

Urban Tourism in Tabriz, Iran: An Analysis of the Domestic Visitors Market

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ABSTRACT

Domestic tourism in the urban areas of Iran has grown significantly in the past two decades. This rapid growth poses great potential for the urban regeneration and the development of the local economy. The steady stream of urban tourists from all over the country rose not because of active promotion but as a result of the growing demand for travel. However, an understanding of the urban tourists' characteristics would lead to better organization and management in this regard. Availability of information is an important factor for the effective planning and management of the tourism market. In line with this argument, an understanding and analysis of the characteristics of visitor's to Tabriz, a city in Northwestern Iran, is essential to develop appropriate strategies and effective planning in the development of urban tourism in the domestic tourism sector of Tabriz. This study examined the dominant features and characteristics of the domestic tourism market in Tabriz, and studied the motives, behavior, needs, desires and satisfaction of tourists about tourism facilities and services. The main finding of the study showed that there is a significant relationship between satisfaction from destination and the demographic variables. The results also indicated that recreation was the main reason for tourists visiting Tabriz and that attractions was the most important factor affecting urban tourists' behavior. The family pattern of travel, lower income class, distance of origin to destination, choice of summer season for travel, and low expenditure make up the main components of domestic tourism which have direct effects on urban tourism behavior in Tabriz.

KEYWORDS: Urban tourism visitors, domestic visitors' characteristics, visitors' evaluation, visitors' satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Tourism Organization, Iran is among the world's top five countries that is bestowed with geographical diversity and is among the top ten tourist-attracting countries which benefits from various historical and cultural attractions (BBC Persian, 2008). This situation can be of great potential in increasing tourism activities in the two major categories of the tourism industry, that is - inbound and domestic tourism. However, an examination of tourism trends shows that Iran has experienced a serious decline in inbound tourism in the past three decades. In contrast, domestic tourism in urban areas has increased significantly in numbers. In 2010, more than 40 million of Iran's population made short tourist trips to urban areas (Tinn News, 2010).

The significance of domestic tourism from the economic and social perspective is undisputable, and it has remarkable potential to develop local areas, increase gross domestic product and regenerate cities. Therefore, consideration of the urban tourism market in Tabriz is an effective way to achieve the economic and social goals, create the appropriate urban infrastructure, increase tourism products and services in virtually all sectors of economic activities, and finally expedite the economic regeneration of the city. The importance of city destinations in Iran is self-generated as urban tourism became increasingly popular among Iranians. Tabriz metropolitan is one of the most important urban destinations in Iran attracting a variety of visitors throughout Iran. However, this process should be organized and managed with an understanding of urban visitor's characteristics, demands and desires.

One of the primary difficulties faced by the urban tourism sector is the imbalance of the supply of services, products and infrastructure against the demand for such products and services. Insufficient information about the characteristics of urban visitors will pose problems in the planning and improvement of the urban tourism market. An understanding of urban tourism is strongly related to knowing what visitors want to experience in the cities they visit. Ashworth (1989) argued that the analysis of urban tourism and enabling the formulation of urban tourism marketing strategies and market forecasting is strongly related to analyzing the answers to the following five main questions: (i) Who visits cities? (ii) Why do travelers visit cities? (iii) What do travelers do in cities? (iv) When do travelers visit cities? and (v) How do travelers perceive cities? The answers to these questions will form one of the most important steps and elements to identify the characteristics of urban visitors. Therefore, the recognition of urban destinations' visitors is vital for Tabriz metropolitan so that it can supply and design the products and services to meet the needs of visitors. In this study, the demographic, psychological and behavioral characteristics of the domestic visitors are analyzed. Therefore, this paper seeks to discuss the urban tourism market characteristics and

features of urban visitors' motives, behavior and satisfaction on the service facilities in Tabriz and also, the correspondence between tourist products, services, infrastructures and facilities in Tabriz on the one hand and demands, desires, motives and number of visitors on the other.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stansfield (1964) claims that academic studies in the past few decades on human outdoor behaviors imply that there is a difference between urban leisure time and non-urban leisure time behavior. Place, in terms of tourist activities, can be divided into rural tourism and urban tourism. The tourism industry is supported by the supply and demand sides. Ashworth (1989), in his empirical studies described the main elements of tourism market activities that are mentioned above. The supply side refers to the facilities, services and attractions offered by a destination to its visitors while the demand side refers to the consumers who buy and use tourism products and services. It needs to be mentioned that cities are turning their attention to both destinations and origin of tourism activities. The dynamic nature of tourism, diverse urban functions, constant changes and the characteristics of visitors of urban areas (population, behavior, motivations, and needs) are among the many factors which create challenges at the level of both conducting urban tourism studies and determining an integrated framework to do research in this field. Pearce's (2001) integrative framework for urban tourism research is more comprehensive and includes the elements of demand, supply, development, marketing, planning, organization, operations, and impact assessment.

