

CASE STUDY

Evaluation of urban branding strategies in Iranian cities

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ABSTRACT

Urban branding, as a new approach toward urban development, improves marketing of the city image in different ways by changing the visual image of the city into a brand image. This paper aims to survey the element of urban branding strategies in Iranian cities by examining the criteria of urban branding theory in Iranian cities. The main goal of this investigation is to describe how the cities become branded, how branding succeeds, and how a viable city image is created. This study is an applied research and descriptive-analytical method conducted in five steps: 1) identifying the study area, 2) identifying economical capabilities of branding in study area, 3) identifying the spatial level of potential using a specific questionnaire, 4) selecting the capabilities with a higher average score as superior capabilities for strategic planning, and 5) performing a strategic planning. The paper explores the concept of urban branding from theoretical, analytical, and practical viewpoints. In practical terms, a questionnaire is administered to planners and designers to identify the stages by which an Iranian city (Qazvin) might be effectively branded. The results showed that the QPSM method and its integration with the SWOT method have a high ability to extract urban branding strategies and can be used in this field.

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INTRODUCTION

Urban or city branding is a current topic mainly addressed since the last decades. Cities all over the world are competing with each other for different targets such as increasing foreign direct investment and attract visitors, businesses, employees, and residents. To understand the concept of urban branding, first it is necessary to define the visual image and urban image. The concept of urban branding is novel and defined as the process by which unique physical features of the city are defined and come to encapsulate the essence of the place. Moreover, urban branding is not only limited to the promotion

of a positive image of the city but it extends more, to change it into an urban experience (Helmy, 2008). Urban branding is a process of diversification whereby local tourism organizations, arts, cultural facilities, museums, and historic preservation groups harness and construct place images and help produce tourist sites to attract consumer and investment to a particular local area (Gotham, 2007; Helmy, 2008). Branding of places and cities consists of two main elements:

- 1- Placemaking or city building; that makes the place specifically advantageous or attractive.
- 2- Place or city marketing; an effort to promote the place or city specific advantage (Gotham, 2007).

The main goals of urban branding are to reimage

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a city depending on place-based identities and understanding of a particular local culture (Gotham, 2007; Järvisalo, 2012). It aims to clear unique and consumer-oriented version of the urban image that can attract desirable consumers and maximize consumer spending (Gotham, 2007; Evans, 2008; Jensen and Richardson, 2005). It is typically based on the representations drawn from architecture and the images of the city heard or read in movies, on television, in magazines, and other forms of mass media (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005; Vanolo, 2008). Therefore, urban branding aims to:

- 1- Develop new ways of communicating city image to the rest of the region, or to the world as a whole, which is considered as a generated image.
- 2- Achieve competitive advantages regionally and internationally.
- 3- Strengthen the reputation of the city and its corporate identity that improves its economic importance (Unsworth, 2008).

Thus, city branding has to be concerned with 'how culture and history, economic growth and social development, infrastructure and architecture, landscape and environment, among other things, can be combined into a saleable identity that is acceptable

to all people, (Järvisalo, 2012). City branding means the main things that people should know about the certain place (Järvisalo, 2012; Unsworth, 2008). The making of a good city image is a meaningful synthesis of activity and structure (Musterd and Murie, 2011; Jansson, 2006). The use of image planning strategies has become an essential need for cities in order to survive through the global economy (San Eugenio Vela, 2013). Successful brands give benefit beyond the visual image into a unique brand image through certain strategies. There are different urban branding strategies that could be developed based on diverse city development objectives and visions such as large-scale urban projects, signed architecture, events, and media (Gotham, 2007; Evans, 2003). A distinct form of branding is needed because of the distinctive nature of cities. Cities are neither products nor corporations in the traditional sense of these terms (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009). Graham Hankinson has developed a model of a place brand that reflects the reality of branding a city. The model is based on a brand as a relationship with all the stakeholders. Fig. 1, Shows this relationship.

It concentrates on the behavior and reality and not so much in communications and image. Hankinson

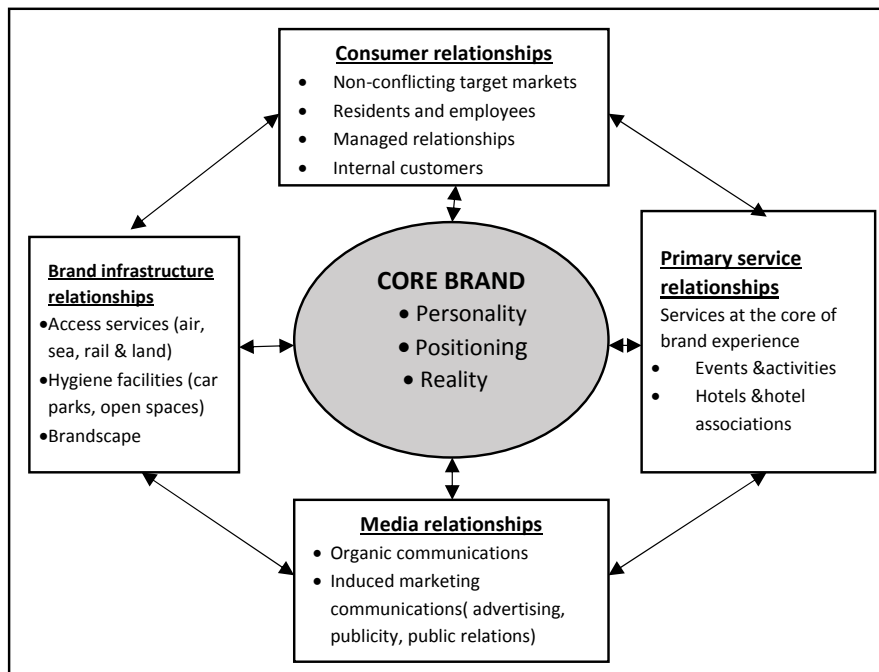


Fig. 1. The relational network brand (Hankinson, 2004)

