate and detrimental characteristics for the future of the tourism system in Iran.

The results show that scenario 1 is a driver scenario in Iran's tourism market development focusing on attracting Southeast Asian tourists. If this scenario happens, it will cover all of the important factors of tourism market development in Iran. All of the 10 key variables in this scenario are important and none of them are not stable or crucial. All of the key factors have a positive nature and trend in the first scenario and over time lead to positive changes in the development of the tourism system. Possible states in the first scenario including modern medical treatments with high quality and low prices; diversification based on local destination; unique local cultural assets and crafting activities; regional cultural tourism products; special mutual tourism-related relationships with Southeast Asian countries; accommodations, support,

and auxiliary facilities considering quality and quantity; political and legal security of tourists to create mental security; business sector events; formulation of a tourism development master plan based on demand and supply; and video content advertising (A1, B2, C1, D3, E1, F1, G1, H1, I1, J2).

In this scenario, E1 (special mutual tourism-related relationships with Southeast Asian countries) has the highest consistency value. In light of the economic importance of tourism development for Iran, Iran should focus on improving its imagery on an international scale, especially in Southeast Asian nations. Building a recognizable image and a strong national brand is becoming an important way of presenting the country's own values, and thus is a method to improve Iran's competitive position internationally (Khodadadi, 2016). H1 (business sector events) is the second variable with high consistency in scenario 1. Business sector events refers to meetings, incentives, conventions (conferences/congresses), and exhibitions (trade shows/fairs/markets). Among other types of event tourism, business-based events are appropriate for the community in Iran because of its specific Islamic rules and regulations. Launching business-based event tourism satisfies numerous strategic goals. Where such events are thought to be too risky, event management and planning should be applied by Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism to establish professional practice devoted to the design, production, and management of planned business and corporate affairs, including meetings, conventions, fairs, and exhibitions (Getz, 2008; Getz, 2014 in Gosar, 2016).

J2 (video content advertising) is the third variable with high consistency in the first scenario. Video content advertising (Belanche et al., 2017) is a kind of digital advertising, implying the display of adverts to a targeted audience on different topical platforms. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism should contribute to destination marketing organizations and other stakeholders with regard to developing the tourism market in Iran. By placing Iranian tourism-related products and services on the internet, we can promote and create a desirable image and national brand of Iran as a tourism destination. Targeting Southeast Asian platforms gives an opportunity to catch the attention of Southeast Asian tourists in particular (Krishnan & Sitaraman, 2013). Regional cultural tourism products (D3) and unique local cultural assets and crafting activities (C1) are variants of the "cultural and historical tourism products and services" and "creative tourism" descriptors in the first scenario, respectively. Both of them are associated with cultural affairs and products. Providing regional cultural tourism products, including local traditional culture, local cuisine culture, local festivals, and ancient architecture, for Southeast Asian international tourists can convince them to visit Iran. Planning for the development of creative tourism utilizing unique local cultural assets can be the best option for attracting Southeast Asian tourist in Iran.

Other variants of the first scenario are I1, B2, A1, G1, respectively. By formulating a tourism master plan based on supply and demand (I1), the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism can develop and market competitive products and destinations from the perspective of the demand and supply sides, improving market access, connectivity, destination infrastructure, and institutional, governmental, and human resources for tourism. Furthermore, destination marketing organizations and travel agencies should diversify incoming tours from Southeast Asian countries based on local destinations (B2), by developing entrepreneurship in marketing management. In terms of medical tourism, Iranian specialists can provide high quality and low prices in modern medical treatments to Southeast Asian tourists (such as fertility treatment, eye care services, orthopedic services, otolaryngology, general surgery, medical dentistry, cardiology, cancer treatment, and plastic surgery). The final variant is ensuring the political and legal security of tourists to create mental security for them (G1). Generally, safety and security are vital to providing quality in tourism. More than any other economic activity, the success or failure of a tourism

destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors (World Tourism Organization, 1997). In this regard, Iran's government should make political and legal security for international tourists a priority. Tourism was one of the first industries to suffer because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Businesses related to tourism, leisure, aviation, automotive shipping, real estate, and non-essential products have encountered the most adversity during this period. Regarding sanitation security, one of the most important factors in tourism development is the "health security of tourists and tourist destinations" (Hall et al., 2012). There is a defined relationship between tourism, stability, development, and security, and any occurrence of insecurity at various levels causes irreparable damage to the industry. In the present study, the third scenario indicates the importance of tourist health security. In the face of the global pandemic, providing health security is an important factor in creating a satisfactory travel experience for international tourists. To this end, basic steps must be taken to achieve such a goal. All related businesses must comply with health protocols (WTTC, 2020) and obtain a health certificate by observing certain laws, such as those pertaining to personnel health security, passenger health security, business health, and vehicle health.

5.1. Practical Implications and Limitations

This study presents some practical implications for tourism market development in Iran. The study has determined some of the most important factors in Iran's tourism market, which can be considered driving forces in the national and regional development strategy for Iran's tourism market in the long term. The study aims to make strategic planning to attract Southeast Asian international tourists one of the research priorities of Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism. In this regard, the initial extracted variables based on a supply-side view of tourism development are specifically appropriate for attracting Southeast Asian international tourists. Some are general, such as communication infrastructure, relating to all guest communities, but in some cases the variables are specific to attracting investment from Southeast Asian countries, such as improving political relationships with those countries, or digital advertising and marketing specifically related to developing Iran's tourism market to attract Southeast Asian tourists. Finally, sustainability in tourism market development should be considered as fundamental in any strategic or action plan in Iran.

Although the MICMAC and Scenario Wizard analyses are more capable of indicating the complexities among the variables than many other current methods, inevitably there are some limitations to the study. The level of knowledge of the expert panel is critical and the outcome of the method depends on their skills. Therefore, any dominating competencies within the group can lead to the results being strongly biased, and in this regard a team should be used that is as multidisciplinary as possible. Another limitation is the estimation of time for the development process, which is difficult because of variable broad definitions. The estimation is also very intuitive because the experts are dealing with uncertain future developments. Finally, we must say that the present study is based on the supply-side, so to optimize this research we propose another study based on a demand-side view and these studies would supplement each other.

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