Urban areas are considered as the main tourist destinations as they enjoy various cultural, historical and recreational attractions. Cities are "multi-purpose destinations" that people visit for a variety of reasons. Based on various motivations for visiting an urban destination, Pearce (2001) described urban tourism demand as "multidimensional and frequently multipurpose in nature". In a successful urban tourist destination, both supply and demand complement one another. Looking at the different and diverse functions of the cities, Page (1995) argues that different and mixed groups of visitors make different uses of cities. In line with this idea, Ashworth (1992) discussed many urban functions of tourist cities in relation to various needs of the visitors and the existing resources of services. His study provides a valuable understanding of the visitors' use of tourist products and services. The term "tourist" is a concept, if deeply understood which can speed up the planning and development of urban tourism.

The next observation can be the root and the basis of all tourism studies: What makes the people travel? In particular, why do people travel to one city but not to the other one? In order to answer this question attention must be paid to the classification of urban attractions within the framework of primary and secondary factors (attractions & facilities) of urban tourism. These factors which are the key and significant factors of urban tourism play an important role in the tourists and visitors' decision-making, and their high quality is a necessary condition for the formation of travels. Tourists' behavior and choice of the destination varies based on their motivation, demands, desire and psychological and demographical characteristics. Understanding of the causes of travel and identifying the similarities and differences in the behavior of urban tourists is necessary for successful urban tourism marketing. The problems of urban tourism market and marketing are related to understanding visitors' characteristics in so far as what the main motivations of visitors to visiting are. What are the demographic and psychological variables of the visitors? What do they prefer? How do they make decisions? What do they want? And what do they need? Hence, the main element to be successful in the urban tourism market is to identify and analyze market characteristics.

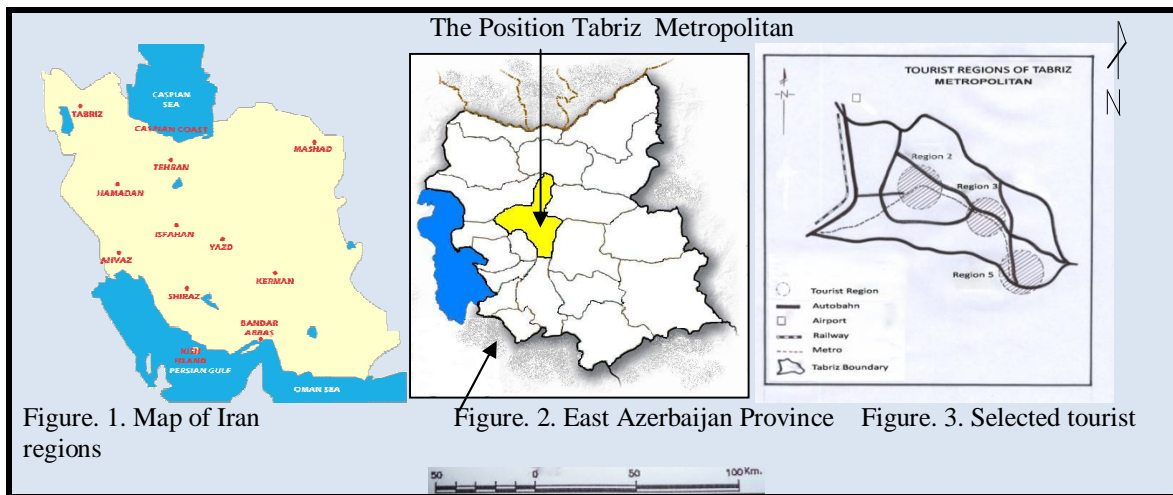
There is very little research which deals with urban tourism and its domestic market analysis in Iran. The present research on urban tourism is the first study on domestic market analysis in an urban area focusing on the demographic, psychological and behavioral characteristics of visitors to Tabriz during the summer holidays. A lack of data and research on Iran's tourism market characteristics is the main limitation of the above research. Most of the research on tourism in Iran is descriptive without sophisticated statistical assessment. This limitation diminishes the merit of other studies in the three main tourism sectors in Iran (inbound, outbound, domestic tourism) as a potential opportunity for pervasive development of Iran.

