Strategic Planning for Tourism Development, Emphasizing on Religious Tourism
(Case Study: Qom City)

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Extended Abstract

Introduction
Nowadays, tourism as a dynamic industry and with unique characteristics includes an important part of economic activities and productions in the developed countries, as well as developed ones. This industry covers all the phenomena and relationships resulting from the interaction of tourists, suppliers and vendors of tourism products, governments and host communities, in the process of attracting and welcoming the tourists. Results and achievements of the tourism industry involve considerable results such as aspects of employment and its impact on development and economic-social functions mentioned in a region or country. Today, the religious tourism is one of the most important kinds which currently has been spread all over the world, and has overcome to weather (climatic) obstacles. Available historical documents from the great civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt and other signs and evidences remained from the pre-historic age indicate that there were numerous religious trips of the thousands of people from past up to now. In fact, mankind for thousands of years take long journeis in order to do religious practices. Nowadays, religious tourism with all its components and different species, due to specific structural and functional characteristics, has been able to be inside the global tourism, so that its sphere of influence has been spread all over the world. The religious tourists consist of two main groups: first, pilgrims or travelers that their motivation is only the religious affairs, that the time and duration of their station does not depend on their acts; and the second, multi-purpose religious tourists while doing pilgrimage and participate in religious ceremonies,

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visit other touristic places with a priority given to the pilgrimage in which increases the time and costs of the trip. There are numerous religious attractions and cultural, historical and natural potentials, in the Qom city and therefore that can easily lead to the development of tourism industry can be very helpful.

**Methodology**
This research is applied-developing in scope and the methodology is descriptive-analytical. For collecting information and data required, documentation and field studies such as interviews and using the data, the attractions, facilities, services and tourism situation in the region have been investigated. Then, the SWOT analysis matrix is used for data analysis and presentation of tourism development strategies in this religious city.

**Results and Discussion**
In recent decades, Qom city, because of religious and spiritual presence of Shiite clergies has become the world’s most important Shiite religious center. Qom is the second city in Iran after Mashhad as a pilgrimage center. The most important and significant tourist attractions of Qom that are visited every day by a large number of internal and external tourists and pilgrims are the holy shrine of Hazrat Masoumeh and the sacred mosque of Jamkaran. Meanwhile, the city of Qom with precious treasures of Islamic art and architecture such as Mirror ans Gold scenes of Hazrat Masoumeh holy shrine, the architecture of Qom Seminary, Qom General Mosque, Green Domes, Molla Sadra’s House, Ayatollah Boroujerdi’s House, These attractions have been completely affected the structure of city’s religious tourism structure and its functioning due to the importance and their role of religious-pilgrimage and the city glory and progress is owed to these places. In addition, there are more than 400 shrines and other pilgrimage places in Qom. Also domination of hot and dry climate in Qom province has provided individual natural attractions in this province that can be attractive for tourists (especially foreign ones) such as Kavir National Park with an area exceeding 600 hectares in northeast of Qom which is one of the Greatest ecologic areas of Iran and is unique due to its various types of plants and animals.

In this paper, SWOT strategic planning process has been used for analyzing the functions of tourism in Qom. A four-stage process of strategic planning including: first, external (opportunities and threats) and internal (strengths and weaknesses) factors evaluation matrix; second, analysis of strategic factors; third, external and internal matrix and matrix of quantitative strategic planning; and finally, appropriate strategies for development of religious tourism in the city of Qom, has designed and presented. Moreover, after consideration of relevant information, the indentified major external and internal factors were in the matrix were evaluated. Number of external factors determined to be 23. Among them, 12 factors cause of religious tourism opportunity of Qom and 11 threatened it. First of all, the factors that led to the opportunity and then those that threatened of the Qom religious tourism sector are located in the matrix. Number of domestic factors also determined to be 24, including the strengths and weaknesses of tourism in Qom. So that, firstly 12 strength factors and then 12 weakness factors of religious tourism are placed in the matrix, then using the expert viewpoints and comments of those interviewed, individual affecting factors were weighted. Finally, by adjusting the strategic planning as well as the internal and external factors that act as the bases in the strategies
planning, the SWOT matrix was extracted and accordingly, quantitative strategic planning, appropriate strategies and priorities matrices of religious tourism development are identified.

Conclusion
In this research, the authors investigated the capabilities and functions of tourism, especially the religious tourism – of the Qom city; and in order to develop this functioning's, applied strategies to developed the mentioned type of tourism are presented. In this process, by assessment of the capabilities and opportunities of Qom religious tourism, the results show that conservative and aggressive strategies achieved the first and second places, respectively. For this purpose, firstly primary WO strategies and then SO strategies are invoked in the SWOT matrix. In fact, the WO2 conservative strategy with a score of 6.49 represents the best strategy for tourism development and therefore it is considered for the city. This important strategy can be achieved by strengthening the implementation and entertainment and recreational areas and also enhancing the natural attractions as a supplementary religious tourism throughout the year to prevent the seasonal tourism and to increase the tourists' residence time. However, the SO2 aggressive strategy, with the score of 7.33 as the most effective strategy after the conservative strategy, is considered. To achieve the objectives of the tourism development using this strategy, on the one hand the development of Islamic sciences, and on the other hand development of advertisements for religious scholars and foreign cultural-religious tourists by introducing the real situation of the cultural-religious functioning of the city to other countries in order to attract more foreign tourists and create sustainable employment and income are recommended.

Keywords: Strategic planning, Tourism development, Religious tourism, SWOT, Qom City.