



Iranian Tourism Marketing Objectives: An Active Sports Tourism Approach

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Today, tourism has become a very profitable industry with explosive growth and can solve many economic problems. Iran has a high potential to exploit the tourism industry at the international level. Therefore, the research aimed to identify and categorize the types of tourist attractions in Iran and formulate marketing objectives for developing the tourism industry in Iran using active sports tourism leverage.

Methodology: The research methodology was grounded theory with Strass & Corbin approach. The sampling method was theoretical sampling. After conducting 31 interviews with tourism industry experts and using literature, theoretical saturation was achieved.

Findings: The findings showed that there are 16 types of tourist attractions in Iran: religious, historical, natural, health, entertainment, heritage, sports, desert, mountainous, wildlife, islands, villages, towns, urban, sociocultural, and shopping attractions. Finally, eight marketing objectives were formulated to increase international tourists in Iran using active sports tourism leverage and earn more from this industry. They include introducing and advertising Iran's active sports attractions among religious tourists, focusing on Russian and Chinese tourists by offering desert attractions; marketing Iran's adventure attractions; offering different interests of Iran in one product package among international tourists; marketing Iranian products and handicrafts among international tourists; ecotourism marketing for Iran's tourism-target villages and towns; marketing for Iranian islands and their water-based sports attractions among wealthy international tourists; and Marketing for Iran's health-attractions.

Originality: In this article, the authors identified and categorized the types of tourist attractions in Iran and analyzed the marketing objectives necessary for developing the tourism industry in Iran using active sports tourism leverage.

Keywords

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1. Introduction

The tourism industry has become one of the most important economic sectors. Tourism creates jobs, generates income, and contributes to infrastructure development (Jäggi, 2022). The tourism industry's contribution to the world economy's GDP was more than 10% before the Corona pandemic, and it was growing. The corona pandemic led to a 50% drop in the tourism industry. However, as the pandemic nears its end, the tourism industry has picked up again. The tourism industry accounted for 10.3%, 5.3%, and 6.1% of the world's GDP in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively. This is while the tourism industry's contribution to Iran's GDP was 5.8%, 3.1%, and 4.1%. It was 11.0%, 5.1%, and 7.3% in Turkey. In Thailand, it was 20.3%, 8.2%, and 5.8%; in the United States, it was 8.8%, 4.8%, and 5.5%. The total contribution of travel & tourism to employment in Iran, Turkey, Thailand, and the United States in 2019 (before the pandemic) was respectively: 1.82_{MN} (7.2% of total jobs), 2.59_{MN} (9.2% of real jobs), 8.19_{MN} (21.8% of full employment), and 16.80_{MN} (10.7% of total jobs). The tourism industry in the world is expected to grow by 5.8% annually until 2032. Currently, 44% of Iran's tourist attractions customers are from Iraq, 15% from Azerbaijan, 9% from Turkey, and 5% from Pakistan. Interestingly, the main customers of Turkish and Thailand tourist attractions are Russia and China, respectively (Dastgerdi et al., 2022; Seifpanahi Shabani, Dastgerdi, et al., 2022; WTTC, 2022). Meanwhile, Turkey is a NATO member on the opposite side of Russia, and Thailand is an ally of the United States on the opposite side of China. It is strange that China and Russia are the two main allies of Iran in international relations and have signed strategic agreements with Iran.

According to those mentioned above, the leading international customers of Iran's tourist attractions are from Iraq and other neighboring Muslim countries, which logically enter Iran for pilgrimage. Although Iran has many tourist attractions, it has not been able to take advantage of this industry significantly (Veicy, 2018). This is while recently, in the general policies of the 7th program announced by the Supreme Leader of Iran in paragraph 17, "developing the tourism industry and promoting handicrafts" have been emphasized (Ayatollah Khamenei, 2022).

Undoubtedly, marketing is the most critical action that must be done to develop Iran's tourism industry at the international level (Nassaji Kamrani et al., 2017). In realizing the market needs of tourism, the critical role belongs to marketing, which through its activities, primarily through marketing mix, should identify and differentiate tourism products (compared to competitors) and thus implement its strategic objectives. Marketing in tourism has characteristics that derive from the fact that the product in tourism is a service. Besides, the invisibility of a product is even more critical to marketing (Ciriković, 2014). Tourism marketing seeks to make tourist destinations better places to live in and better places to visit (Font & McCabe, 2017).

Identifying the spatial structure of tourist attractions is one of the basic requirements for developing a country's tourism industry (Kang et al., 2018). Identifying destinations will improve planning and management by providing tourism actors with information about how tourists consume the goal (Paulino et al., 2021). Although Large destinations such as metropolitans usually offer multiple and diverse attractions, a selection will be

visited by tourists during their stay. Also, identifying the forces that bind attractions together is critical to efficient management, promotion, and preservation (Hernández et al., 2021). Today, different countries of the world are looking to turn the existing capacities in their country into tourist attractions, and national parks are one of these cases (Haukeland et al., 2010). Dark tourism is also a new kind of growing tourist attraction (Raine, 2013). Nature-based tourism is another essential export item of the tourism industry in many countries, such as Australia, Kenya, Nepal, New Zealand, and Turkey, which are identified, categorized, and promoted by these countries (Alaeddinoglu & Can, 2011). In Thailand, beaches, islands, pedestrian streets, temples, and markets have been identified as the most critical types of tourist attractions (Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan, 2019). After identifying and categorizing the types of tourist attractions in each country, it is possible to determine their importance for developing this industry (Lascu et al., 2018).

Iran has many tourist attractions, but so far, it has not been able to use the potential of these attractions for the significant development of Iran's tourism industry. Iran's active sports tourism attractions have great potential to use their leverage to transform the entire Iranian tourism industry (Seifpanahi Shabani, Dastgerdi, et al., 2022). Sports tourism includes two general parts and more than ten different types, which in the development of Iran's sports tourism industry, less attention has been paid to these different types of sports tourism (Dastgerdi et al., 2022).

As mentioned above, it is necessary to identify and differentiate Iran's tourism product (compared to competitors) and thus implement its strategic marketing objectives using active sports tourism leverage. The tourism industry is significant for job creation, alleviating poverty, and economic growth; therefore, it is necessary to provide marketing objectives. The first step to offering marketing objectives is identifying and categorizing Iran's tourist attractions. Therefore, using the Grounded Theory (GT) methodology (open and selective coding), this work sought to identify and classify the types of Iran's tourism attractions and formulate marketing objectives for Iran's tourism development using active sports tourism leverage. Our findings will introduce the kinds of Iran's tourist attractions that can be the destination for international tourists. Also, marketing objectives will be presented, which can be used by researchers, managers, officials, and tourism agencies.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study Design

In this research, considering that the purpose of the study was to identify the types of tourist attractions in Iran and formulate marketing objectives to increase international tourists in Iran, the GT method (open and selective coding) was used. Data can be considered in the GT method, including interviews, past papers, documents, and observations. The sampling method in GT is theoretical sampling. In theoretical sampling, the research process is not predetermined, and the researcher continues to interview and review the literature until theoretical saturation is obtained. In other words, theoretical sampling means that sampling is formed during the research rather than known before the

examination. It is based on the concepts that emerged from the analysis and seemed related to the emerging theory. Sampling and analysis should occur one after the other, and each study round guides the next data collection stage. Therefore, data collection and analysis are done simultaneously until the researchers obtain theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). According to the instructions of Corbin and Strauss in this research, the emerging data determined the direction of the study, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with specialists in the tourism industry, marketing management, and travel and tourism agencies.

2.2. Participants

In the research process, 15 faculty members of Iranian universities and 16 travel and tourism agency professionals were interviewed. The characteristics of the interviewees are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the interviewees.

