

# Application of Meta-SWOT method for tourism development planning of Farsi Island of the Persian Gulf Region

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** Tourism is a pivotal force in contemporary economies, shaping macroeconomic facets, such as national income, financial robustness, and employment opportunities. In an era marked by globalization, nations and urban centers aspire to elevate their competitive stance and augment community well-being through strategic blueprints for the tourism sector.

**Research Methodology:** This research focuses on the evaluation of Persian Gulf tourism's standing vis-à-vis regional rivals while identifying the tourism assets and competencies of Farsi Island and scrutinizing their Value, Rareness, Imitability, and Organization (VRIO) attributes. The meta-SWOT strategic planning methodology is a paramount tool in this context.

**Results:** The research unfolds in two phases: documentary and bibliographical scrutiny, and comprehensive surveys canvassing insights from ten tourism authorities judiciously chosen through purposive selection. The results shed light on the preeminent sway of macro-level factors, including national macro-management, governmental foreign policy, and international sanctions, as potent determinants of the tourism landscape of Farsi Island.

**Limitations:** This study required long-term secondary analysis of data from Persian Gulf countries. However, these data have only recently been collected in a few countries; therefore, this study is based on primary data collection.

**Contributions:** Concurrently, factors such as inadequate budget allocation and marginalization of the tourism sector within the country play pivotal roles in molding the Persian Gulf region's tourism trajectory.

**Keywords:** *Tourism, Strategic Planning, Meta-SWOT, Persian Gulf region, Farsi Island*

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism is a vital industry with a significant impact on social, environmental, and economic development worldwide. In today's world, economic growth and job opportunities in tourism have extended beyond traditional boundaries (Prayitno et al., 2024; Qwatekana & Tshikovhi, 2024). Developing countries prioritize the preservation of environments and traditions, while leveraging tourism for infrastructure development. For many developing nations, tourism is a crucial source of foreign exchange earnings and contributes to economic progress. Therefore, tourism plays a pivotal role in generating revenue, enhancing quality of life, and fostering sustainable regional development at both macro and micro levels (Janparvar, Ghalehtemouri, Mazandrani, & Mousavi, 2022; Mousavi, Ghalehtemouri, & Zadeh, 2024).

This perspective offers valuable insights into the re-evaluation of tourism opportunities in international waters. Regardless of the geopolitical context in which tourism occurs, whether in urban, rural, coastal, or island settings, it is crucial to address the root causes and impacts of tourism. This requires a comprehensive approach incorporating technological and political solutions (Farmaki, 2024; Movahed & Ghalehtemouri, 2020; Shahraki, 2022; Shamaei & Jafarpour Ghalehtemouri, 2024). To promote island tourism, a balance between economic benefits and preservation of local ecosystems must be achieved. Human-induced environmental harm, such as the construction of tourist facilities and land reclamation, poses a threat to fragile island ecosystems. Therefore, regulating tourist development is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of these ecosystems. By implementing ethical and sustainable practices, the tourism industry can play a significant role in conserving these natural resources (Aldeek & Mistarihi, 2020; Cusi, Ferri, Micozzi, & Palazzo, 2023; Salamzadeh, Ebrahimi, Soleimani, & Fekete-Farkas, 2021). Additionally, an increasing number of people have recognized the significant economic contribution of tourism to many island economies. However, it is important to maintain a harmonious coexistence between tourists and the indigenous way of life. Islands must maximize the economic benefits of tourism while preserving their unique charm and safeguarding the rights of indigenous communities (Budianto et al., 2022; Junior & Birolo, 2021). A deliberate approach that prioritizes the conservation of natural and cultural resources along with economic benefits is essential for sustainable island tourism. Striking this balance is crucial for the well-being of locals, the protection of their fundamental rights, and the long-term viability of island tourism (Amini, Jafarinia, Gorgin, & Ghalehtemouri, 2022; Ghalehtemouri, Mousavi, Hekmatnia, & Kashkouli, 2020; Mousavi, Ghalehtemouri, Sotoudeh, & Fahliani, 2023).

Globalization has ushered in a new era of intense global competition, necessitating companies to formulate effective economic policies and strategies to navigate this dynamic landscape. The advantages of competitiveness in the global economy are often concentrated in specific regions, such as skilled labor, knowledge hubs, robust institutions, competitors, related industries, and advanced user networks (Buckley, 2022; Jakob, 2022). However, critics like Wanzenboeck, Scherngell, and Brenner (2014) and Sang, Alexander, and Anwar (2023) argue that genuine competitiveness relies on the movement of production drivers across regions. In this evolving scenario, tourism has emerged as a significant economic catalyst and competitive force within the global economy, earning it the moniker of the "invisible export" (Rogerson, 2013). Safarabadi, Majidi Dehshykh, Zangiabadi, and Shahzeidi (2016) stress the importance of assessing the competitive landscape, establishing strategic objectives, and creating a robust framework for tourism products. Similarly, Borkowski and Meese (2020) underscored the necessity of comprehending both known and unforeseen challenges when confronting an uncertain future. Within this context, strategic planning in tourism development becomes a valuable tool, necessitating a shift in mindset, addressing theoretical and cognitive aspects, and translating them into practical planning strategies (Fragidis, Riskos, & Kotzaivazoglou, 2022). This holistic approach is essential for enterprises seeking to prosper in increasingly competitive global environments.

