

The Effect of New Media on the Tourism Strategies in Iran

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ABSTRACT

Currently, the whole media capacities are not in use in the country in order to develop the tourism strategies and approaches, and there is a considerable gap between the media and tourism organizations that if not solved, the possibility of realizing the programs and aims of the tourism industry will be hardly feasible. The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of new media on the tourism strategies in Iran. The research method was descriptive-survey, which tried to explain a model. In order to collect data, a researcher-made questionnaire of new media function was used which had 18 items with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.77; and the researcher-made questionnaire of tourism strategy was used, which had 18 items with the Cronbach's alpha of 0.72. In order to enhance the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a number of questionnaires were distributed among the experts and elites, and all the uncertainties related to the questions were identified. Finally, after clarifying and fixing ambiguities, the final questionnaire was provided and distributed. The statistical population included the managers and experts of Tourism in Tehran and the statistical sample was determined as 108 by using the snowball sampling method. LISREL software was used to study the causal relations between the variables. Findings showed that there is a significant relationship between realizing the main functions of the new media and the development of tourism strategies. Furthermore, the results indicated that the new media in tourism section could not perform their functions very well.

Keywords: *New media, Tourism Strategies, Tourism and Technology.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing development in tourism industry, as a result of information and communication technology, has made many governments consider tourism as an important component of the national and local economic development and growth. This matter has led to the growth in tourism as a scientific area (Azamatova, et al., 2018). 11 percent of the Growth Domestic Production (GDP) of the countries is allocated to the tourism industry. Tourism has created 200 million jobs in the whole the world so far and 5.5 million new jobs are created every year by this industry. Moreover, 8 percent of the human forces work in the tourism section. The old tourism (the organized mass, standard, inflexible, and less attention to the personal needs tourism) is replaced with the new tourism (much information, the value of money and time, having less opportunity, more integration with the local communities, etc.).

On the other hand, information technology plays a vital role in the competitiveness of the organizations and tourism destinations and also in the entire industry, which has led to change in the efficiency and effectiveness of the tourism organization (Buhalis & Law, 2008). New technologies have brought the tourism industry into the new stage and have made tourism organizations complicated in a way (Bejro, 2006). Besides, the social functions of the media in the effect

realm, two issues have drawn media's attention one of which is the effect of media on the perception considered in the media theory framework adopted from McLuhan's thoughts (1964) and another one is the manner of the direct or indirect effect on the people and framing the public opinion (Hakimara, 2006: 210).

New media such as internet, cell phone, and satellite, little by little, play the older communication roles faster and stronger in society by the very advanced and interactive features; indeed, new media is not replaced with the previous media and only the ways and forms of communication are improved by the development of the technology (Renuka and Gurnathan, 2017). Public perception of the new media is that whatever which is produced by a computer is named as new media (Manovich, 2001; Norouzi, 2018). New media has provided the possibility of interaction between the sender and receiver of the information (Salehi Amiri, 2008).

Changing the nature and concept of tourism is one of the main reasons for the growing use of the internet in the tourism industry. On the other hand, travel costs have been the main driver of electronic business growth. Instant hotel booking is estimated to have risen from 5 billion dollars in 2001 to 14.8 billion dollars in 2007 (Law & Hsu, 2005). Electronic tourism means digitalizing all the processes and value chains in the tourism industry including traveling, hospitality, and food provision in a way that the organizations to be able to maximize their efficiency and effectiveness. The complicated combination of the tourism products and the interwoven boundaries of the service providing have led to the creation of serious competition in both physical and virtual spaces (Choi

et al., 2007). If a place is presented in mass media with its all magnificence, luxuriance, and extraordinary features, it will help this place to be turned into a tourism destination, as this presentation will absolutely make passion and interest about it (Boniface, 2002). In the present study, it was attempted to investigate the following issues as new media functions with an emphasis on the media function theories (McQuail, 2004): informing role, solidarity, mobilization, entertainment, and leisure provider, continuity, the impact of media on the society and tourism organization, the development of the tourism culture in the society, the participation of people and media in the development of tourism strategies among the society's individuals.

