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IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE VARIABLES THROUGH SCENARIO PLANNING PERSPECTIVE FOR CREATIVE TOURISM IN IRAN

Mir Najaf MOUSAVI[1], Kamran Jafarpour GHALEHTEIMOURI[2,3], Nazanin Zahra SOTOUDEH[4], Mohammad Reza Amiri FAHLIANI[5]

ABSTRACT. Identify Appropriate Variables Through Scenario Planning Perspective For Creative Tourism In Iran. This study explores the major factors affecting the creative tourism market in Iran and their potential to drive national and regional development in the long run. The study employs the MicMac and Scenario Wizard software to identify the variables and their relationships and influence on each other. The study finds that communication infrastructure is a general factor that affects all guest communities, while others are specific to capital attraction from Middle Eastern countries. These include improving political relations with these countries and digital advertising and marketing of Iran's development. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a new teaching methodology on student performance in mathematics. The methodology involved a combination of interactive lectures, group discussions, and hands-on activities. A quasi-experimental design was used, with one group of students receiving the new methodology and a control group receiving traditional teaching methods. The study was conducted over the course of one semester with pre- and post-tests administered to both groups. The results showed a significant improvement in the performance of the experimental group compared to the control group. The experimental group had a mean post-test score of 87.5, compared to the control group's mean score of 76.2. The influence graph shows the relationships between the variables and

[1] *Urmia University, Department of Geography and Urban Planning, Urmia, Iran, e-mail: m.mousavi@urmia.ac.ir*
[2] *Malaysia-Japan International Institute of Technology, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Kuala Lumpur, Jalan Sultan Yahya Petra, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*
[3] *Department of Geographical Sciences, Faculty of Geography and Urban Planning, Kharazmi University, Human Sciences building 4th floor, Tehran, Iran, e-mail: space.kamran@gmail.com*
[4] *Razi University, Kermanshah, Iran, e-mail: nzsetoudeh@yahoo.com*
[5] *Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran, e-mail: amiri_reza88@yahoo.com*

how they influence one another, and the spatial structure of the direct driving forces of creative tourism development in Iran is indicated at a rate of 25%. This research offers insights and recommendations for policymakers, tourism practitioners, and scholars interested in the development of creative tourism in Iran. These findings suggest that the new teaching methodology can be an effective way to improve student performance in mathematics. Further research could explore the impact of this methodology on other subjects and in different settings.

Keywords*: Foresight, Tourism planning, Creative tourism, MicMac, Scenario Wizard*.

1. Introduction

Creative tourism combines current tourism resources centered on "creativity" with elements of living art and culture to offer visitors authentic experiences (Richards & Wilson, 2006). By actively participating in creative processes, tourists can develop their creative potential and skills, contributing to the development of economic, social, and cultural conditions in the destination where they are presented. Creative resources have greater stability and dynamism than tangible cultural products, enabling tourist destination cities to develop innovative products quickly and gain a competitive advantage (Yozcu & Icoz, 2010; Hung et al., 2016; Remoaldo, 2020). Therefore, creative tourism has greater potential than traditional cultural tourism in terms of adding value and allowing destinations to innovate new products relatively quickly (Richards & Wilson, 2006). Creative tourism is heavily reliant on the active participation of tourists, who interact and create the entire experience, actively learning about their surroundings and using this knowledge to develop their skills (Richards & Wilson, 2006).

According to Osman and Sentosa (2013), tourism is a significant and rapidly growing industry that contributes greatly to the economic growth of countries and local communities. Moreover, Rahimi et al. (2015) suggest that tourism has become a powerful tool for improving the quality of life and shaping the world in terms of communication, political and cultural benefits, and international effects. As the tourism industry shifts from traditional to creative tourism, creative tourism initiatives are becoming a new model of cultural tourism that harnesses economic, social, and cultural dynamism in areas that attract specific markets (Richards, 2011; Richards & Raymond, 2000; Richards & Wilson, 2007; Gato et al., 2020).

Creativity is heavily influenced by diversity within socio-cultural contexts. Cultural diversity is particularly important for accelerating and strengthening creative processes and activities. However, in the modern era, globalization and the desire to associate with global brands has led to a reduction in diversity and differentiation among destinations, which is a significant feature that distinguishes them. Cities and tourist destinations' attempts to distinguish themselves and appear on global tourism maps have often resulted in the opposite effect. This is because they rely on dictated and similar strategies, such as the creation of symbolic structures, the exclusion of cultural heritage, the holding of large-scale events, and the adoption of a theme-based approach. Consequently, cultural tourism has become repetitive and led to the emergence of similar tourism destinations with identical tourism products worldwide. According to Richards and Raymond (2000), creative tourism requires the destination itself to be more creative in designing "institutional" experiences rather than relying solely on tourists' creativity. Destinations need to consider their creative aspects and provide a unique incentive for creative tourists to visit. Each location has the potential to provide unique combinations of knowledge, skills, physical, social, and spatial capital to adapt specific locations for specific creative activities. The handicraft sector is particularly adept at using creativity to overcome limited available resources and attract potential customers (Philis, 2009; Ghalehteimouri et al., 2020).

As competition in the tourism industry intensifies, suppliers are introducing more practical features to distinguish their products. Unique experiences are highly valued, and only those who can invest in meeting tourist demand will be able to succeed in this competitive market. Creative tourism experiences are primarily developed from a supply perspective, with little research conducted on tourists' perceptions of these experiences (Tan et al., 2014). However, Maisel (2009) discovered that many tourists prefer small, intimate, and personalized experiences. Moreover, Tan et al. (2013) investigated the concept of "creativity" in tourism and found that a creative experience requires knowledge in social, cultural, or environmental aspects.

However, creative tourism may be the key to unlocking this potential. Iran's cultural and artistic diversity, along with its originality in creative industries, are contributing factors that can be leveraged to develop creative tourism. Due to a lack of necessary infrastructure, Iran is unable to compete effectively in industrial age tourism markets that rely on large-scale commercial facilities. As a result, it is being proposed that Iran positions itself as a creative tourism destination, emphasizing its cultural and artistic offerings based on its unique needs and capabilities. By capitalizing on areas of cultural diversity, multiple subcultures, rich historical backgrounds, and high-quality handicrafts,

tourism can become a valuable source of additional income for Iran. The potential economic benefits of creative tourism are significant, including the potential to increase the GDP and strengthen the national economy in the long run. The aim of this research is to introduce a new strategic approach, utilizing futures studies, to plan creative tourism in Iran. The study is divided into two stages, with the first identifying key factors and driving forces, and the second designing possible future scenarios using strategic management and futures research methodologies, and utilizing MicMac and Scenario Wizard software applications. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Identification of key factors and driving forces affecting the development of creative tourism in Iran.

