

**Assessing the impact of urban tourism in the destination's cities
(Case study: Tabriz)**

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Abstract

The city is a complex area that has capabilities that the tool of the areas that the plan is based on the quality of life and property location, But it's also a lifestyle that determines local architectural aesthetics and potential that can be exploited through tourist activities. This study aimed to identify the characteristics of urban tourism and the elements of a system of urban tourism, which will be identifying characteristics city close breaker, by creating a tourism product, with the relationship between city tourism and urbanization in order to determine the quality of the sites. These elements as a case study in Tabriz, the city ranks first in the country with a low tourism function are applied, with a mixed industrial and economic profile. This type of city has an urban tourism system which starts to take shape and, according to the theory of "overlapping cities", although there are many forms of tourism in a city (cultural, business, shopping, sports tourism, visiting relatives and friends and recreational tourism), Tabriz focuses on the typology of the city for festivals, business, leisure and sport, as a strategy for the tourism sector development and for entering the tourism market of Iran.

Keywords: Tourist city, urban tourism, Tabriz, Urbanity.

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Introduction

Tourism has become along the time a phenomenon of the contemporary world, standing out by a broad dynamics, very diverse motivations, and a multitude of forms. Tourism is a complex activity with a multitude of issues, with a significant economic load, positioned at the intersection of several branches and economic sectors. The tourism and travel industry is often considered to function as a mechanism for fantasy and personal development, the so called "industry of dreams". Addressing the two concepts, tourism and the city, in a synergistic way is apparently difficult, but it is certain that urban space is a favorable support for economic activities, thereby, for tourist activities. The hard competition between cities on the national and global market to attract investments, capital, tourists and a recognized status determines the tourism sector to play an increasingly important role. Urban tourism is primarily a movement activity through which tourists make exchanges and transformations of goods, individual values and cultural models, shaping in this way a tourism system. This modeling has proven to be a difficult phenomenon because it is in constant contact with the geographical space, having an impact on it often irreversible. The influence of the tourism phenomenon on the urban space creates certain urban morphological transformations. Amid a communist legacy, the cities in Iran, implicitly the studied one, have a lower tourism potential compared to other European cities due to a problematic past, a peripheral location within Europe, a tourist infrastructure often neglected, a high level of crime and social problems of segregation. This produces long-term consequences on the city, because it affects the tourism industry and the local economy, the investments, the trade and the attractiveness among both residents and non-residents (who are often tourists) of the city.

Defining urban tourism and urban tourism system

Tourism is considered primarily a form of recreation and of spending the spare time (Holloway, 1994) and involves a temporary movement of people to destinations outside the area of residence and activities in the destination during the time spent there (Witt, Brooke et al., 1991), generating expenses with impact on local economies. There is a very clear bidirectional relationship between tourism and the city: tourism

can be a way to approach the city, especially since the development of new technologies of communication and transportation has created "an operative, viable and developed system in all the places, consisting of material and immaterial networks" (Chaoy, 1994, pp. 26-39, which speaks of a dying city and the supremacy of the urban areas). There are extremely well capitalized certain routes / streets of the city, the historic center (with its cultural activities, festivals, street performances etc.) through tourism activities, which become tourist places; the tourism influences the existence of a city and renders its centrality (the tourists are often attracted by this part of the city and less by the peripheral and peri-urban areas). The city becomes the object of study for urban tourism, and it is sought by tourists who want to escape from their daily routine and who seek the fantastic places (Urry, 1990, p. 11). It is worth mentioning that the visitors of a city are also of urban provenance, and their choice is justified by the fact that the city is the spatial concentration (density) of a maximum of social objects characterized by diversity (Lévy, 1999, p. 285); the city influences the tourism and the tourism influences the city, creating a vicious circle. Urban tourism has developed during the 90's, which corresponds to the movement of globalization and increasing competition between cities, prompting the public actors to consider the city a product to be better positioned in a competitive market in order to highlight the uniqueness of the city, specifically the urban identity, linking the human community and the urbanized territory. Given the dynamism of the city and its functions and metamorphoses over time, it was difficult to see and quantify the urban tourism within the other functions of the city. Due to the behavioural changes and trends, the city has turned into a cultural center, a place to relax, a place to shop etc. Thus it can be said that urban tourism is an integrated feature of urban life (Howie, 2003, p. 93). Law (1993) mentions four main factors that have boosted the urban tourism: the industry decline, the need of new economic activities, the economical growth generated by tourism and the capitalization of tourism potential represent the main reasons for regeneration and revitalization of urban centers. These factors have led to two types of tourism urbanization: conversion of industrial spaces into tourist areas and the development of new tourist resorts. The diverse forms of tourism that