2. RESEARCH LITERATURE

2.1. Tourism Strategies

Tourism strategy reveals the real form that tourism takes. Tourism development strategy as a tool for economic growth, and in particular, identifying those that need a strategy, can lead to the product development and marketing strategies, profitability improvement, investment attraction, the role of government and business section in determining the quality and quantity of the needed resources, and supporting the regional plans. The main aim of the tourism development strategy is to maximize the sustainable economic profits of tourism and clear plans, leading to the provision of suitable strategies in economic and social sections. A set of processes in which tourism achieves a desirable level of development in a short term, medium term, and long term, is called the tourism strategies (Edgall, et al., 2008). In the drafts of developing tourism strategies of Iran, which were provided by the tourism development national plan of the organization of the world and Iran's tourism, the required strategies for the development of tourism in Iran are explained as nine strategies (Raoufi, 2011); these strategies, which contribute to the development of the IT-based tourism industry, can be summarized in few parts the most important of which are as follows: (Hashemi, et al., 2007).

2.1.1. The strategies of developing the information technology public infrastructures

These strategies refer to the factors that facilitate the presence of tourists in a country, such as currency exchange, weather, etc. Information technology provides tourists with these facilities in order to have access to the required information in their desired language. Another type of these technology public infrastructures is the information of the non-tangible infrastructures. The development of these infrastructures will have a great impact on the way of tourist's perception of the country's situation such as laws, security, electronic payments, and the creation of business brands (Hashemi et al., 2007).

2.1.2. The development strategy of tourism products and services

This strategy is in the three different stages, including inter-organizational, intra-organizational integrity, and as the top stage, the integrity of intra-industrial stage through which all the units that have a role in the tourism industry, must be coordinated with each other. Such coordination results in receiving higher value-added from the tourist and the feelings of a more desirable experience of the destination. The biggest sense of such coordination is the lack of interference in the activity of other units. Implementing an inter-organizational

integration can be achieved by using intranet networks, inter-industrial integrations by using extranet, internet, and inter-industry coordination by using internet network as well as creating a comprehensive tourism portal (Hashemi et al., 2007).

2.1.3. Development Strategy of Informing and Information Systems

This strategy includes management supporting systems, collecting systems, classification of the statistics and the present information, information analysis, developing the comprehensive portal of the country with the accessibility to all the activists, using multi-media tools, electronic brochures, and virtual tours and increasing the use of electronic brochures.

2.1.4. Development Strategy of Human Resources

As a part of services and experience that a tourist receives, human resource is very important in the tourism industry. Therefore, using people with great skills in providing travel service has always been one of the competitive advantages of organizations providing tourism services (Hashemi et al., 2007). To this purpose, applying decision-making support systems, applying electronic education systems, and using remote control systems are utilized (Singh, & Muthuseker; 2017).

2.1.5. Quality Improvement Strategy and Customer Satisfaction

Since the tourism industry is an industry with variety-driven nature, keeping and maintaining customer's loyalty is a very difficult task. Hence, recording and maintaining the information of these costumers, putting them as the priority in special situations, and offering special recommendations in a specific can enhance the loyalty of the tourists. Applying this way requires the knowledge about the wide spectrum of costumers in target markets that this organization must be familiar with their demands.

To this end, the systems of communication with the costumers can be used. Another way is to develop a scattered database that leads to the coordination and prevention of the increase in the tourists' actions in facing the different organization in the destination. Applying interactive marketing methods enables providers to learn about the tourists' attitudes. Learning about the attitudes and inner tendencies of tourist will be a great help in providing personalized products and designing novel products in accordance with tourists' needs. Using software and tracking systems of tourists' packs as well as their check-in and check-out and bills reduce the amount of delay in tourist' waiting time in destinations or between the traveling paths. These systems enable the authorities to track the moment situation of tourists' stuff. Nowadays, in important cities of the world, the activities trends are in a way that a tourist receives an identity card in their arrivals to the city in return for paying a certain amount of money. Using this technology gives the decision-makers of the destination comprehensive information about a tourist's activities while traveling. Information such as regarding race, nationality, education, sex, income level, and what kind of activities a tourist tends to do on a trip. This card allows the tourist to use all the leisure and public facilities. However, using such an efficient system requires the reconstruction in all activities of the tourism service units of the destination, including transportation services, natural and cultural attractions, leisure programs, etc., so that all these

units be able to continue their activities by using a united system (Hashemi et al., 2007).

3. NEW MEDIA

Public perception of modern media is that whatever a computer produces or publishes is considered as new media (Manovich, 2001). New media refer to a set of communication tools that have three common features: being interactive, being personal, and asynchronism in transferring message (Rogers, 1983).