Specialty	Number	Education			Academic rank		
		Bachelor	Masters	PhD	Assistant professor	Associate professor	Professor
Marketing management	6	-	-	6	4	1	1
Tourism industry	9	-	-	9	7	1	1
Travel and tourism agencies professionals	16	7	5	4	-	-	-
Total	31	7	5	19	11	2	2

2.3. Materials and measures

Participants were briefed on the study and listened to an interview script read by the facilitator, which outlined the requirements of a successful discussion, such as staying on topic. The initial questions were informed by previous research and relevant evidence from personal experience. An interview protocol with one of the managers of the travel and tourism agencies professionals:

- Opening
 - (1) Introductions of interviewer and interview participant
 - (2) Overview of the purpose of the study
 - (3) Confidentiality assurance
 - (4) Permission to audiotape
- Demographic Data
 - (1) Please introduce yourself.
 - (2) Please explain a little about the organizational structure of your agency.
 - (3) Please tell me a little about your agency's background in the tourism industry.
 - (4) How many foreign tourists do you bring to Iran on average in a year?
- Initial Prompts
 - (1) Tell me about one of your main facilitating or servicing companies or organizations.
 - (2) Tell me about your most important major customers. What countries are they from?
 - (3) What are the most important tourist attractions in Iran?
 - (4) Please tell me more about ... (the most important attractions of Iran) and their international customers.

- Additional Questions
 - (1) How do you manage a relationship with your international tourists?
 - (2) What do you exchange money with your international tourists?
 - (3) How do you determine the success of a relationship with an international tourist?
 - (4) Why are some relationships with international tourists less successful?
 - (5) How do you market Iran's attractions to potential international tourists? Please tell me about your marketing plan.
 - (6) In your opinion, in order to develop Iran's tourism industry in the international market, what should be the marketing objectives?
 - (7) How attractive are Iran's active sports tourism attractions (desert tourism, mountain climbing, water-beach sports, surfing, etc.)?
 - (8) In your opinion, how can active sports tourism attractions be used as a lever for the development of the entire Iranian tourism industry in the global market? What objectives can be formulated in this regard?
 - (9) ...
- Additional Unplanned/Floating Prompts
 - (1) How?
 - (2) Describe?
 - (3) Can you tell me more about that?
 - (4) Will you explain that in more detail?
 - (5) Can you give me examples or tell a story of experience about that?
 - (6) How does that work?

A digital voice recorder (Lander PCM Recorder) was used to record interviews, and a compatible PC was required for data transference from the recorder to the computer to enable data transcription.

2.4. Research procedure

We interviewed six marketing management specialists, nine tourism industry specialists, and 16 travel and tourism agency professionals. Interviews were conducted with specialists in the tourism industry and travel and tourism agency professionals to identify different tourist attractions in Iran while studying past papers, websites, books, and other documents. To formulate marketing objectives for the development of the tourism industry in Iran, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with tourism industry specialists, marketing management specialists, and travel and tourism agency professionals. First, preliminary coordination was done with them, and an interview was scheduled. The interviews took about five months. Papers related to tourism attractions were specially reviewed to understand the conditions better.

2.5. Data collection & analysis

In the GT method, data collection and analysis are done for each interview, and this cycle continues until theoretical saturation is obtained. The data analysis method was constant comparisons. Comparisons were made at the concept level. To be more specific, data were broken down into manageable pieces. Each piece of datum was examined closely. If data in the new interview was conceptually like data from the past interview analyzed, then it was coded using the same conceptual name. Still, this time we were asking this: What else

is being learned about this concept? This enabled us to elaborate on a concept in terms of its properties and dimensions, extending our understanding. In addition to making comparisons along conceptual lines, we continued to ask theoretically based questions that led to further theoretical sampling. The research was a continuous data collection process, followed by analysis and memo writing, leading to new questions and more data collection. In this approach, the original questions are modified repeatedly, considering what is being discovered during the analysis. This means that while the initial question is essential in setting the study's parameters, it is not as important as the questions during the study intended to keep the analysis and the research moving forward. This entire data collection and analysis process was continued until we had satisfied that we had acquired sufficient data to describe each category. Also, we continued the theme analysis process in terms of its properties and dimensions, and we accounted for variation (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). No software was employed in the study. The researchers carefully analyzed all the interviews and data according to the instructions of Corbin and Strauss.

2.6. Triangulation

Triangulation is one of the methods of better understanding qualitative data and a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study. Triangulation involves other parts of research. Data and investigator triangulation are two crucial forms of qualitative research: data triangulation for correlating people, time, and space, and investigator triangulation for connecting the findings from multiple researchers in a study (Denzin, 2017). In this research, to data triangulation, experts in various fields of the tourism industry, marketing management, and travel and tourism agencies professionals were interviewed. Also, for investigator triangulation, after conducting each interview, data analysis was done by all the co-researchers. In addition, at different stages of the research, there associate professors of tourism management, marketing management, and geography and tourism planning of the University of Tehran, Allameh Tabataba'i University, and the University of Zanjan were asked to analyze the data (as secondary coders). All researchers and associate professors engaged and discussed coherence and transparency regarding the research process by describing critical elements and themes during data analysis. Finally, all associate professors agreed with the themes concluded and stated that the findings were sufficient and had reached the point of saturation. Therefore, triangulation has been done carefully, and the results have high reliability and validity.

3. Results

Considering that the research aimed to identify the types of tourist attractions in Iran, the research findings are presented in Table 2. As Table 2 shows, 16 types of tourist attractions in Iran can be destinations for international tourists.

Table 2. Types of tourist attractions in Iran.