interfere with urban tourism show the complexity of tourism phenomenon in the cities, where there are also some other forms of tourism such as cultural tourism, business tourism, shopping tourism, sports tourism, visiting relatives and friends and leisure tourism, meant both for tourists and residents (Gheorghilaş, 2004, p. 12). The factors influencing the complexity of urban tourism are related to the size of the city, its history and heritage, the urban morphology, the quality of environment, the geographical location and the destination image. The deindustrialization and economic restructuring have helped urban tourism in the developed or developing countries. Ashworth & Tunbridge (1990) indicate that in order to strengthen Depending on the cultural and heritage its competitive position, many urban areas have elements present in each urban area, they are locally capitalized their culture and heritage. capitalized determining a predominance of a form of For each of these urban resources there is a perceptual process, most tourists often adding tourism demand and functional links are created meaning and consistency to the tourist space. The between the different forms of tourism in the city tourist spaces in cities are represented by the historical (recreation, leisure, business, shopping) and the centers, by peri-urban areas with leisure activities and tourists. by the urban fringe. The effects of a mono-functional touristic city crisis when there is a decline in tourism demand. they were highly discussed especially in times of economic „false tourists” who avoid high prices and do not stay in the destination, choosing to go to nearby communities may become a threat to urban tourism sector.

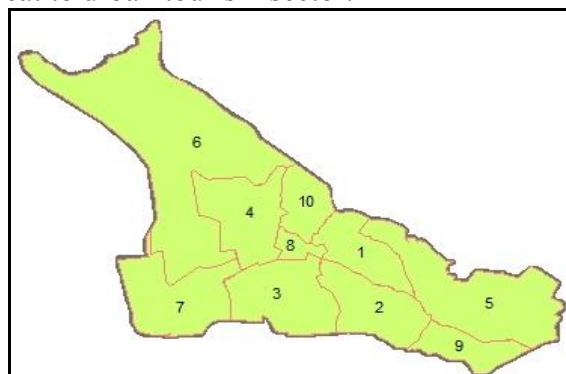


Figure 1 – Tabriz city regionals
Source: Authors

Urban tourism system

The tourism system consists of the geosystem (the ecosystem that depends on natural factors), the territory (consisting of accessibility, natural resources, Tourism heritage, and tourist infrastructure) and the landscape (the visible part of the territory). The spatial analysis is a tool for tourism development and a mean of analyzing the tourism supply and demand. According to Van den Berg et al. (1995), the urban tourism product consists of five components: the primary tourism product, the complementary tourism product, the touristic image, the external accessibility (how to reach the destination) and the domestic accessibility (easy movement within the destination). Thus the tourism system is segmented into the system I consisting of key factors, namely the primary and complementary tourism product, which form a complete tourism product, the touristic image (exercised through the market perception) and the internal and external accessibility of the destination. This first system cannot work without the influences of the public and private sector that form the system II, which have a major impact on the tourism product and on the urban tourism attractively.

Within the Ist system, the destination image is often a key factor when choosing a tourist destination the practice demonstrating that the positive images are generally taken easier into consideration (Bramwell, Rawding, 1996; Chon, 1991; Dann, 1996; Echtner, Ritchie, 1993; Gartner, 1993; Goodrich, 1978; Mayo, 1973).

