



Prioritization of tourist attractions through of tourism development approach: The utilization of AHP and TOPSIS methods (Case Study: Khoy city)

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ABSTRACT

Given the significance of tourist attractions as tourism resources in any region, the initial steps toward the development of tourism in a particular area involve recognizing, prioritizing, and ranking these resources for tourism attraction programs and marketing. Khoy City, endowed with abundant historical, cultural, and natural resources, stands out as an ideal region for tourism development, given its proximity to Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Moreover, the presence of the tomb of Shams and its proximity to Rumi's mausoleum in Konya can effectively contribute to cultural tourism. Therefore, this research, employing an analytical-descriptive approach, utilizes the AHP and TOPSIS models and collects field data through questionnaires to examine and determine the ranking of tourist attractions in this city. The results indicate that based on the seven criteria (legal, infrastructural, geographical, socio-cultural, environmental, tourism product impact, economic) in Khoy urban area, "Khoy Bazaar" and "Shohada Hill" are ranked first to second. In the suburban area of Khoy City, the "Qotour Suspension Bridge," "Imamzadeh Taj al-Din," and "Mirfataah Pilgrimage Site" are ranked first to third. Investing in the creation of human-made attractions, including recreational, sports, and entertainment attractions, can complement nature-based tourism, which is the main advantage of the city. Alongside this, the presence of necessary facilities and equipment (accommodations, transportation infrastructure, etc.) and facilitation of access to the region can enhance various tourism aspects in this city.

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1. Introduction

The tourism industry can be considered one of the high value-added industries for all countries. The economic impact of tourism is not solely based on tourism-related businesses such as "hospitality industries" (accommodation), "food industries," "transportation and travel services," "restaurants and retailers," "handicraft industries," "entertainment and recreation," and so forth; it also influences many related industries. The effects that are directly related to various tourism sectors are termed direct effects, while those that affect other related industries are referred to as indirect effects.

These impacts, along with increasing income for the beneficiaries of this industry and injecting resources and income, have societal effects known as the induced effects of the tourism industry (direct, indirect, and induced effects). All these factors can have their effects in various dimensions such as "tourism demand and supply" and consequently "domestic gross production and international trade of countries", "employment and unemployment in countries", "demand for services in tourism-related industries", "improvement of welfare and social justice", "development of infrastructure", "activation of airports and transportation systems", "increase in local and indigenous production and industry (handicrafts and cultural



products)", "environmental protection of the region and other tourist attractions", "increase in the production of local goods and services," "increase in the pride and honor of the host society," "elevation of security and order in society," and more (Masaeli et al., 2022). According to the West Azerbaijan Provincial Development Plan (2018), the tourism capacities of Khoy City are diverse, encompassing areas such as "historical-cultural," "natural," "health," "sports," and so forth, on a regional scale. This city, due to its possession of historical-cultural tourist attractions with national and international significance, such as the mausoleum of Shams Tabrizi, holds a special position in the tourism system of the province and the country. It should be noted that the tourism capacities of Khoy City, as formal attractions of the city, not only have a historical dimension but also have a cultural and ritualistic aspect. This aspect, in addition to its general audience, provides a platform for attracting specific groups and ethnicities such as Armenians, Zoroastrians, Christians, and more. Art festivals related to Shams and Rumi are a subject that elevates the status and position of the cultural attraction of the mausoleum of Shams Tabrizi in Khoy to a much higher level than a decade ago. The key issue in the performance of formal attractions in the city is the lack of an appropriate tourism calendar and the absence of the necessary linkage between sectors in the tourism domain to increase the time of attracting and retaining tourists within the city. However, the first step to creating a tourism calendar and inter-sectoral linkage in tourism to attract and retain tourists is to identify the tourism potential of the region (West Azerbaijan Provincial Management and Planning Organization, 2019). On the other hand, in today's world, competitiveness is recognized as a fundamental principle in the global business arena. This principle applies to all industries and services, and the tourism industry is no exception. Destination marketing management is one of the topics that has been discussed in achieving tourism goals and its development. Based on this, various tourism destinations seek to create a competitive advantage to achieve the benefits of tourism, such as currency earning and employment. Therefore, tourist attractions, which are part of the three sectors of "cultural and historical" tourism, "nature-based" tourism, and "human-made" tourism, are considered tourism