The Persian Gulf is a clear example of how economic interests have been prioritized over environmental conservation. This is because national and international tourism policies have led to the creation of artificial environments, threatening fragile marine ecosystems (Movahed & Ghalehtemouri, 2019; Seyfi & Hall, 2019). These man-made structures have caused environmental problems such as water pollution, coastal erosion, and degradation of benthic ecosystems (Cantonati et al., 2020). Without immediate action, irreversible damage can occur in this complex ecosystem, and many species depend on it. It is crucial to recognize the importance of environmental protection and reject the idea that profit and progress should come before preserving the natural world. It is time for us to take responsibility for our actions and prioritize environmental conservation.

A strategic planning approach is essential for ensuring consistency in pursuing goals, timelines, urban development blueprints, and implementation mechanisms. This type of planning is critical for tourism development, as it helps achieve sustainable economic, social, and cultural objectives by outlining a clear vision for the future. While the SWOT model has traditionally been used for strategic tourism planning, the meta-SWOT approach has emerged as an innovative alternative. This approach helps

identify and evaluate competitive dynamics, internal resources, and capabilities. Developing nations can benefit from investing in the tourism sector as they offer a promising source of revenue. Iran, with its diverse tourist attractions, has the potential to excel in this industry through its strategic planning. Farsi Island, with its historical and natural charm, is an ideal location for tourism. By utilizing strategic planning, Farsi Island's tourism potential can be maximized, making it a thriving hub in the Gulf of Oman. This study employed the Meta-SWOT strategic planning approach to achieve the following objectives:

1. Compare Farsi Island's tourism standing with its regional counterparts in the Gulf of Oman.
2. Identify Farsi Island's most valuable, rare, imitable, and organized resources and capabilities.
3. Highlights the macro-environmental factors that significantly impact Farsi Island's tourism prospects (Borkowski & Meese, 2020; Rogerson, 2013; Safarabadi et al., 2016).

## 2. Literature Review

The concept of "hospitality" continues to be a topic of significant uncertainty and debate in academic discussions, resulting in a lack of consensus and clarity in its definition (Ottenbacher, Harrington, & Parsa, 2009). This lack of clarity presents a notable challenge, especially in urban tourism research. Urban tourism research, as emphasized by Kennedy, Tobing, and Toruan (2022), highlights the increasing importance of addressing tourism-related issues in urban settings, such as central business districts (CBDs), historic cores, markets, and industrial areas. Establishing a common understanding and agreement on these issues is crucial for advancing the research in this field. On a broader scale, the lack of consensus on the definition and terminology of tourism is a significant obstacle (Hall, Manning, & Goodwin, 2023). Despite the extensive historical context and numerous studies in this area, there is still disagreement in defining core terms and concepts. This disagreement arises from the intricate and multifaceted nature of tourism, resulting in varied perspectives and expectations from stakeholders and participants. Consequently, diverse interpretations and definitions of tourism persist (Mullally et al., 2022).

Tourism is a diverse industry that encompasses a range of activities involving travel outside of one's usual living or working environment, typically for leisure, vacations, or other purposes, and usually lasting less than a year (Nadia, Syaharuddin, Jumriani, Putra, & Rusmaniah, 2023). The complexity of defining tourism highlights the importance of ongoing collaboration and dialogue among stakeholders to establish a comprehensive and universally accepted understanding of the term and related concepts, thereby promoting clarity and consensus in the field. In terms of economic development, tourism is recognized as one of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries (Hosseini, Paydar, & Hajiaghaei-Keshteli, 2021), with significant economic impact (Murphy, 2013). Given its diverse demands and spatial requirements, tourism has become increasingly important in contemporary societies. However, for tourism to be successful, it must be guided by the principles of environmental sustainability, economic revitalization, community stability, and growth of small-scale tourism enterprises (Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007).

Understanding the development of tourism requires examining internal and external factors at a macro level (Mohamed, Alakhras, Khalil, & Mohamed, 2021). Internal factors include geographical, economic, and social elements, whereas external factors include decision-making structures, political dynamics, and the social climate of a country. Taking a strategic approach to leverage these factors and maximizing the potential of different tourism regions is crucial. Strategic tourism planning, which identifies the unique attractions and capabilities of these regions, is essential for developing necessary strategies (Taylor, 2015). Tourism has been a key driver of economic growth, contributing to enhancing overall quality of life through revenue generation and job creation (Javdan, Ghalehtemouri, Ghasemi, & Riazi, 2023; Zaei & Zaei, 2013). Therefore, creating a supportive environment is vital for sustainable tourism growth in potential areas. This can be achieved by following the principles of strategic and purposeful planning, ensuring that all essential components are integrated into the tourism planning process for success and effectiveness.