2. Creating planning based on scenario planning according to Iran's conditions.

2. Theoretical foundations of the research

2.1. Tourism development

Tourism is a vital source of economic growth for many countries as it drives infrastructure development and investment while providing economic benefits (Asaker et al., 2014; Fletcher & Archer, 1991). Countries worldwide have come to rely heavily on the tourism industry as a significant contributor to economic activity and growth planning (Dogru et al., 2020). The tourism industry creates job opportunities and contributes to regional and national socioeconomic functions, such as income diversification and reducing economic inconsistency (Holjevac, 2003). In developed countries, developing the tourism industry can lead to new export, foreign exchange, and job opportunities while reducing income disparity. In developing countries, tourism expansion can promote long-term development and a more equitable distribution of income at the national level, closing the gap created by the inequitable distribution of financial resources in the past century (Morab et al., 2018).

2.2. Creative tourism

Creative tourism has emerged as a response to the increasing prevalence of mass cultural tourism and the desire of travelers to have more active participation in their travel experiences. Over the years, the range and scope of activities associated with creative tourism have broadened, leading to a shift in definitions. Nevertheless, the original definition provided by Greg

Richards and Crispin Raymond in 2000 remains fundamental in the field. It states that "tourism provides visitors with the opportunity to unleash their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences that are characteristic of the holiday destinations where they are undertaken" (Duxbury & Richards, 2019). Richards (2011) argues that creative tourism can take various forms and involve different types of creativity, with some being more active than others (Fig. 1).

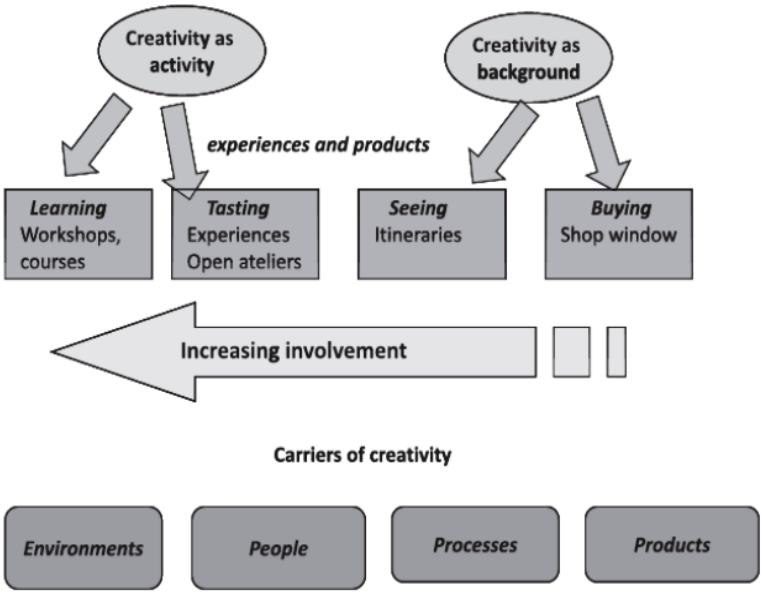

Fig. 1. Creative tourism models.
Source: Richards (2011, p. 1239)

According to Richards and Wilson (2006), there are three types of creative development strategies: creative seeing, creative spaces, and creative tourism. Creative shows can act as hubs in creative networks and establish a direct link between creativity and tourism. Creative spaces are oriented towards production and consumption functions (Richards, 2011). As mentioned previously, creative tourism offers several advantages over cultural tourism. These include the following: a) Creativity is a scarce commodity that is only accessible to a few individuals and can easily add value; b) It enables the destination to quickly innovate its products and distinguish itself from other

destinations; c) Creative resources are typically more sustainable and renewable than tangible resources; d) Creativity is usually more mobile than tangible cultural products; and e) Creativity results in the creation of value by both tourists and destinations (adapted from Richards & Wilson, 2006).

2.3. Strategic planning of creative tourism based on the scenario writing approach

Dewey's instrumentalism ideology, formulated in 1929, posits that people are constantly connected to and influenced by their environment. This philosophy formed the basis of Bertalanffy's (1962) system theory, which asserts that understanding the linkages and interactions within a system is crucial to gaining insight into it. Real systems, according to Bertalanffy, interact with their surroundings, adapt to them, and evolve over time. In line with the systems theory present in the literature on management science and organizational development (Katz and Kahn 1978; Scott 1961; Thompson 1967), organizations are viewed as systems composed of interconnected components, such as people and processes. It is proposed that the elements within a system interact with one another to achieve a specific objective (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972).

As the world becomes more complex and chaotic, entire systems can evolve and become increasingly complex. Systems thinking recognizes that events in complex systems are separated by both distance and time, implying that small catalytic events can have significant impacts on the system as a whole (Senge, 1990).

Strategic tourism planning is a process aimed at optimizing the benefits of tourism while balancing the quality and quantity of supply with the appropriate level of demand. This framework provides direction for any tourism organization or destination and emphasizes quality, efficiency, and effectiveness (Edgell et al., 2008). To ensure the desired quality of tourism products and bring the greatest benefits to the local community or tourism destination, countries need to have a clear understanding of the location, process, and path to achieving their future tourism sector goals (Johnson et al., 2008). Appropriate strategic planning sets aside short-term profit-driven goals and instead focuses on many key features of the future that are more beneficial and favorable to society as a whole.

In recent years, the research of the future has gained popularity as a new field of knowledge that expands the possibilities of what the future may hold. Rather than relying on linear and predictable planning for a single future, this knowledge explores the vast and unknown possibilities of human and

technological advancements, opening up new horizons for humanity. As a result, planning has shifted from simply following the past or predicting the future to actively building and creating the future (Mehdizadeh, 2010).

2.4. Iran and its tourism

The tourism industry is rapidly evolving and transforming in the postmodern era, similar to other manifestations of this era. However, the tourism industry in Iran faces obstacles such as the complicated process of obtaining licenses and inconsistencies between the private and public sectors, hindering its progress. Meanwhile, in other dynamic countries, natural, historical, and cultural resources have reached saturation, and tourism planners are seeking new attractions to respond to the expanding market demand (Maleki and Amiri Fahliani, 2019).