METHODOLOGY

The current study employed a self-administered questionnaire to analyze the domestic urban tourism market as the demand group of the tourist services and products. The purpose of the present study was to analyze the demographical, psychological and behavioral characteristics of tourists to Tabriz Metropolitan. The survey encompassed three types of questions relating to: (i) the demographic characteristics of tourists, including age, gender, origin, marital status, occupation, educational level, family members and monthly income; (ii) psychological characteristics of tourists including number accompanying people, travel mode, travel companions, travel period, travel season, factors affecting the destination choice, daily costs etc, and (iii) behavioral features of tourists including type of travel vehicle, distance, familiarity with destination, multi travel, length of stay, source of gathering information, place of residence, the highest cost type, visitors satisfaction, etc.

The study of domestic urban tourism was conducted within the scope of Tabriz. Tabriz is the capital city of Eastern Azerbaijan (Figure 2) and is located on the north-west of Iran (Figure 1). The domestic tourist population includes those tourists who have stayed at least a night in this city. The actual number of domestic tourists, who have stayed in the city during the three months of the summer holidays was $N=300.000$ (EACHTO¹, 2011). There are two main reasons for selecting summer as the time period for conducting this research. Firstly, the summer season is the holiday period in the educational system in Iran and consequently it is a holiday period for more than 16 million students (Jam-e-jam news agency, 2010). Secondly, Iran enjoys diverse climatic conditions. The mountainous areas of the West and Northwest of Iran including Tabriz have better climatic conditions for traveling and attracting travelers during the summer.

The respondents were randomly selected from amongst the travelers present at tourist sites and spaces who were visiting Tabriz during the summer season, from 22nd of July till 22nd of September 2011. Regarding the diversity of the origins of travelers, cultural, economic, and demographic variables and behavioral homogeneity were not considered. The prepared questionnaires were distributed to the visitors directly by the researchers in person. All the 382 questionnaires were returned but only 361 of the questionnaires, or 94 percent, were useable for data analysis.



In the tourism map of Tabriz, the city is divided into 5 tourist regions (Figure 3). This division was done on the basis of the city's geographical position, location of recreational and tourist sites and spaces, cultural and historic environments, and general urban access. In the sampling phase, three regions (regions 2, 3 & 5), which are heterogeneous in terms of geographical position, spaces, urban functions and tourist characteristics, were selected; generally, cultural and historic regions, recreation centers, accommodations and shopping centers have multiple functions and are usually visited by the most heterogeneous visitors and travelers. When the above-mentioned factors are taken into account, the sampled population in the intended regions can be accepted as representatives of the whole statistical population with a minimum degree of sampling errors. Therefore these regions were selected on Iran's Map in East Azerbaijan as the regions from which data was collected. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS. Data collection was conducted within the framework of quantitative analysis research techniques including questionnaire via random sampling from the statistical population and analysis with descriptive methods. The frequencies and the modes of the quantitative variables were first extracted from the tourists' responses. Regarding the main objectives and research questions, statistical tests such as t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed to investigate the dependent quantitative variables of the travelers' responses in relation to the nominal and ordinal variables. However the study suffers a few limitations. The first limitation of the study was the survey time; all samples of the survey were collected from 22nd of July till 22nd of September 2011. It was hard to get samples in other months due to the changing characteristics of the visitors depending on the season and through time. Second, the study only surveyed the tourists of three regions; the results may not represent the total potential market of Tabriz domestic urban tourism.

¹ East Azerbaijan Cultural heritage, Handicraft and Tourism Organization

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Number	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	213	59.0
Female	148	41.0
Total	361	100.0
<i>Age</i>		
- 15	5	1.4
15-19	26	7.2
20-24	94	26.0
25-29	57	15.8
30-34	50	13.9
35-39	51	14.1
40-44	35	9.7
45-49	16	4.4
50 +	27	7.5
Total	361	100.0
<i>Occupation</i>		
Government officer	129	45.7
Worker	21	5.8
Famer	2	0.6
Student	108	29.9
Military officer	1	0.3
Pensioner	4	1.1
Self-employer	73	20.2
Other	23	6.4
Total	361	100.0
<i>Educational level</i>		
Primary school	8	2.2
Junior middle school	21	5.8
Senior middle school	91	25.2
College	48	13.3
Bachelor	141	39.1
Master's degree	42	11.6
PhD +	10	2.8
Total	361	100.0
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	139	28.5
Married	222	61.5
Total	361	100.0
<i>Monthly income USD</i>		
< 300	81	22.4
300-399	64	17.7
400-499	43	11.9
500-600	45	12.5
> 600	128	25.5
Total	361	100.0
<i>Family Members</i>		
1 Person	4	1.1
2 Persons	93	25.8
3 Persons	57	15.8
4 Persons	109	30.2
5 Persons	61	16.9
6 Persons	19	5.3
6 + Persons	18	5.1
Total	361	100.0