In the context of regional competitiveness, globalization has intensified competition among cities and regions for investment, business, visitors, and various events (Zali & Zamanipoor, 2015). The significance of regional identity has increased in the current era of globalization and global capitalism (Zimmerbauer, 2011). Regional identity is now a crucial aspect of geography, often associated with natural or cultural characteristics such as landscapes, dialects, local cuisines, landmarks, and businesses that embody and express that identity. Media, literature, and cultural activities can serve as media for communicating regional identities. The concept of a "new regional identity" corresponds with the rise of "new regionalism" and acknowledges a region's role as a primary driver of economic progress. Regional identity has become a focal point in planning and marketing strategies, leveraging human resources, and enhancing regional competitiveness (Paasi, 2013). The premise is that each region can attract investment by effectively showcasing its distinctive attributes, thereby distinguishing itself from others.

The culture of innovation serves as the foundation for a continuous production cycle that effectively implements the identified strategy, validates its efficacy, and ultimately reaches the desired goals. The dynamic interplay among these elements forms a perpetual loop that propels a country or region towards sustainable development and a competitive position. Anholt (2015) proposed a cyclical mechanism, as depicted in Figure 1, to foster development and establish a competitive identity for a country or region. This cycle delineates the stages through which competitiveness can be achieved, starting with crafting a competitive strategy that aligns with an area's unique attributes and strengths. Simultaneously, it entails cultivating an innovative culture across diverse sectors, such as government, culture, tourism, trade, investment expansion, education, and industry.

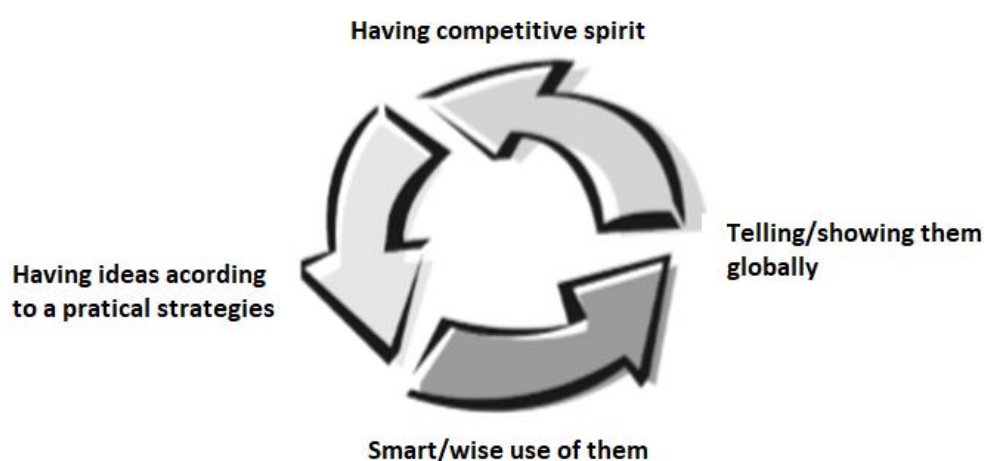


Figure 1. The virtue Cycle of Competitive Identity  
Source: Anholt (2015)

The strategic planning model is structured around an internal external–internal framework, emphasizing the iterative nature of the planning process. Rather than following a linear path, this model recognizes the importance of ongoing evaluation and adaptation. It entails assessing internal capabilities as well as conducting a thorough analysis of external macro-factors, including economic, political, social, environmental, and legal factors, beyond the organization's immediate influence. Experts play a crucial role in evaluating the impact of these factors on goal-oriented strategies. The PESTEL method is a useful tool for identifying these external factors and associated risks, enabling the organization to develop strategies that address or mitigate their impacts (Badri, Rezvani, Torabi, & Malekan, 2015; Bloomberg, 2022; Eskandarian, Ghalehtemouri, & Das, 2012).

In the context of the research background, it is crucial to emphasize the extensive planning efforts and research studies carried out in various regions of Iran that boast diverse tourism landscapes. The predominant approach in most of these studies was strategic planning for the SWOT. For instance, Pourahmad et al. conducted a study titled 'Priority of Strategic Assessment of Tourism Development

in the Alamut region of Qazvin' (Taherkhani & Farahani, 2019). Furthermore, Niavand, Salarzehi, and Tash (2014) devised a strategic research model for tourism in the coastal area of Chabahar, while Ahangaran, Bhartiya, Nadalipour, and Salehi (2022) carried out a study titled "Determining Contributory Factors to the Competitiveness of Iran's Medical Tourism: An Importance-Performance Analysis," leading to the development of a competitiveness model. These studies highlight the ongoing dedication to utilizing strategic planning methodologies in tourism development, with a specific focus on enhancing competitiveness and fostering sustainable growth in the industry.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### ***3.1 Application of method***

This study utilized a descriptive-analytical research method with a practical focus, conducted in two phases. The initial phase involved data collection through documentary research and a thorough review of relevant literature, including documents related to tourism and the development plan for the Persian Gulf region. Subsequently, the goals, key strategies, and capabilities of Persian Gulf tourism were input into Meta-SWOT software. In the second phase, field information was gathered through surveys consisting of questionnaires and interviews with 15 experts and researchers specializing in tourism (Makooi, Mousavi, & Javan, 2022; Molan, Farhadi, Saganeiti, & Murgante, 2021).

