

Assessment of Strategic Factors of War Tourism in Iran

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Abstract

Today, war tourism tours in the world are regarded as opportunity for glorification of the defendant combatants in each country and protect ting their beliefs while there are regarded as class for training and promoting peace and showing destructive consequences of war and are the best method for showing difference of this war from many wars and difference of attitude. Broad area of the war involved regions, effect of attendance in these regions on national identity of the visitors and spiritual strong heritage of Islamic Revolution periods are the specifications which distinguish these regions from other travel destinations in Iran.

This research studies position of this tourism with use of SWOT method and calculates strategic status of war tourism by presenting tourism strategic position.

Keywords: war tourism, Iran, SWOT, strategic position tourism index (SPTI)

Introduction

With regard to increase and variety of tourism varieties in the world, a new variety of tourism as dark tourism was added to common varieties of tourism since 1990s. While major part of tourism literature review is about marketing, consumption and supply of recreational and entertaining destinations of tourism, some researchers and writers searched for death and war tragedy antithesis.

We should note that since concept of dark tourism is subset of many tourism kinds such as cultural, historical, heritage etc and is difficult to define and explain, therefore, dark tourism is a complex branch of tourism. . Dark tourism is different from holiday packages such as shore tourism and its validity and authenticity are very important for experience of the visitors. In tourism studies, the travels which are related to death, cruelty and catastrophe were studied with different names of which the most balanced one is dark tourism.

One of the subsets of dark tourism is war tourism. War and armed conflicts are integral part of the human history. Irrespective of the reason and motivation of these wars, what is true is that despite destructive consequences of war and slaughter and damages resulting from it even for the victorious party in war, this ominous phenomenon is an important part of the history. Historians believe that century 20 is the bloodiest century in human history in terms of casualties resulting from war. In century 20, 25 wars and armed conflicts, direct and indirect casualties were estimated to be between 170 and 200 million persons and the number of the killed was about 110 million persons in battlefields. Studies show that millions of tourists visit the historical places relating to war across the world and supply and demand of this branch of tourism has peaceful concept though commercial and political goals are hidden in it.

It has been predicted that war tourism in century 20 is not only an important subset in dark tourism but also will turn into the most popular types of tourism.

Today, war tourism has many proponents as one of the attractive and important branches of tourism industry in the world and millions of people visit the war tourism charismas from different parts of the world through battlefields tours. This part of tourism industry is growing rapidly in the world and many investments have been made in this field in different countries of the world.

Respect for the war victims especially admiring sacrifices of the commanders, soldiers and even partisans who died in war are point of similar of all nations and cultures.

Speed of war tourism growth and visiting battlefields in Iran is more than that of all tourism types. On the basis of the informal statistics, about 5 million persons visit these battlefields though many groups travel to southern zones and through some caravans to the west. If all sections are activated for accepting passengers, this statistics will increase up to 10 million persons.

In spite of record of such tourism in Iran, no definite study has been done on supply and demand and no new concepts have been introduced to this field. While what distinguishes between war tourism and other types of tourism is that not only economic aspects are regarded but also cultural aspects are very important and cultural concepts such as defense resistance, epic, sacrifice, patriotism, martyrdom seeking , altruism etc are transferred to the future generations in the best way.

Review of literature

War tourism is an important and definite part of the dark and death tourism. Studies of war tourism have attracted attention even before emergence of tourism. Conflict of war interpretation is not a new issue and educational tourism approaches toward recreation and entertainment have been discussed in many studies of war tourism and become more complex on the basis of the political considerations. Challenges of war presentation were studied as a tourism charisma in many local war sites in USA (Abroe, 1998, Hanink& Stutts, 2002, Greene,

1990) and sites of the world wars in century 20 (Franza & Johnson, 1994, Martinez, 1992, Charleton, 1991, Sison, 2000 and 1999, Edwards, 2000, Slade, 2004) and Vietnam war tourism sites (Henderson, 2000) are very important in these discussions. In Europe, war interpretation and conflict have longer history and use of emotional approach for interpreting the past events is related to controversial interpretation. Where soldiers and men gather, military strategies are compiled and battlefields are important for the future generations because wars don't break out due to military interventions as expected before. Today, wars break out with new technologies and wars are not only limited to a battlefield or special front and battlefields, sacred fronts and such sites will grow slowly though importance and reliability of the available fronts will be elevated as a part of the past memories. Memories and monuments have changed from an ordinary historical event to unordinary and wonderful events which have deep values. It means that they have turned into a sacred history. Lloyds (1998) described memory symbols which may be equal for defeat and victory extrinsically but they may mean sacred history intrinsically and we can specify their orientation due to their related values.

