Using SWOT Analysis in Tourism Studies with System approach

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ABSTRACT

SWOT analysis is one of the important tools in strategic planning. This technique considered to achieve organizational goals with paying attention to the strengths and weaknesses within the organizations. On the other hand regarding to opportunities and threats includes effective surrounding conditions on organization. SWOT can be used in the travel and tourism industry to achieve sustainable development and success in absorbing tourists especially in international level. In tourism and tourism research and studies addressing the traditional SWOT analysis does not seem enough. The reason can be expressed in a number of cases, such as: multi-field nature of tourism studies, Diversity of tourism services, Multiplicity of involved organizations in tourism and paying attention to inside and outside the tourism system simultaneously. At this paper SWOT analysis applies with a systematic approach as a tool for doing tourism researches. On the other hand tourism should be considered and should be managed as a system because without a systematic view all aspects of the system would not be considered. Regarding to tourist system’s data, procedures and solutions can be found in SWOT analysis that lead to get appropriate output of the system mentioned above.

Key words: SWOT analysis, tourism studies, system approach, tourism industry.

Introduction

Today, tourism is considered by most of policy-makers and planners as one of the largest and most diverse instruments for growth. Due to the psychological, sociological and capability of each region on one hand, and the special features of this industry on the other hand, calls for a specific and critical study for making policies, management and planning in tourism [1]. Tourism industry refers to a set of economic activities that offer some certain products and services to the tourist. This leads to some ambiguities in the determination of its boundaries and limits and, on the other hand, its relationships have been extended to all economic sections [2].

Primary, tourism is regarded as a wide and complicated discipline that includes a wide range of elements and gets some special forms in accordance with different environments. With respect to the multi-dimensional and broadness of the nature of this industry, any plan and decision about it, at any level, should be along with all of its dimensions as well as careful considerations. Tourism is a multi-level discipline with a complicated nature. This industry has come out of the single-dimensional and absolute state, and its new views regarding other social issues are put under consideration [3].

As mentioned, tourism industry is multi-dimensional, and making decisions about it calls for considering all of its dimensions. Thus, the industry, as a whole system, can be studied and investigated using SWOT analysis since SWOT is one of the instruments of strategic planning, and since in can include all of the dimensions of a matter strategically; it is a good instrument for tourism analyses. Further, the parts of tourism industry should not be considered separately in using this instrument; rather, the analysis can be conducted as a whole. Several studies for tourism planning have used SWOT, but the present paper considers the analysis with a system approach.

SWOT Analysis:

SWOT is a model for identifying the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and external threats with which a system confronts. Maximizing the strengths and opportunities besides minimizing the weaknesses and...
tourism. This model provides a framework for depicting the factors of the internal and external environments as a unified set such as tourism industry. Further, it allows for recognizing the task of the small and large sophisticated systems in which the considered system (like tourism system) should operate. Many professionals believe that analyzing tourism industry as a system, not as an industry or market, is valuable (and a system refers to a set of interdependent components that form a consistent body) [8]. System approach includes decentralization in decisions, and following it leads to the flexibility and freedom of action for individuals. On the other hand, it emphasizes the focus on the external environment of organizations and a dynamic and active presence in it. Generally, system approach focuses on the development and change and prepares creation and innovation in organization [9].

Tourism should be managed as a system because without a system approach, not all of its dimensions may be under consideration. The inputs and outputs of tourism section mutually relate to each other and finally affect the target society. In case tourism industry is viewed like a systematic structure, we can observe that it connects with all of the different parts of society, economy, politics as well as other environmental factors [10]. We should say that tourism researches, with regard to its nature that relates to various disciplines, consist of several complicated factors and components, and sometimes it seems that some parts; say any internal part or factor (internal structure of the system) like touristy residences, travel agencies, tourism facilities etc. that are closer to tourism, are ignored. While the existence of such factors is necessary for the process of tourism and constitutes its components, the effect of external factors (system’s external-environmental factors) and other sections on the performance system of tourism is important. The distraction in any of these sections and elements leads to the emergence of negative effects on the whole system. Based on tourism system, an organization should preserve, control and direct the joint relationship between various parts of tourism though information, advertisement and similar procedures so that these factors will complement each other and various parts of tourism will be dynamic, active and hold the necessary standards in the direction of tourism as a whole [8].

One of the models for tourism system is offered by Laws, and the authors of this paper offer it in the following image with some modifications (Figure 1). In such a view, not just a part is considered; rather, different parts of the system are under consideration, the negative consequences of tourism are reduced, and planners are forced to evaluate the effective factors [11].
Mills and Morrison consider four elements in tourism system and define them as follows:

- **Market**: In marketing system, the consumerism behaviors deriving from social and cultural limitations should be considered because the purchase of tour facilities in various ways is evident in tourism.

- **Tour**: This element consists of different components such as travel, visitor’s specifications, different features and cultures of travelers (tourists) and future forecast. These components together form the motivation for touring different destinations.