Iran, historically known as Persia, is one of the largest countries in the Middle East, with a vast heritage and rich local culture dating back over 7,000 years. It boasts 13 cultural sites and 9 intangible heritage sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, as well as unique geographical features such as the Alborz and Zagros mountain ranges, vast deserts, high plateaus, fertile plains, the Persian Gulf, and the Caspian Sea, resulting in diverse climates, plants, and animals (Nematpour et al., 2020). Despite its potential for developing the tourism industry, Iran has not fully capitalized on this opportunity due to its mono-product oil-based economy, neglecting other sectors.

Given Iran's high dependence on oil revenues, the non-renewability of fossil fuels, and their sharp price fluctuations, there is an urgent need to shift toward using alternative resources and break free from a mono-product economy. As tourism has become one of the top industries in the world and Iran has great potential in this regard, developing the tourism industry can be a viable alternative to oil revenues (Abedi and Sedaghat, 2019; Movahed and Jafarpour Ghalehteimouri, 2019).

3. Methodology

This study is an applied research project that utilizes the descriptive-analytical method. It is also an exploratory-analytical study based on innovative futures research methods that employ both quantitative and qualitative models. To collect the required data, the researchers employed both documentary and survey methods, and the statistical population consisted of tourism experts located in Shiraz. The collected data were analyzed using the structural analysis method, which is used to analyze the relationships between variables, especially in large systems with multiple dimensions. To perform the structural analysis,

the researchers utilized MicMac software, which is specifically designed to describe a system's main components through matrix relations. The software outputs in the form of tables and graphs can help us understand the dimensions and relationships of the system and how it may function in the future (Naimi and Pourmohammadi, 2016).

In general, structural analysis involves three steps. The first step involves extracting variables/factors. Although this step does not typically have a formal and standard structure, it is crucial to the process. The second step involves determining the relationships between the variables, with an emphasis on linking variables and describing their interrelationship networks. The third step involves identifying the driving forces (Rabbani, 2012). To systematically analyze a set of variables and describe their interrelationships, we need to conduct cross-impact analysis, which is a popular method used to analyze the interrelationships between current variables (Nematpour & Faraji, 2019). This type of analysis is crucial for discovering a system's future nature and behavior.

In this section, the study was conducted on a statistical population of tourism experts, out of which 30 experts were selected using purposive sampling. The data collection process utilized both desk-based and field methods. The desk-based method involved examining the theoretical foundations and background of the subject, while the field method involved completing an open-ended questionnaire to gather relevant data.

The questionnaire design involved four steps. In the first step, 41 effective factors were extracted using the Delphi method and environmental scanning. In the second step, the questionnaire was adjusted pair-wise and provided to experts to score from 0 to 3 based on the relationships between the factors. The third step involved designing another questionnaire to extract the possible situations for each factor's future. Finally, another pair-wise questionnaire was designed for the experts' final weighting of the scenarios.

To determine the key variables affecting creative tourism in Iran, the components and effective factors were identified using previous studies in this field, a combination of foreign and local studies. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the experts in the study area.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of tourism experts

Field	Total number of respondents	**Education level**			**Gender**		**University professor**	
		Bachelor	Master	PhD	Male	Female	Yes	No
Tourism	30	-	16	14	18	12	17	13

3.1. Cross impact analysis

To implement and analyze the cross-impact driving forces, the following steps were taken:

Step 1: Experts were consulted to determine the importance of the driving forces and key factors affecting tourism during infectious diseases.

Step 2: A Cartesian map was drawn to depict the correlation of cross impacts. The map, shown in Figure 2, uses the y-axis to represent the communication logic of the degree of dependence and the x-axis to represent the influence values. Driving forces are divided into four categories in this map:

- First zone: Driving forces and waves that are strongly influenced by other factors and whose occurrence depends on other driving forces. These have high uncertainty.
- Second zone: Driving forces that have two-way influence, meaning that they both influence and are influenced by other driving forces.
- Third zone: Neutral driving forces and waves that neither influence nor are influenced by other driving forces.
- Fourth zone: Driving forces and waves that influence other driving forces.

The Cartesian map provides a clear understanding of the interrelationships among driving forces and their levels of influence (Naimi and Pourmohammadi, 2016).

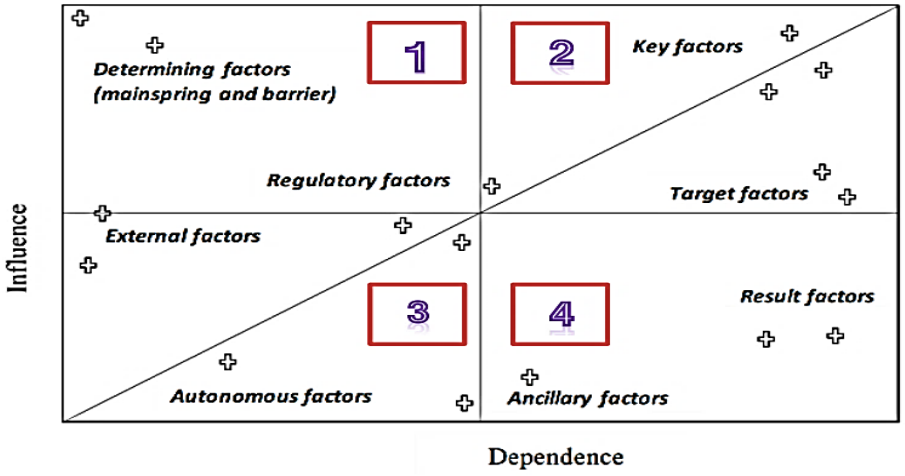

Fig. 2. Coordinates of the cross-impact analysis of driving forces.
Source: the authors

Step 3: Uncertainties are driving forces that are more influential than other driving forces. In other words, their probability of occurrence is highly dependent on the occurrence of other driving forces. The driving forces were divided into three categories to determine the uncertainties: i) driving forces and waves that influence but are not influenced by the key variables of creative tourism in Iran (certain driving forces); ii) driving forces and waves that are influenced a lot and whose probability of occurrence depends on the occurrence of other driving forces (uncertainties); iii) driving forces and waves that are highly influenced and are very important in key variables (critical uncertainty) (Naimi and Pourmohammadi, 2016).

3.1.1. Structural analysis

The cross-impact analysis method is used in structural analysis. This is a primary cross-impact analysis technique that includes both direct and indirect relationships (Cabrera et al., 2002). Structural analysis can be defined as a system composed of a collection of related items. This system's variables contain a network that must be analysed using interrelationships between variables using a cross-correlation matrix to determine the system's future evolution trend (Nematpour et al., 2020).