Research methodology

SWOT analysis: it was applied for the first time as planning tool for commercial activities but national, scientific and educational institutes and other organizations and institutes were used in the first step of planning process. These tools can be useful for expansion and development of services and new plans, assessing value of these services, plans, projects and new ideas and other positions which need to be decided.

General goal of any SWOT analysis is identification of intrinsic and extrinsic factors which are important for access to goals. Therefore, information is classified as two key groups:

- 1- Intrinsic factors including weaknesses and strengths
- 2- Extrinsic factors including opportunities and threats

For definition of strengths, weaknesses and threats, we can use the following simple terms:

- **Strengths:** the specifications which help the group achieve the goals. These specifications have a positive effect to achieve desirable goals; therefore, strategies of the group should be designed for strengthening these specifications.
- **Weaknesses:** the specifications which are harmful for achieving the goals and will have negative effects. Therefore, strategies of the group should be designed for weakening these factors.
- **Opportunities:** The conditions which can help the group achieve the goals due to positive potential effects. Therefore, these classes can expedite access to the goals besides the available strengths.
- **Threats:** the conditions which can be regarded as barrier to the group. Therefore, strategies of the group should be designed for converting these inhibiting factors to opportunities and progressing factors.

In the next stage, we can draw a matrix which has four zones with four different strategies in process of formulating development policies and strategy with regard to the previous aspects and reaction type and interaction of each intrinsic and extrinsic factor. Therefore, matrix of each zone should be able to keep strengths and opportunities, exclude weaknesses and strengths and convert them to weaknesses and opportunity or decrease scope of these factors in order to decrease negative and destructive effects on the organization. These strategies include:

SO strategies: these strategies are called violating strengths. In these policies, proposed strategies are considered for desirable use of strengths in order to take advantage of the future opportunities.

WO strategies: these strategies are known as review strategies. In this zone, suggestions and executive strategies are considered for weaknesses with optimal use of opportunities especially by reallocating the resources.

ST strategies: these strategies are called variety strategies and confront with extra-organizational threats by identifying the most important intra-organizational strengths. Therefore, fulfilling the necessary needs for confronting with the threats is the most important part of the suggestions.

WT strategies: these defensive strategies intend to prevent extraordinary threats by presenting executive strategies while minimizing weaknesses.

We can draw SWOT comparative matrix with regard to the above remarks:

Weaknesses(W)	Strengths (S)	
Review strategies (WO) , removing problems and weaknesses in order to provide new opportunities	Violating strategies (SO) Developing the new methods which are suitable for strengthening work.	Opportunities (O)
Defensive strategies (WT) Developing strategies for preventing threats and weaknesses against us	Variety strategies(STO) Removing threats	Threats (T)

Table 2: SWOT comparative matrix

On the basis of this method, experts were asked to present strengths, weaknesses and opportunity of war tourism in Iran. Then, a questionnaire was prepared on the basis of Likert spectrum (5-1) and scores of each component were calculated.

3- Calculating strategic position of tourism index

This index was presented for the first time in this article. Strategic position of tourism index has been prepared on the basis of SWOT table components:

$$SPTI = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n S.w + \sum_{i=1}^n O.w}{\sum_{i=1}^n W.w + \sum_{i=1}^n T.w}$$

Because components are not calculated equally in the formula, importance of each component was measured to be between 1=unimportant, 2=low importance and 3=highly important and importance of each component was obtained on the basis of the following formula:

$$W = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n w}{n}$$

With regard to the formula, we can expect that if SPT1=1, tourism position was positioned in breakeven point. If SPT1>1, tourism will be in desirable position and its numerical increase shows increase of sustainability and suitable position of abilities to shortages and if SPT1<1, tourism will be positioned in critical point and weakness and threats caused to decrease comparative advantage.