states that marketing networks are vehicles for integrating stakeholders, producers, and employees in a collaborative partnership of value enhancement. Network marketing consists of a complex web of relationships and organizations. In best cases, organizations manage to combine resources and create relationships and value (Hankinson, 2004).

Nowadays, many cities attempt to promote their image through the aid of iconic artifacts. From a general point of view, city branding is mainly based on three key attributes; i.e., image, uniqueness, and authenticity. Nearly every city has city branding on its agenda in order to redevelop its image (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). Branding, mainly developed from marketing strategies, is increasingly used for city marketing and promotion, similar to products. Kotler even argues, that 'places are products whose identities and values must be designed and marketed' as products (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). According to Anholt, one of the objectives of city or place branding is to discover or create the uniqueness of image, which makes the city differentiable from others (Anholt, 2006). The main aim in the construction of brands for cities is the articulation of the city in the globalized world (Rainiso, 2003). If a city claims to 'work' successfully, it needs economic wealth and an attractive image. As a holistic approach city, branding serves as a promotion tool for creating a unique image of a city. Accordingly, the image of the city can be considered as one of the most important key concerns for city branding (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002). Culture is something that individuals or groups "create", or alternatively something that such individuals or groups "receive". In other words, in order to trace the development of culture, it is necessary to consider the mutual relations between the three parties, the "creator", the "cultural property", and the "recipients", and they cannot be discussed separately from the conditions of the society that gave them birth (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). Depending on the major intervention targets, there are at least three different types of cultural strategies (Anholt, 2007). People-oriented strategies emphasize human development, focusing on either principal producers of arts or cultural consumers. Cultural subsidies and funding for artistic activities can be targeted at producers, while cultural classes and workshops serve local consumers directly. Product-oriented strategies emphasize on the industrial networks and institutions

through which cultural workers are mobilized. They very much resemble industrial policies used in other sectors to encourage agglomeration, increase worker skills, and cultivate a productive social environment. Place-oriented strategies aim at attracting capital investment and enticing tourists. They often involve infrastructure and property development, the promotion of cultural events, and the building of cultural venues (e.g., museums, theaters, libraries). The actual implementation of these three types of strategies can and often do overlap one another. To make a successful cultural policy, some conditions need to be met (Randall, 1997). First is the championship by local officials, particularly those at the senior level. Second, there needs to be sufficient investment and revenue for new capital projects. Third, a coherent government structure needs to be in place to support cultural and creative industries. Last, a regulatory structure should ensure that policies are carried out and implemented properly (Van Gelder, 2003). Modern industrial development commenced in popular cultures plays a constructive role in pulling people closer together by providing them with a shared experience invigorated by the consumption of cultural commodities. The commodification, production, marketing, pirating, and consumption of popular cultures first encourage collaborations between companies and individuals involved in these processes. Moreover, these activities also construct new frameworks for delivering images, ideas, and emotions, which can invigorate feelings of proximity and belonging. In a free-market economy, dense (and often uncontrolled) circulation of popular culture has the potential to weaken individual states, control over the inflow of culture and hamper their efforts to utilize culture for their own purposes such as nation-building. In other words, it creates a new sort of community that stretches beyond the reach of the state and may challenge it. The spread of popular culture helps people in East Asia to develop a common language made up of the same sounds, images, and texts available through music and smartphones, TV, and movie screens, in comic publications, on commercial billboards, or via the Internet (Otmazgin, 2016). These commodities and images do not have to be unique, as long as they are shared by wide segments of the population. As shown in Fig. 2, the process of urban branding requires urban infrastructures and facilities (hotels, safety

roads, public and green spaces, recreation centers, art galleries, museums, and theatres), city form (city landscape, landmarks, modern streets, urban neighborhoods, urban texture, and branding urban projects), historical buildings and environments (historical buildings, signature architecture, and historical environments), and socio-cultural events and activities (events and cultural activities, festivals, religious and national occasions, customs, and media-generated image such as logos, slogans and website). Fig. 2, shows the components of urban branding.

In this research, the components affecting urban branding are divided into four categories:

- Urban infrastructures and facilities;
- City image (spatial or visual);
- Media-generated image (logs, slogans, and website);
- and
- Socio-cultural events and activities.

Urban branding strategies can affect the capability and capacity of a city to attain appropriate economic, social, and cultural objectives. Such branding can

develop the visual image of a city by incorporating historical and cultural illustration with modern urban factors and new landmark buildings.

This paper explores the concept of urban branding from the theoretical analytical viewpoint and attempts to identify the main features of an achievable urban branding strategy. The main aims of this work are:

- To emphasize the role of city branding in urban planning;
- To improve the visual image of a city; and
- To create a suitable image, which facilitates urban development.