#### ***3.2 Use of the Meta-SWOT Model and PESTEL Analysis***

In the Meta-SWOT model, external factors related to the organizational environment were examined separately from the internal factors. The PESTEL method is utilized for this analysis, which involves a detailed evaluation of political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors (Heydari, Keshtidar, Azimzadeh, Talebpour, & Ramkissoon, 2021). This approach helps to identify potential opportunities and risks associated with each of these factors. By considering these external factors, organizations can gain valuable insights into the broader operational context, enabling informed decision making and the development of strategies that align with market conditions and regulatory frameworks. PESTEL analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of external influences on an organization, allowing it to leverage opportunities and proactively manage risks (Saghaei, Gankhaki, & Fadaei Jozzi, 2021).

#### ***3.3 Expert Participants***

To gain a comprehensive understanding of tourism planning and development in the Persian Gulf region, we assembled diverse groups of experts and researchers. Our participants included seven university professors specializing in tourism and eight researchers with PhD and Master's degrees in urban and regional planning. Their expertise and knowledge of the region were essential to effectively address the research questions. Throughout the strategic planning process, these experts were involved at every stage to ensure a well-informed and thorough approach. For example, when assessing resources and capabilities, we considered expert feedback on factors such as rarity (R), imitability (I), and organizational strength (O), which offered valuable insights into the region's strengths and competitive advantages.

#### ***3.4 Data Input and Competitive Tourism Mapping***

In the second stage of the research, information from the Farsi Island tourism landscape document, along with expert input, was input into the software to create a competitive tourism map of the Persian Gulf region. This map considers two key factors: the arrival of foreign tourists and the economic and social effects of foreign tourism. These factors were chosen based on the objectives outlined in the Tourism Development Document of the Persian Gulf region, the region's current capabilities, its strategic location as a border region with Persian Gulf states, and the strong tourism industry in countries, such as Saudi Arabia.

#### ***3.5 Macro-Environmental Factor Analysis***

Furthermore, this study examined the tourism goals of the region by analyzing the macro-environmental factors that impact tourism in the Persian Gulf area. It evaluates how the region's resources and

capabilities affect these factors, providing a thorough insight into the complex interplay between the region's tourism opportunities and its external surroundings.

### 3.6 Research scope

The Persian Gulf is home to around 90 islands, 34 of which are under Iran's jurisdiction. Among these islands, 17 are strategically important for controlling the international waterway of the Hormuz Strait and for monitoring foreign naval activities. Farsi Island, located in the central Persian Gulf at coordinates 21-10-50 longitude and 35-59-27 latitude, is about 67.76 miles (112.40 kilometers) southwest of Bushehr Port. It serves as a naval base and is positioned 23 km south of Al-Arabi Island, which is part of Saudi Arabia, and approximately 130 km from the Saudi Arabian coast. Farsi Island holds significant political, economic (especially in energy and tourism), and military importance owing to its strategic location along major naval routes and its natural beauty. Similar to many other Iranian islands, Farsi Island has primarily been used for military purposes in recent decades. The island played a crucial role in Iran during the oil tanker war between 1985 and 1989. In addition to its energy-related significance, Farsi Island has potential for maritime tourism because of its picturesque landscape. With a perimeter of about 1.5 km and an area of less than one square kilometer, the island offers a compact yet attractive destination.



Figure 2. The location of the Farsi Island in the Persian Gulf region

## 4. Results and discussions

### 4.1 Definition of the goals

The initial phase of the Meta-SWOT planning process involved thorough research. This research is crucial for determining goals that will steer strategic planning efforts. To do this, we begin by examining the upstream documents and extracting the goals outlined in the vision document. Subsequently, we incorporated the valuable insights of experts gathered through a purposive method. These experts played a pivotal role in assessing and ranking goals based on their perceived priorities (Table. 1).

Table 1. The goals set for tourism in the region

Goals	Priority
Increasing the average residence of tourists	Medium
Increasing the number of domestic tourists twice	High

Fair distribution of tourists between different parts of the island	Low
Increasing the employment rate in tourism twice	High
Strengthening and developing the communication infrastructures	Low
Strengthen eco-tourism tourism	Medium
Increasing regional security	Medium
Having a long-term plan in the field of tourism	Low
Strengthening and organizing maritime tourism	Medium
Strengthening the historical and cultural tourism of Fars Island in the Persian Gulf region	Medium
Increasing the amount of budget allocated to tourism	High
Increasing the number of foreign tourists twice	High
Increasing trans-regional advertising in tourism	Low
Strengthening the indigenous and local culture foundations	low

These goals were categorized and ranked according to their perceived priority levels as High, Medium, or Low. This comprehensive goal assessment lays the foundation for subsequent phases of the meta-SWOT planning process.

#### ***4.2 Reasons for selecting research components***

The selection of research components for this study is underpinned by several compelling reasons rooted in existing knowledge gaps and the pressing need for comprehensive investigation within the field of tourism in the Persian Gulf region, with a specific focus on Farsi Island.