The structural analysis seeks to identify key variables (overt or covert) in order to solicit participants' and stakeholders' perspectives on a system's complex and unpredictable aspects and behaviours. In general, structural analysis consists of three steps: 1) variable/factor extraction 2) establishing relationships between variables, and 3) identifying key variables (Javanshiri, 2019).

3.1.2. Structural analysis via MicMac software

This software was created to simplify the process of performing structural analysis using a cross-impact matrix for classification. Variables are rated on a scale of 0 to 3 based on their relationships with other variables. If there are n variables identified, the relationships between them form an n × n matrix. This matrix can be represented as a graph that shows the direction and degree of influence of each variable on the others. The software also has the ability to extract and rank key factors based on the topology of the variables. To perform structural analysis using MicMac software, there are six steps: 1) understanding the system and assessing its stability or instability, 2) identifying indirect influences between variables, 3) identifying main factors and driving forces, 4) gaining a comprehensive understanding of the system and avoiding partial analysis, 5) identifying destabilizing factors, and 6) measuring the influence of the system's main stages to identify the environment. The cross-impact analysis of variables can be visualized using graphs that are divided into four areas. These areas show the degree to which driving forces are influenced by other driving forces, as well as how much they influence others.

The output of the cross-impact analysis model depicts the relationships between the variables. MicMac software can convert relationships into special graphs, allowing for easy analysis of the relationships and system structure. In general, the software's matrices and output graphs fall into two categories: the matrix of direct impacts of variables and related graphs, and the matrix of indirect relationships between variables and related graphs. If the initial matrix specifies the potential relationship between the variables, the matrix software also provides the potential direct relationship between the variables and the matrix of potential indirect relationships between the variables (Zali and Mansouri, 2015).

3.1.3. Scenario writing using Scenario Wizard software

The Scenario Wizard software is a powerful tool for performing complex scenario analysis. It allows for the selection of key factors and the classification of each factor into various situations. These situations are presented to development experts as a matrix for all key factors. The questionnaire used in this software contains items that are scored on a range of -3 to 3, indicating both positive and negative impacts. The central question of the questionnaire is, "If situation A1 of key factor A occurs in the future, what impact will it have on the occurrence or non-occurrence of situation B2 of key factor B?" The answers to these questions are then analyzed within the software using the CIB1 analytical technique, which aims to optimize and ensure the reliability of scenarios.

3.2. Research method process

The structural method is a powerful tool for analyzing complex systems with multiple dimensions, by analyzing the relationships between variables using both qualitative and quantitative data. Among the many software applications available for implementing structural analysis, MicMac stands out as one of the best. The software facilitates cross-matrix calculations, and generates tables and graphs that aid in understanding system relationships and predicting future trends. Developed by Michel Godet, the method consists of three steps: examining the variables, analyzing the relationships between the variables, and identifying the key variables. This approach has been widely used in futures research due to its flexibility and ability to handle large amounts of data (Rabbani, 2012; Godet, 2000).

3.2.1. Research variables and indicators

The key variables for measuring the development of creative tourism were extracted according to the theoretical foundations of the research, reviewed by tourism experts, and the most important variables were extracted from them (Table 2).

- Identifying the key variables affecting the development of creative tourism in Iran

The Delphi method was used with a panel of experts to identify the initial variables affecting the development of creative tourism planning. First, a panel of specialists, experts, and executors involved in tourism was selected. Next, they were questioned using different methods to extract their opinions about the subject under study. Finally, after screening the variables, 41 variables were selected as the primary variables affecting tourism development, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Indicators and sub-indicators of the study

	Indicator	Sub-indicator	Variables' symbol
1	Economic	1. Investment in handicrafts	Var1
		2. Attention to foreign investment in Iran	Var2
		3. Investment in e-tourism	Var3
		4. Investment in medical tourism	Var4
2	Socio-cultural and historical potential	1. Promoting the creative potential of local communities	Var5
		2. Cultural attractions	Var6
		3. Various types of handicrafts	Var7
		4. Existence of various rituals and traditions	Var8
		5. Existence of various traditional and local types of food	Var9
		6. Religious attractions	Var10
		7. High degree of hospitality of the Iranian people	Var11
3	Infrastructural	1. Paying attention to experience-based accommodations	Var12
		2. Considering the reconstruction of historical monuments	Var13
		3. Promoting public health in tourist places	Var14
		4. Various accommodation centers	Var15
		5. Greater attention to road trip accommodation facilities	Var16
4	Organizations and policies	1. Specialized management in tourism	Var17
		2. Building international trust to attract foreign tourists	Var18
		3. Political instability in the Middle East	Var19
		4. Lack of coordination among organizations	Var20

	Indicator	Sub-indicator	Variables' symbol
		5. Influence of the government's foreign policy on attracting international tourists	Var21
		6. Incentive policies for foreign investment	Var22
		7. Facilitating entry for foreign tourists	Var23
		8. Sustainable cooperation of organizations involved in foreign tourism	Var24
		9. Government's attention to the development and attraction of tourism as a generator of capital	Var25
5	Environmental	1. Existence of a variety of climates	Var26
		2. Existence of various natural monuments	Var27
6	Technology and information	1. Paying attention to creative advertising in tourism	Var28
		1. E-commerce in the tourism and hotel industry	Var29
		2. Participation in and support of research programs and projects and dissertations about creative tourism	Var30
		3. Using new advertisements in identifying the target markets	Var31
7	Providing services	1. The possibility of ordering a previously experienced product in the future and the sustained seller-tourist relationship	Var32
		2. Using skilled and experienced guides and leaders	Var33
		3. Existence of tours and travel agencies	Var34
8	Management policies	1. Branding by making creative concepts	Var35
		2. Considering the citizens' talent for artistic creativity	Var36
		3. Paying attention to traditional cultural and artistic ctivities	Var37
		4. Paying greater attention to festivals and cultural events	Var38
		5. Manpower training	Var39
		6. Comprehensive plan for tourism development	Var40
		7. Employing specialized personnel in tourism organizations	Var41

4. Results

4.1. Identifying the key variables based on cross-impact analysis

To identify the key variables influencing creative tourism in Iran, we conducted a thorough review of relevant studies and interviewed experts, including those from universities and tourism institutions in Iran. We collected a total of 56 variables and narrowed them down to 41 after filtering and categorizing them based on expert panel feedback. These variables were then matched through a 41 × 41 cross-impact matrix and evaluated using the MicMac technique and cross-impact analysis. Our results showed that 72.51% of the variables influenced one another, with 1,219 evaluable relationships in Iran's creative tourism matrix.