Then, in practical terms, an expert study is conducted to identify the stages by which an Iranian city (Qazvin) might be effectively branded.

The present study was performed in Qazvin urban agglomeration in 2018.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is an applied research and descriptive-analytical method, performed in five following steps:

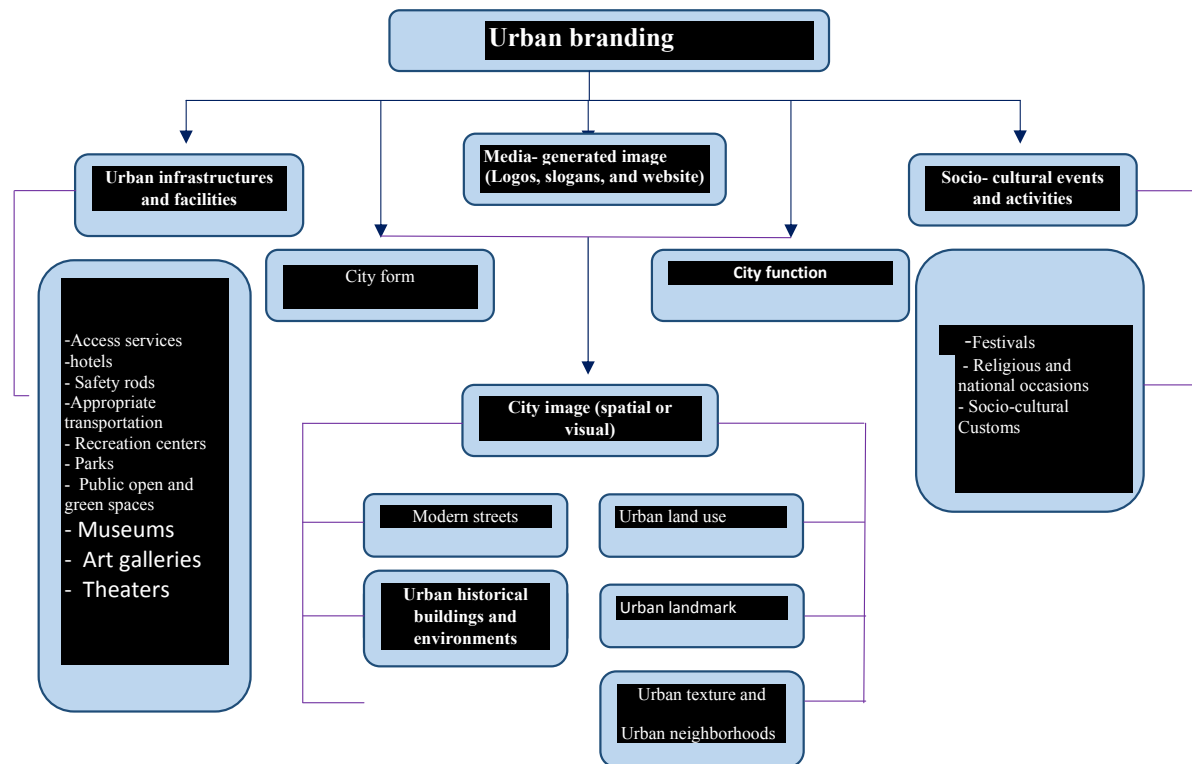


Fig. 2. The components of urban branding (authors)

- In the first step, to identify the economic capabilities for branding, the study area was determined. This area includes a space that was affected by the city of Qazvin (Qazvin urban agglomeration) directly.

- In the second step, economical branding capabilities in the study area are identified using documents such as Qazvin tourism comprehensive plans, regional land use plans, and regional comprehensive plans. The classification of these capabilities is based on theoretical studies.

In the third step, a questionnaire for identifying the spatial level of potential capabilities (international, national, and regional) is prepared (22 questionnaires for managers and experts 31 questionnaires for academic experts and academic staff). The method used to determine the sample size at this stage was snowball sampling. Using these questionnaires, managers and experts were asked to assign scores of 1 to 4 for each capability at each spatial level. For

example, capabilities 1 was scored 4 (high impact) at the regional level, 2 (moderate impact) at the national level, and 1 (low impact) internationally. The information from the following organizations were used based on the comments of managers and experts:

- Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization of Qazvin Province
- Industry, Mining, and Trade Organization of Qazvin province
- Agriculture Organization of Qazvin province
- Road and Urban Development Office of Qazvin province
- Municipality of Qazvin

- In the fourth step, the capabilities at the national and international levels received a higher average score and then selected as superior capabilities for strategic planning.