resources and their ranking and prioritization are of great importance. Accordingly, this study aims to prioritize tourist attractions in Khoy City to regulate various aspects of tourism activation in this region. Today, one of the main factors contributing to economic growth and development at the urban and national levels is the tourism industry. This industry is continuously expanding, and each country strives to attract as many tourists as possible based on its potentials. Tourism, like any other multidimensional subject, constitutes a system, with elements and components that, when combined, create a whole. A proper understanding of each system requires knowledge of its components and its entirety to ensure that the gears of this system function optimally for tourism as a whole to operate with the highest efficiency and effectiveness. Based on this, every tourism system consists of the following elements:

- ⇒ Tourist attractions and activities
- ⇒ Accommodation facilities
- ⇒ Transportation facilities and services
- ⇒ Institutional elements
- ⇒ Other infrastructural facilities
- ⇒ Food and restaurants
- ⇒ Other tourism facilities and services (Malek and Kalantari, 2022).

Tourism encompasses a flow of capital, human resources, culture, and their interactions that leave various effects in geographical spaces (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004). Many countries derive economic and social benefits from tourism, utilizing tourism revenues for their infrastructure development (Eccles and Costa, 1996). Tourism is a multidimensional concept, encompassing economic, social, cultural, political, and security aspects at local, regional, national, and international levels, addressing today's needs for satisfaction in places other than human residences. These needs include "stress relief," "rest," "peace of mind," "cultural familiarity," "food," "interaction with people," and "exploring new and beautiful places" (Barimani et al., 2016), creating a conducive environment for tourist enjoyment. The supply side of the tourism sector includes tangible items, global attractions, scenic views, hotels, restaurants, and other accommodation facilities, transportation companies, travel tours, and also intangible items such as the quality of services provided by each element of the tourism supply. Considering that tourism resources (natural,

cultural-social, and other resources) combined with tourism facilities become attractions (Zargham, 2002). Given that prioritizing tourist attractions can provide valuable insights for regional and national policymakers and planners, extensive research has been conducted on this topic. Some of the research conducted at national and international levels is outlined below=

In a study in 2018, Elahi Chooran and Senaemoghadam prioritized tourist attractions in Nowshahr City using F-AHP and F-TOPSIS methods, revealing that the Sisangan Recreation Complex ranked first, the Citra Tourist Complex ranked second, and the Ovidar Dam Recreation Complex ranked third (Elahi Chooran and Senaemoghadam, 2018)= In another study in 2019, Aslani and colleagues prioritized tourist attractions in Yazd city using the feasibility analysis and quantitative matrix evaluation techniques. The results indicated that the priorities for development were architectural heritage, handicrafts and local products, holding special religious ceremonies, and local culture, all emphasizing tangible and intangible dimensions of Yazd's heritage

(Aslani et al., 2020). In a study in 2020, Zakery and Sadeghlou focused on prioritizing tourist attractions in Mashhad for tourism development. They employed entropy, VICOR, and indicated that the Imam Reza Shrine, the Blue Waves Land, and Torghabeh were the top priorities. Interestingly, there was a difference in views between officials regarding the Imam Reza Shrine, Ferdowsi's Mausoleum, and the Blue Waves Lands (Zakeri and Sadeghloo, 2021). In a research study conducted in 2023 by Fan and colleagues, the authors aimed to determine and prioritize tourism development strategies in the Chanbai Mountains in China using SWOT, QSPM, and AHP methods. The results highlighted the need to focus on the natural and historical advantages, and a government-private investment mechanism could be a solution for development. However, given that this region is undergoing its infancy in tourism, planners and government-private managers must pay attention to providing suitable economic levels and job opportunities for the area (Fan, 2023). Other studies in this field are summarized in the Table 1=