Advancement in technology enables tourism organizations to do their tasks and provide products or services that are compatible with the personal demands of people. Furthermore, technology can provide the needs that passengers have. This need emerges as a determinant value and the service provider organization must consider and provide that value. Therefore, technology acts as a very powerful force and provides the tourism industry with a new form; also, it can keep the companies in the scene of competition (Gi, 1999).

Tourism organizations cannot disregard the integration of internet in their marketing anymore because this phenomenon has many advantages including the global accessibility, the easiness of updating, and information services in real-time, interactive communication features, and customer-friendly made capabilities. Tourism is an unusual product as it is based on the available information at the time of sale. Information-driven nature of this product means that the internet, which has global accessibility and multi-media features, is an important factor in the promotion and distribution of tourism services (Doolin, et al.; 2002). According to the World Tourism

Organization, the success key of the tourism in the field of the internet is the fast understanding of the clients' needs, direct communication with the customers, and providing updated, personalized, and comprehensive information (Casteneda et al., 2008).

Information technology development has had a deep impact on the tourism business. It brings the latest traveling and tourism news to the people's houses via television or it gives them information through domestic information systems. Considering the criteria related to the needs and justifications, the applicant can make it feasible to have a quick comparison between the solutions and options. Moreover, it makes it possible to have valid access to the perfect explanation of the destination features and all the related details; furthermore, it can be possible to provide moment information about the reservation as well as the automatic purchase of the ticket.

Technology development led to increase in the group travel for various reasons such as an increase in leisure time, raise in the income, advancement in long distance communication, and creation of efficient railroad transportation (Gi, 1999). By using new technology, the tourism industry is able to provide a very exclusive product to the demanding, elite, experienced, and new tourists who seek for unique experiences and have an independent attitude and excessive interest in traveling (Buhalis & Law; 2008). In contrast, new tourism is less accessible socially and in terms of psychology for it requires development in special skills, knowledge, and unique taste. Cultural tourism is one of the new tourism forms that is rapidly increasing because of the potential capacity in order to respond to the human's instinctive wish for visiting and learning about the world's various cultures (Zargham, 1997)

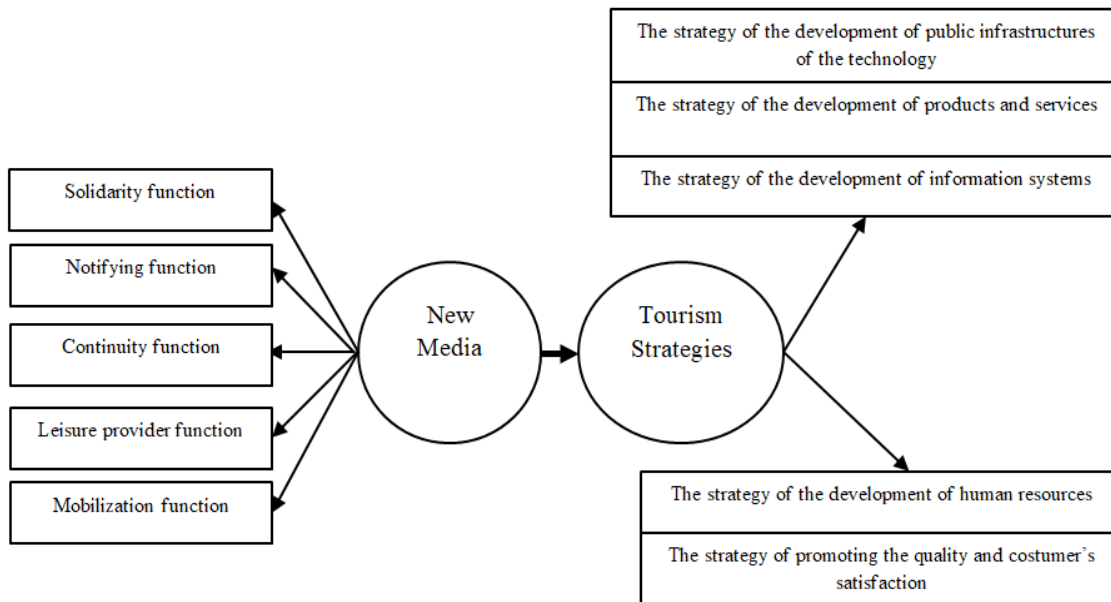


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the effect of new media on the development of tourism strategies.