The fifth step involves strategic planning. In this step, for the study of branding economical

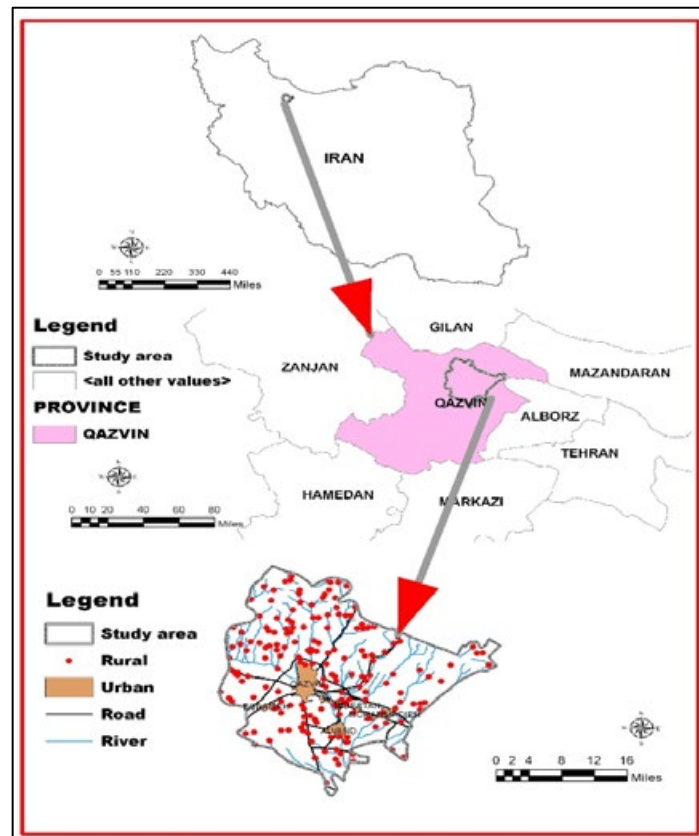


Fig. 3. The study area

capabilities system in Qazvin urban agglomeration, Internal Factor Evaluation Matrix (IFE) and External Factor Evaluation matrix (EFE) were formed. Next, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified using available resources and documentation, as well as expert’s opinions. After identifying the internal and external environment, to determine the coefficient of the importance of the internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and the factors of the external environment (opportunities and threats), questionnaires were distributed among the sample population of the previous stage (managers and organizational experts and academic experts). Using these questionnaires, the respondents were asked to assign a coefficient of 0 (unimportant) to 1 (of great importance) according to the level of importance of the factors in the system. Subsequently, Eq. 1 was used to calculate the importance coefficient for each factor:

$$D_{ni} = \frac{d_i}{\sum_{i=1}^n d_i} \tag{1}$$

Where, Dni is the importance coefficient of a factor, di is the frequency of choices, and n is the number of items

The sum of importance coefficient of factors in the internal factor matrix and the external factor matrix is equal to 1. In addition to the importance coefficient, a score of 1 to 4 was assigned to the Delphi team to the factors that indicate the current response of the system to these factors (score). The final score in the internal and external environment assessment table is obtained from the importance coefficients multiplier in the scores. After identifying the internal and external environment, possible strategies were proposed in the field of Branding capabilities of Qazvin urban agglomeration. These strategies fall into four main categories; i.e., aggressive strategies (SO) competitive strategies (ST) conservative strategies

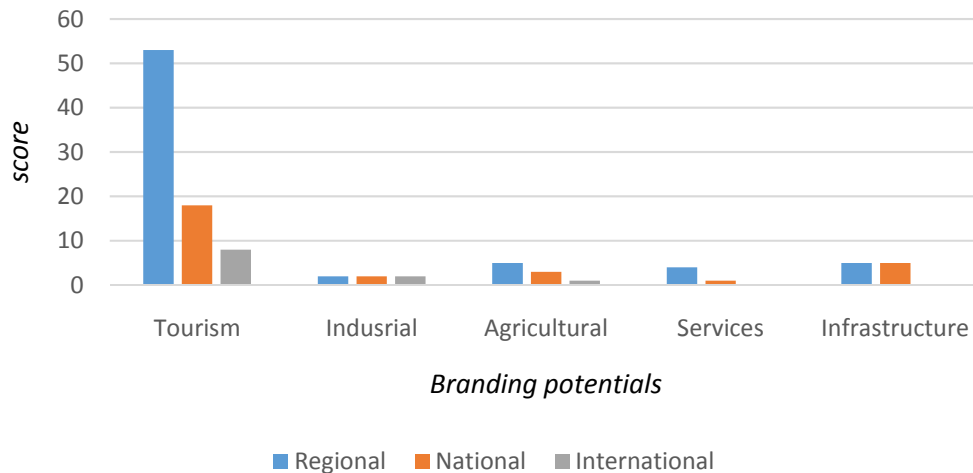


Fig.4. The spatial level of branding potential in Qazvin urban agglomeration

Table 1. The selected potential for branding plan of Qazvin urban agglomeration

Potential name	International average scores	National average scores	Averaged scores
Sadal-Saltanehserai	3.3	3.6	3.4
Qazvin traditional market	2.1	3.4	2.75
Safavi Gardens Collection	2.2	3.4	2.8
Alborz and Lia Industrial Estates	2.5	3.6	3.1
The old gates (old Tehran, DarbKoshk)	3	3.3	3.1
Calligraphy	1.8	3.8	2.8
Traditional pastries	1.9	2.8	2.4
Traditional almond gardens	2.1	2.6	2.4
Educational Services (Academic)	2.8	3.6	3.2

(WO) defensive strategies (WT) (David, 2009). In the last section, using the Quantitative *Strategic Planning Matrix* (QSPM), strategies were prioritized and strategy selection was optimized (Wang and Hong, 2011).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To study and plan the branding potential of Qazvin city, the study area must first be identified. Because the impact of branding potential in the areas around the city can also affect the city, the study area should include the area city and its surrounding area. Thus, Qazvin urban agglomeration plan was used as the study area.