Table 1. Some Research Conducted at National and International Levels

Authors	year	Area	Methodology
Noori and Taghizade	2013	North west of Kermanshah Province	Multiple-criteria TOPSIS
Ajza Shokouhi, et al.	2014	Natural waterfalls in Lorestan	AHP
Tang and Rochananond	1990	32 countries	Multiple-criteria
Goksu and Kaya	2014	Bosni	Fuzzy AHP- Topsis
Emir et al.	2016	Turkey	AHP
Rahmani et al.	2020	Mashhad	FUZZY TOPSIS
Hosseini and Paydar	2022	Northern Savadkooh area	FUZZY TOPSIS

The main point that should be emphasized is that the prioritization of attractions and tourism resources is not a new topic; however, it is not one that becomes obsolete. There is always a need for the examination, identification, and prioritization of tourism in various regions. Therefore, from 1990 to 2023, numerous research studies have been conducted in this regard. Additionally, various methods have been employed to calculate and prioritize, each approaching the issue from a different perspective and utilizing distinct methodologies. It is crucial to note that no particular method holds a specific superiority

over others, and each method contributes uniquely to the discourse on this subject.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Materials

2.1.1. Geographical Scope of the Study Area

According to the statistical yearbook of West Azerbaijan province in 1395, the city of Khoy is located at a geographical position of 44 degrees and 58 minutes east longitude and 38 degrees and 32 minutes north latitude. The time difference between Khoy and Tehran is 25 minutes and 34 seconds. The geographical location of Khoy is illustrated in Fig 1.

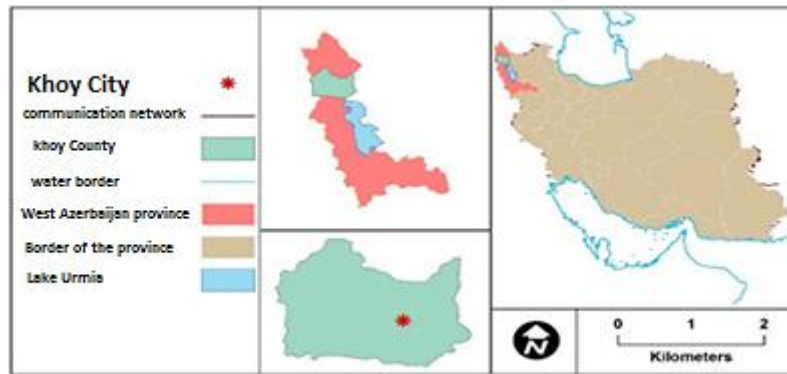


Fig. 1. Current geographical location of Khoy

The Khoy plain is situated in the southeastern foothills of the Armenian Highlands, with an average elevation of 1139 meters above sea level. *2.1.2. Current Demographic and Geographical Overview* As of the latest political divisions in 2017, this city is comprised of four districts (Ivavughli, Sefaiyeh, Qatour, and Central), six urban centers, 11 rural districts, and 231 inhabited villages, along with 13 uninhabited villages. According to the 2017 census, the city of Khoy had a population exceeding 348,664 individuals, with 225,931 residing in the urban area of Khoy itself. Positioned in a relatively extensive valley within the West Azerbaijan province, Khoy stands as the second-largest city

level, which is lower than all the adjacent plains to Lake Urmia. Consequently, colloquially, it is referred to as "Khoy Chokhori" (Khoy Basin). in the province after Urmia. As one of the cities in West Azerbaijan province, Khoy is situated in the northwesternmost part of Iran, serving as a cradle for a multi-millennial civilization and being one of the oldest centers of civilization in the country. Its strategic significance has been historically high due to its adjacency to Turkey and its location on the Silk Road (Fig 2). Notably, Khoy is renowned for its vast sunflower fields, earning it the nickname "City of Sunflowers" (Statistical Center of Iran, 2017; 2019).