4. RESEARCH PLAN

The research method is descriptive-survey and tries to explain a model. In order to achieve the effective factors in forming the model of new media's impact on the development of tourism

strategies from the experts' point of view, with an emphasis on the communication and media theories and their relation with the development of the tourism strategies as well as obtaining the reliable components, the interview with the experts was done through a questionnaire.

The researcher-made questionnaire of new media included 18 items and was based on the main functions of the mass media of “McQuails”. The researcher-made questionnaire of tourism strategy included 18 items. In order to enhance the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, first, a number of questionnaires were distributed among the elites and experts and all the ambiguities related to the questions were identified. Finally, after clarifying and fixing ambiguities, the final questionnaire was provided and distributed. The reliability of the questions was determined based on the Cronbach’s alpha test; it was determined as 0.77 for the questionnaire of new media’s function and 0.72 for tourism strategy questionnaire. The statistical sample was determined as 108 via the snowball method. LISREL software was used in order to assess the causal relations between the variables.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

First hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between implementing the new media’s function of notifying and the development of tourism strategies.

Table 1. One sample t-test for assessing new media’s role of notifying

Frequency	Mean variable	Standard deviation	The below bound of 95%	T statistics	Significant level
40	74.92	11.24	71.80	13.95	0.000

According to the results obtained from the Table (1) as mean 74.92%, t-statistic (t=13.95), and significant level (sig= 0.000), it was concluded that the hypothesis (0) is rejected with the confidence coefficient of 99.9%. Therefore, the first hypothesis, “There is a significant relationship between implementing the new media’s function of notifying and development of tourism strategies”, was confirmed with the confidence coefficient of 99.9%. Hence, it can be said that effective notifying by new media can lead to the development of tourism strategies.

Second Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between implementing the solidarity of new media and the development of tourism strategies.

Table 2. One sample t-test for assessing new media’s role of solidarity

Frequency	Mean variable	Standard deviation	The below bound of 95%	T-statistics	Significant level
40	76.1	10.2	73.4	16.2	0.000

According to the results obtained from the Table (2), mean 76.1%, t-statistic (T=16.2), and significant level (sig= 0.000), it can be concluded that the hypothesis (0) is rejected with the confidence level of 99.9%. Therefore, the second hypothesis, “There is a significant relationship between implementing the new media’s solidarity function and the development of the tourism strategies”, was confirmed with the confidence level of 99.9%. Thus, it can be said that the new media’s solidarity role leads to the development of tourism strategies.

Third hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between implementing the continuity and cohesion function of the new media and the development of tourism strategies.

Table 3. One sample t-test for assessing the assumption of continuity and cohesion role of new media

Frequency	Mean variable	Standard deviation	The below bound of 95%	T statistics	Significant level
40	68.12	13.72	64.47	8.35	0.000

According to the results obtained from the Table (3), mean 68.12%, t-statistic (T=8.35), and significant level (sig= 0.000), it can be concluded that the hypothesis (0) is rejected with the confidence level of 99.9%. Therefore, the third hypothesis, “There is a significant relationship between implementing the continuity and cohesion function of the new media and the development of tourism strategies”, was confirmed with the confidence level of 99.9%. Thus, it can be said that the new media’s continuity and cohesion role leads to the development of tourism strategies.

Fourth hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between implementing the leisure and entertainment function of the new media and the development of tourism strategies.

Table 4. One sample t-test for assessing the leisure and entertainment function of new media

Frequency	Mean variable	Standard deviation	The below bound of 95%	T statistics	Significant level
40	61.49	12.86	58.1	5.65	0.000

According to the results obtained from the Table (4), mean 61.49%, t-statistic (T=5.65), and significant level (sig= 0.000), it can be concluded that the hypothesis (0) is rejected with the confidence level of 99.9%. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis, “There is a significant relationship between implementing the leisure and entertainment function of the new media and the development of tourism strategies”, was confirmed with the confidence level of 99.9%. Thus, it can be said that the new media’s leisure and entertainment role is effective in the development of tourism strategies.

Fifth hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between implementing the mobilization of new media and development of tourism strategies.

Table 5. One sample t-test for assessing the new media’s role of mobilization hypothesis

Frequency	Mean variable	Standard deviation	The below bound of 95%	T statistics	Significant level
40	76.75	13.76	73.1	12.30	0.000

According to the results obtained from the Table (5), mean 76.75%, t-statistic (T=12.30), and significant level (sig= 0.000), it can be concluded that the hypothesis (0) is rejected with the confidence level of 99.9%. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis, “There is a significant relationship between implementing the mobilization of new media and development of tourism strategies”, was confirmed with the confidence level of 99.9%. Thus, it can be said that the new media’s mobilization role leads to the development of tourism strategies.