Examples of tourist attractions	Subcategories	Main categories
Imam-Reza-Shrine, Fatima-Masumeh-Shrine, Muhammad-al-Awsat-Ibn-Ali, Shah-Abdol-Azim-Shrine, Shah-Cheragh, Imamzadeh-Seyed-Morteza, Shrine-of-Imamzadeh-Ibrahim, Imamzadeh-of-Mashhad-e-Ardehal-Shrine, Imamzadeh-Naser-and-Yaser, Imamzadeh-Agha-Ali-Abbasi-& Shahzadeh-Mohammad, Emanzadeh-Soltan-Ebrahim, Emanzadeh-Davod, Imamzadeh-Seyed-Aladdin-Hosein, Tomb-of-Emir-Ali, Imamzadeh-Shahreza, Imamzadeh-Jafar-Bin-Musa-al-Kazem, Imamzadeh-Saleh, Imamzadeh-Shah-Mohammad-Tghi, Imamzadeh-Seyyed-Mozaffar, Imamzaade-Mohammad, Imamzadeh-Hussein-Ibn-Musa-Al-kadhim-Holy-Shrine, Imamzadeh-Sultan-Muhammad-and-Sultan-Ibrahim	Shrines	Religious attractions 1
Jamkaran-Mosque, Saheb-al-Zaman-Mosque-and-Mahdieh-of-Kerman-(Tomb-of-General-Qasem-Soleimani), Imam-Muhammad-Bastam-and-Bayazid-Bastami-Tomb, Dihyah-al-Kalbi-Tomb	Mosques and toms	
Vank-Church-Isfahan, Armenian-Church-Shiraz, Saint-Sarkis-Cathedral-Tehran, Adorian-Temple-(Tehran-Fire-Temple), Haim-Synagogue-Tehran, Saint-Mary-Church-Isfahan	Church & synagogue	
Persepolis-(Shiraz), Tomb-of-Cyrus-the-Great, Naqsh-e-Rostam, Ganjnameh, Noushabad-Underground-City, The-Stone-Lion, Kariz-Underground-City, Zoroastrian-Towers-of-Silence, Chak-Chak-(Pirre-Herisht-Ardakan), Statue-of-Shapur-in-the-Shapur-cave, Sangtarashan-Cave-of-Jahrom, Niasar-Cave-or-Raies-Cave, Naqsh-e-Rajab, Tang-e-Chogan-e-Vosta, Victory-Relief-of-Firuzabad, Sarab-e-Bahram-Relief, Shapur-I's-victory-relief, Tangab-Relief, Khan-Tashi-Inscription	Antiquities	Historical attractions 2
Saadabad-Historical-Complex, Golestan-Palace, Niavaran-Complex, Ashraf-Hall, Aali-Qapu-Palace, Chehel-Sotoon-Palace, Hasht-Behesht-Palace, Historical-Mansion-of-Eshrat-Abad	Historical palaces	
Izad-Khast-Caravansary, Maranjaab-Caravansary, Murchekhort-Caravansary, Robat-Sharaf, Khanat-Caravansary, Zein-o-din-Caravansery, Shah-Abbasi-Caravansary-of-Meybod, Kabutar-Khan-Caravansary, Ahuan-Stone-Caravansary, Qasr-e-Bahram-Caravansary	Historical caravansaries	
Rudkhan-Castle, Bam-historical-Citadel, Rayen-Castle, Anar-Castle, Narin-Castle, Arg-of-Karim-Khan, Arg-e-Googad-of-Golpayegan, Hormoz-Portuguese-Castle, Mehr-Padin-Castle-of-Mehriz, Birjand-Castle, Bampour-Castle, Naseri-Castle, Castle-Mourchekhort	Historical castles	
Shapouri-House, Manzar-Garden-of-Birjand-(Former-British-Consulate), Shazdeh-Garden, Naranjestan-Qavam-Garden, Afif-Abad-Garden, Delgosha-Garden, Dowlat-Abad-Garden, Naji-Historical-Park, Pahlavanpur-Garden, Kolah-Farangi-Garden-of-Birjand, Eram-Garden, Jahan-Nama-Garden, Fin-Garden-of-Kashan, Ferdows-Garden, Farmanieh-Garden-Hall, Golshan-Garden-of-Tabas, Borujerdiha-House-of-Kashan, Cheshme-Ali-house-of-Damghan, Ameri-House, Tabatabai-House, The-house-of-Mostofi-al-Mamalek, Mousa-Khani-Mansion, House-of-Haj-Agha-Ali-Rafsanjan, Lari's-house, Yazd, Malek-Al-Tajjar-traditional-hotel-Yazd, Aghazadeh-Mansion	Historical houses and garden	
Jameh-Atigh-Mosque-Shiraz, Tarikhneh-Mosque, Jameh-Mosque-of-Yazd, Nasir-al-Mulk-Mosque-Shiraz-(Pink-Mosque), Amir-Chakhmaq-Complex, Vakil-Mosque-Shiraz, Imam-Mosque-Isfahan, Sheikh-Lotfollah-Mosque-Isfahan, Friday-Mosque-Isfahan, Jameh-Mosque-Ardestan, Jameh-Mosque-Kashan, Jameh-Mosque-Qaen, Tiss-Mosque, Ferdows-Jame-Mosque, Jameh-Mosque-Fahraj, Semnan-Central-Mosque, Jameh-Mosque-Kerman, Malek-Mosque-Kerman, Jameh-Mosque-Damghan, Hazireh-Mosque-Yazd, Shah-Nemat-o-lah-Complex-Taft, Jameh-Mosque-Bastam, Ganjali-Khan-Mosque-Kerman, Mulla-Ismael-Mosque-Yazd, Imam-Mosque-Semnan, Imam-Mosque-Tehran, Jameh-Mosque-Tehran, Sepahsalar-Mosque, Jameh-Mosque-Bandar-Abbas	Historical mosques	

Examples of tourist attractions	Subcategories	Main categories
Si-O-Se-Pol-Bridge-Isfahan, Choobi-Bridge-Isfahan, Maman-Bridge-Isfahan, Shahrestan-Bridge, Khaju-Bridge,	Historical bridges	Natural attractions
Ancient-Hill-Ecbatana, Harireh-Ancient-City-Kish-Island, Historic-City-Toon, Khajeh-Mountain, Shahr-e-Sukhteh, Ancient-Delazian, Ancient-Demb-Kooh, Tepe-Hissar-Damghan, Ancient-City-Dahan-e-Gholaman, Tepe-Sialk, Ancient-City-Gor, Dinosaur-Footprints-Zarand, Shiushgan-Mountain	Ancient sites	
Tomb-of-Ferdowsi, Tomb-of-Hafez-Shirazi-(Hafeziyeh), Tomb-of-Khayyam, Avicenna-Mausoleum, Tomb-of-Saadi-Shirazi-(Saadiyeh), Khwaju-Kermani-Tomb, Tomb-of-Nader-Shah, Shah-Shoja-Tomb, Tomb-of-Vesal-Shirazi, Mausoleum-of-Baba-Taher, Attar-Neyshaburi-Tomb, Tomb-of-Kamal-ol-molk, Saeb-Tabrizi-Monument, Tomb-of-Baba-Koohi, Tomb-of-Sheikh-Roozbehan, Tomb-of-Ibn-Hosam-Khosfi, Tomb-of-Bozarjmehr-Ghaeni, Tomb-of-Abu-al-Hassan-Kharaqani, Tomb-of-Mahdi-Akhavan-Sales, Sohrab-Sepehri's-Grave, Alamdar-Sanadareh-Cemetery, Haftaad-Mullah-Cemetery	Tomb of the famous	
Vakil-Historic-Bath, Sultan-Amir-Ahmad-Bathhouse, Rehan-Historical-Bath, Mahdi-Qoli-Beig-Historical-Bath, Gallehdari-Bath-Bandar-Abbas, Navab-Bath-House-Tehran	Historical baths	
Sun-Palace-or-Kalat-Palace, Toghrol-Historical-Tower, Naqsh-e-Jahan-Square-Isfahan, Imam-Ali-Square-Isfahan-(Atigh-Square), City-Theater-Tehran, Firooz-Bahram-Fire-Temple-Tehran, Semnan-Arg-Gate, Sardar-e-Bagh-Melli, Harooniyeh-Tus, Manar-Jonban-Isfahan, Chehel-Dokhtaran-Isfahan, Radkan-Tower-Chenaran, Khosrogerd-Minareh-Sabzevar, Akhangan-Rod, Chopoghi-Wind-catcher-Sirjan, Moein-Windbreaker-Rafsanjan, Yazd-Time-Square, Burj-I-Mehmandust, Chehl-Dokhtaran-Tower, Pir-e-Alamdar-Tower, Alexander's-Prison, Kurit-Dam-Tabas, Khanshraf-historical-windmills, Shah-Abbasi-Arch-Tabas, Indians-Temple-Bandar-Abbas, Shahrmaahan-Windmill	Historical buildings	
Meybod-Brick-Ice-House, Meybod-Water-Reservoir, Moayedi-Ice-House, Zarisof-Historical-Ice-house, Sirjan-Twin Ice-House, Water-Reservoirs-Birjand, Garmsar-Ice-House	Historical icehouses	
Qasabeh-Qanat-Gonabad, Zarach-Qanat-Yazd, Qanats-Baladeh-Ferdows	Historical qanats	
Doodvazan-Waterfall, Varzan-Waterfall, Visadar-Waterfall, Zomorrod-Waterfall, Kalashtar-Waterfall, Margoon-Waterfall, Kuhmaresorhijski Vodopad, Ortokand-Waterfall, RudMajan-Waterfall, Akhlamad-Waterfall, Qarah-Su-Waterfall, Niasar-Waterfall, Semirom-Waterfall, Locust-Waterfall, Khafr-Waterfall, Waterfall-King-Lvlak, Poneh-Zar-Waterfall, Rhine-Waterfall, Mojen-Waterfall, Bangan-Waterfall, Bibi-Seyedan-Waterfalls	Waterfalls	
Badab-Soort, Morteza-Ali-Spring-of-Tabas, Cheshmeh-Balangan, Genow-Spring, Naz-Spring, Cheshmeh-e-Lengan, Cesme-Ali-of-Damghan	Springs	
Ladies-Plage-(Women's Beach)-Kish-Island, Men's Beach-Kish-Island, Ramin-Beach-of-Chabahar, Rocky-Beach-of-Chabahar, Darek-Beach-of-Chabahar, Gwadar-Bay-Beach, Chabahar-Bay-Beach, South-Beach-of-Kish-Island, Sandy-Beach-of-Qeshm, Sahel-e-Naz-of-Qeshm, Suru-Beach-of-Bandar-Abbas, Oyster-beach port Lengeh, Beaches-of-Kish-Island, Beaches-of-Qeshm-Island, Kolbeh-Hoor-Lantern-of-Kish-Island, Fungal-Rock-of-Kish-Island, Mossy-Beach-of-Chabahar, Coconut-Beach-of-Kish-Island	Beaches	
Roodbal-Dam, Doroudzan-Dam, Golestan-Dam, Toroq-Dam-of-Mashhad, Kardeh-Dam-of-Mashhad, Latyan-Dam, Karaj-Dam, Taleqan-Dam, Jiroft-Dam, Band-e-Dareh-Dam	Dams	

