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## **Futures studies of Tourism with a Spirituality Perspective**

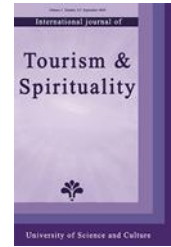
**Manouchehr Jahanian**

*Assistant Professor, University of Science & Culture, Tehran, Iran  
jahanian@usc.ac.ir*

### **Abstract**

Supposing that today's growing range of human needs with the increasing growth of technology is not only limited to material dimensions but non-material aspects are of an undeniable role in the human self-actualization. In this regard, the concept of spirituality dramatically manifests itself in different aspects of human life, even though the technological evolutions and tourism can be an important lever in this area. In this study, using content analysis techniques and using ideas of experts, we assessed the components of 'styling the future', 'tourism', and 'spirituality' comparing elements of these variables such that the relationship between tourism and spirituality was extracted in the form of 'a sense of excellence', 'a sense of meaning', 'human values' and 'interaction with existence'. Also, the relationship between tourism and futures studies (futurology) was defined using the extracted parameters including 'consultation prior to social and cultural reforms', 'future analysis and alert against challenges', and 'determining strategic priorities'. Eventually, in relation to these three components, the obtained results emphasized the need for taking the advantage of spirituality in the study of the tourism industry.

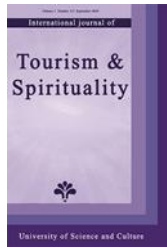
**Keywords:** Tourism, Spirituality, Futures Studies, Delphi Technique.



## Introduction

Man has entered a new and unprecedented era in his life during which the world is changing rapidly; but in the paradigm of modernism and rationalism, the share of spirit and man's internal needs have not been considered as much as necessary (Farhangi et al, 85). One important aspect of these developments can be identified in the tourism industry. Basically, one may say 'tourism is the collection of all the activities that happen in the travel of a tourist'. In other words, any activity that happens in the current of a trip of tourists is tourism' (Lumsden, 2001: 18). Given the need to respect the spiritual dimension in various areas, we must also pay attention to it in the tourism industry. The word spirituality is from the root *spiritus* meaning 'soul'. The overall result obtained from various definitions put forward by researchers is that spirituality can be regarded as an attempt to explore the ultimate goal of a person in their life or work for establishing a strong relationship between the individual and the family or colleagues, and all those who are involved in some way in the issues of a person and consistency or unity between a persons' beliefs with the values of the society. Due to the fact that tourism can revive spiritual aspects in a person's life, in this study, we first assess the relation of these two elements and their relationship. Then, according to futures studies approach that has become increasingly important in analytical studies, we discuss the relationship between tourism and futures studies.

The futures studies approach has been currently taken under consideration in different fields by most scientists and researchers. The main reason for such a widespread use of this approach is that without having a detailed and comprehensive understanding of past, present, and future of an issue, one may not predict a detailed process of developments. Indeed, the goals that can be pursued and achieved through futures studies. The underlying question of the research is 'What is the position of futures studies in the tourism industry with a spiritual approach?' Because a limited number of works have been done on the futures studies of tourism with a spiritual approach, in this study we assess the effective elements in the relationship between tourism and futures studies, on the one hand, and factors influencing tourism and spirituality, on the other. Finally, we suggest the overall



outcome of the existing relationship between these three elements and the corresponding model, while analyzing the general principles of tourism futures studies with a spiritual approach.

### **Tourism and its impacts on individuals**

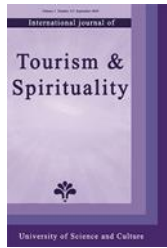
Tourism is not only a mix of commercial activities but the ideological expression of history, nature, and tradition; such expression that has the power to rearrange culture and nature based on its own needs (Bronze: 125: 2006). Today, people need to travel to improve and enhance their character and their physical and spiritual health. To put it simply, modern tourists need a journey that leads to the development of their personality and their experiences and deepens their spiritual sense (Ambroz & Ovsenik, 2011). In addition, tourism is reasonably required to meet man's material and natural demands in order to create understanding and social cohesion all around the globe (Sahabi and Moradi, 2011). Traveling is the main way to achieve the inside of things, gain insight and experience, and understand the problems of today's world and find a solution to existing controversies (Vesajoki 2002: 50,51,54). Tourists travel to seek self-discovery and excellence of soul or a new spiritual communication with nature and the environment in order to understand the universe (West, 2005). Overall tourism is likely to improve man's character and identity and strengthens their ethical approaches to solving existing problems (Vesajoki 2002: 95). Graburn (1989) argues that functionally and symbolically tourism is equivalent to other institutions that man uses to ameliorate his life and give meaning to it.