Demographic characteristics of respondents

The results of the investigation conducted on domestic urban tourism provide a measurable framework for the destination illustrating the demographic, psychological and behavioral characteristics of tourists. The survey sought to examine the tourists' characteristics in order to improve the provision of services and products and consequently meet their satisfaction. The demographic characteristics of the target market have a remarkable impact on the formation and quality of tourist travels and tourists' behavior. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1. The gender composition of the respondents comprises 59 percent males and 41 percent females. Suppliers of tourist products and services should take into account gender differences when targeting the needs and wants of their customers. In some societies, gender is significant as it forms the basis of expectations that society expects from men and women. When targeting the tourism market, the issue of gender differences from the point of view of various cultures and religions should be taken into consideration. The composition of Tabriz urban domestic market seems to have a socio-cultural structure. Depending on gender, Islamic teachings have determined equal but different social and behavioral restrictions for men and women. Factors such as the necessity to wear proper clothing to be protected from men, and household responsibilities in relation to children compared to men have restricted the women's individual traveling pattern. In addition, Iranians prefer to travel in a family mode; therefore, the number of women traveling individually is insignificant. Respondents' condition of travel is a consequence of their marital status. Various age groups have various needs, wants, motivations and tourist behaviors, therefore the suppliers should prepare the services and products which are appropriate for various groups in terms of their ages.

For instance, a recreation center should pay attention to the needs and wants of all age groups: Providing amusement for children, exciting entertainment for youths and a safe and sound environment for the elderly. Moreover, as the age increases, tourists attach more value and attention to their degree of satisfaction; thus, paying attention to customers' age differences is strategically significant in Tabriz urban market tourism. The tourist population visiting Tabriz is mainly young population. In fact, almost 70 percent of the respondents were in the 20-39 years age group who are more inclined towards exciting entertainment and recreational activities. Almost 9 percent of the respondents belonged to the age group of less than 20 who are inclined towards exciting activities due to their age, and lastly, 14 percent are in the age group between 40-49 years who tend to enjoy more relaxing and less exciting activities. Generally, tourists' income level affects their tendency for travel. Research has shown that in comparison to the elderly, youths show greater tendency to travel because they do not shoulder much responsibilities both financially and in the family. Most of the travel behavior, such as destination choice, travel mode, purchase type, expenditure, and accommodation have a direct relationship with travelers' income level. Thus, travelers' income is one of the effective factors in the formation and quality of travel and customers' satisfaction from destination and tourist services. The average annual per capita income in Iran was 4400 USD in 2011 (Shargh news paper, 2011). The highest rate of monthly income of the middle class in Iran is almost 600 USD. The results show that almost 70 percent of the respondents have an income which is less than middle class; thus, the financial resources of the domestic tourists are limited. Therefore, when targeting the consumers, the suppliers of tourist services and products should consider the consumers' purchasing power.

The analysis of the distribution of respondents' in terms of their jobs illustrate that the middle class of society made up the largest body of tourists. There is a significant relationship between the students' summer holidays and the increase in travels. Most of the civil employees, self-employees and students (85.6 percent) prefer summer holidays as the best season for travelling, that is why the highest number of travelers were observed in Tabriz during the data collection. One of the main findings of the present survey is that the higher the job level, the more the expectations and consequently satisfaction expected. Tourist activities differ with various classes and groups of the society. For instance, among the educated class and those in the higher socio-economic level of society, tourist activities are considered as a need, while for the lower class, these activities are affected by other motivational factors. For example, visiting relatives and pilgrimage have a more innate trigger as compared to tourist or recreational motivations. Education is one of the acquired characteristics which has a significant role on leisure time spending and travel behavior. This factor affects various tourist needs and wants and, consequently, the consumers' expected quality and degree of satisfaction. The results show that most tourists (53.5 percent) are highly educated (possessing at least a basic degree) while the educational level of 46.5 percent of the whole respondents was below a bachelor's degree.