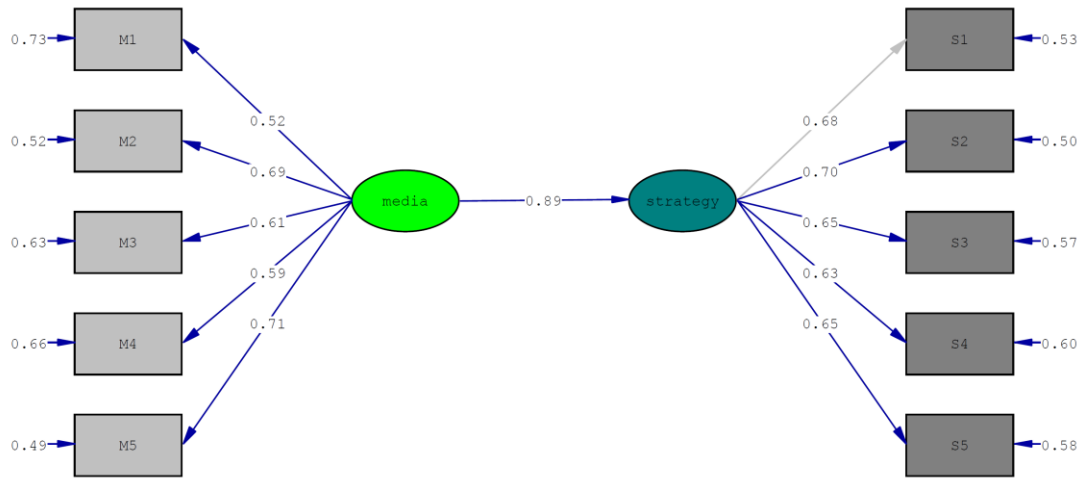
strategies”, is confirmed with the confidence level of 99.9%. Thus, it can be said that the new media’s mobilization role leads to the development of tourism strategies.

Main hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between the development of tourism strategies and the implementation of the main functions of new media.

Table 6. One sample t-test for assessing the new media’s role of main functions

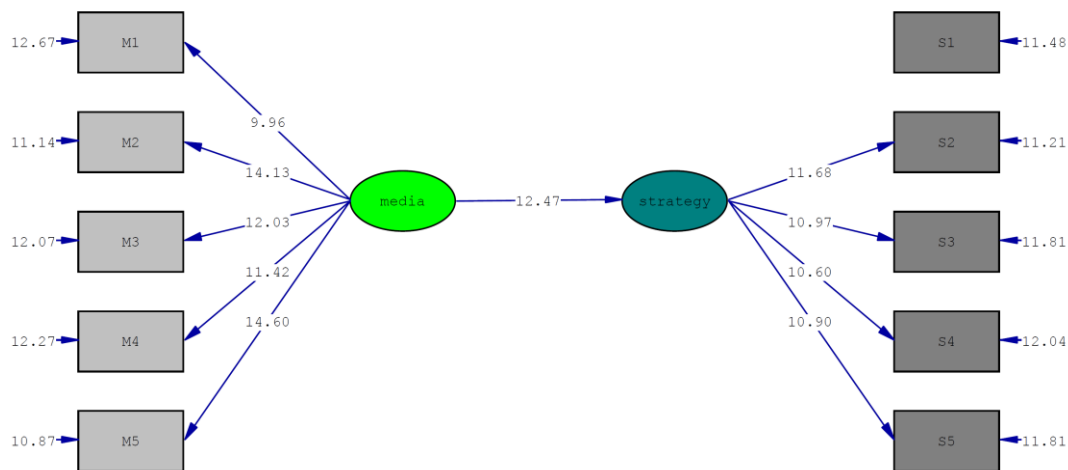
Frequency	Mean variable	Standard deviation	The below bound of 95%	T statistics	Significant level
40	67.1	7.2	65.13	14.88	0.000

According to the results obtained from the Table (6), mean 67.1%, t-statistic (T=14.88), and significant level (sig= 0.000), it can be concluded that the hypothesis (0) is rejected with the confidence level of 99.9%. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis, “There is a significant relationship between the development of tourism strategies and the implementation of the main functions of new media”, was confirmed with the confidence level of 99.9%. Thus, it can be said that the new media’s main functions leads to the development of tourism strategies.