Of these relationships, 37.89% showed zero influence, 34.94% had weak influence, 34.04% had moderate influence, and 31% had strong influence on each other. Our study also used statistical indicators with double data rotation, which had a 100% desirability and optimization, indicating high validity and response rates. We validated our structural analysis using expert opinions and provided a general analysis of the system environment. Finally, we examined the mutual influence of the variables, their ranking, and displacement to identify driving forces and key effective factors.

Table 3. Initial analysis of cross-impact matrix data

Country	Matrix dimensions	Number of replications	0	1	2	3	Total	Filling degree
Iran	41	2	462	426	415	378	1219	72.51

The data from the MDI-based cross-impact matrix show that most variables have an important role in improving relations in the Iranian tourism development system. However, only some have the greatest impact on the system and are regarded as key variables (Table 4).

Table 4. Direct impact and dependence of variables

	Variable's role	Variable's symbol	Variable	MDI	
				Direct impact	Direct dependence
1	Two-way	Var31	Using new advertisements in identifying the target markets	326	338
2	Two-way	Var2	Paying attention to foreign investment in Iran	322	336
3	Influencing	Var24	Sustainable cooperation of organizations involved in foreign tourism	205	330
4	Influencing	Var17	Specialized management in tourism	305	326
5	Influencing	Var14	Promoting public health in tourist places	305	322
6	Influencing	Var26	Existence of a variety of climates	303	321
7	Influencing	Var39	Manpower training	301	317
8	Two-way	Var34	Existence of tours and travel agencies	297	284
9	Influencing	Var19	Political instability in the Middle East	295	280
10	Influencing	Var41	Employing specialized personnel in tourism organizations	292	276
11	Influencing	Var11	High degree of hospitality of the Iranian people	288	267
12	Influencing	Var13	Considering the reconstruction of historical monuments	284	255
13	Influencing	Var21	Influence of the government's foreign policy on attracting international tourists	282	255
14	Influencing	Var28	Paying attention to creative advertising on tourism	280	251
15	Two-way	Var4	Investment in medical tourism	280	149

	Variable's role	Variable's symbol	Variable	MDI	
				Direct impact	Direct dependence
16	Influencing	Var15	Various accommodation centers	280	248
17	Influencing	Var18	Building international trust to attract foreign tourists	278	246
18	Two-way	Var10	Religious attractions	267	242
19	Influencing	Var27	Existence of various natural monuments	265	242
20	Influencing	Var7	Various types of handicrafts	263	230
21	Two-way	Var30	Participation in and support of research programs and projects and dissertations about creative tourism	259	227
22	Influencing	Var16	Greater attention paid to road trip accommodation facilities	238	225
23	Regulatory	Var20	Lack of coordination among organizations	236	223
24	Two-way	Var33	The possibility of ordering a previously experienced product in the future and the sustained seller-tourist relationship	235	221
25	Regulatory	Var3	Investment in e-tourism	234	213
26	Two-way	Var36	Considering the citizens' talent for artistic creativity	230	213
27	Influenced	Var1	Investment in handicrafts	221	207
28	Regulatory	Var25	Government's paying attention to the development and attraction of tourism as a generator of capital	213	204
29	Regulatory	Var5	Promoting the creativity potential of local communities	205	196
30	Regulatory	Var6	Cultural attractions	203	193
31	Influenced	Var8	Existence of various rituals and traditions	201	188

	Variable's role	Variable's symbol	Variable	MDI	
				Direct impact	Direct dependence
32	Autonomous	Var12	Paying attention to experience-based accommodations	199	188
33	Autonomous	Var37	Paying attention to traditional cultural and artistic activities	196	185
34	Autonomous	Var29	E-commerce in the tourism and hotel industry	188	171
35	Influenced	Var38	Greater paying attention to festivals and cultural events	167	168
36	Influenced	Var32	The possibility of ordering a previously experienced product in the future and the sustained seller-tourist relationship	163	158
37	Autonomous	Var22	Incentive policies for foreign investment	150	154
38	Autonomous	Var9	Existence of various traditional and local types of food	142	150
39	Autonomous	Var23	Facilitating entry for foreign tourists	133	149
40	Autonomous	Var40	Comprehensive plan for tourism development	125	145
41	Autonomous	Var35	Branding by making creative concepts	112	143

Table 4 highlights 16 variables among the 41 studied that were identified as influential variables. These variables include sustainable cooperation among organizations involved in foreign tourism, specialized management in tourism, promoting public health in tourist places, the existence of a variety of climates, manpower training, political instability in the Middle East, employing specialized personnel in tourism organizations, high degree of hospitality of Iranian people, considering the reconstruction of historical monuments, the influence of the government's foreign policy on attracting international tourists, attention to creative advertising in tourism, various accommodation centers, building international trust to attract foreign tourists, the existence of various

natural monuments, various types of handicrafts, and greater attention to road trip accommodation facilities. These variables are considered input variables that exert more influence than being influenced, and they are located in the northwestern part of the dispersion map. These variables are crucial in controlling the system's stability and are therefore regarded as key and determining variables in the system's behavior.

The next type of variables in the graph are two-way variables that both influence and are influenced by other variables. These variables can be divided into two categories: risk variables and target variables. Among the studied variables, 7 variables from different groups were identified as two-way variables. These variables include: using new advertisements in identifying the target markets, paying attention to foreign investment in Iran, existence of tours and travel agencies, investment in medical tourism, religious attractions, participation in and support of research programs and projects and dissertations about creative tourism, the possibility of ordering a previously experienced product in the future and the sustained seller-tourist relationship, and considering the citizens' talent for artistic creativity. Two-way variables both influence and are influenced by other variables to a large extent and any action on them will lead to the reaction of other variables.

Regulatory variables are located around the center of gravity of the chart and sometimes act as secondary leverage variables (weak target variables and weak risk variables). In the influence graph of variables affecting creative tourism in Iran, lack of coordination among organizations, investment in e-tourism, government's attention to the development and attraction of tourism as a capital generator, and promoting the local communities' creative potential are among cultural attractions. These variables influence slightly but are influenced highly.

The next variable type is result variables or those influenced by other variables. These variables in the graph are located southeast of the influence plan. They influence highly but are influenced slightly. In the present study, investment in handicrafts, the existence of various rituals and traditions, greater attention to festivals and cultural events, and the possibility of ordering a previously experienced product in the future, and the sustained seller-tourist relationship were regarded as result variables.