Examples of tourist attractions	Subcategories	Main categories
Azini-International-Wetland, Gavkhouni-Wetland, Bahram-V-Wetland, Barm-e-Delak-Wetland, Chabaha-Bay-Wetland, Anzali-Lagoon, Amirkelayeh-Wetland, Estil-Lagoon, Soostan-Lagoon	Wetlands	Health attractions
Maharlou-Lake, Tashk-Lake, Lake-Parishan, Lake-Dasht-e-Arjan, Bakhtegan-Lake, Makhrage-Lake-Shahrbabak, Golmakan-Green-Lake, Mount-Bromo-Lake, Bazangan-Lake, Masileh-Salt-Lake, Hamun-Lake, Tar-Lake, Havir-Lake, Vistan-Lake, Saqalaksar-Dam	Lakes	
Stars-Valley-of-Qeshm-Island, Chahkooh-Canyon-of-Qeshm-Island, Dalfard-Valley-Kerman, Tanq-e-Boraq-of-Eqlid, Valley-of-India-of-Esfedan, Valley-of-Statues-of-Qeshm-Island, Jamsh-Valley-of-Sikhuran, Tang-e-Bastanak-of-Marvdasht, Meymand-tourist-region, Shamkhal-Valley-of-Dargaz, Tanq-e-Harariz-Valley, Tang-e-Bavan-Valley, Tanq-e-Tizab-Valley, Valley-of-the-Seven-Caves, Abqad-Valley-of-Chenaran, Golab-Darreh, DarAbad-Valley, Valley-of-Kan-Sulqan	Valleys	
Abr-Forest, Avicennia-marina-of-Gwadar-Bay, Avicennia-marina-of-Qeshm-Island, Sorkkeh-Hesar-Forest-Park, Lavizan-Forest-Park, Naharkhoran, Gisum-Forest-Road, Oak-forests-of-Ilam, Golestan-National-Park, Lavij-Forest, Filband-Forest, Zagros-forests-in-Baneh, The-forests-of-northern-Iran, Savadkuh-Rash-forest, Ramsar-Dalkhani-forest, Alimestan-forest-Amol	Forests	
Qareaghaj-River, Bahu-Kalat-River, Aras-River, Karun-River, Chalus-River, Zayanderud, Karaj-River, Neka-River, Babol-River, Jajrud-river, Sefid-Rud	Rivers	
Qeshm-Geopark, Rageh-Geo-Park	Geo-parks	
Subatan, Countrysides-of-Masal, Damash-e-Rudbar, Deylaman-Siahkal, Aladash-e-Savadkuh, Filband-of-Babol, Javaher-Deh-Ramsar, Jahan-Nama-Kordkuy, Mazichal-Kelardasht, Gersmase-Ramsar, Suleiman-Tange-Sari, Alasht, Si-Dasht, Sue-Chale-Masal	Tourist countrysides	
Ali-Sadr-Cave, Katala-Khor, Nakhcheer, Quri-Qala-Cave, Salt-Cave-Qeshm, Daniel-Cave-Mazandaran, Dengzlu-Cave-Isfahan, Ghar-Parau-Cave, Jojar-cave, Roodafshan-Cave, Qizhlan-Cave, Karafu-cave, Avishu-Cave, Dosar-Cave, Sangtarashan-cave, Saholan-Cave, Bat-cave, Morad-Ice-Cave, Sangsar-Darband-Cave, Espahbod-Khurshid-Cave,	Caves	
Al-Zahra-University-Hospital-Isfahan, Faqihi-Hospital-Shiraz, Razavi-Hospital-Mashhad, Imam-Khomeini-Hospital-Tehran, Imam-Reza-Hospital-Mashhad, Dr-Ali-Shariati-Hospital-Mashhad, Hashemi-Nezhad-Hospital-Mashhad, Amin-Hospital-Isfahan, Qaem-Hospital-Mashhad, Ayatollah-Kashani-Hospital-Isfahan, Nor-and-Ali-Asqar-Hospital-Isfahan, Shahid-Mohammadi-Hospital-Bandar-Abbas	General hospitals	
Milad-Hospital-Tehran, Shahid-Beheshti-Hospital-Shiraz, Farabi-Hospital-Mashhad, 17-Shahrivar-Hospital-Mashhad, Gharazi-Hospital-Isfahan, Dr-Ali-Shariati-Hospital-Isfahan	Social security organization	
Abu-Ali-Sina-Hospital-Shiraz, Namazi-Hospital-Shiraz, Masih-Daneshvari-Hospital-Tehran, Sina-Hospital-Tehran, Shahid-Chamran-Hospital-Shiraz, Montaseriyeh-Hospital-Mashhad, Omid-Hospital-Mashhad, Seyyed-e-Al-Shohada-Hospital-Isfahan	Organ transplantation, tuberculosis, and cancer	
Fajr-Hospital-Tehran, Baqiyatallah-Medical-Clinic-Tehran, Khatam-al-Anbya-Hospital-Tehran, 576-Artesh-Hospital-Shiraz, Moslemin-Hospital-Shiraz, Iran-Naja-Hospital-Shiraz, Shahid-Sadoughi-Specialty-and-Specialty-Hospital-Isfahan, 577-Artesh-Hospital-Isfahan	Armed forces	
Bahman-Hospital-Tehran, Erfan-Hospital-Tehran, Erfan-Niyayesh-Hospital-Tehran, Atieh-Hospital-Tehran, Day-General-Hospital-Tehran, Kasra-Hospital-Tehran, Jam-Hospital-Tehran, Dena-Hospital-Shiraz, Dr-Mirhoseini-Hospital-Shiraz, Ordibehst-Hospital-Shiraz	Private hospitals	
Rajaie-Cardiovascular-Medical-and-Research-Center-Tehran, Tehran-Heart-Center-Tehran, Al-Zahra-Heart-Hospital-Shiraz, Alavi-Hospital-	Cardiovascular hospitals	