In a study entitled 'Tourism, a holy journey', Sharpley and Sundaram (2005) conclude that naturally in all kinds of tourism there is a spiritual endeavor formed by a number of travel experiences that leads to an improvement in a person's soul and spiritual feelings. Vukonic (1996) consider tourism as an opportunity to recognize and develop the spiritual needs of the person. Also, in Islamic culture seeing the world is of particular importance and is considered a commendable tradition. Getting to visit the earth and getting familiar with diverse manifestations of nature and culture give humans a better

understanding of God and the universe (Fallahi, 1389: 37). Tourism has a beneficial impact on people's beliefs and leads to a better attitude toward life (Irimias and Gabor, 2013). Traveling provokes questions about people's beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes and makes them think (Vesajoki, 2002: 58), resulting in an attenuated unrealistic patterns and balances in their stereotypes. Therefore, by creating a direct interaction with other peoples and cultures, it reveals the inner realities of a community and makes change easier (Sahabi and Moradi, 2011). Tourism helps people see their environment as a whole and understand other peoples (Vesajoki, 2002: 51). Traveling reduces cultural contradictions between the host community and the guest members by promoting the cultural tolerance of people with different cultures, which leads to turning cultural prejudice and ethnocentrism into cultural relativism (Sahabi and Moradi, 2011) and brings people closer to each other. Indeed, the fact that we have to live in contact with nature and human beings facilitates understanding, knowledge, and cognition of other people's customs and cultures and teaches tourists to consider the distinctions and differences between themselves and others as an existential value (Sahabi and Moradi, 2011). After traveling people's spirit and perceptions about themselves, peoples, places, and the environment are likely to change (Sahabi and Moradi, 2011). Travel effects on people can be presented in Table (1).

**Table 1: Impacts of travel on individuals**

Access to nature and the inside of things
Gaining insight
Gaining experience
Understanding the problems of today's world
Find a solution to many challenges
Self-discovery
Relationship with nature and the environment in order to understand the universe

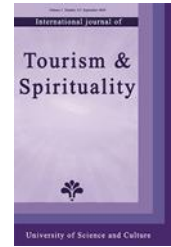


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Enhancing character and identity
Knowing the creator
Knowledge of the universe
The impact on beliefs
A better attitude toward life
Provoking questions about previous attitudes
Thinking
Change
Interaction with other people
A better understanding of people
Increasing cultural tolerance
Reducing conflicts
People getting close to each other
Understanding, knowledge and mutual cognition
Education
Realizing the value of being

### **Spirituality**

Spirituality is an inner need that some experts consider it as the highest level of cognitive, emotional, and moral development (Ghana et al, 1391). Despite increasing emphasis of scientists on the spiritual dimension of human growth still, there is no definition that encompasses the entirety of spirituality. Spirituality is a way to exist and experience created by understanding the spiritual dimensions (Elkins et al, 1988) and a feeling that leads to conformity and continuity with the world (Tacey 2003). Vaughan (1993) defined spirituality as a permanent attempt to answer the questions of life. Other definitions consider spirituality as a power or reviving inspiration

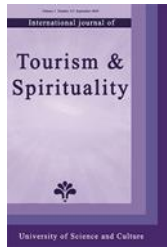


that gives direction and meaning to life and will lead us toward our goals (McKingnt, 1984 & Cavanagh, 1999). Spirituality is the desire to find the ultimate goal of life, also named as energy, meaning, knowing etc. (Cavanagh, 1999). Spirituality is a force driving toward sublime and divine goals beyond man's individuality and religion (McKnight, 1984). Spirituality is a way in which man finds their historic context and lives in it. Also, it is a search for humanity and awareness in life (Abedi Jafari and Rastegar, 2007). Spirituality is an effort to create sensitivity in man toward himself, others, the superior power (of god), exploring to find what is needed for becoming human, searching to achieve full humanity (Abedi Jafari and Rastegar, 2007). Other definitions of spirituality describe it as a means to create awareness of life. Since the word spirituality is used in various fields, providing a unanimously accepted comprehensive definition is almost impossible. The definition of spirituality is very difficult because it has a personal and individualized meaning and every person has a specific and unique definition of it in their mind.