1. **Addressing the Research Gap:** The primary motivation for choosing this research focus is the evident dearth of research in this particular area. Previous studies on tourism in the Persian Gulf, particularly those centered on Farsi Island, have predominantly focused on domestic tourism. Nevertheless, there is a notable absence of research on international tourists and their potential influence on the burgeoning tourism sector on Farsi Island. This substantial research gap underscores the need for a new and more inclusive approach.
2. **Exploring Socio-Economic Impact:** The primary objective of this study is to analyze the socio-economic impact of foreign tourists. This decision was justified for several reasons. First, foreign tourists are known to contribute significantly to foreign exchange earnings, which is crucial for a region's economy. Second, the presence of a border market, which indicates unique economic potential, further emphasizes the significance of this research. Moreover, the region's high unemployment rate underscores the potential of strategically developing tourism to create jobs and to address this issue. Lastly, the strong cultural and social ties between Farsi Island and the people of Persian Gulf states underscore the importance of examining the socioeconomic aspects of tourism in this context.
3. **Economic Growth and Unemployment Mitigation:** Given the strategic significance of Farsi Island's development across multiple industries and sectors, it is essential to conduct research to identify and evaluate potential opportunities for economic growth and job creation in this region. Through comprehensive studies that explore the potential for tourism and other developmental possibilities, we can lay the groundwork for sustainable economic expansion and address the issue of unemployment among the local population. Therefore, the selection of research components is guided by the necessity to address existing knowledge gaps, analyze the socio-economic implications of foreign tourism, and strategise for holistic regional development that supports broader goals of economic growth and employment generation.

#### ***4.3 Resources and capabilities identification***

During this critical phase of the study, the established tourism development objectives were carefully assessed under the guidance of industry experts. The primary goal is to identify the inherent resources and capabilities within the Farsi Island region that significantly contribute to the achievement of these objectives. These resources and capabilities represent the strengths and potential of Farsi Island in tourism development efforts. Recognizing them is essential as they play a dual role in facilitating goal achievement and establishing a competitive edge over other destinations. While these resources and

capabilities may not be fully utilized or immediately profitable, they hold significant untapped potential that can be leveraged through strategic planning. To gauge their importance, each resource and capability was thoroughly evaluated and rated by experts involved in the study. Ideally, the cumulative rating of all identified resources and capabilities should be 100%. This measurable rating system enables a comprehensive assessment of Farsi Island's strengths, pinpointing areas that need further development and enhancement to achieve successful tourism outcomes (see Table. 2).

Table 2. Resources and capabilities effective in the development

Resources and capabilities	Ratings
Having historical monuments	6
The susceptibility of Farsi Island for Tourism	8
Partnership	1
Private investment	3
Security	4
Management stability	4
Native customs	7
Educated manpower	4
Historical background	7
Adequate infrastructure	4
People hospitality	14
Climate diversity	3
Geographical location	12
Long-term planning	2
Communications	5
Ecotourism	6
Existence of a border market	5

This comprehensive assessment offers a well-rounded perspective on Farsi Island's available resources and capabilities, guiding strategic decisions and delineating a pathway towards a flourishing tourism landscape.

#### **4.4 Determining competitive aspects and competitors**

In the following stage, the software smoothly incorporated the key factors essential to Farsi Island's tourism goals. These factors represent the competitive aspects that Farsi Island must excel in to efficiently achieve its objectives. This stage also involves identifying the main competitors in the region. The aim of this analysis is to outline specific areas of tourism where Farsi Island should strive to outperform its competitors. A list of potential competitors for Farsi Island has been carefully compiled, including well-known entities, such as Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, and Oman.

To enable a thorough comparison, a structured five-level scale has been meticulously utilized, ranging from "very high" to "very low." This precisely calibrated scale ensures a detailed evaluation of Farsi Island's competitive position compared with its regional counterparts across various crucial tourism factors. The results of this comparative analysis are presented in Table 3, which provides clarity on Farsi Island's performance relative to its competitors in each important tourism dimension.

Table 3. Competitive variables and competitors entered in the software

Competitive aspects	
Foreign tourism, economic effects, and social tourism	
Competition level	Competitors
High	Dubai

High	Qatar
Low	Bahrain
Medium	Oman
High	Kuwait
High	Saudi Arabia

This comprehensive analysis serves as a compass, guiding Farsi Island towards a nuanced understanding of its competitive landscape, facilitating strategic decision-making to bolster its tourism sector.

#### 4.5 Competition map

In the next phase, we established the correlation between each competitive aspect and the identified resources and capabilities to create a competition map. This map offers an overview of Farsi Island's position compared with its competitors in terms of the research objectives, as depicted in Figure 3. The competitive map below illustrates Farsi Island's tourism in the Persian Gulf region, showing its relative standing among competing countries in the tourism sector. As shown in Figure 3, Farsi Island is expected to have a strong position to attract foreign tourists compared to its competitors within the specified timeframe. To achieve the goals outlined in the vision document, it is essential to strengthen the resources, capabilities, and strategies that received high scores from experts, establishing them as effective and leading strategies. Among the competing countries, Dubai currently holds the top rank with a score of 3.70, followed closely by Kuwait with a score of 3.25 and Qatar with a score of 3.05 in terms of foreign tourist reception by 2022. Given the island's geographical proximity and cultural similarity to the Persian Gulf states, this positioning is both logical and feasible. Data from the Iranian Statistics Center indicates that Dubai and Kuwait consistently attract a significant number of foreign tourists in the region.