Research finding

These experts mentioned weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats of war tourism in Iran as follows:

	Obtained score	Importance coefficient	Effective coefficient
Strengths			
• Unique monuments in battlefields	4.02	2.92	11.7384
• Preparing war tourism master plan	3.88	2.3	8.924
• Pilgrimage and historical laces in battlefields	3.25	2.21	7.1805
• Special and strategic position of battlefields	4.31	2.8	12.068
• Unique events and operations occurred in war	4.75	2.92	13.87
• Interest of the young in holy defense	3.82	2.73	10.429
• Positive mental foreground of holy defense in the country	4.13	2.41	9.9533
• Advertisement and	2.3	2.51	5.773

information of the media about holy defense and travels of Rhian Noor			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to establish intercultural communication with the people residing in battlefields 	4.89	2.02	9.8778
Weaknesses			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to open some battlefields for public visit 	2.44	0.62	1.5128
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> preventing the public from visiting search operations fields 	3.97	0.95	3.7715
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unsuitable reconstruction of some battlefields 	2.68	1.8	4.824
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> destruction of some relics of war 	3.21	2.5	8.025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> failure to distribute visitors in the year 	4.2	2.73	11.466
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> weakness of war tourism staff to perform their responsibilities 	4.7	3	14.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of international airports and organized transportation facilities 	3.11	2.15	6.6865
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limitation of recreational services and equipments 	1.25	1.13	1.4125
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of sufficient information centers 	2.11	1.7	3.587
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> need for investment 	2.25	2.8	6.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of accurate and separated statistics (age, gender etc) 	3	2.05	6.15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> failure to do coherent research 	3.5	2.13	6.816
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> failure to train the local people regarding interaction with the tourists 	3.2	2.13	6.816
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of feasibility studies and scientific studies regarding war tourism capabilities 	3.8	1.15	4.37
Opportunities			

• identification of the Iranian culture through visiting battlefields	4.21	2.8	11.788
• interest of the people in Middle East region in holy defense periods	3.98	2.9	11.542
• promotion of the war tourism market in the world	4.5	2.25	10.125
• intactness of battlefields in Iran	4.73	2.75	13.008
• high ability to do different studies in war tourism in Iran	4.92	2.7	13.284
Threats			
• broad propaganda activities of the known countries in war tourism	4.32	0.05	2.16
Global propaganda against Iran	4.71	2.5	11.775
Failure to produce media productions in international level in order to introduce Iran war tourism capabilities	4,8	2.7	12.96

Calculation of strategic position of tourism index

On the basis of the obtained scores, index rate equals to:

With regard to the index rate, we can find that war tourism status in Iran has strategically desirable position and ability of Iran to develop such tourism solves the available problem. Therefore, we can include investment and development in the agenda.

The following SWOT table was prepared with use of the above components:

Table 5: SWOT

<p>War tourism</p>	<p>Strengths Unique monuments in battlefields Preparing war tourism master plan Pilgrimage and historical laces in battlefields Special and strategic position of battlefields Unique events and operations occurred in war Interest of the young in holy defense Positive mental foreground of holy defense in the country Advertisement and information of the media about holy defense and travels of Rhian Noor Ability to establish intercultural communication with the people residing in battlefields</p>	<p>Weaknesses Failure to open some battlefields for public visit preventing the public from visiting search operations fields unsuitable reconstruction of some battlefields destruction of some relics of war failure to distribute visitors in the year weakness of war tourism staff to perform their responsibilities lack of international airports and organized transportation facilities limitation of recreational services and equipments lack of sufficient information centers need for investment lack of accurate and separated statistics (age, gender etc) failure to do coherent research failure to train the local people regarding interaction with the tourists lack of feasibility studies and scientific studies regarding war tourism capabilities</p>
<p>Opportunity (O) identification of the Iranian culture through visiting battlefields interest of the people in Middle East region in holy defense periods promotion of the war tourism market in the world intactness of battlefields in Iran high ability to do different studies in war tourism in Iran</p>	<p>SO Development of Rahian Noor Campaigns Increasing variety of Campaigns Marketing in global level Recognizing natural capabilities and capitals to develop battlefields tourism Recognizing spatial specifications and creating equipment in battlefields</p>	<p>WO Rapid development of infrastructures and war tourism services Planning and efficient management in war tourism zones and development of this branch of tourism Developing powers of private sector for organizing supply and demand Studying general condition of the provinces regarding manner and scope of performance for the war tourism</p>