The concept of spirituality thus interferes with other concepts, making it difficult to apply everywhere. Nevertheless, various authors have referred to different definitions of spirituality such as the sense of excellence, interacting with the creator, nature, human, individuality, and finding a sense of achievement (Rezai et al, 2015)

### **Futures Studies**

Futures studies or futurology is a systematic attempt to look at long-term future in the field of science, technology, economy, and society for identifying new technologies and strengthening strategic research areas with the greatest economic and social benefits (Karami and Keshavarz, 2014). Michael Goode (Michael Goode 2006) defines futures studies as the cognition of possible states and choosing from among them in order to direct extant actions. Elsewhere futures studies are defined as the discovery, evaluation, and presenting probable or desirable futures (Bell, 1997). According to futures studies, the future for societies is not only in a single state, but it is possible to imagine different futures for it. The future of human societies is not an imposed and obligatory process; rather, it changes under the influence of man's



causes, values, needs, and wills. Recognition of possible future, in addition to academic and positive methods, needs all types of knowledge, arts, and new skills. In futures studies, possible futures are studied, as well as building a favorable future for human societies. Futures studies is a regular and targeted effort to help build a better future (Mahdizadeh, 2009).

### *Dimensions of Futures studies*

The dimensions of future based on the output of futures studies topics include the following (Karami and Keshavarz, 2014):

- Possible future: anything including good, bad, likely or unlikely that can happen in the future
- Likely future: anything that most likely happens in the future
- Desirable future: the future which is favorable and preferred

According to European Union working group (2005), the future mapping is defined as all activities related to thinking about the future, studying the future, and shaping it. Although it is rather about the future of science and technology and companies, futures studies have wider applications at the macro level in national, social, and political issues. Future is made of events (or possible futures and events), processes (events that have happened in the past and the present and would probably occur in the future), images (the desired future of people), and measures (planning solutions to achieve the desired future).

### **Method**

The current study was conducted based on the fundamental and theoretical methods using documentaries and library studies to discover the nature of phenomena and the relationships between variables, as well as building or testing the theories and expanding the boundaries of scientific disciplines. The main objective of this work is to explore the relationships between phenomena, to test theories, and to add to the existing knowledge in a particular field. Fundamental studies can be either theoretical or empirical. The theoretical fundamental research

uses rational reasoning and deductive methods based on library studies. The experimental fundamental research uses inductive reasoning based on field methods. In this study, data were collected through studying books, articles, documents, and the available literature. In order to categorize similar concepts, the Delphi Technique was used in a sweeping method between related professionals who have been selected using snowball technique. Next, interviews with experts were analyzed for detailed connection between variables.

### Findings

In order to answer the question of the study, several analyses are proposed which is discussed as follows.

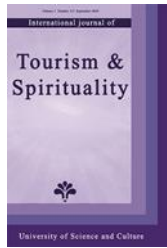
#### *The relationship between tourism and spirituality*

According to the findings of previous investigations, which include dimensions of spirituality and tourism aspects associated with individual and using content analysis, the following dimensions were extracted:

**Table 2: Comparing component of tourism and spirituality**

Comparing components of tourism and spirituality	
Promoting characters Realizing existential values	A sense of transcendence and sacred values
Acquiring the inside of things Relationship with nature and the environment in order to understand the universe Interaction with other people A better understanding of people People getting close to each other Understanding, knowledge, and cognition Knowing the creator	Mutual relationship with the creator, Nature, and Man
Finding an identity Self-discovery Knowledge of the universe Acquiring insight	Identification and finding meaning
Understanding, knowledge, and cognition Reducing conflicts Increasing capacity Impact on beliefs	Moral Values



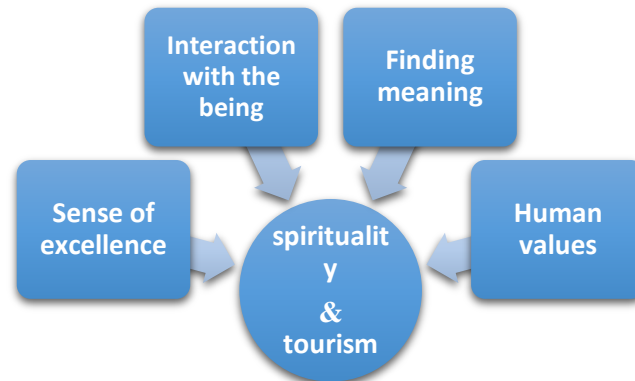


Then, using the Delphi method (multi-stage sweeping) among 12 experts in tourism and spirituality chosen through the snowball technique, components proposed by various researchers were classified in four categories. Then, these components were interrelated and their concepts were assimilated:

**Table 3. Interpretation of tourism and spirituality cooperative components**

<b>Interpretation of the fourth component</b>	<b>Interpretation of the third component</b>	<b>Interpretation of the second component</b>	<b>Interpretation of the First component</b>
Tourism would lead to a close interaction of people with each other that leads to mutual understanding and reducing conflicts between humans.	Tourism gives identity to man and makes sense of the meaning of life.	Tourism helps understand the environment in relation to (God, nature, human) and this creates an interaction between man and the universe.	Tourism creates conditions for the recognition and promotion of character values to create a sense of excellence in person.
<b>Human values</b>	<b>Finding meaning</b>	<b>Interaction with the being</b>	<b>Sense of excellence</b>

The following four components were achieved according to the final implementation of the components of content analysis and validation of experts from the relation of tourism and spirituality:



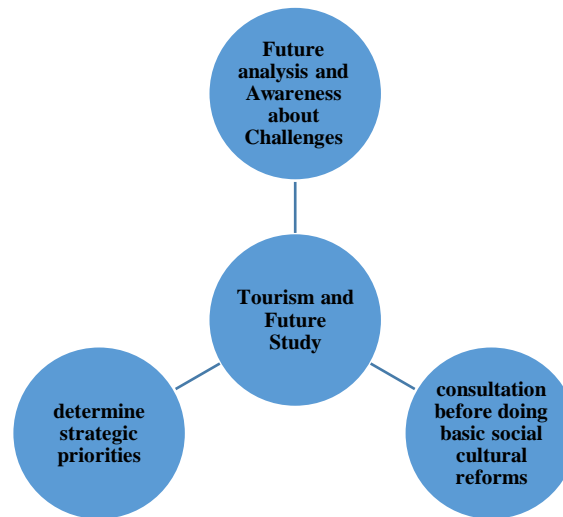
**Figure 1. Conceptual model of relationship between tourism and spirituality**

### *Relationship between Futures Studies and Tourism*

Karroubi et al (2013) view the futures studies as a real tool in planning that produces the following three objectives in connection with tourism:

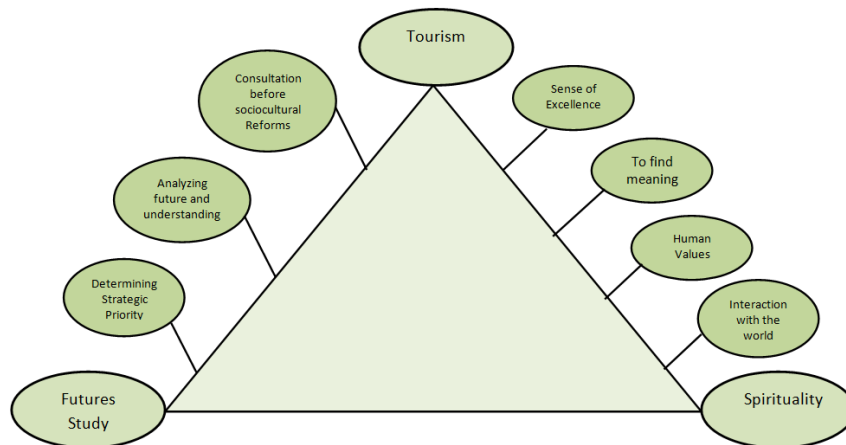
1. Future-oriented analysis of relevant topics and raising awareness about future challenges of tourism future;
2. A common way to consultation before doing basic social cultural reforms in tourism;
3. A means to determine strategic priorities especially through technology and scientific projects.

The dimensions of this relationship are in the following model:



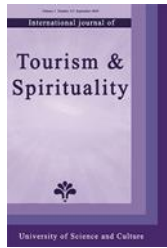
**Figure 2. Conceptual model of relationship between Futures studies and tourism**

The following model (Figure 3) can be developed according to the content analysis on spirituality, extracting dimensions of spirituality, extracting aspects of tourism and relationship focused analysis of these two variables in the form of conceptual comparison using experts' ideas as well as relationship focused analysis of tourism and futures studies deduced from the work of Karroubi et al (2013). It should be noted that in this model the relationship between futures studies and spirituality has no difference from the past and the present, but only its instances differ. This claim can be explained by the fact that spirituality is a concept that carries time, meaning it exists at all times and only has different instances because of different places, this means future spirituality.