- **Destination**: It refers to a set of facilities and attractions considered by tourists as well as regulation of marketing rules and plans to meet their needs. Destination is the main and primary motivation of touring.

- **Marketing**: It includes the introduction of different destinations to the present and future tourists with a look at the market plan and with the use of marketing management instruments [12].

**Application of SWOT in Tourism System:**

The development of tourism industry calls for the practical and executional cooperation of the responsible and relevant organizations of this industry apart from their tendency to cooperate that is usually their slogan [3]. The trustee organizations in tourism should be able to forecast the effect of different crises in order to be able to set forth the necessary management actions before, during and after them [13]. Thus, in the researches and investigations of tourism field, the issues should be addressed systematically, and the whole tourism system should be evaluated that in this direction, SWOT analysis is one of the instruments of study.

In preparing SWOT matrix, the most difficult part is to compare the internal and external main factors, which requires a good judgment. Further, there is nothing called as the best set of comparable factors. In addition, when the matrix is used, using the very special strategies rather than the general strategies is the important matter [5]. Therefore, if this matrix is prepared using system approach, the emerged difference in the number of the effective factors and variables on the industry as well as the broadness of the professional field in the analysis of
the factors is clearly observable. In other words, the target organizations, on one hand, can consider totally all of their conditions and situations and other trustee organizations’ as the internal factors, and, on the other hand, attend to all of the effective variables on tourism industry that affect some parts of the industry directly or indirectly.

According to the above discussions, the four main factors of SWOT analysis are described as follows:

1. **Strengths:** The strengths of tourism system refer to the points that, inside a region’s tourism system, are the sign of strength, the considerable point and the preserver of the system, such as the existence of tourism institutes, welfare facilities, powerful banks and suitable investment in tourism economy.

2. **Weaknesses:** They are regarded as the deficiencies existing in tourism system of a region, which lead to the weakness in desirable performance of the section. The components such as the lack of medical facilities, no easy access to tourism information resources, no or insufficient good hotels can be considered in this category.

3. **Opportunities:** They refer to the environmental situations surrounding the system such as geographical location, tourism attraction culture of the region, international relations, development infrastructure of the region etc. that provide the enough opportunity for the development of tourism or the development of its one or more dimensions.

4. **Threats:** The deficiencies and limitations outside of tourism system always cause the slow-down in the process of tourism development. Thus, they should be detected and some solutions should be provided to overcome them [14].

To perform SWOT analysis in tourism industry having a system approach seems necessary because, with this approach, all of the dimensions and aspects of tourism system can be considered. By using SWOT analysis in tourism studies, therefore, we can follow tourism system goals more efficient and effective. Further, as mentioned, the organizations involving in tourism field can implement their strategic policies and plans in a centralized form.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:**

Extensive scientific advancements in various fields of human knowledge in recent years have led to the establishment of large and complicated systems for investigating and studying on human issues. Hence, there is a need for an approach that, as well as addressing complexities, is able to offer a clear image of the system parts and the relations among them. The main goal of this paper was achieving an approach of research in tourism industry that holds the mentioned characteristic, which is nothing but SWOT analysis with system approach. Clearly, this analysis helps organizations to recognize their best opportunity and strength or recognize their worst threat and weakness and, if possible, select their strategies in the way that reduce as much as possible the effect of the worst weaknesses and threats and use the benefits of the best opportunities and strengths as much as possible.

Tourism is a multi-dimensional and broad activity. The solution for the problems of tourism should be sought with consultation and cooperation of all responsible authorities. Cooperation development in tourism is among the subjects that the scientists and managers of the industry intensely emphasize. Regarding that tourism is a multi-dimensional matter and it is necessary that several independent organizations make decisions about it simultaneously, SWOT analysis, on one hand, has been considered for strategic planning in this industry and, on the other hand, the planning was studied with a systematic view because it seems that the cooperation and unity of all of tourism system parts can lead to the success of this industry.

As it was mentioned in the paper, tourism should be managed as a system since not all of its parts may be under consideration without system approach. The inputs and outputs of tourism section are mutually related to each other and finally affect the target society. Thus, in the studies and tourism field, the issues should be address in a systematic way and the whole system should be evaluated. According to the discussions, the following recommendations are offered for conducting better researches in tourism:

- Conducting SWOT analysis and even other methods of tourism analysis with system approach;
- Considering the whole tourism system as a strategic unit for research planning and policy making;
- Using research teams with experts in the specific disciplines related to tourism industry rather than using the analysis of the experts of a special discipline in the SWOT analysis of tourism systems;
- Conducting inter-discipline researches for better recognizing of tourism systems;
- Conducting strategic researches in a centralized form to create utilitarian and correspondence among the trustee organizations of tourism industry;
- Enhancing inter-organizational cooperation in plans and policy-makings of organizations related to tourism industry for sustainable growth and development of the industry;
- Conducting Basic studies in order to recognize the function and role of each section in tourism industry using academic researchers and professionals;
- Cooperation between the governments as the cooperative entity of tourism industry parts.

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