Chart X illustrates the location of Farsi Island in the Persian Gulf region compared to its competitors in terms of the economic and social influence of foreign tourists. Farsi Island has a higher rating of 3.60 out of 5 on the X-axis, mainly because of its proximity to Arab states in the Persian Gulf. Dubai, Qatar, and Kuwait were identified as the key tourism rivals on Farsi Island in this competitive context. Following this analysis, a table (Table 5) was generated by the software to outline the competitive edge of each competitor in different aspects and to calculate the total score.

Table 4. Comparison of the Persian Gulf region with the region states

<b>Influential factors on tourism</b>	<b>Kuwait</b>	<b>Qatar</b>	<b>Dubai</b>	<b>Oman</b>	<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>Bahrain</b>
Having historical monuments	Higher	Almost equal	Higher	Higher	Lower	Lower
The susceptibility of the region for Tourism	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Almost equal
Security	Lower	Lower	Lower	Almost equal	Lower	Lower
Management stability	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal
Native customs	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher	Almost equal
Private sector investment	Higher	Higher	Higher	Almost equal	Lower	Lower
Educated manpower	Almost equal	Higher	Higher	Higher	Almost equal	Almost equal

Historical background of cities	Higher	Higher	Lower	Higher	Almost equal	Almost equal
Adequate infrastructure	Almost equal	Almost equal	Lower	Higher	Lower	Lower
People hospitality	Higher	Higher	Almost equal	Almost equal	Higher	Almost equal
Climate diversity	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Geographical location	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Much higher	Higher
Long-term planning	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal
Communications	Lower	Lower	Almost equal	Almost equal	Lower	Lower
Ecotourism	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
Existence of a border market	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Partnership	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal	Almost equal

#### 4.6 Constructing a Strategic Fitness Map

In the final phase, we crafted a strategic fitness map, drawing from our PESTEL analysis and the comparison of resources, goals, and macro-factors. This visual representation employs turquoise for resources and capabilities, with brown denoting peripheral macro-factors.

##### 4.6.1 Turquoise Bubbles

**Resources and Capabilities** The Turquoise bubbles, slanting upwards and to the right, represent Farsi Island's tourism resources and internal capabilities. They are characterized by their value, rationality, imitability, and organization (VRIO) attributes. They epitomize the untapped potential and inherent advantages of Farsi Island's tourism, which can be further fortified to enhance regional competitiveness. Importantly, they exhibited the highest strategic fitness with macro-factors. This signifies meticulous alignment and planning to effectively counteract the adverse effects of these factors. This strategic fitness ensures adaptability and flexibility in response to unforeseen events including international sanctions.

##### 4.6.2 Bubble Sizes

**Alignment and Urgency** The size of the bubbles on the map indicates the degree of alignment with established goals. Simultaneously, the size of the macro-environmental factors conveys their urgency.

##### 4.6.3 Key Findings from the Map

1. Three macro-environmental factors—macro-management, international sanctions, and foreign policy—had the most significant influence on Farsi Island tourism. They were positioned at  $X = 4$  and  $Y = 3$ , underscoring their pivotal roles. Among these factors, macro-management and foreign policy exhibit the highest urgency based on bubble size, demanding immediate attention and review.
2. Additionally, the allocation of the budget to tourism and the lack of focus on the tourism industry in the country also significantly impact tourism on Farsi Island, as emphasized by their large bubble sizes, signifying an urgent need for action.
3. Conversely, natural disasters and terrorist groups have a minimal impact on tourism in the Persian Gulf, as indicated by their peripheral location on the map. Similarly, conflicts between countries in the region and natural disasters register the lowest urgency points among macro-factors.
4. Farsi Island's tourism capabilities in the Persian Gulf region and maritime tourism in the Persian Gulf region exhibit the highest strategic fitness with macro-factors. These two resources and capabilities possess VIOR characteristics among regional competitors in the Persian Gulf tourism

- sector. This underscores the imperative for officials and tourism industry experts to proactively strengthen and empower these aspects to achieve superior performance in the region.
- Furthermore, the historical features of Farsi Island and the existence of suitable infrastructure align notably with the tourism goals of the Persian Gulf region, which is substantiated by the size of turquoise bubbles. Consequently, special attention should be directed towards these factors, necessitating investment in tourism infrastructure that encompasses hotels, roads, and essential amenities.