The last variables identified in the graph are autonomous variables. These variables have a low influence on and from other variables and are located in the southwestern part of the variable dispersion map. Autonomous variables of this study are paying attention to experience-based accommodation, paying attention to traditional cultural and artistic activities, e-commerce in the tourism and hotel industry, incentive policies for foreign investment, the existence

of various traditional and local types of food, facilitating entry for foreign tourists, comprehensive plan for tourism development, and branding by making creative concepts. Such variables do not cause any reaction in other variables.

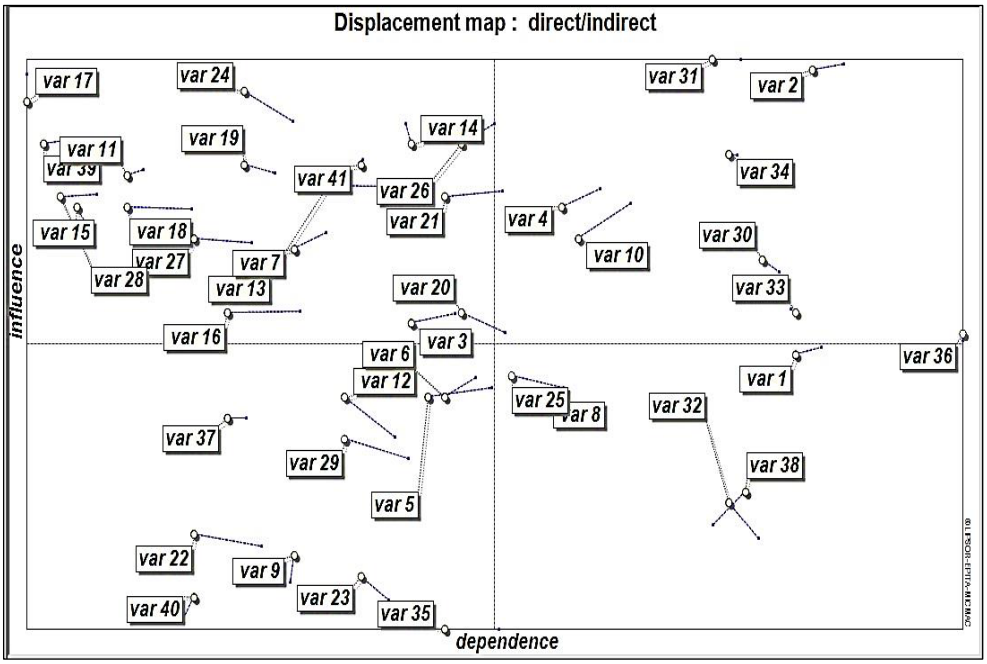

Fig. 3. Influence and dependence of variables.
Source: the authors

The direct or indirect dependence of the variables identified in the MicMac software was analyzed in five coverages: 5%, 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100%. The coverages show the weak, moderate, and strong relationships between the variables (Figs. 4 and 5). The influence graph shows the relationships between the variables and how they influence one another. This graph is denoted by red and blue lines. This graph includes measurements of very weak influence, weak influence, moderate influence, relatively strong influence, and very strong influence. The red lines denote the strong influence of factors on each other, while the blue lines (with a different thickness) show moderate to weak relationships. Fig. 5 indicates the spatial structure of the direct driving forces of creative tourism development in Iran at a rate of 25%. These are the most important indicators in the spatial structure of Iran's creative tourism development system.

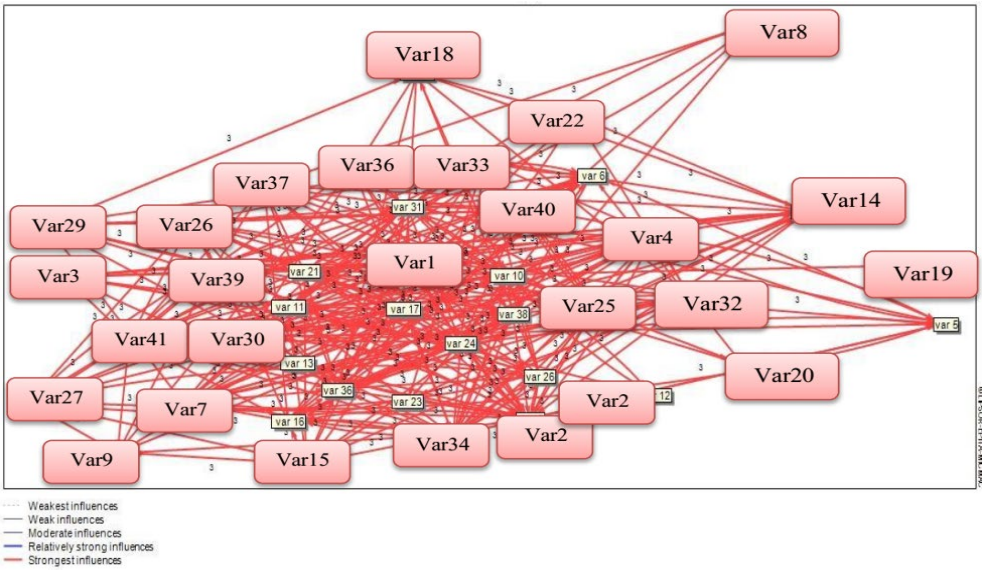

Fig. 4. Spatial structure of direct indicators of tourism development at rates of 25%.
Source: the authors

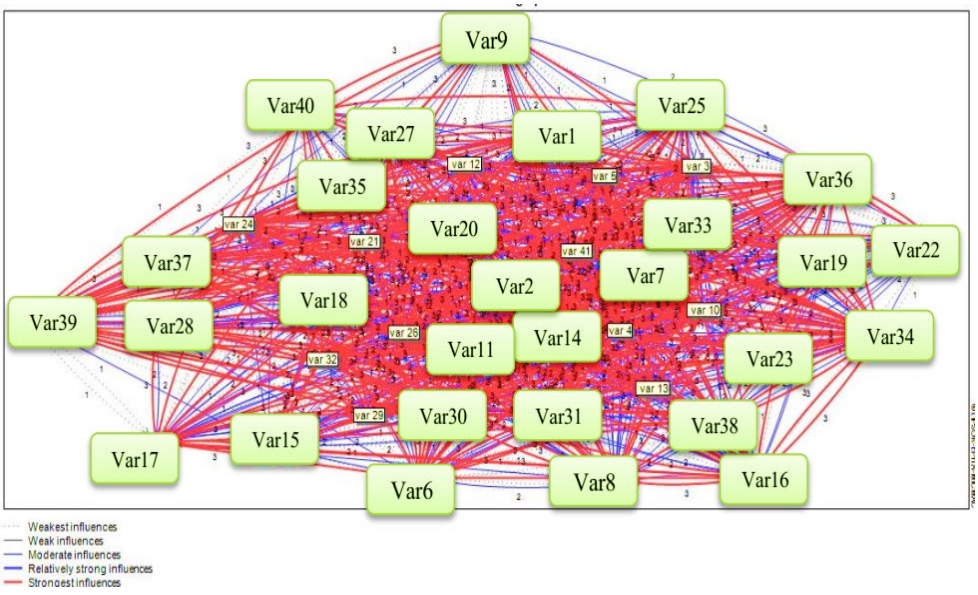

Fig. 5. Spatial structure of direct indicators of tourism development at rates of 100%.
Source: the authors