Research methodology

Based on the theoretical concepts of urban tourism and urban tourism system and based on previous studies about the general context of tourism, accessibility, tourist market and tourism image of Tabriz city (Bădiță, 2012a, 2012b), the urban tourism system of Tabriz will be approached from the following perspectives: According to the theory of Van den Berg et al., 1995, the 2nd system will be briefly identified; The social and touristic general context of the city; The 1st system will be outlined, namely the product - image - accessibility of Tabriz urban destination, focusing on developing a tourism product and on the tourist quality of urban space. To create an eloquent tourism product there will be taken into consideration the previous studies of touristic image to present the endogenous and exogenous perception,

and the studies of Tabriz tourism market to highlight the characteristics of urban tourism (i. e. urban tourism supply and its distribution within the urban territory, the relation between the touristic supply and demand and its concentrations in the urban space), it will be outlined the profile of urban tourist (city-breaker) according to Juguet model, 2009; Tabriz tourism product will be developed integrating some tourism forms specific to this city: city breaks, business, cultural tourism and leisure, emphasizing also the quality of places (a new quality of urban spaces being the development of tourism which determines a certain urban quality of spaces), as a prerequisite for the tourism development, through the relation between tourist city and urbanity, using the model developed by Sombret, 2007.

Tabriz city as a case study

The functions of the region were likely agricultural and industrial, during the communist period a forced industrialization was developed in the cities. The industrialization process was not correlated with the real resources of the region and with the work force, leading to a chaotic urban development, unrelated to the investments on housing, infrastructure and social objectives. The problem occurs after 1989 when, once with the collapse of the communist system, the economical elements of the region have recorded dis-functionalities because they could not adapt to the new requirements of the economical market.

In terms of tourism, in the city the persons number that work in the hotels and restaurants sectors is extremely low, about 2. 5% of all the employees in the service sector, 1770 employees in 2008, 1418 employees in 2009 and 1389 in 2010, from an annual total of about 65, 000 employees in the service sector in Tabriz (Bădiță, 2013). The positioning of the tourism sector reveals a low tourism intake in the economy of the city and an involvement of a small percentage of the population in the hospitality activities, highlighting a significant low economic level that tourism has on the market of Tabriz city. A perception study conducted in the city reveals that tourists come to the city for professional and business purposes (52%), personal interest (42%) and cultural purposes (33%), most tourists choosing to visit the center due to the historical landmarks (27%) and low prices (39%).

Tourists come to visit Tabriz only on weekends (98%), thus the weekend tourism being among the main forms of tourism in Tabriz; the city was seen as a commercial-university center rather than a touristic one (Bădiță, 2012b). The urban tourism system will be approached by highlighting the characteristics of urban tourism and the city tourism product (the relation supply demand, the city-beaker profile and the quality of places), the accessibility and the tourism market being already presented in other studies previously conducted in the city (Bădiță, 2012a, 2012b). In this touristic context, the urban tourism system in Tabriz is based on a tourist supply represented by attractive anthropogenic resources, which are various in terms of structure, physiognomy and functionality, and which attract tourist flows which can capitalize effectively, socially and economically this supply. Located in the Jiu meadow and on its terraces, the drained areas of the city have become leisure areas. The historic artifacts from the area emphasize the importance of the historical heritage of Oltenia Region. The touristic heritage is highlighted in the lists of historical monuments in 2004 (310 monuments) and 2010 (313 monuments) published by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, with no major differences between the two years of reference (Bădiță, 2012a). The analysis of the concentration degree of landmarks in the city reveals a discontinuous distribution, with a high concentration especially in the city centering mainly in the historic center and a reduced presence in terms of typology, attractiveness, number in the peripheral neighborhoods of the city. Overall it is obvious the variety and complexity of the existing historical monuments which could prompt the historical and cultural tourism (Figure 3) (Bădiță, 2013). The touristic potential refers to different forms of tourism such as: a transit tourism due to the city's location at the crossroads of the communication networks in the South-West of the country, a business tourism due to the presence of the automotive industry, a scientific tourism due to the University of Tabriz, cultural and leisure tourism due to the numerous objectives included in the national cultural heritage lists.