The area is 1,471 km² and includes 6 cities (with a population of 615,674 people) and 93 villages (with a

population of 151,498 people).

To identify branding potentials, the study plans such as comprehensive tourism plan of Qazvin province, comprehensive plan of Qazvin city, comprehensive plan of Qazvin region, provincial development, and land use plan of Qazvin, as well as expert surveys were used. Branding potential is classified into four categories: tourism, industry, agriculture, and services. In addition, in classifying potentials, there were identified a total of 53 tourism potential: 2 industrial potentials, 5 agricultural potentials, 4 servicing potentials, and 5 infrastructures potential. The spatial level impacts of branding potential are shown in Fig. 4. Qazvin’s urban agglomeration in the field of tourism is more capable in regional, national, and international levels than other fields

Table 2. EFE matrix

	External factors	Importance coefficient	Scores	Final scores
Opportunities	O1- locating at a distance of 120 km from the capital (outside of the banned industrial investment belt)	0.06	2	0.12
	O2- Proximity to the capital of the country (center of capitals, market of consumption, and the high degree of accessibility)	0.05	2	0.1
	O3- Appropriate location (located next to the main North and west communication arteries)	0.04	2	0.08
	O4- Placing along the road leading to the western borders of the country	0.04	2	0.08
	O5- The location of Qazvin as the provincial center in the study area	0.03	1	0.03
	O6- Industrial development policies by the central government	0.05	2	0.1
	O7- The emergence of urban branding as one of the economic issues among government officials	0.03	1	0.03
	O8- Improved attraction of tourists and foreign investors after Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action	0.05	2	0.1
	O9- The prominence of Qazvin urban agglomeration as one of the most important industrial centers in the Iran	0.07	2	0.14
	O10- The prominence of Qazvin city as an academic and research city in the Iran	0.04	2	0.08
Threats	T1- Subsequent droughts in the Middle East and Iran	0.05	2	0.1
	T2- The existence of insecurity at the borders of the Iran and raising the risk of investment	0.06	2	0.12
	T3- Banking and financial sanctions by Western countries and reduced willingness of investors and tourists to enter Iran	0.08	1	0.08
	T4- The existence of rival industrial centers such as Eshtehard, Bouyin Zahra, Arak, and Qom near the study area	0.04	2	0.08
	T5- The existence of tourism centers with similar capabilities in the cities of Isfahan, Tabriz, Tehran, and Shiraz	0.05	1	0.05
	T6- Reduction of oil revenues and consequently government revenues after sanctions and cuts in development budgets	0.06	2	0.12
	T7- The presentation of tourism and historical attractions as the second and third issue in Iran	0.05	2	0.1
	T8- Placing countries with high tourist attraction like Turkey, Azerbaijan, UAE in the neighborhood	0.07	1	0.07
	T9- Lack of tax and economic incentives to attract investors in industrial and commercial sectors	0.05	2	0.1
	T10- The weakness of IT infrastructure of the country and the province in the field of urban branding	0.03	2	0.06
sum		1	1.74	

Evaluation of urban branding strategies

and industrial and agricultural potential are in the next ranks.

It is worth mentioning that the potentials at the higher levels also include lower levels. For example, the potential for international impacts also includes lower levels (national and regional). In the following potentials (Table 1) those Scored above 1.5 were selected as potentials that to be used in the branding plan of Qazvin urban agglomeration. Scoring is based on how much each of these potentials has the ability of branding at different spatial levels.

According to Table 1, Sadal-Saltaneh, as one of the historical tourist attractions of Qazvin urban agglomeration, has the highest international

average scores (3.3). Lowest international average score belongs to calligraphy art with 1.8. At the national level, calligraphy has the highest score of 3.8 and traditional almond gardens with the lowest score of 2.6. More than 70% of these potentials are within the city limits, and the historical district of the city, with 80% of these capabilities is the most important part. For analysis and planning of Qazvin urban agglomeration branding, strategic planning method was used. Therefore, after identifying the internal (IFE) and external (EFE) environment, using the views of managers and experts of academic and organizations, the importance coefficient of the factors was determined and some appropriate strategies were presented.

Table 3. IFE matrix

	Internal factors	Importance coefficient	Scores	Final scores
strengths	S1- The presence of active and expert labor force in the study area	0.09	3	0.27
	S2- There are a desire and willingness among the authorities of urban and provincial organizations about urban branding	0.05	2	0.1
	S3- The existence Specific and unmatched branding potential in the national and international level, such as calligraphy, old gates, and Saad al-Saltanahserai	0.08	2	0.16
	S4- The existence of appropriate university and research centers, such as the international university within the study area	0.04	2	0.08
	S5- Existence of energy and transportation infrastructures and services within the study area	0.07	4	0.28
	S6- The desire of the residents and citizens of the study area to present the capabilities at different levels	0.03	1	0.03
	S7- The existence of suitable natural and agricultural resources for industrial development within the study area	0.05	2	0.1
	S8- There are websites for each organization that introduces supervised capabilities	0.04	4	0.16
	S9- High youth percentage With high economic motives	0.06	2	0.12
	S10- High level of literacy and educated people within the study area	0.05	3	0.15
Weakness	W1- Lack of coordination between the responsible organizations about branding potential	0.08	2	0.16
	W2- Little acquaintance and in some cases the lack of familiarity with urban branding between authorities and organizational experts	0.03	3	0.09
	W3- There is no independent website suitable for introducing branding potential of study area	0.03	2	0.06
	W4- The lack of unit manager for the study area	0.05	2	0.10
	W5- probability of resistance to the branding, especially from the traditional economic group (Qazvin traditional market)	0.04	2	0.08
	W6- Failure to create appropriate routes and corridors within the city and the urban agglomeration for introducing the potentials	0.03	2	0.06
	W7- Reduction of groundwater levels and reduction of surface water following droughts in the study area	0.02	3	0.06
	W8- The high percentage of immigrants in the study area and lack of sense of belonging	0.05	3	0.15
	W9- The weakness of the private investor in the study area	0.07	3	0.21
	W10- Reduced environmental quality in the study area as a result of lack of attention over the last decades	0.04	3	0.12
sum		1		2.54