In term of origins, domestic tourists comprised a mixture of Iran's 31 provinces. Taking into consideration the division of country into 7 tourist regions (see Table 2) the origins and the size of tourism trend can be examined within the framework of these regions. One of the important motivating factors determining tourism trends is the closeness of destinations to starting points which directly affects the number of tourists in destinations. Although the development of new transportation means like airplanes has amazingly reduced the distance in intra-city travels, distance remains one of the most important factors in the tourism trends of the middle class who tend to travel by road.

As discussed below, the relationship between the distance of destination and starting points and the number of arrivals to Tabriz is obvious, hence confirming the hypothesis stated earlier. Most of the tourists visiting this city in the summer of 2011 were mainly from tourist region 1, comprising 45.7 percent of the total visitors. The cities of

tourist region 1 are located 500-900 km away from Tabriz. In addition to proximity to Tabriz, another reason is the common cultural, social and ethnic characteristics between the residents of East Azerbaijan and Tabriz with the visitors. Due to the development of economic activities, most of the residents of Azerbaijan region have migrated to Karaj and Tehran. Therefore the visits paid to this city are multi-purpose in nature with the aim of visiting friends and relatives, being closer to the cultural and ethnic identity and enjoying a recreational holiday. The lowest number of the visitors are from tourist region 6, located in the south and center of Iran. This region accounts for only 3.6 percent of the total visitors arriving in Tabriz metropolitan. As this region (6) is located 1300-1600 km away from Tabriz, residents there have the least travel motivation to visit Tabriz.

Table 2 Distance between Origins and Destination per km table 2, there is a significant

Regions Number	Origins (Provinces)	Location	Distance
1	Mazandaran, Qazvin, Tehran, Qom, Semnan, Markazi, Alborz	Northwest of Iran	500-900 Km
2	East Azerbaijan, Ardabil, Zanjan, Gilan	Northwest of Iran	60-500 Km
3	West Azerbaijan, Kordestan, Hamadan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Lorestan	West of Iran	300-800 Km
4	Kkozeistan, Chahar Mahall va Bakhtiari,	Southwest of Iran	800 -1000 Km
5	Esfahan, Busheh, Fars, Kohgiluyeh & Buyer Ahmad	Center & South of Iran	1000-1300 Km
6	Kerman, Hormozgan, Yazd	Center & South of Iran	1300-1600 Km
7	Golestan, Khorasan- e Shomali, Khorasan-e Janubi, Khorasan- e Razavi, Sistan va Baluchestan	Northwest, West, Southwest of Iran	1500-2200 Km

Psychological characteristics of respondents

The psychological profiles of respondents are shown in Table 3 and 4. Tourists' psychological and life style are among the psychological variables influencing tourists' behavior during travel. This section discusses the factors which determine the motivational characteristics of travel, travel type characteristics, preferences and socio-cultural characteristics. Tourists travel with various motivations and for various reasons. Many levels of these traveling needs are accomplished at the same time which provides a multi-dimensional image. The combinational elements of the destination attract tourists and encourage them to stay longer. Intriguing historic, cultural and natural attractions, climate, and services are among the main attracting factors of tourist destinations. Among the main and primary reasons and motivations for traveling are leisure motivations and relaxation. As illustrated in Table 3 there are 12 major factors classified as the main motivations of the respondents traveling to Tabriz. For almost 42 percent of the respondents, their main reason for traveling to Tabriz is to relax. For 58.7 percent of the respondents, their traveling had more a recreational motivation. The remaining 2.5 percent of the respondents selected the other remaining ten types of classification of motivation. The results extracted from this table illustrate that Tabriz metropolitan -as a cultural-historic city benefiting from pleasant climate- has had a combinational role (cultural-historic and recreational tourism) as a tourist destination.