Examples of tourist attractions	Subcategories	Main categories
Mashhad, Shahid-Chamran-Heart-Educational-Medical-and-Research-Center-Isfahan		
Farabi-Ophthalmology-Hospital-Tehran, Noor-Eye-Hospital-Tehran, Khatam-OL-Anbia-Eye-Hospital-Mashhad, Feiz-Eye-Hospital-Isfahan, Dr-Khodadoust-Eye-Hospital-Shiraz	Specialized ophthalmology hospitals	
Iran-Neuroscience-Hospital-Tehran, Hafez-Hospital-Shiraz	Neurology and psychiatry hospitals	
Mottahari-Burns-Hospital-Tehran, Ghotb-Al-Din-Hospital-Shiraz, Imam-Musa-Kazim-Hospital-Isfahan, Shahid-Kamyab-Hospital-Mashhad	Burns and accidents hospitals	
Loghman-e-Hakim-poisoning-Hospital-Tehran, Hospital-Shiraz, Hazrat-e-Ali-Asghar-Hospital-Shiraz	Hospitals for poisoning	
Razi-Dermatology-Hospital-Tehran,	Hospitals for dermatology	
Mihaye-Khorushan-Water-Park-Mashhad, Absar-water-complex-Isfahan, Bandar-Abbas-Water-Park, Aftab-Shore-Water-park-Mashhad, Water-Waves-Land-Mashhad,	Water-parks	
Eram-Amusement-Park-Tehran, Iran-Land-Shiraz, Nazhvan-Amusement-Park-Isfahan, Derak-Highland-Park-Shiraz, Qeshm-City-Center-Complex, Azadi-Park-Shiraz, Padideh-e-Shandiz-Amusement-Park-Mashhad, Amusement-Park-of-Mellat-Park-Mashhad, Amusement-Park-of-South-star-shopping-mall-Bandar-Abbas, Luna-Amusement-Park-Shiraz, Wonderland-Amusement-of-Tirazheh-Shopping-Center-Tehran, Sarzamin-Shegeftangiz-of-Persian-Gulf-Lake-Tehran, Highland-amusement-Park-Kish-Island, Dream-Land-amusement-park-Isfahan	Amusement parks	Entertainment attractions 5
Suspended-Resturant-Shandiz-and-Bungee-jumping-Mashhad, Tourist-Village-river-Chadegan-Zayanderoud, Chalidareh-Tourist-Complex-Mashhad	Tourist-complex-	
Shashlik-of-Shandrz-(food)-Mashhad, Dizi-Torghabeh-(food)-Mashhad, Farahzad-Tehran, Darband-Tehran, Pleasure-Boats-of-Kish-Island	Luxury entertainment	
Astan Quds Rzavi Museums, Chehel-Sotoon-Palace-Museum-Isfahan	Multidisciplinary museums	Heritage attractions 6
National-Museum-of-Iran-Tehran, Achaemenid-Museum-Shiraz, Great-Museum-of-Khorasan-Mashhad, Haft-Tanan-Museum-Shiraz, Pars-Museum-Shiraz	Antiquities museums	
Water-Museum-Bandar-Abbas, Persian-Gulf-Anthropological-Museum-Bandar-Abbas, Kish-Native-Anthropology-House, Museum-and-urban-symbol-of-Kish-Island	Museum of anthropology	
Isfahan-Music-Museum, Abgineh-Museum, Reza-Abbasi-Museum-Tehran, Tehran-Museum-of-Contemporary-Art	Art museums	
Treasury-of-National-Jewels-Museum-Tehran, Carpet-Museum-of-Iran-Tehran, Post-and-Communications-Museum-Tehran, Vank-Church-Museum-Isfahan	Subject museums	
Khayyam-Planetarium-Neyshabur, Malek-National-Library-&-Museum	Science museums	
Banadar-Abbas-Wildlife-Museum, Iran-Wildlife-and-Nature-Museum-Dar-Abad-Museum	Wildlife-museum	
Water-Museum-Bandar-Abbas, Geo-Park-Museum-Qeshm-Island, Qeshm-Underwater-Museum-(Ghadir-Museum)	Water museum	
Domestic sports competitions, Hosting international sports events	Sports events	
Azadi-Sports-Complex, Naghsh-e-Jahan-Stadium, Imam-Reza-Arena-Mashhad, Pars-Stadium-Shiraz, Samen-Stadium-Mashhad, Aftab-e-Enqlab-Athletics-Complex, Dizin-Ski-Resort-Tehran, Pooladkaf-International-Ski-Resort-Sepidan, Tochal-Resort, Shemshak-Ski-	Sports venues	

Examples of tourist attractions	Subcategories	Main categories	
Resort, Darband-Sar-Ski-Resort, Abali-Ski-Resort, Shirbad-Ski-Resort, FereydounShahr-Ski-Resort, Afus-Ski-Resort			
Diving, Surfing, Mountaineering, Trekking, Rock-Climbing, Car-Racing, Motor-Riding, Kish-Island-Safari, Desert Safari, Karting, Marine Recreation Sports, Buggy Track, Ski	Sports activities		
Maranjab-Desert, Mesr-Desert, Deyhuk-Desert, Akbar-Abad-Desert, Hemmatabad-Desert-Zirkuh, Seh-Qaleh-Desert, Polond-Desert, Halvan-Desert, Boshrouyeh-Desert, Daranjir-Desert, Bahabad-Desert, AbarkooH-Desert, Dasht-e-Kavir-Damghan, Kavir-e-Namak-e-Sirjan	Soft adventure deserts	Desert attractions	8
Rig-e-Jenn-Desert, Hyderabad-Desert, Kalut-Shahdad-Desert, Caracal-Desert	Hard adventure deserts		
Neshaneh-Peak, Mount-Taftan, Mount-Bazman, Martain-and-miniature-mountains-of-Nehbandan, Martain-and-miniature-mountains-of-Chabahar	Soft adventure mountains	Mountainous attractions	9
Mount Damavand, Kal-Qedvis-Peak-(Dena), Ghashmastan-Peak-(Dena), HozDal-Peak-(Dena), PaZan-Pir Peak-(Dena), Sabalan, Kol-Janu-Peak-Oshtorankuh, Senboran-Peak-Oshtorankuh, Alam-Peak, Shirbad-Mountain-(Binalud-Mountains), Kuh-e-Shah, Hazaran, Shahankue-Mountain, Sahand	Hard adventure mountains		
Lake-Urmia-National-Park, Bamo-National-Park, Kolah-Ghazi-National-Park, Bakhtegan-National-Park, Khojir-National-Park, Khar-Turan-National-Park, Kavir-National-Park	National Park		
Geno-Biosphere-Reserve, Braham-Gur-Protected-Area, Male-Gale-Protected-Area, Bezmai-Protected-Area, Khaja-Pistachio-Forest, Mozaffari-Protected-Area, Bagh-Shadi-Protected-Forest-Area, Koh-Bafaq-Protected-Area, Kalmand-Protected-Area, Black-Mountain-Protected-Area, Gandu-or-Bahu-Kalat-Protected-Area, Bozman-protected-Area, Abr-Forest	Protected area	Wildlife Attractions	10
Qomishlo-National-Park-and-Wildlife-Sanctuary, Shir-Ahmed-Wildlife-Sanctuary, Robat-Shor-Wildlife-Sanctuary, Naybandan-Wildlife-Sanctuary, Dar-Anjir-Wildlife Sanctuary, No-hunting-area-Qara-Tepe, Khabr-National-Park-and-Rochun-Wildlife-Sanctuary, Shidvar-Island-(Snake-Island)	Nature-reserve		
Mahi-Kur-Cave, Plains of overturned tulips, Sarv-e-Abarkuh	National natural monument		
Qeshm-Island, Kish-Island, Hormuz-Island, Abu-Musa-Island,	Town-islands	Islands attractions	11
Lavan-Island, Larak-Island, Greater-Tumb, Siri-Island, Lesser-Tumb-Island, Hengam-Island, Snakes-Island, Hendorabi-Island, Lesser-Farvar-Island, Grate-Farvar-Island	Village-islands		
Meymand-Rocky-Village, Chensht-Village, Tarz-Village-Ravar, Abyaneh-Traditional-Village, Ghalat-Village, Bast-Qalat, Faryab-Historical-Village, Kousha-Historical-Village, Niasar-Village, Barzok-Village, Nashedan, Koorangan-Village-Fasa, Dehmurd-Village-Neyriz, Bazangan-Village, Podedh-Village, Daroud-Village, Kalahrud-Village, Baghou-Village, Mej-Village, Palangari-ye-Now-Kamfiruz, Bozveshk-Village, Navaygan-Village	Historical villages	Attractive villages	12
Ayeshabad-Village, Shib-Deraz-Village, Shamil-e-Bala-Village, Basaidu-Coastal-Village, Bastanlu-Coastal-Village, Sourgalm-Coastal-Village, Mogh-e-Qanbareh-ye-Kuh-Mobarak-Coastal-Village, Mokhdan-Bord-Khun-Coastal-Village	Coastal villages		
Kargan-Port, Kolāhi-Port, Bandar-e-Mogham, Chiruyeh-Port, Bandar-e-Shiu, Bandar-Aftab, Tiyab-e-Khunsorkh-Port, Taban-Port, Bandar-e-Divan, Bandar-e-Laft, Nokhaylo-Port, Bandar-e-Doulab	Port villages		
Kang-Village, Radkan-Village-Chenaran, Dizbad-Bala-Village, Kharv-e-Olya-Village, Bojan-Village	Stepped villages		
Bayazeh-Village, Matin-Abad-Village, Mesr-Village	Desert villages		