Analysis of internal and external environment:

In the external environment analysis (Table 2), T3 and T8 are important factors that challenge the system. According to the scores, the response of the system to the external environment factors is very weak. Table 2 illustrate the EFE matrix.

In the internal environment analysis, S1, S3, and

W1 are the important factors that affect the system of branding in the study area. The response of the system to internal factors is relatively better than that to the external environment (Table 3).

As shown in Figs. 5 and 6, IFE and EFE scores are 1.86 and 2.17, respectively, and Qazvin urban agglomeration lies in Quadrant VIII. Thus, the

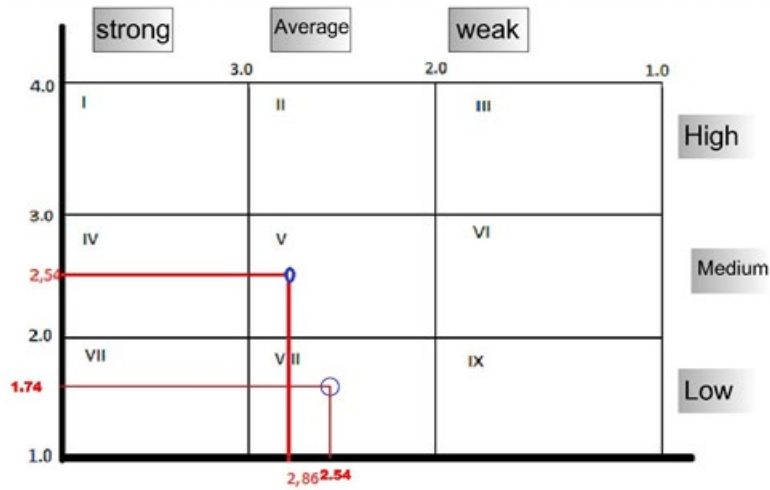


Fig. 5. IF matrix

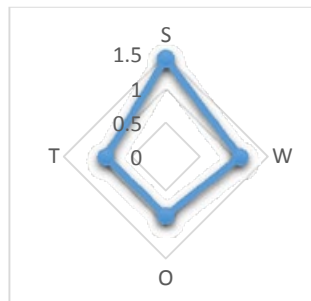
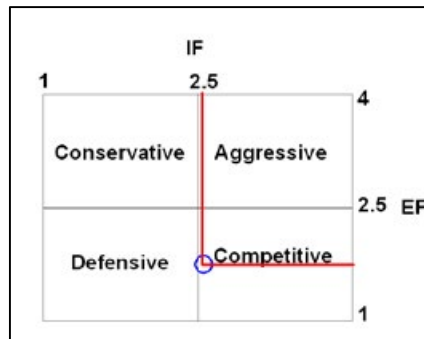


Fig. 6. IF matrix

Table 4. SWOT strategies

SO	WO
<p>SO1 - Specialization of industrial activities in the industrial zones of study area considering the human and natural capabilities (S7, O7, and O6)</p> <p>SO2 - Use of young and expert labor forces to exploit the potentials (S1, S2, S4, S5, S7, O2, O6, and O9)</p> <p>SO3 - Use of Post-Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Space on the Export of Industrial Products and Reception of Tourists (S1, S3, S7, and O8)</p> <p>SO4 – Identifying the unique tourism and industrial capabilities at study area that are capable of becoming an urban brand and raised at the national and international levels (S1, S3, S7, S9, S10 O7, O8, and O9)</p>	<p>WO1- Using the location of the study area (located on the main western routes of the country) to introduce potentials using urban image (W6, O4, and O3)</p> <p>WO2- Creating tax incentives and reducing the administrative bureaucracy to attract domestic and foreign investors (W9, O6, and O7)</p> <p>WO3- Entering passersby inside the study area and defining the appropriate routes for familiarizing them with study area capabilities (W6, O3, and O4)</p> <p>WO4- Coordination between organizations and institutions responsible for urban branding through the establishment of an independent organization with respect to the urban branding position among national authorities (W1, W4, O5, and O7)</p>
ST	WT
<p>ST1 - Investment and emphasis on unique tourism capabilities in competing with the tourist attractions of neighboring countries and domestic cities (S1, T5, and T8)</p> <p>ST2 - Use of strengths within the study area, such as the appropriate infrastructure, young labor force, in order to compete and develop the industrial potential of study area against the surrounding industrial cities (S1, S5, S10, and T4)</p> <p>ST3- Better use of websites to introduce study area and its potential in order to reduce the negative view on the investment space in the country and study area (S8 and T2)</p> <p>ST4- Use of universities and research centers as the center for the preparation of tourism and industrial development projects.... (S4, S6, T5, T7, and T8)</p>	<p>WT1- Control and supervision of water consumption, especially in agricultural sector, and prepare appropriate plans in this field according to the standard documents (W7 and T1)</p> <p>WT2- Creation of tax exemptions and credit granting to indigenous investors to bring transformation in industrial and tourism sectors (W9, T3, and T6)</p> <p>WT3- Paying further attention to environmental projects and water resources over the coming years (W7, W10, and T1)</p> <p>WT4- Increasing the awareness and information of different classes of people within the study area regarding urban branding and its positive effects to reduce domestic disputes as well as increasing the willingness of foreign investors (W5, W2, and T3)</p>