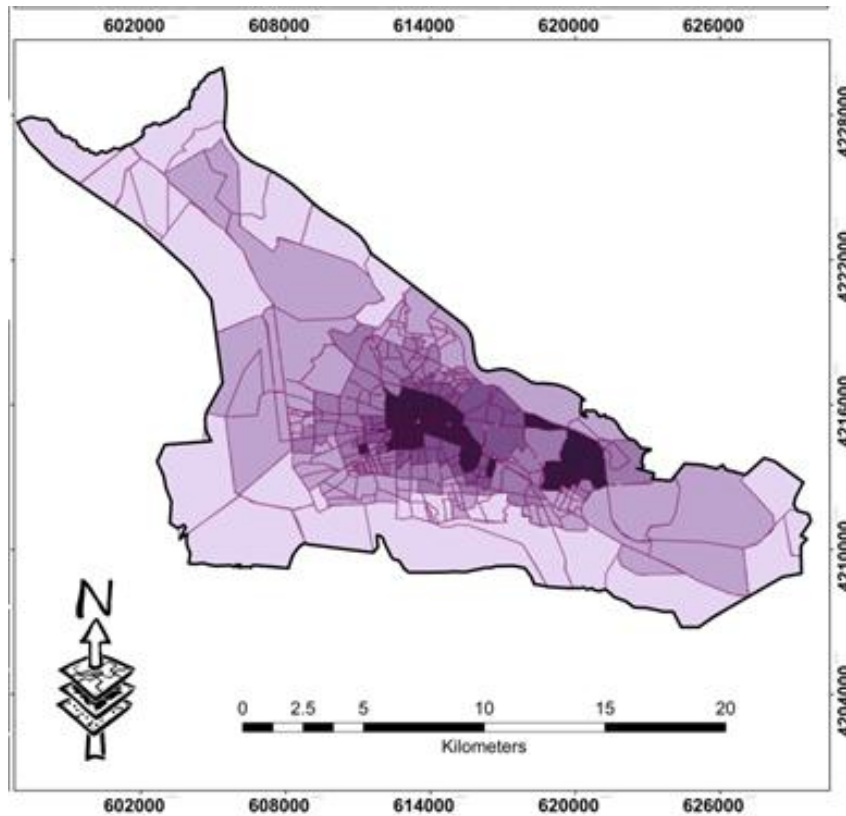


Figure 2 - The concentration degree (%) of landmarks in Tabriz city
Source: Authors

The tourism demand is low, recording 55, 000 tourists in 2007, 2008 and only 25, 000 in 2010 (Bădiță, 2012a). According to the Micksch theory (1951 cited by Cocean et al., 2005, p. 283), which reflects the appropriate relationship between tourism supply and tourism demand in terms of tourist facilities, the studied city has a concentrated tourism supply and demand - specific to the unique landmarks in the cities and in their peri-urban areas, to which tourist flows converge from the proximity areas; besides the landmarks of the municipality, especially located in the central area, there is observed a touristic infrastructure in its peri-urban area; the flows to this city are mainly domestic and very few international (according to the statistical data in 2011). Referring to the typology of urban tourist areas, there are patterns that reveal certain structural tourist cities where the touristic space has a certain form and where the city center is well

individualized. Such a model is developed by Giotart in 1989 which highlights four structural types of urban tourist spaces: the traditional bipolar or poly nuclear tourist space; the unipolar and mononuclear polyvalent space; and the specialized unipolar, bipolar or poly nuclear urban spaces. The studied area falls within the polyvalent tourist space with unipolar and mononuclear concentration, because the city center concentrates most of the landmarks and attracts the most tourists, and the per-urban area has a tourist supply focused especially on cultural, recreation, leisure or transit tourism.