Examples of tourist attractions	Subcategories	Main categories
Ghamsar-Village, Mehr-Gerd-Village, Barzok-Village, Sivar-Village, Anjireh-Village, Virani-Village	Product-oriented villages	Attractive towns
Tang-e-Boraq-Village, Harariz-Village, Sikhuran-Village, Bar-Village, Paqale-Village-Mamasani, Zoshk-Village, Noghondar-Village, Hesār-e-golestān-Village, Mayan-Sofla-Village, Baghroud-Village, Abardeh-Village, Khadar-Archang-&-Sarasiab-Village, Jaghargh-Village, Azghad-Village	Valley village	
Ahar-Village-&-Shekarab-Waterfall, Herandeh-Village, Deh-Kohneh-Village-Sepidan, Baghroud-Village, Khosrow-and-Shirin-Village, Bidegol-Village, Hesar-e-Dashtak-Village, Hesār-e-golestān-Village	Riverside villages	
Khafri-Village, Barg-e-Jahan-Village, Dezhkord-Village-Eqlid	Mountainous villages	
Maharlo-Village, Dorodzan-Village-Marvdasht	Lakeside villages	
Makhunik-Village, Daroud-Village, Amir-Hajjilu-Village-Fasa, Kholoss-Village-(Indian-descent), Gotab-Village-(Indian-descent), Yord-e-Khordu-(Russian-descent)	Culture-oriented villages	
Dehbakri-Village-Bam, Kondazi-Village-Marvdasht, Jidarzar-Village-Kamfiruz	Pristine villages	
Wooden-Village-Neyshabur	Special villages	
Kashan, Likak, Sarpol-Zahab, Kalat-Nader, Neyshabur, Sabzevar, Mehriz, Zabol, Kangavar, Kazerun, Borujerd, Hafshejan, Jahrom, Sa'adat-Shahr, Dehdasht, Harsin, Firuzabad, Dehloran, Abarkooh, Shahrbabak, Lar, Kashmar, Fin, Taft, Kavar, Rayen, Aleshtar, Fareghan, Roodān, Bampour, Meymeh, Quchan	Historical towns	
Paveh, Darreh-Shahr, Bazoft, Semirom, Kuhdasht, Pataveh, Khansar, Fereydun-Shahr, Azna, Eqlid, Farokhshahr, Shulabad, Safashahr, Boroujen, Natanz, Dargaz, Rābor, Golpayegan, Mahan, Shahmirzad, Dibaj, Abdanan, Arsenjan	Mountainous towns	
Chadegan, Sudejan, Dorud, Shahroud, Ben, Baghbahadoran, Sepid-Dasht, Mojen, Chenaran, Sonqor, Esfedan, Nourabad-Mamasani, Rask, Jiroft	Riverside towns	
Bandar-e-Anzali, Suzā, Koshkonar, Parsian, Minab, Rezvanshahr, Nur, Nowshahr, Mahmudabad, Ramsar	Coastal towns	
Tabas, Qaleh-Ganj-(Land-of-Kapars), Aran-va-Bidgol, Seh-Qaleh, Tabas-Masina	Desert towns	
Meybod, Rafsanjan, Sirjan, Ardakan, Sarakhs, Pariz	Industrial towns	
Bandar-Lengeh, Kouhestak-Port, Sirik-Port, Bandar-e-Charak, Bandar-e-Jask, Bandar-Kong, Bandar-Khamir, Bandar-e-Pol	Port towns	
Damghan, Farooq, Farashband, Estahban	Product-oriented towns	
Islamabad-e-Gharb, Saravan, Sarakhs, Sarbaz, Astara, Khoy	Border towns	
Mahdi-Shahr-(Sangsar), Lordegan	Culture-oriented towns	
Neyriz, Dorud	Lakeside towns	
Eslamiyeh	Town garden	
Azadi-Tower, Persian-Gulf-Musical-Fountain-Kish-Island, Tehran-Milad-Tower, Tehran-Tabiat-Bridge, Isfahan-Aquarium, Tehran-Sky-Suspension-Bridge, Padideh-Tourism-Town, Tohid-Tunnel-Tehran, Vali-e-Asr-Crossroads-Underpass-Tehran, Vali-e-Asr-Cable-Bridge-Shiraz, Sadr-Multi-Floor-Highway-Tehran	Urban buildings	Urban attractions
Abo-O-Atash-Park, Nahj-al-Balagha-Park, Javanmardan-Park, Jamshidiyeh-Park, Niavaran-Park, Azadi-Park-Shiraz, Be'sat-Park-Shiraz, Mellat-Parke-Tehran, Mellat-Parke-Mashhad, Sa'ei-Park-Tehran, Waterfall-Park-Kish-Island, Pardis-Honar-Park-Isfahan, Fadak-Garden-Isfahan	Urban parks	
Vakilabad-Garden-Mashhad, Palayeshgah-Forest-Park-Shiraz, Nazhvan-Park-Isfahan, Persian-Gulf-Forest-Park-Bandar-Abbas	Urban forest parks	

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Examples of tourist attractions	Subcategories	Main categories
Kooh-Sangi-Park-Mashhad, Soffeh-Mountain-Park-Isfahan, Panje-Ali-Mountain-Park-Bandar-Abbas, Tehran-Waterfall-Park	Mountainous parks	
City-Park-Kish-Island, Hengam-Park-Kish-Island, Fisherman-Beach-Park-Kish-Island, Suru-Beach-Park-Bandar-Abbas, Saaheli-Camping-Qeshm, Tourism-Beach-Park-Bandar-Abbas, Persian-Gulf-Martyrs-lake-Tehran	Beach parks	
Tehran-Birds-Garden, Isfahan-Birds-Garden, Mashhad-Birds-Garden, Shiraz-Birds-Garden	Bird gardens	
Tehran-Jurassic-Park, Professor-Bazima-Scientific-Park-Mashhad, Qeshm-Noopak-Crocodile-Park-Qeshm, Ziyarat-Subject-Park-Mashhad, Tehran-Book-Garden	Subject parks	
Mashhad-Flowers-Garden, Mashhad-Botanical-Garden-Mashhad, Orgoona-Garden-of-Torghabeh, Persian-Garden-Tehran, Flowers-Garden-Isfahan	Flower gardens	
World-Road-Kish-Island, Velayat-Great-Park-Tehran, Mellat-Park-Sports-Complex-Mashhad, Sports-Beach-Park-Bandar-Abbas	Sports parks	
Jolfa-Isfahan, Suru-Ancient-Neighborhood-Bandar-Abbas	Urban tourist neighborhoods	
Tehran, Shiraz, Mashhad, Isfahan, Qom, Karaj	Metropolises	
Yazd, Kerman, Zahedan, Birjand, Semnan	Desert cities	
Arak, Hamedan	Mountainous cities	
Yasuj, Shahrekord, Khorram-Abad	Lurs cities	Sociocultural attractions
Tabriz, Ardabil, Zanjan, Qazvin, Urima	Azeri cities	
Ilam, Kermanshah, Sanandaj	Kurdish cities	
Rasht, Chalus, Sari, Gorgan, Bojnurd	Green northern cities	
Ahvaz, Bandar-Abas, Bushehr	Arab cities	
Chabahar	Baloch cities	
Date, Saffron, Pistachio, Walnut, Mediterranean Fruits, Honey	Crops	
Women's-Dress, Leather-Clothes, Kids-Clothing	Clothing	
Iranian-Carpet, Miniature, Pottery, Enamels, Persian-Khatamkari, Inlaid-Work, Penman-Cloth, Embroidered-Leather	Handicrafts	
Meatball-Tabrizi, Stuffed-Grape-Leaves	Local-foods,	
Luxury-Restaurants	Luxury-foods	Shopping attractions
Beldaji-Gaz, Sohan-e-Qom	Local souvenirs	

4. Discussion and conclusion

Using the GT method (open and selective coding), this work sought to identify and categorize the types of Iran's tourism attractions and formulate marketing objectives for developing the tourism industry in Iran using active sports tourism leverage. The findings show that there are 16 tourist attractions in Iran: religious attractions, historical-attractions, natural attractions, health-attractions, entertainment attractions, heritage-attractions, sports attractions, desert-attractions, mountainous attractions, wildlife-attractions, islands attractions, attractive-villages, attractive towns, urban-attractions, sociocultural attractions, and shopping-attractions.