<p>Threats broad propaganda activities of the known countries in war tourism Global propaganda against Iran Failure to produce media productions in international level in order to introduce Iran war tourism capabilities</p>	<p>S.T. Recognizing topographic structure of the zones and climatic factors effective on climatic variety of the zones Reliance on value and spiritual fundamentals of holy defense periods in war tourism development management process Attention to principle of public participation and private sector in prioritizing issues and equipping and exploiting war tourism resources and facilities Establishing communication between tourism products of battlefields and other products and charismas in the province and national spatial areas</p>	<p>Studying spatial dispersion of the battlefields operational zones and the affected zones as the available country divisions system Recognizing executive priorities of study for recognition of battlefields and performance of work based on major priorities Recognizing physical capabilities and infrastructures available in the battlefields Recognizing capacities of the facilities and war tourism services Ranking battlefields and definition of ordered spatial organization Delimiting physical domain of the operational zones and war stricken zones Classifying battlefields in terms of role and function and their effect on war tourism Recognizing beneficiary institutions for managing battlefields and management of war tourism Recognizing tourism supply with multiple purpose in battlefields</p> <p>WT Coordinated Planning and execution in all political, economic and social dimensions in order to develop war tourism Attention to principles of sustainability , integration , and introversion of development and equipping the tourism resources Attention to extra systemic opportunities and threats effective on development of war tourism Reliance on cognitive logic of system analysis and strategic planning</p>
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	<p>Recognizing resources and charismas affected by the imposed war and holy defense period</p> <p>Recognizing and classifying artificial charismas created by the Islamic combatants as defensive factor in operational zones</p> <p>Recognizing and classifying charismas, the protected relics and symbols made for guarding war in the studied zones</p> <p>Recognizing and classifying museums and war exhibits</p> <p>Recognizing special events as distinguished points and starting point in operational zones and battlefields</p> <p>Recognizing natural resources and charismas in order to develop war tourism</p> <p>Recognizing cultural –historical resources and charismas in order to develop war tourism</p> <p>Recognizing special charismas in order to develop war tourism</p>	
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Conclusion and suggestions

There was one of the unique battles of century 20 in Iran. Different events of holy defense period in Iran are branch of wonderful events of which examples may not occur in any parts of the world. Battle fronts, chemical regions, holocaust of villages, performed operations are among them. These capabilities and mixture of holy defense with religious and patriotic beliefs and caused many people to visit battlefields in winter and Norooz holidays as Rahian Noor Tour. Although people welcomed the battlefields and it was mixed with religious dimensions, no scientific institution has been included in this category.

The following suggestions were presented with use of experts and field studies:

SO strategies:

- Development of Rahian Noor Campaigns
- Increasing variety of Campaigns
- Marketing in global level
- Recognizing natural capabilities and capitals to develop battlefields tourism
- Recognizing spatial specifications and creating equipment in battlefields

WO strategies:

- Developing powers of private sector for organizing supply and demand
- Studying general condition of the provinces regarding manner and scope of performance for the war tourism
- Studying spatial dispersion of the battlefields operational zones and the affected zones as the available country divisions system
- Recognizing executive priorities of study for recognition of battlefields and performance of work based on major priorities
- Recognizing physical capabilities and infrastructures available in the battlefields
- Recognizing capacities of the facilities and war tourism services
- Ranking battlefields and definition of ordered spatial organization
- Delimiting physical domain of the operational zones and war stricken zones
- Classifying battlefields in terms of role and function and their effect on war tourism
- Recognizing structural and functional specifications of the war tourism related institutions
- Recognizing beneficiary institutions for managing battlefields and management of war tourism
- Recognizing tourism supply with multiple purpose in battlefields

ST strategies:

Recognizing topographic structure of the zones and climatic factors effective on climatic variety of the zones

Reliance on value and spiritual fundamentals of holy defense periods in war tourism development management process

Attention to principle of public participation and private sector in prioritizing issues and equipping and exploiting war tourism resources and facilities

Establishing communication between tourism products of battlefields and other products and charismas in the province and national spatial areas

Recognizing resources and charismas affected by the imposed war and holy defense period

Recognizing and classifying artificial charismas created by the Islamic combatants as defensive factor in operational zones

Recognizing and classifying charismas, the protected relics and symbols made for guarding war in the studied zones

Recognizing and classifying museums and war exhibits

Recognizing special events as distinguished points and starting point in operational zones and battlefields

Recognizing natural resources and charismas in order to develop war tourism

Recognizing cultural –historical resources and charismas in order to develop war tourism

Recognizing special charismas in order to develop war tourism

WT strategies

Coordinated Planning and execution in all political, economic and social dimensions in order to develop war tourism

Attention to principles of sustainability, integration, and introversion of development and equipping the tourism resources

Attention to extra -systemic opportunities and threats effective on development of war tourism

Reliance on cognitive logic of system analysis and strategic planning

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