City-breaker profile

In the case of week-end urban tourism, the so called city-break, that takes place over a short period of time (a maximum of 2 days), it is necessary to understand the profiles of the city-breaker (Table 1) and of the urban tourist who needs easy and handy services because of the limited available time. Urban touristic heritage is an important resource for them, thus needing adequate information in town (tourist information Centre, leaflets etc.). The needs of an urban visitor center on easy movement if there is touristic information guide when sightseeing, the fun of discovering (to cultivate and recreate), access to the necessary facilities and touristic services (Wastiaux, 2009, p. 42). Of the four types of tourist city-breaker the anxious and the clever type seek Tabriz for a practical city, with a rich touristic supply of leisure and entertainment.

Tabriz tourism product

After determining the characteristics of Tabriz urban tourism system, the forms of tourism and the urban tourist profile, a tourism production are outlined for Tabriz that focuses on the following considerations:

According to fig. 3, a touristic place has a large degree of tourist city, but a low urbanity. Spaces like cities and resorts have the two features, and are thus places with a higher quality for tourism. The suburbs or per-urban spaces are considered to have low degrees of tourist city or urbanity, having a lower touristic quality and attractively. There are exceptions to this in cities where the suburb holds a more pronounced touristic function than the center. The model can be also applied to the studied city, because it can be easily integrated into this relation between tourist city and urbanity, in the areas with higher values of

the two represented elements. Thus Tabriz has a tourist city and urbanity higher than average, which indicates an average to high quality of places, with prerequisites for the development of tourism activities in the city, following the implementation of a set of actions, resulting in an increase in the quality of the study place.

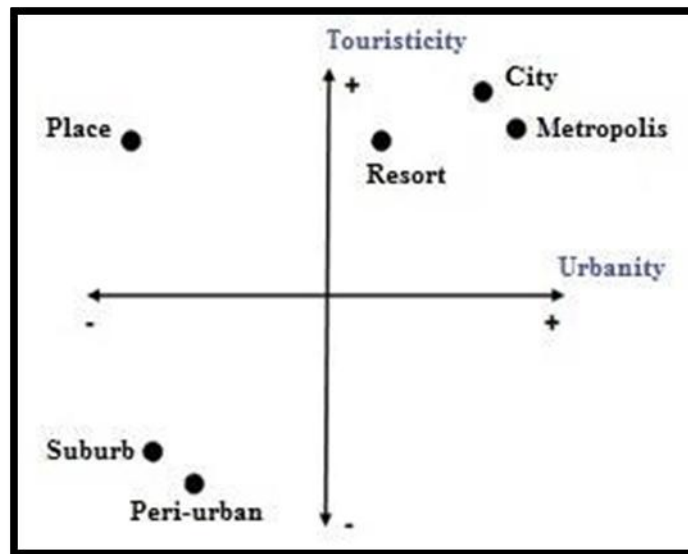


Figure 3 - The relation between touristicity and urbanity in different types of touristic places
Source: Adapted after Sombret, 2007

Conclusions

The majority of survey respondents believed tourism provides economic benefits to their local area by generating spending, attracting investment, and creating business and employment opportunities. Residents would like to see tourism contributing to improvements in their area, especially the provision of services and cultural activities. The largest socio-demographic differences were due to gender, where women had stronger opinions than men regarding the impact of the anti-social consequences of tourism. For example, women were more concerned about tourism encouraging excessive drinking/drug use, crowding public spaces, and increases in anti-social behavior. In modern society tourism represents, through its contents and role, a distinct field of activity, an essential component of

economic and social life for many states, which see touristic potential as a real generator of revenue. Thus, urban tourism is the set of resources or touristic activities located in cities and offered to visitors who come from other places (Vighetti, 1994). Behavioral changes have led cities to become centers of culture and leisure, with tourists spending their time in public spaces located especially in the center. Many theories consider urban tourism to be rather accidental than on purpose (Ashworth, Tunbridge, 1990). Tabriz is noted for a week-end urban tourism, with transit tourism dominating and leisure per-urban areas being visited. It was estimated that 80% of visits in cities are purely urban tourism, while 20% are complimentary tourism, visiting cities being associated with other forms of tourism. The study set out to better understand the perceptions and attitudes of urban host communities toward tourists and tourism, and to understand the impacts that were of most concern to these communities in major cities. Outlined below is a summary of key findings from the local government focus groups and community survey.

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