As mentioned in the introduction, before the pandemic, nearly 75% of the tourists who entered Iran were from Iraq, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, and Turkey (WTTTC, 2022). It is evident that the religious attractions of Iran, especially the shrine of Imam Reza (AS) in Mashhad, are the leading destination of most foreign tourists in Iran (Heydari Chianeh et al., 2018). Worldwide, Muslim travelers are expected to be worth more than US\$450 billion by 2026.

Ignoring Muslim tourists would be a missed opportunity for any country's economy that depends on tourism (Wisker et al., 2020). In recent years, even religious theme parks dedicated to different religions have become popular among tourists (Shinde, 2021). Currently, Iran's religious attractions are considered a significant strength in Iran's tourism industry. Introducing and advertising other Iran tourist attractions to religious tourists should be one of the marketing objectives of Iranian tourism officials and activists. Iran should provide security, accommodation, safe and comfortable transportation, and essential services to increase religious tourists from countries that are friendly and aligned with Iran (Aghajani & Farahanifard, 2015).

Historical and natural attractions are part of conventional tourist attractions, and Iran is one of the wealthiest countries in the world in this area (Nasrollahi et al., 2015). Unfortunately, Iran, having many historical and natural attractions, has been unable to attract many international tourists. Most customers of Turkish tourist beaches are Russian tourists, while Turkey is a member of NATO. Most customers of Thailand's natural attractions are Chinese tourists, while Thailand is an ally of the United States. The lack of effective marketing measures and the lack of providing essential services are among the most important reasons for not attracting Russian and Chinese tourists to Iran's natural and historical attractions (Kiyani & Kiyani, 2019). In the future, Iranian officials and activists should choose Russian and Chinese tourists as the two main target markets and win the competition with Turkey and Thailand by taking effective marketing measures and providing essential services. There are significant differences between tourists of different nationalities (Jensen, 2006). Guided tours, employing an "aesthetic" approach to interpretation, using stories, art, and poetry to emotionally engage Chinese visitors with the landscape, appear more appropriate, culturally relevant, and effective. Fundamental techniques used by guides should include numerous adjectival words, figurative or metaphorical landscape descriptions, and exaggeration of the landscape's beauty (Xu et al., 2013).

As nature-based tourism grows, protected areas will witness increasing pressure from tourists, with the quality of destination attributes exerting a considerable influence over their experience (Deng et al., 2002). Nature-based tourism in protected areas of low-income countries can contribute to regional economies, reduce poverty, and help to develop rural areas, but there are also significant challenges (Chung et al., 2018; Job & Paesler, 2013). As the findings showed, fortunately, Iran has many protected areas that can be offered to international tourists by developing tourism services. For example, Shidvar Island in Iran can compete with Wasini Island in Kenya.

Museums and Entertainment facilities are also essential in developing tourism (Ervin Chua & Marek, 2020; Tayara & Yilmaz, 2020). Entertainment tourism, defined as economic activities based on integrated services provided by the entertainment and tourism sectors, is a rising trend worldwide (Luo et al., 2019). Also, multi-attractions in a destination are a stronger incentive to attract international tourists who have to travel a long distance and pay a higher price (Park et al., 2019). Entertainment attractions encourage tourists to travel worldwide to have fun and are essential to many gaming destinations. Las Vegas in USA and Macau in China are two destinations that have invested heavily in entertainment tourism (Luo & Lam, 2017). Also, heritage attractions

significantly impact visitors' co-creation, experiences, and satisfaction (Nowacki & Kruczek, 2021). The current research findings showed that Iran has significant entertainment and heritage attractions that can complement other Iran's tourist attractions in competition with international competitors.

The perspective and beauty of the sea, solitude and unique characteristics of the islands have also made them desirable tourist attractions for international tourists (Nicolosi et al., 2018; Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan, 2019). Islands have great potential to attract wealthy international tourists because they can create distinctive experiences for them. However, it is noteworthy that the excessive tourism development in small islands leads to the growth of pollutant emissions, increased carbon emissions, and environmental degradation (Katircioglu et al., 2020). Tourism development efforts in small islands have not yet been matched with environmental management efforts (Kurniawan et al., 2019). Nevertheless, tourism development in large and densely populated islands benefits the locals and the host country (Moon & Han, 2018). In general, sustainable tourism development should be planned and implemented to ensure long-term benefits for the islands (Li et al., 2021). Fortunately, Iran has many islands that can be distinctive attractions for international tourists. We considered these islands as a separate category because they have distinct characteristics.

As the findings showed, Iran has many health attractions, which is considered an extreme point in Iran's tourism industry (Izadi et al., 2012). Iran has been the health tourism hub in West Asia for the past 50-60 years. Turkey is diligently seeking to become a region's health tourism hub (Büyükoçkan et al., 2021). Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Singapore, India, and Thailand are other health tourism hubs in Asia (Li et al., 2022). Overall health spending is primarily affected by the long-term variations in several inbound visitor markets (Ridderstaat et al., 2019). Usually, the length of travel, the strict rules for obtaining visas, the high cost of medical services, and the low quality of medical and care services harm the willingness of patients to travel to some health tourism destinations. Perhaps that is why Chinese health tourists were more likely to accept health tourism services in China positively (Jiang et al., 2022). In recent years, the high quality of medical services, meager treatment costs, and ease of travel to Iran compared to international competitors have made Iran's health tourism income more than the total income of other types of tourism in Iran (international section).

The findings showed that several thousands of villages and towns in Iran could be destinations for international tourists. In recent decades, rising consumer interest in visiting relatively less commercialized natural destinations has facilitated the growth of ecotourism. Ecotourism is an interdisciplinary knowledge domain inherently connected with hospitality management, geography, and international business (Khanra et al., 2021). Ecotourism pursues sustainable regional development, improved livelihood for the local population, employment opportunities, income source creation, and enriched service exports (Saidmamatov et al., 2020). The results of various research in Iran have also shown that the development of ecotourism has led to job creation and increased income in rural areas of Iran (Amini Kashani & Alalhesabi, 2021; Zolfaghari et al., 2022).

Other vital attractions for international tourists are visiting metropolises and their social culture, infrastructure, and urban attractions (Zare Ashkezari et al., 2016). As

the findings showed, Iran has significant urban interests in its metropolises that can be tourist destinations. Although these attractions alone cannot lead to an increase in Chinese, Russian, German, and other tourists from developed and wealthy countries, they can complement other Iranian tourist attractions for these tourists. However, the urban attractions of Iran are currently visited by Iraqi tourists who have come to Iran for pilgrimage.

Despite the growth of online shopping in recent decades, shopping tourism has grown significantly. Shopping tourism is influenced by many factors: product type, price, distance, and other attractions (Kristoffersson et al., 2018). Shopping has become the main tourist activity and accounts for a considerable amount of tourism expenditure. Previous research has found that shopping tourists stay longer at a destination and spend approximately three to four times more than leisure tourists (Choi et al., 2016). As the findings showed, Iran has many shopping attractions. The marketing of Iranian products and handicrafts among international tourists significantly impacts Iran's income from the tourism industry. Chinese, Russian and Iraqi tourists are among the most critical potential target markets for Iran's tourism industry at the international level. The importance of this subject becomes more apparent when we know: China plays a vital role in the prosperity of international tourism as the world's largest source of outbound expenditures. Shopping accounts for the highest proportion of China's outbound travel expenses (Zhong et al., 2022).