Table 3 Frequency Distribution of Major Reasons for Traveling to Tabriz

Purpose of trip	Answer / Number	Yes %	No
Business & Exhibitions & Events	Yes 11 No 350	3.0	97.0
Administrative	Yes 13 No 348	3.6	96.4
Conference & Convention	Yes 9 No 352	2.5	97.5
Recreation & Tourism	Yes 212 No 149	58.7	41.3
Scientific research	Yes 8 No 353	2.2	97.8
Education	Yes 9 No 352	2.5	97.5
Visiting friend & Relatives	Yes 21 No 340	5.8	94.2
Medical	Yes 5 No 356	1.4	98.6
Honey moon	Yes 5 No 356	1.4	98.6
Sport	Yes 5 No 356	1.4	98.6
Culture & Art	Yes 7 No 354	1.9	98.1

Most of the domestic urban travels performed by the respondents are to satisfy their physical needs such as, the need to relax, curiosity and excitement and to satisfy their externally-motivated passions (see Table 4). For 41 percent of the respondents, pleasant climate and secure social environment qualify Tabriz as a preferred destination to relax. Almost 58 percent of the respondents believe that Tabriz is a suitable destination to satisfy their externally-motivated passions through travelling and recreations. Therefore, more than 87 percent of the respondents prefer summer as their preferred period to travel to Tabriz due to its pleasant climatic conditions. Generally speaking, this region benefits from the characteristics of a four-seasonal region and urban tourism in Tabriz is influenced by its climatic condition.

Table 4 Psychological Characteristics of Respondents (Preferences)

Characteristics	Number	%
<i>Preferred Period</i>		
Nowrouz holidays	33	9.2
Summer holidays	312	87.2
Religious holidays	2	0.6
National holidays	11	3.1
Total	361	100.0
<i>Travel time</i>		
Weekend	24	6.6
Week days	189	52.4
Occasions	148	41.0
Total	361	100.0
<i>Preferred Season</i>		
Spring	69	19.1
Summer	275	76.2
Autumn	14	3.9
Winter	3	8.0
Total	361	100.0
<i>Trip type</i>		
With travel agencies	24	6.6
Without travel agencies	337	93.4
Total	361	100.0
<i>Pattern of travel companions</i>		
Family	274	75.9
Friends	15	4.2
Colleague	49	13.6
Alone	23	6.4
Total	361	100.0
<i>Travel companions</i>		
Alone	19	5.26
2 persons	41	11.35
3 persons	36	9.97
4 persons	126	34.9
5 persons	35	9.7
6 persons	101	27.0
7 +	3	0.83
Total	361	100.0
<i>Average daily expenditure USD</i>		
< 50	146	40.4
50 – 100	114	31.6
101 – 150	36	10.0
151 – 200	28	7.8
201 – 250	10	2.8
251 – 300	7	1.9
301 – 350	6	1.7
> 350	14	3.9
Total	361	100.0
<i>Preferred food</i>		
Prefer restaurant's food	200	55.4
Prepare food by myself	161	44.6
Total	361	100.0

Lack of planning for all seasons on the one hand and the pleasant climate of Tabriz during summer on the other hand have made Tabriz urban tourism seasonal and dependent on the summer season. As previously mentioned, 93 percent of the respondents had made their own arrangements for their trip themselves; this type of traveling has a

significant correlation with families' socio-economic status and it is also indicative of the position and role of travel agencies. In the process of consuming tourist products, travel agencies are the last ring of the chain which connects the demanders to the suppliers of these products and services. In the domestic tourism sectors, travel agencies perform weakly in providing tourist services and products. As mentioned, family pattern of travelling is the most-preferred pattern of traveling between Iranians. Therefore, almost 75 percent of the respondents travelled with their family. It should be noted that travelers' preferences are indicative of their attitudes. Some environmental factors like culture, social class, company groups and family are among the reasons for choosing the travel pattern. These factors also affect the behavior of the consumers of tourist products and services (Ketabchi, 2004). The average daily expenditure of 72 percent of the respondents is less than USD 100. Logically, when one benefits from higher rate of wealth, the possibility and quality of travelling will be more and higher respectively. As a result, their expenditure will increase as well. Social class is still one of the important external factors which influences the purchasing motivation. Social class is evaluated on the basis of job status and income level. This external factor also determines the travelling motivation and purchasing patterns. In general, the average tourism expenses are higher than the average income rate in Iran. A comparative analysis of the income rate of the respondents demonstrates that the income rate of 65 percent of the respondents is between USD 50-600 which is indicative of the income rate of the middle class and below. The monthly income of 75 percent of the respondents is less than USD600 which is representative of the income of the middle class and lower in Iran. This indicates that the purchasing power of tourists is low and supplier's targeting should be in line with tourists' purchasing power. Tourists have a lot of needs but their financial resources are limited, therefore their needs will turn into demand only when their needs match their purchasing power.