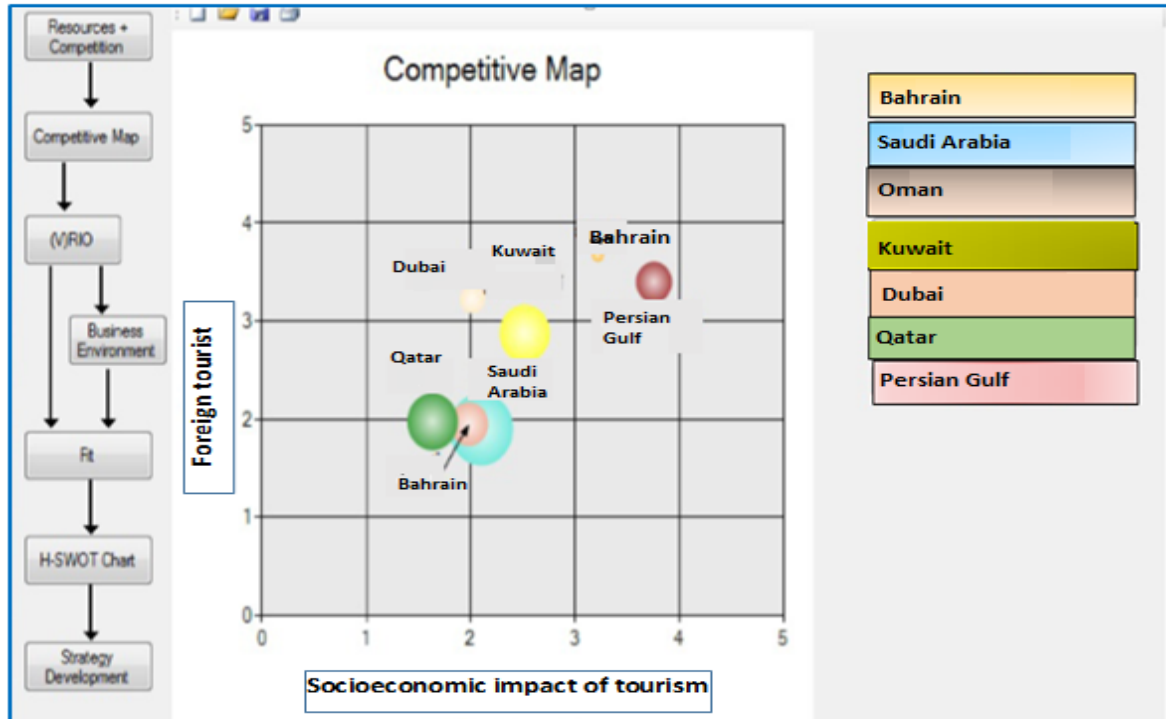


Figure 3. Map of tourism development in the Persian Gulf region versus Competitors