4.2. Creating compatible scenarios based on CIB

Scenario planning can also be effective in helping us understand the key challenges facing tourism destinations, such as sustainability, which is the main focus of global tourism research (Connell & Page, 2008). After identifying the key factors to achieve the goals and promote creative tourism in Iran, various situations are conceivable. These outcomes are critical in planning for the future of creative tourism. For this reason, a concise analysis of the future conditions involves developing scenarios. By defining scenarios, we do not mean to choose only one preferred future and wish to find the possible future to adapt; rather, the main intention is to make strategic decisions that are reasonable and practical enough for "all possible futures".

Once the cross-impact analysis structure is completed and driving forces are identified, scenario assumptions must provide a coherent configuration of each descriptor's dual role in influencing both the source and target to avoid contradictions and conflicts. When developing the questionnaire for the key driving forces, it is crucial to ensure internal consistency in the generated scenario matrix by selecting descriptive variables that are not preferred over other variables from the same descriptor that are induced by the combined effects of other descriptors.

To create possible scenarios from the 10 key driving forces identified by the cross-impact algorithm, a matrix of key descriptors was made with rules coded in the CIB method, and then presented to experts for further evaluation. Considering the foresight of the key factors, a 30 x 30 matrix was created using the following concept: "If there is a change in the preparation and implementation of the plan for each of the three situations, how will it affect the process of achieving the goals of creative tourism?" These scenarios were developed based on progressive judgments, relationships, and interactions of structured components and processes, providing insight into the future of creative tourism.

After adjusting the key descriptors with the rules coded in the CIB method, the experts were once again asked to examine the key variables (descriptors) by formulating a 30x30 matrix. This matrix considered the effect that any changes to the descriptive variables would have on the growth and development of Iran's creative tourism system. Based on the judgments, relationships, and interactions of the variables and processes, scenarios were designed as strategic driving forces for the future development of national creative tourism. Table 5 provides an overview of the study descriptors and their specific variables.

Table 5. Possible situations of descriptors

Variable	Uncertainty	Situation	Situation description		
A	Using new advertisements to identify the target markets		A1	A2	A3
			Paying attention to the development of new advertising in identifying goals	Continuing the current trend and indifference to the current situation	Disregard for and further reduction of new advertisements in identifying creative tourism goals
B	Paying attention to foreign investment in Iran	B1	Increasing paying attention to and paving the way for foreign investment in Iran		
		B2	Continuing the current trend of foreign investment		
		B3	More neglect of investment and foreign capital inflow		
C	Sustainable cooperation of organizations involved in foreign tourism		C1	C2	C3
			More attention and organized cooperation of institutions involved in foreign tourism	Continuing the current trend and irregular relations among tourism organizations	Reducing the attention to building friendly relations and sustainable cooperation of institutions involved in foreign tourism
D	Specialized management in tourism	D1	Paying attention to specialized tourism management in the country's macro policies		
		D2	Continuing the current unfavorable trend		
		D3	Complete disregard for the role of specialized management in advancing the goals of creative tourism in the country		
E	Promoting public health in tourist places		E1	E2	E3
			Greater attention to the quality of public health in tourist places	Continuing the current trend and paying little attention to public health	Further reduction of attention to the health of public places of creative tourism

Variable	Uncertainty	Situation	Situation description		
F	Existence of a variety of climates	F1	Increasing the attention to the four-season climate in attracting creative tourists to the country		
		F2	Continuing of the current trend in paying attention to the four-season climate in Iran		
		F3	Complete disregard for this important variable in attracting creative tourists		
G	Manpower		G1	G2	G3
			Investment in manpower training	Continuing the current trend	Reduced attention to investment in manpower in relation to creative tourism
H	Efficient tours and travel agencies	H1	Greater attention to tours and travel agencies in improving their quality and their role in attracting more creative tourists to the country		
		H2	Continuing the current unfavorable trend		
		H3	More reduction in the quality of tours and travel agencies and a greater reduction of tourists		
I	Political instability in the Middle East		I1	I2	I3
			Paying attention to the development of friendly relations with neighbors	Continuing the current trend and reducing the friendly relations	Lack of paying attention to friendly relations and greater tension in relations with neighbors
J	Employing specialized personnel in tourism organizations	J1	Investment in the training and employment of specialized forces in tourism in tourism organizations		
		J2	Continuing the current trend and paying little attention to specialized forces in tourism		
		J3	Paying less attention to the training and employment of capable forces in tourism in relevant organizations		

The next step involved assessing the impact of X situation of the X descriptor on the Y situation of the Y descriptor, based on expert interviews and literature review, considering only direct impacts. This process resulted in a cross-impact matrix generated in the Scenario Wizard software. The model comprised 30 possible situations for the 10 key variables (descriptors) that affect the development of creative tourism in Iran.

The Scenario Wizard presented five scenarios that were strongly compatible with each other. The results indicated a high probability of these five scenarios occurring in the future of creative tourism development in Iran. These scenarios were identified based on specific characteristics, with the first scenario being the driving scenario with ideal and favorable conditions. The second and third scenarios had appropriate and moderate conditions, while the fourth and fifth scenarios were critical and unfavorable, making them unsuitable for the development of creative tourism.