Behavioral characteristics of respondents

The behavioral characteristics of respondents are shown in Table 5. One of the important factors in the success of marketing strategies is a right understanding of consumer's behavior. Purchasers' diverse characteristics are influenced by social², cultural³, personal⁴ and psychological⁵ factors therefore different people show different purchasing. As mentioned previously, 93 percent of the respondents had made their own arrangements for their trip themselves; almost 76 percent preferred the family mode of traveling and almost 73 percent had preferred to travel in their private car. This result indicates that the respondents don't have enough confidence with regard to the reliability of travel agencies and public services. Also, some of the most important factors in selecting the private car as transport modes are the tendency of Iranians to travel with their family, convenience and comfort, inexpensive fuel, inadequacy of public transport means and costly aviation. Lack of adequate accommodation in high season creates uncertainty about travelers accommodation and forces travelers to use their private car to avoid stress in case they are unable to obtain proper accommodation; The possibility of camping in the areas allocated by municipality and passenger park and the possibility of accommodation in schools in the course of journey, encourages the use of private cars. More than 61 percent of the respondents had prior familiarity with Tabriz. Investigating the respondents' sources of information about Tabriz indicated that the behavior of most travelers is influenced by their friends and relatives as the influential social factors. Other reference groups such as visual and print media has had no remarkable effect on their degree of familiarity with destination and their decision making process. Allocation of only 2.2 percent of the responses to travel agencies as the source of information shows that travelling process in Iran has been mainly a self-motivated process in which travel agencies has had no planning role. Therefore, the domestic tourism market in Iran lacks systematic marketing advertisement. The lengthy stay in a destination means an increase in expenses for tourists and increase of income for the suppliers of the services and products. There is a direct relation between the attractions, tourism planning for destination and length of stay. Tabriz is not a remarkable destination for travelers to staying more time; therefore, majority of respondents had stayed 2 or 3 days. In relation to the length of stay it can be inferred that most of those who have stayed 4 days and more in Tabriz, have stayed by their relatives. This group comprises 29.6 percent of the total respondents. Respondents' preference of accommodation type reveals the life style and socio-economic status of the respondents. For Iranian domestic tourists, staying with friends and relatives is a motivating factor in the decision to travel and in selecting the destination. Thus, more than 16 percent of the respondents in Tabriz stayed with their friends and relatives playing no role in the occupancy rate of the hotels and guesthouses. This means that the travelling process occurred with no effect in generating income and money articulation in the destination. In addition, the possibility of using public parks provide by the municipalities, using schools in summer holidays and new year holiday to accommodate travelers, and provision of welfare and accommodation facilities by organizations for their employees practically withdrew implies that 44 percent of travelers never stayed in hotels and guesthouses.

Table 5 Behavioral characteristics of respondents

² Culture, micro-culture, social class

³ Reference groups, family, status and dignity.

⁴ Age and life-cycle stages, economic condition, life style, character and personal imagination

⁵ Motivation, motivational positioning

Characteristics	Number	%
Transport modes		
Privet car	263	72.9
Minibus	8	2.2
Autobus	34	9.4
Train	17	4.7
Airplane	36	10.0
Others	3	8.0
Total	361	100.0
Travel distance (drive)		
< 1 hour	14	3.9
1 + 2 hours	38	10.5
2 + 3 hours	27	7.5
3 + 4 hours	6	1.7
4 + 5 hours	17	4.7
> 5 hours	259	71.7
Total	361	100.0
Familiarity with destination		
Yes	221	61.2
No	140	38.8
Total	361	100.0
Information Source		
Friends & Family	164	45.4
Travel agency	8	2.2
On TV	39	10.8
Through internet	8	2.2
Magazine & Brochure	7	1.9
By chance	21	5.8
Already familiar	87	24.1
My family is living in Tabriz	25	6.9
1 & 5	1	3.0
1 & 8	1	3.0
Total	361	100.0
Length of stay		
1 day	69	19.1
2 days	104	28.8
3 days	99	27.4
4 days	40	11.1
5 days	11	3.0
5+ days	38	10.5
Total	361	100.0
Preferred accommodation place		
With family	43	11.9
With friends	15	4.1
Inn	24	6.6
Institutional dorm	34	9.4
In school	47	13.0
Hotel	119	33.0
Traveler's Park	79	22.0
Total	361	100.0
Inter-city Transportation means		
Private car	235	65.1
Bus	21	5.8
Taxi	95	26.3
Walking	10	2.8
Total	361	100.0