**Figure 3. A Conceptual Model of Relationships between Tourism, Spirituality, and Futures studies**

According to the above conceptual model, seven experts were interviewed about ‘knowledge of the tourism industry’, having the needed knowledge in futures studies and ‘having sufficient knowledge of spirituality’. The summary of their ideas about these dimensions is presented in Table 4.



**Table 4. Summary of interviewees' opinions**

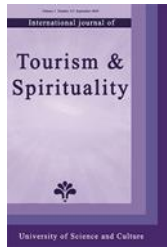
The results of the relationship between dimensions	Dimensions of spirituality and tourism	Dimensions futures studies and tourism		
<p>With regard to future trends in the tourism industry and the spiritual nature of the industry in making a sense of transcendence, finding meaning, human values, and interaction with existence, any amendment in the social and cultural level should be made with an attitude of growth in these areas and or other economic, religious, ecological areas. However, the spiritual aspect of people's lives must also be considered because it's spirituality that keeps people alive and does not show up only in the form of religion, sometimes religion, seeing nature, human interaction, and even drinking a tea with a friend can induce a spiritual sense to humans. Then, it is the human existence that makes the society. The existence of the society community makes the meaning of good and bad. Sometimes, an element of the social dimension, if they do not surpass the ethical framework accepted by the society, is not desirable or not seen as a value, but its existence is important in the spiritual dimension. It is necessary then, with the view that posterity should also take advantage of it, to undertake social and cultural reforms so that spiritual manifestations of the current society is revived and made grow in the passage of time, and sometimes substantially used so that spirituality is. This is where spiritual aspects of tourism become significant in human life.</p>	Sense of excellence	<p>Consultation before social and cultural reforms</p>		
	Finding meaning			
	Human values			
	Interaction with existence			
<p>According to human future challenges, sometimes caused by growing our technology, these challenges and spiritual aspects of tourism must be studied in order to preserve human excellence and interact with existence so that these potentials are fully used. So, too much confusion with technology turns into reconciliation through interacting with existence.</p>	Sense of Excellence	<p>Future analysis and awareness about challenges</p>		
	Finding meaning			
	Human values			
	Interaction with existence			
<p>Tourism makes a sense of meaning in life and keeps moral values alive; it must take place in all aspects of planning for the future. This alone, if taken as an indication of value for prioritization of strategic decisions, will attenuate decisions that are taken without the presence of spiritual aspects in tourism. Thus, in tourism industry strategic planning, spiritual aspects must be taken into consideration to ensure the right outcome.</p>	Sense of excellence	<p>Determining strategic priorities</p>		
	Finding meaning			
	Human values			
	Interaction with existence			

### **Discussion and conclusion**

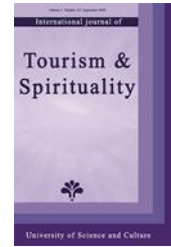
Since the tourism industry has the lowest dependence on infrastructure and is one of the important lucrative industries during economic crises, it serves as one of the most important economic levers worldwide. Countries in crises need to exploit any chance they have including both tangible and intangible opportunities. However, in most cases, only the tangible aspect is taken into consideration. Spiritual tourism is no exception to this rule. The cultural heritage in every country is sometimes tangible, such as mosques, shrines, churches, and temples and sometimes intangible such as customs and spiritual and religious rituals. However, it should be noted that spirituality is not necessarily in religious aspects but everything associated with the human soul can have a root in spirituality. Unfortunately, in many cases, the spiritual dimension is confused with religion and thus the spiritual potential of each region is mainly viewed in terms of religion and in intangible forms. Noticeably, according to the definitions of spirituality and tourism and similarities of these two concepts that contain a sense of transcendence, finding meaning, human values, and interaction with existence, it is evident that tourism in its various forms interacts constantly with spirituality and will have an undeniable influence on the future decisions of the industry. It is thus necessary to be considered in all aspects of tourism future such that planning will have no spiritual lack and the opportunities are not only analyzed with a physical approach. Because programming with spiritual approach leads to the integrity and stability of human values at different levels of society and even the increasing technological growth, it does not cause any problem.

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