Table 5. QSPM of SO strategies

Strategy	SO1		SO2		SO3		SO4		
	Importance coefficient	Attractiveness score	Total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	Total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	Total attractiveness scores
S1	0.09	3	0.27	4	0.36	1	0.09	0	0
S2	0.05	1	0.05	0	0	0	0	2	0.1
S3	0.08	0	0	2	0.16	2	0.16	4	0.32
S4	0.04	2	0.08	1	0.04	1	0.04	0	0
S5	0.07	2	0.14	1	0.07	2	0.14	0	0
S6	0.03	1	0.03	0	0	1	0.03	2	0.06
S7	0.05	4	0.2	3	0.15	2	0.1	1	0.05
S8	0.04	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0.12
S9	0.06	3	0.18	4	0.24	2	0.12	0	0
S10	0.05	2	0.1	3	0.15	1	0.05	0	0
O1	0.06	4	0.24	1	0.06	0	0	0	0
O2	0.05	3	0.15	1	0.05	2	0.1	1	0.05
O3	0.04	2	0.08	2	0.08	2	0.08	1	0.04
O4	0.04	0	0	0	0	2	0.08	0	0
O5	0.03	1	0.03	1	0.03	0	0	0	0
O6	0.05	4	0.2	3	0.15	2	0.1	2	0.1
O7	0.03	0	0	2	0.06	0	0	3	0.09
O8	0.05	0	0	4	0.2	4	0.2	1	0.05
O9	0.07	4	0.28	3	0.21	3	0.21	1	0.07
O10	0.04	0	0	2	0.08	1	0.04	0	0
total			2.03		2.09		1.54		1.05

currently applied situation (harvest or divest) strategy must be kept.

According to the internal and external analysis scores in Fig. 6, the strategies must be competitive (ST); as the main purpose is to implement internal strengths and avoid the threats posed by the

external environment.

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) strategies

At this stage, using comparative analysis and internal and external factors evaluation matrixes,

Table 6. QSPM of WO strategies

Strategy	WO1			WO2		WO3		WO4	
factors	Importance coefficient	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores
W1	0.08	0	0	2	0.16	0	0	3	0.24
W2	0.03	0	0	0	0	1	0.03	2	0.06
W3	0.03	1	0.03	1	0.03	2	0.06	1	0.03
W4	0.05	0	0	2	0.1	1	0.05	2	0.1
W5	0.04	0	0	0	0	1	0.04	0	0
W6	0.03	4	0.12	0	0	4	0.12	1	0.03
W7	0.02	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
W8	0.05	1	0.05	0	0	0	0	0	0
W9	0.07	0	0	3	0.21	0	0	0	0
W10	0.04	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
O1	0.06	1	0.06	0	0	0	0	0	0
O2	0.05	1	0.05	0	0	1	0.05	0	0
O3	0.04	4	0.16	0	0	3	0.12	0	0
O4	0.04	3	0.12	0	0	2	0.08	0	0
O5	0.03	1	0.03	0	0	2	0.06	1	0.03
O6	0.05	0	0	1	0.05	0	0	0	0
O7	0.03	2	0.06	0	0	1	0.03	4	0.12
O8	0.05	3	0.15	4	0.2	3	0.15	0	0
O9	0.07	2	0.14	2	0.14	2	0.14	0	0
O10	0.04	2	0.08	0	0	2	0.08	0	0
total			1.05		0.89		1.01		0.61

Table 7. QSPM of WO strategies

Strategy	ST1			ST2		ST3		ST4	
factors	Importance coefficient	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores
S1	0.09	0	0	4	0.36	0	0	0	0
S2	0.05	0	0	2	0.1	1	0.05	2	0.1
S3	0.08	4	0.32	0	0	2	0.16	2	0.16
S4	0.04	0	0	1	0.04	1	0.04	4	0.16
S5	0.07	0	0	4	0.28	0	0	0	0
S6	0.03	2	0.06	2	0.06	2	0.06	1	0.03
S7	0.05	0	0	3	0.15	0	0	0	0
S8	0.04	2	0.08	1	0.04	4	0.16	1	0.04
S9	0.06	1	0.06	3	0.18	0	0	0	0
S10	0.05	0	0	3	0.15	0	0	2	0.1
T1	0.05	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T2	0.06	0	0	0	0	3	0.18	0	0
T3	0.08	1	0.08	2	0.16	2	0.16	0	0
T4	0.04	0	0	4	0.16	0	0	0	0
T5	0.05	4	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
T6	0.06	1	0.06	2	0.12	1	0.06	1	0.06
T7	0.05	2	0.1	0	0	0	0	2	0.1
T8	0.07	4	0.28	0	0	0	0	0	0
T9	0.05	0	0	3	0.15	2	0.1	0	0
T10	0.03	0	0	0	0	2	0.06	0	0
total			1.24		1.95		1.03		0.75