Table 6. Scenarios with strong stability in the future of creative tourism development in Iran

Factor / Scenario		Scenario No. 1	Scenario No. 2	Scenario No. 3	Scenario No. 4	Scenario No. 5
Factor 1	Using new advertisements in identifying the target markets	A1	A2	A3	A3	A3
Factor 2	Paying attention to foreign investment in Iran	B1	B3	B3	B3	B3
Factor 3	Sustainable cooperation of organizations involved in foreign tourism	C2	C2	C2	C3	C3
Factor 4	Specialized management in tourism	D1	D2	D3	D3	D3
Factor 5	Promoting public health in tourist places	E1	E2	E3	E3	E3

Factor / Scenario		Scenario No. 1	Scenario No. 2	Scenario No. 3	Scenario No. 4	Scenario No. 5
Factor 6	Existence of a variety of climates	F1	F2	F2	F3	F3
Factor 7	Manpower training	G1	G2	G2	G2	G2
Factor 8	Existence of tours and travel agencies	H1	H2	H2	H2	H2
Factor 9	Political instability in the Middle East	I2	I2	I3	I3	I3
Factor 10	Employing specialized personnel in tourism organizations	J1	J1	J2	J3	J3

Source: Authors' calculations (2020)

The scenarios have more unfavorable situations than favorable ones. Of the surveyed situations, 18% are optimistic, 20% are static, and 62% are pessimistic.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Strategic planning is a versatile tool that can be tailored to suit different circumstances and objectives. Its effectiveness, however, can be diminished by significant discrepancies between predicted and actual outcomes. Traditional planning methods, which rely on rigid predictions, are unable to accommodate unexpected events, making them obsolete. Scenario planning, on the other hand, allows for the exploration of alternate futures by utilizing quantitative and qualitative categories. It encourages new ways of thinking and acting (Daniali and Sharifzadegan, 2019; Ghalehteimouri et al., 2021).

In the 21st century, creativity is the driving force behind industry, economy, urban development, and social life. Development strategies that emphasize creativity provide a new avenue for unique experiences and play a crucial role in changing lifestyles and expressing identities. These strategies invest in place branding by focusing on participation in local creative economies. This process involves the transfer of tourism resources from tangible culture to intangible

culture and creativity, leading to the emergence of creative tourism. This model transforms intangible culture and heritage into marketable goods. By reshaping traditional tourism products, creative approaches create new tourism experiences that promote creative consumption (Bastenegar et al., 2017, p. 103). Political systems and the efforts of government and other stakeholders in the tourism industry can contribute to the development of the tourism sector. Countries that rely heavily on tourism may invest more effort in generating revenue, thus contributing to the growth of their tourism industry.

This study aimed to develop a favorable model for the development of creative tourism in Iran. The study utilized 41 variables, the MicMac futures study model, cross-impact analysis, and Scenario Wizard software. The effective variables were selected based on a 41×41 and 41-variable matrix, and the results were calculated by assigning weights to the variables (ranging from zero to P). By evaluating the 41 key factors using direct and indirect methods, the study identified the key factors that had the greatest impact on creative tourism in Iran. Ten variables were identified as key variables in Iran's creative tourism system, and possible scenarios were developed from these 10 key variables using the cross-impact algorithm.

According to these classifications and the mental influence of experts, the final list of the identified key variables is as follows:

- Var 31: Using new advertisements to identify the target markets
- Var 2: Paying attention to foreign investment in Iran
- Var 24: Sustainable cooperation of organizations involved in foreign tourism
- Var 14: Specialized management in tourism
- Var 14: Promoting public health in tourist places
- Var 26: Existence of a variety of climates
- Var 39: Manpower training
- Var 34: Existence of tours and travel agencies
- Var 19: Political instability in the Middle East
- Var 41: Employing specialized personnel in tourism organizations

Based on the CIB analysis, this study identified five different scenarios for the future of Iran's creative tourism development. Scenario 1 was found to be the most desirable as it covered all the important factors for developing creative tourism in Iran, while Scenarios 2 and 3 had stable features but were unsuitable for designing strategies. On the other hand, Scenarios 4 and 5 were found to have inappropriate and critical features that could negatively impact the future of creative tourism in Iran, especially if the country faces boycotts or continues to have strained foreign relations with other countries.

The study highlights the importance of effective interaction among the key factors to achieve the comprehensive goals of the future of creative tourism in Iran. By evaluating the impact of different variables and their priorities, tourism planners can make low-risk decisions and develop realistic and credible strategies, goals, tactics, and action plans for the future of creative tourism.

The study suggests that the government's serious determination to lift sanctions and pave the way for foreign investors can stimulate the development of creative tourism in Iran. It also emphasizes the need to reduce tensions with neighboring countries and establish foreign relations based on mutual recognition and respect to attract foreign investment and stimulate the growth of the tourism industry, including creative tourism.

Overall, this study provides a valuable insight into the key factors and scenarios that can influence the future of creative tourism in Iran. It highlights the need for systematic recognition of these influences to make informed decisions and develop effective strategies for the sustainable development of creative tourism.

5.1. Practical concepts and limitations

This study aimed to identify the major factors affecting the creative tourism market in Iran and their implications for national and regional development strategies in the long run. While some of these factors are general and relate to all guest communities, others are specific to attracting capital from Middle Eastern countries, such as improving political relations and digital advertising and marketing. However, there are limitations to the study that need to be acknowledged. The MicMac software was used to analyze the direct and indirect dependence of the identified variables in five coverages, which showed the weak, moderate, and strong relationships between the variables. The influence graph, denoted by red and blue lines, showed the relationships between the variables and how they influenced each other. The spatial structure of the direct driving forces of creative tourism development in Iran at a rate of 25%, which are the most important indicators in the spatial structure of Iran's creative tourism development system.

The first limitation is the difficulty in ensuring the accuracy of the results since predictions and recommendations cannot be judged until the future arrives. Measuring realistic threats and evaluating the vulnerabilities and consequences of new pandemics are challenging tasks. To minimize this limitation, the study attempted to make the horizon of futurism as realistic as possible.

The second limitation is that it is impossible to experience and test the future in the present, making any idea potentially unscientific. To address this limitation, the study avoided making predictions with no rational roots and relied on logical reasoning from experts to support its findings.

Another limitation is the lack of previous similar local studies, which could have provided a valuable point of reference. Additionally, the study was limited by the lack of experts with specialized knowledge about the subject under study. The accuracy of the structural analysis results depends on the rankings of experts and elites in the study, which can be biased if the panel is dominated by one area of expertise. Therefore, a multidisciplinary team should be considered. Furthermore, the extensive definitions of the variables make estimating the time for the development process difficult, and the estimation process is highly intuitive because experts deal with an uncertain future.

In conclusion, while this study identified major factors affecting the creative tourism market in Iran and their implications for development strategies, there are limitations to its findings. Future studies should aim to address these limitations and build on the insights provided by this research to support the sustainable growth of the creative tourism market in Iran.

On behalf of authors this paper has not contained any sources of conflict of competing interests.

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