Chi-Square=62.74, df=34, P-value=0.00193, RMSEA=0.048

Chart 1. The structural model in the standard estimation mode.



Chi-Square=62.74, df=34, P-value=0.00193, RMSEA=0.048

Chart 2. The Structural model in the significance numbers mode.

According to the Chart (2), It is clear that the value of the effect is equal to 0.89 and the significant number is 12.47, which is more than the critical number of 1.96. Therefore, new media

have a positive and significant effect on the development of tourism strategies. The model is fit in terms of fitness indices; because, the value of RMSEA is equal to 0.048, which is lower

than the valid amount of 0.08, also, the Chi-2 value divided by

the degree of freedom (1.47) is less than the valid amount of 3.

Table 7. Mean test of a society (second stage)

Inferential statistics							
Dimensions	Variables	T	df	sig	95% of confidence interval for the difference		interpretation
					Low limit	High limit	
New media	Function of notifying	-41.583	107	.000	-1.3461	-1.2243	low
	Solidiraty function	-29.687	107	.000	-1.3236	-1.1579	low
	Continuity and cohesion function	-3.055	107	.003	-0.2392	-0.509	low
	Function of leisure and entertainment provider	5.104	107	.000	0.1444	0.3278	high
	Function of mobilization	-25.473	107	.000	-1.3007	-1.1129	low
Tourism strategies based on the information technology	Strategy of information technology infrastructures development	-51.876	107	.000	-1.5117	-1.4004	low
	Strategy of the development of tourism products and services	-47.412	107	.000	-1.4470	-1.3308	low
	Strategy of the information systems development	-40.443	107	.000	-1.3080	-1.1858	low
	Strategy of the human resources development	-37.114	107	.000	-1.2430	-1.0408	low
	Strategy of the quality promotion and customer satisfaction	-30.123	107	.000	-1.1321	-1.0712	low

According to Table (7), the results of the new media functions indicated that the new media could not implement their function well in the tourism section. As it can be observed, tourism strategies based on the information technology have a fundamental weakness in all five strategies. The statistics show that the strategy of the development of information technology public infrastructures (-51.876) has been in the lowest position and does not have a good condition; then, the strategy of tourism products and services development (-47.412) and the strategy of information systems development (-40.433) are placed in the next ranks with slight differneces to each other, respectively. Thus, the necessity of paying attention to the development of tourism strategies based on the information technology is considered.

6. CONCLUSION

First hypothesis:

According to the average frequency of responses of 75.92%, the hypothesis of “There is a significant relationship between the implementation of new media notifying function and the development of tourism strategies” was confirmed. Therefore, it can be said that the effective notifying by the new media leads to the development of tourism strategies. “fast and widespread notifying” is one of the prominent features of the industrial and developed world. Informing the society and public education as well as the development of participation under the light of increasing growth of media is very important, and the role of notifying people and increasing the social and cultural understanding of society are among the most important tasks of the mass media. In an era that the world is getting smaller continuously towards a global village, understanding the function and nature of the media has an effective and useful role in authentication of the cultural identity and national values. Sufficient information in any situation is more important than anything else and should be in a way that is proper for its visitor’s desirable place. Appropriate, useful, and interesting information might act as an accelerating factor in taking decision for going to a place; that is to say, you cannot go somewhere that you do not know

if it existed (Boniface, 2002). Currently, many landmarks in Iran are unknown for foreign and domestic tourists that should be known. Having fair information services in tourism is necessary. A tourist stays in a place for a short time;’ therefore, he/she should get information about the place that he/she is going to see, or whatever he/she is going to do and something that is going to purchase. The tourist must be informed about the destination and the level of services that the destination is going to serve. Informing people about a service will increase that service’s customers. In this industry, providing travel services to the visitors is not enough and must be active in developing communication and bringing information to others, tourists in particular. Nowadays, tourism applicants do not only look for passing leisure times and their information demands are increasing every day. In the scene of global competition, there should be a strong bond between the tourism industry and information technology; also, by increasing the informing of tourists and passengers, special services and products can be offered in order to supply passengers’ needs. Having systems in order to analyze, find information and inform, and communicate with the environments can play a role in setting and implementing tourism strategy and programs.