Table 8. QSPM of WT strategies

Strategy factors	WT1			WT2		WT3		WT4	
	Importance coefficient	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores	Attractiveness score	total attractiveness scores
W1	0.08	0	0	0	0	1	0.08	1	0.08
W2	0.03	0	0	1	0.03	0	0	3	0.09
W3	0.03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
W4	0.05	1	0.05	1	0.05	2	0.1	0	0
W5	0.04	0	0	1	0.04	0	0	4	0.16
W6	0.03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
W7	0.02	4	0.08	0	0	3	0.06	0	0
W8	0.05	0	0	1	0.05	0	0	2	0.1
W9	0.07	0	0	4	0.28	0	0	0	0
W10	0.04	3	0.12	0	0	4	0.16	0	0
T1	0.05	3	0.15	0	0	4	0.2	0	0
T2	0.06	0	0	1	0.06	0	0	1	0.06
T3	0.08	0	0	2	0.16	0	0	4	0.32
T4	0.04	0	0	2	0.08	0	0	0	0
T5	0.05	0	0	2	0.1	0	0	0	0
T6	0.06	1	0.06	3	0.18	0	0	1	0.06
T7	0.05	0	0	1	0.05	0	0	0	0
T8	0.07	0	0	1	0.07	0	0	0	0
T9	0.05	0	0	3	0.15	0	0	0	0
T10	0.03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
total			0.46		1.3		0.6		0.87

variety of possible strategies are proposed in the branding potential of Qazvin urban agglomeration (Table 4).

To evaluate the proposed strategies, used a quantitative strategy planning matrix (QSPM) which assess the feasibility and sustainability of proposed solutions in facing the social, economic, institutional, managerial, operational, and environmental conditions of Qazvin urban agglomeration, and identifies the relative attractiveness of the strategies.

At this stage, the final strategies were selected through the prioritization of the acceptable strategies obtained in the previous step.

In this matrix, there are at least 10 internal factors of strengths and weaknesses and 10 external factors of opportunities and threats that play a major role in the success of the branding of the study area. These factors are seen in the left column and the strategies derived from the SWOT matrix at the top of the matrix columns. Then, the importance coefficient is calculated using the internal and external factors evaluation matrix. In the next step, the Delphi group is asked to assign an attractiveness score of 1 to 4 to each related factor associated with its strategy. This score reflects the effectiveness of current strategies in association with these factors. The number 4

means an excellent reaction, 3 is medium to high, 2 is moderate, and 1 suggests a poor response. If the factor does not play any significant role in the success of the strategies, then it is not assigned a score. After determining the attractiveness score, the scores are multiplied by importance coefficient to obtain total attractiveness score for each strategy. Each strategy that gets the highest score is given the priority. These aggregate scores represent the relative attractiveness of each strategy, which only takes into account the effect of the internal and external factors involved. If the attraction score tends to 4, it means that the strategies are effective for planning the branding capabilities. On the other hand, when it is closer to 1, it means the strategies is considered as weak. The results of the matrix for prioritizing the strategies are shown in Tables (5, 6, 7 and 8). Here, based on priority and according to an implementation time, the strategies can be categorized into four categories, and each strategy is implemented according to its priority in accelerating the branding problems in Qazvin urban agglomeration.

- First priority: SO2, SO1, ST2, and SO3
- Secondary priority: WT2, ST1, WO1, and SO4
- Third priority: ST3, WO3, WO2, and WT4
- Fourth priority: ST4, WO4, WT3, and WT1

CONCLUSION

Planning for sustainable urban development requires the use of economic capabilities and potentials of the city of interest. In the contemporary world, the use of economic capabilities of the city requires their introduction and branding. In this research, with the aim of developing the economic capabilities of Qazvin urban agglomeration, a strategic plan was prepared with an emphasis on branding. The results showed that the most important challenges facing the commercialization of economic capabilities of Qazvin urban agglomeration are more related to the external environment and sanctions imposed by the Western countries. Due to these factors, the oil imports and, as a result, the financial resources have been reduced in Iran. The arrival of tourists and foreign investors is the main goal of the urban brand plans. In addition, the creation of barriers to financial transactions with other countries is another reason causing a challenge in the branding of Qazvin urban agglomeration potentials. Therefore, with the existing conditions, it is not possible for the economic capabilities of the study area to perform branding at the international level. Such a branding will not be possible until fundamental changes are made in Iran's foreign affairs. Despite many obstacles in the international level, a relatively proper branding is possible at the national level, especially in the industrial and, somewhat, tourism sectors. The main challenge at the national level, however, is the existence of management problems such as lack of organizational coordination and lack of unit management, as well as the drought that has taken place in recent years. The strategies presented in this work are trying to reduce these weaknesses-threats, as well as reinforcing strengths-opportunities. Using strategic analysis, with a holistic and comprehensive perspective, has the potential to identify the internal and external environment of the systems and provide appropriate strategies in this regard that will enhance the system's growth over the time.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission,

and redundancy have been completely observed by the authors.

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