Sport, desert, and mountainous attractions are three active tourist attractions, also known as adventure tourism. Fortunately, Iran is rich in these tourist attractions at the international level. Iran's deserts are unique in the world. Iran's deserts alone can create a strong competitive advantage in competition with Turkey and Thailand and create distinctive experiences for international tourists. Due to the four seasons, Iran's mountains are also a competitive advantage in competition with Turkey, Thailand, Dubai, Doha, Egypt, etc. Sports tourism is essential to tourism (Elahi et al., 2021). Physical activity and sporting events are the core of the sports industry (Khosromanesh et al., 2019). The development of tourism and job creation are the most important consequences of the sports industry (Shariati et al., 2022). Various types of sports tourism are classified into two general categories: active and passive (Dastgerdi et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the development of event tourism in Iran faces many challenges, including raising the quality of sports teams (Seifpanahi Shabani, Khosromanesh, et al., 2022), attracting sponsors (Khabiri et al., 2019), supporting other government institutions (Alidoust Ghahfarokhi et al., 2022), and producing the necessary sports equipment (Khabiri et al., 2020). Therefore, Iran is not in a good position in an event or passive sports tourism but is aggressive in active sports tourism. Active sports tourism in Iran is closely related to mountains, beaches, and deserts. Therefore, sports organizations play a vital role in developing adventure tourism in Iran. Of course, this section is currently not in a favorable situation from the dimensions of logistics and management (Alidoust Ghahfarokhi et al., 2022). Culture can create constraints for the development of sports tourism (Hudson et al., 2010). Cultural problems for young women's outdoor physical activity in Iran are one of the critical obstacles to the development of active sports tourism in Iran (Shariati et al., 2021). Many people and organizations are responsible for solving the cultural problems of women's outdoor physical activity, and necessary measures should be taken in this regard (Khosromanesh et al., 2018). Therefore, using drivers and removing

obstacles to women's physical activity is one of the obligations of active tourism development in Iran (Asadolahi et al., 2022).

Academic interest in adventure tourism has increased in recent years, given the exponential growth of this sector (Janowski et al., 2021). For example, Surf tourism is a rapidly expanding market segment of the broader sports tourism industry (Fallah Kazemi & Atghia, 2021; Martin & Assenov, 2012). Destination marketers in adventure tourism should understand that the key to successful destination marketing is to develop destination loyalty among tourists by satisfying their expected destination attributes while simultaneously providing extraordinary experiences that exceed the decision-maker's expectations (Sato et al., 2018). Marketing research is an essential part of adventure tourism marketing. The profile of the adventure tourist will be beneficial for planning sustainable tourism (Rojo-Ramos et al., 2021). Most characteristics demonstrated in previous conceptualizations of the "adventure tourist" have changed. These changes are significant and should be considered in general discussions of the current state of adventure tourism, as well as in marketing and management strategies and the future development of adventure tourism operations (Giddy, 2018).

Desert tourism, mountaineering, rock climbing, diving, surfing, etc. are all known as active sports tourism or adventure tourism. As can be seen in Table 2, Iran has many active sports tourism attractions. As mentioned, active sports tourism or adventure tourism has taken a large share of the tourism market today. As a strategic action, Iran can develop its entire tourism industry by leveraging active sports tourism or adventure tourism. Considering the importance of active sports tourism and other things mentioned above, eight marketing objectives have been formulated to develop the Iranian tourism industry.

In the current research, 16 types of tourist attractions in Iran were identified (Table 2) and discussed. The second part of the research was to formulate marketing objectives to increase international tourists in Iran using active sports tourism leverage. In conclusion, as discussed above, eight marketing objectives were developed, which in order of importance, are:

- 1- Introducing and advertising Iran's active sports tourist attractions to religious tourists.
- 2- We are focusing on Russian and Chinese tourists by offering desert attractions; as the primary target markets for Iran's natural and historical attractions.
- 3- Developing adventure tourism and using the unique capabilities of Iran's deserts and mountains to increase international tourists to Iran. (In fact, mountaineering and desert tourism are two essential types of active sports tourism).
- 4- Offering different attractions of Iran in product packages among international tourists. For example: "desert tourism + ecotourism + visiting historical attractions" or "mountaineering + ecotourism + nature tourism + museum tourism" or "pilgrimage + water sports + visiting commercial centers".
- 5- Marketing of Iranian products and handicrafts among international tourists (Iraqi, Russian, and Chinese, ... tourists).
- 6- Ecotourism marketing of Iran's target villages and towns for tourism along with mountaineering, desert tourism, and water-based sports in Russia, China, and Germany.

- 7- Marketing for Iran's islands and their water-based sports attractions to increase the arrival of wealthy international tourists to Iran.
- 8- Health tourism marketing for Iran's health attractions in Iraq, Russia, China, Pakistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Kuwait, etc.

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تدوین اهداف بازاریابی توریسم در ایران: با رویکرد گردشگری ورزشی فعال

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کلیدواژه

اکوتوریسم

تفریح

سفر

جاذبه‌های گردشگری ایران

جهانگردی

گردشگری ماجراجویانه

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: امروزه گردشگری به صنعتی بسیار سودآور با رشد انفجاری تبدیل شده است و می‌تواند بسیاری از مشکلات اقتصادی را حل کند. ایران پتانسیل بالایی برای بهره‌برداری از صنعت گردشگری در سطح بین‌المللی دارد. بنابراین، هدف تحقیق شناسایی و دسته‌بندی انواع جاذبه‌های گردشگری ایران و تدوین اهداف بازاریابی برای توسعه صنعت گردشگری ایران با استفاده از اهرم گردشگری ورزشی فعال بود.

روش: روش تحقیق، گردن‌دندآوری با رویکرد استراوس و کوربین بود. روش نمونه‌گیری، نمونه‌گیری نظری بود. پس از انجام ۳۱ مصاحبه با کارشناسان صنعت گردشگری و مطالعه سایر منابع، اشباع نظری حاصل شد.

یافته‌ها: یافته‌ها نشان داد که ۱۶ نوع جاذبه گردشگری در ایران وجود دارد: جاذبه‌های مذهبی، تاریخی، طبیعی، سلامت، تفریحی، میراثی، ورزشی، کویری، کوهستانی، حیات وحش، جزایر، روستاها، شهرها، شهری، فرهنگی-اجتماعی و خرید. نهایتاً هشت هدف بازاریابی برای افزایش گردشگران بین‌المللی در ایران با استفاده از اهرم گردشگری ورزشی فعال و کسب درآمد بیشتر از این صنعت تدوین شد که عبارتند از: معرفی و تبلیغ جاذبه‌های گردشگری ورزشی فعال ایران در بین گردشگران مذهبی؛ تمرکز بر گردشگران روسی و چینی با ارائه جاذبه‌های بیابانی؛ بازاریابی جاذبه‌های ماجراجویی ایران؛ ارائه جاذبه‌های مختلف ایران در یک بسته محصول در بین گردشگران بین‌المللی؛ بازاریابی محصولات و صنایع دستی ایرانی در بین گردشگران بین‌المللی؛ بازاریابی اکوتوریسم برای روستاها و شهرهای هدف گردشگری ایران؛ بازاریابی جزایر ایرانی و جاذبه‌های ورزشی آبی آنها در میان گردشگران ثروتمند بین‌المللی؛ و بازاریابی برای جاذبه‌های سلامت ایران.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: نویسندگان در این مقاله انواع جاذبه‌های گردشگری در ایران را شناسایی و دسته‌بندی کردند و تحلیلی درباره اهداف بازاریابی ضروری برای توسعه صنعت گردشگری در ایران با استفاده از اهرم گردشگری ورزشی فعال ارائه نمودند.

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