Although hotels in Tabriz show full occupancy rates during high season, the possibility of accommodation of travelers with low expense in schools and passenger parks has significantly de-motivated the investors from building hotels and inns. The frequency of the responses of the preferred intercity transportation means indicates that 65.1 percent of the respondents used their own private automobile for intra-city trips. The concentration of cultural and

historic attractions in the old section of the city, and lack of parking lots in this area inconveniences travelers. This has always been one of the problems in domestic tourism of Tabriz. In addition, taxis are not equipped with meters resulting, in most of the cases, in the wrong calculation of taxi fares. Development of metro and increasing the capacity of public transportation will lessen the use of private automobiles to access the tourist sites and consequently will affect travelers' satisfaction.

Conclusion

The present survey has focused on examining and analyzing the demographic, psychological and behavioral characteristics of urban tourists to Tabriz. The main results of the present survey indicate that:

- i. Tourists' experiences and behavior are strongly affected by multi-dimensional motivations, preferences, needs and cooperative activities and characteristics of destination.
- ii. Tourists' needs and wants are affected by their demographic, economic, social and psychological characteristics.
- iii. There is a significant relationship between the degree of satisfaction of urban tourists and the quality and quantity of the combinational urban and tourist elements which are in conformity with their needs, wants and characteristics.
- iv. There is a direct relationship between the development of target market, enhancement of tourist products and services and development of tourism economy of destination on the one hand and the analysis of results.

The accomplishment of marketing goals is difficult without paying attention to tourists' characteristics. This indicates that the marketing efforts of organizations and travel agencies must be in accordance with tourists' travel objectives, preferences, and motivations. Most of the family-oriented tourists selected Tabriz as their destination due to its capability in providing a secure and calm social environment for families. The coincidence of the end of the educational year with summer has increasingly affected the formation of travel mode of young travelers, resulting in the formation of family travels. The results have also shown that tourists visiting Tabriz are mainly from the middle social class and below with low purchasing power. The main purpose of tourists visiting Tabriz is for relaxation and recreation; the fact that this region benefits from pleasant climate in the first half of the year which coincides with the educational holidays and the high social and moral security are three important factors reinforcing the motivation of tourists to travel to Tabriz. There is potential in developing winter activities in the second half of the year, but the neglect of this potential and lack of planning for tourism throughout the year has ensured the seasonality of tourism market. Because of lack of trust in tourist services and products offered by the travel agencies, the domestic tourism trends are planned by travelers and are mainly performed in family mode; therefore, travel agencies play no significant role in the formation of domestic tourism. Moreover, most of travel agencies don't possess enough expertise and knowledge in this field. The experience of domestic tourists has shown that the cost of tourism is higher in comparison to other countries. This is one of the factors which force the travelers to personally embark on planning for their travelling, and use less tourist services and facilities like restaurants and tours. The results show that tourism-related organizations and travel agencies, mass media and the Internet play a smaller role in advertising and introducing the destinations. On the contrary, personal experiences, recommendations, family and relative relationships have been the main source of gaining information for tourists. The results show that the lack of accommodation facilities, road facilities, recreational places in destinations and high expenses, are the main reasons for family-mode and self-administrated travel. One of the successful policies has been the innovation of accommodating tourists in schools and passenger parks during the high season. Taking these measures has contributed to the flourishing of the domestic tourism planning due to its significant role in utilizing leisure time for tourist activities. By accommodating tourists in houses and public accommodation places, most of the accommodation expenses are taken up by families and urban management authorities. In general, the number of transit tourists and passengers has increased but they play no significant role in the economy of the region. This is due to the lack of some public spaces like water front, restaurants, cultural products, various exhibitions, parking lots, public restrooms, mosques, etc. All these points are indicative of the fact that Tabriz is far from ready to host the tourists and travelers. It could be even claimed that despite benefiting from its natural potential, various historic, cultural, recreational attractions, Tabriz can't be considered as a perfect destination for urban tourism.

The main purpose of the paper was to illustrate the current state of urban tourism and to examine the characteristics of tourism market and the existing challenges of tourism for the future development of urban tourism of Tabriz. Supply and demand in tourism are two main components of the combinational system of tourism industry. Future research should extend to the analysis of the characteristics of destinations as the supply market, the destination of tourists as the demand market and the relationship between them. Such information is one of the requirements of successful marketing, providing services as well as the overall development of tourism industry of destination.

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