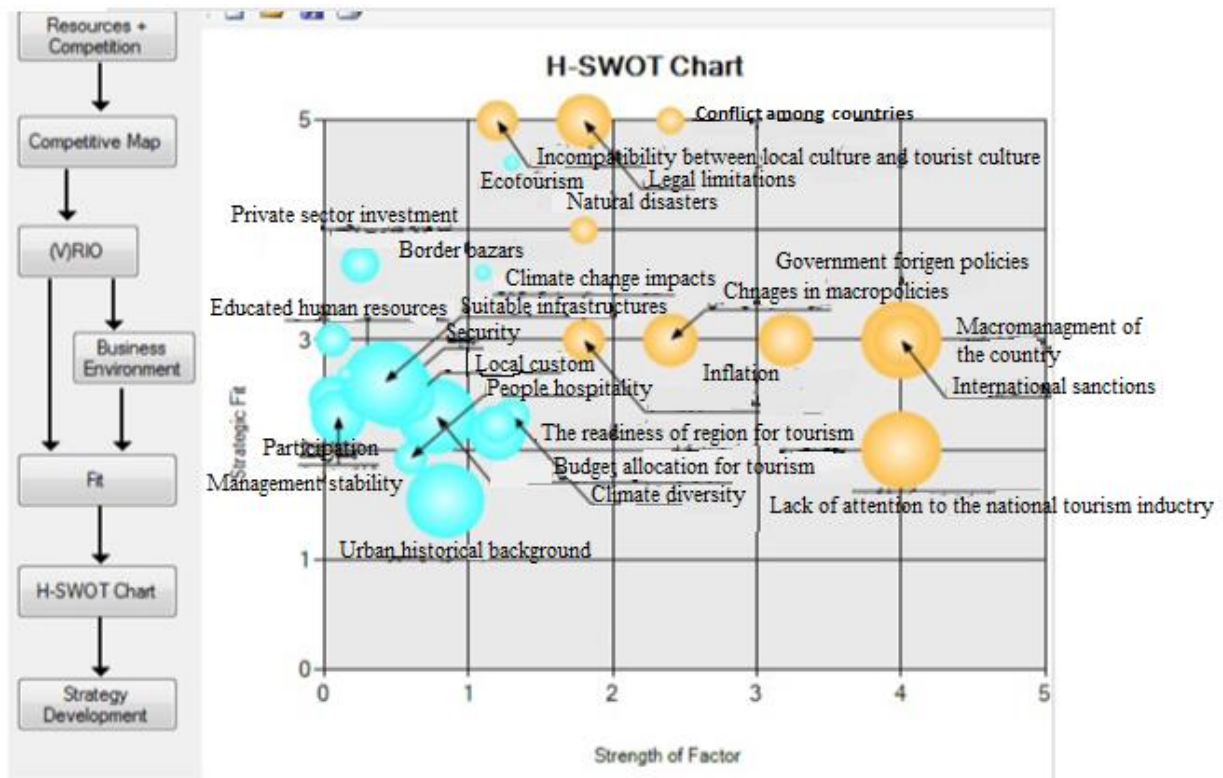


Figure 4. Strategic Map of the tourism development in the Farsi Island

#### 4.7 Comparative Analysis and Implications

These contrasting results highlight the complex nature of tourism development and the need for context-specific analysis. Our research focuses on eco-tourism and sociocultural aspects, considering the impact of foreign tourists and the broader socioeconomic effects of tourism. We also incorporate international macro-factors to highlight the comprehensive influence of external elements on tourism development in the region, including the effects of sanctions and national management policies.

Understanding these characteristics will allow policymakers and stakeholders to gain a thorough understanding of the specific factors driving tourism growth on Farsi Island. With this knowledge, they can make informed decisions that will contribute to the long-term advancement of the region. It is essential to tailor strategies and interventions to the unique qualities and circumstances of each destination, taking into account both internal resources and capabilities as well as external macro-environmental factors that influence tourism dynamics. Tourism development is crucial across international borders, particularly in the Persian Gulf region, which is surrounded by oil-rich countries, thus necessitating effective tourism planning. Sustainable development in these areas, which experience high levels of human activity, requires collaborative efforts. Additionally, sustainable tourism presents an opportunity for developing nations to create jobs, promote growth, and build a more sustainable economy without compromising their long-term interests. Ecotourism is a form of nature-based tourism that involves visiting natural areas to experience and appreciate nature and traditional culture.

Our comprehensive study and analysis have provided valuable insights into the development of tourism on Farsi Island and the Persian Gulf region. Notably, our findings and competitive elements differ from those of previous studies. While previous research has focused on eco-tourism and socio-cultural tourism growth, our study has focused on foreign tourists and the economic impact of tourism development. Our findings highlight the significance of international macro-factors such as sanctions and national management in shaping tourist growth on Farsi Island in the Persian Gulf region.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 *Shaping the Future of Tourism on Farsi Island*

This study underscores the effectiveness of the Meta-SWOT technique as a potent approach for tourism development planning, especially concerning the future of tourism on Farsi Island in the Persian Gulf region and in the context of international competition. By meticulously aligning internal resources with macro-environmental factors, this technique facilitates the identification of optimal strategies for realizing tourism goals articulated in the vision document.

### 5.2 *Competitive Landscape and Strategic Planning*

These findings stress the pivotal role of the competitive landscape in assessing the tourism scenario within the Persian Gulf region, particularly in terms of attracting foreign tourists. To achieve these objectives successfully, it is imperative to fortify the identified resources, capabilities, and strategies that experts have recognized as having the highest potential. These aspects must be central to progressive and robust planning. As is evident from the competitive map, Farsi Island is poised to hold a favorable and accessible position relative to its competitors in terms of attracting foreign tourists, with a respectable score of 3.25 out of 5 on the y-axis. This positioning is justifiable when considering the island's global strategic importance and potential appeal to international visitors.

### 5.3 *Macro-Environmental Factors of Influence*

The strategic fitness map highlights three macro-environmental factors—the country's macro-management, international sanctions, and government foreign policy—as having the most significant influence on tourism in the Persian Gulf region. Their positioning on the map at  $y = 3$  and  $x = 4$  underscores their critical role. Furthermore, these factors command the highest urgency scores, thus underscoring the need for immediate attention. Conversely, the allocation of budgets to tourism and the lack of emphasis on the tourism industry in the country, while influential, rank relatively lower in terms of impact.

### 5.4 *Farsi Island's Tourism Potential*

In the context of Farsi Island, the results reaffirm its substantial tourism potential because of its unique resources and capabilities. The island's environmental attributes, particularly its eco-tourism potential, coupled with its strategic border location for commercial tourism and rich historical background, significantly contribute to its allure for visitors. These factors underline the island's tourism potential and stress the importance of harnessing resources and capabilities for further development.

### 5.5 *Key Findings Summary*

In summary, the key findings of this study are as follows.

1. **Macro-Environmental Influence:** The country's macro-management, international sanctions, and government foreign policy exert a significant influence on tourism development on Farsi Island. Ensuring political stability in the country is paramount for enhancing Farsi Island's capacity to attract foreign tourists.
2. **Cultural hospitability:** The presence of a welcoming indigenous culture among the local population emerges as a critical factor for tourism development on Farsi Island. This underscores the importance of promoting cultural awareness and public education to facilitate interactions with foreign tourists.

These insights provide a robust foundation for strategic planning and decision making aimed at realizing Farsi Island's tourism potential and fostering sustainable growth in the region.

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