Second hypothesis

According to the average frequency of responses of 76.1%, the hypothesis of “There is a significant relationship between the solidarity function of new media and development of tourism strategies” was confirmed. Therefore, it can be mentioned that the role of the solidarity of new media leads to the development of tourism strategies. New media has a high correlation with the cultural and social structures of societies in a way that idea and thoughts of people are manifested and emerged in different forms of new media synchronously. Spreading phone texts, providing and broadcasting a report in a different way from the internet, satellite, television, and social networks are indicatives of a dominant thought, which the new media have placed them in their priority and have accelerated their spread speed.

Third hypothesis

According to the average frequency of responses of 68.12%, the hypothesis of "There is a significant relationship between the continuity and cohesion function of the new media and the development of tourism strategies" was confirmed. Therefore, it can be said that the role of continuity and cohesion function of new media leads to the development of tourism strategies.

Fourth hypothesis

According to the average frequency of the responses of 61.49%, the hypothesis of "There is a significant relationship between the leisure and entertainment function of new media and development of tourism strategies" was confirmed. Therefore, it can be mentioned that the roles of leisure and entertainment of new media are effective in the development of tourism strategies. Hearing and watching the films, games, contests and entertainments, happy songs and poems that are played through the visual and audio media, besides studying and considering stories, which are published in the press have allocated a great deal of leisure time to themselves in such a way that nowadays, many people take refuge to the media in order to spend their leisure time, and entertain themselves by watching the leisure programs.

The fifth hypothesis

According to the average frequency of responses of 76.75%, the hypothesis of "There is a significant relationship between the mobilization function of new media and the development of tourism strategies" was confirmed. Therefore, it can be explained that the role of new media mobilization leads to the development of tourism strategies. Mass media not only explain new issues but also excite and mobilize the public opinion by their disclosures and criticisms. If the public opinion is directed to a certain direction, the cultural, economic, and social movements will be formed and media will take step by using special techniques in order to direct the public opinion and attune people with the explained issues. These movements are dependent on the media orientation that to which direction, they are oriented.

The main hypothesis

According to the average frequency of responses of 67.1%, the main hypothesis of "There is a significant relationship between the main functions of new media and the development of tourism strategies" was confirmed. Therefore, it can be mentioned that the role of new media mobilization leads to the development of tourism strategies.

According to the Chart (2) and by the main hypothesis confirmation, that is to say, the effect of new media on the development of tourism strategies is found, new media with 0.89 and the significant number of 12.47 have a positive and significant effect on the development of tourism strategies. The results showed that among the media functions, the mobilization function (M5) with 0.71 and the new media solidarity function (M2) with 0.69, respectively, have the most effect on the development of strategies among the new media functions in which, there are components such as public participation in the development of strategies and the role of accelerating new media. Therefore, the implementation of the solidarity functions, mobilization, and notifying the new media will have a considerable impact on the development of tourism strategies.

According to Chart (2), the estimation of the tourism strategies development based on information technology showed that the

development strategy of the tourism products and services (s2) with 0.70%, components as inter-industry coordination across different levels of tourism, global distribution channels of tourism services, outputs of the tourism services activities, regional strategic cooperation in order to use the common sources and the development strategy of information technology infrastructures (s1) with 0.68%, and components; tourism regulations in electronic area, electronic security of tourism users, electronic financial exchanges, and business brands in tourism section are affected by new media. Development strategy of informing and information systems (s3) with 0.65% showed that the new media have a more effective role in the sections of supervising the performance of the tourism plans, coordination of the tourism plans, collecting and classification of the tourism statistics, virtual tours of the tourism destinations, and sharing the traveling experiences in virtual spaces.

The results of Table (7) showed that the new media could not perform their functions properly in the tourism section; informing function (-41.853%), solidarity function (-29.687%), cohesion and continuity function (-3.055%), the function of providing leisure and entertainment (51.104%), mobilization function (25.473%), in which, the function of informing of new media including the coherent informing, exercising, innovation, interaction and trust, is in the lowest place and has had the weakest performance; also, it shows that these parts have fundamental problems. On the other hand, being positive about the function of providing entertainment and leisure of the new media (5.104%) including creation of the enthusiasm and interest in leisure and entertainment, reducing the social tensions, enhancing the exploitation of tourism attractions and enrichment of the leisure times, indicate of this fact that the new media could create interest and enthusiasm towards the leisure and entertainment and lead to an increase in the benefit from tourism attractions.

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