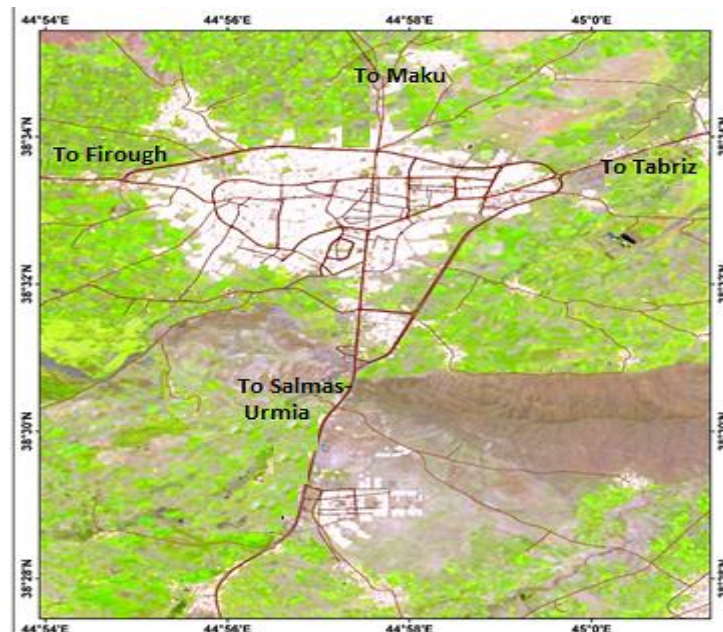


Fig. 2. Urban Road Network Position in Khoy City
(Digital Data from Earth Sciences Databases)

2.1.3. Tourism Resources in Khoy City

Tourist attractions are classified into three major categories by the World Tourism Organization:

- Natural Attractions

- Historical-Cultural Attractions

- Special Attractions (Inskip, 1991).

In this context, and based on the types of thematic tourism and attention to the attractions

and tourism resources of Khoy City, the following definitions are provided=

2.1.3.1. Natural Tourism (Natural Heritage)

The increasing growth of technology and industry, the rapid pace towards mechanization in life, and psychological fatigue resulting from human civilization's pollution have led individuals to seek comfort and tranquility in nature. Today, nature tourism has become a significant part of global tourism activities worldwide. In this type of activity, travelers' journey to high mountains, mountain ranges, foothills, forests, plains, deep valleys, and deserts with the aim of enjoying the natural beauty and astonishing features of creation. This strong inclination and specific tendency to benefit from nature are known as ecotourism. The concept of ecotourism developed in the 1980s with the aim of monitoring tourism and its detrimental effects on natural areas (World Organization Tourism, 2002). Natural tourism resources encompass all natural phenomena suitable for tourism within a geographical area, where human intervention has not played a role in their formation. Geological and geographical structures of natural landscapes or confined areas that are habitats for species of animals and plants of scientific and conservation value fall into this category of tourism. Natural tourist attractions are divided into the following categories:

Hot Springs and Mineral Springs: These springs include non-carbonated and sulfur-mixed water. In Khoy city, they consist of 16 locations, such

as Qaranjeh Hot Spring, Razi Mineral Spring, Kelvans Mineral Spring, Khan Mineral Spring, Zarean Mineral Spring, Bolagh Bilvar Mineral Spring, Veyshegh Mineral Spring, Navaii Mineral Spring, Qoruq Mineral Spring, Daste Dareh Mineral Spring, Qarah Shaban Mineral Spring, Avavoghlou Mineral Spring, Shaghayi Mineral Spring, Qotour Hot Spring, Kafchirin Hot Spring, and Zelzeleh Bolaghi Spring.

Wetlands and Ponds: Wetlands and ponds are places for water accumulation that can serve as habitats for native and migratory animals, including birds. In Khoy, there are three locations such as Qaris Wetland, Qazalche Pond, and Kelvans Earth Dam=

Caves: Another natural tourist attraction is caves, with two of them in Khoy, namely Ali Sheikh Cave and Shaghayi Wonderland Cave=

Waterfalls: Waterfalls, which have their special charm, especially in the warm seasons, are another source of natural heritage. In Khoy, there are three waterfalls: Qizilchir Bedlan Waterfall, Geyuran Qotour Waterfall, and Mamish Khan Waterfall=

Lakes: Lakes are another natural tourism resource, and in Khoy, they include the Orin Mountain Lakes=

Other resources also include the Lalas Asgarabad Plain, Chalekhaneh Khaneh Mountain, Ivavoghlou, Aland Yeylaghi Area (Jahannam Darreh), Ancient Trees, etc. Map of Natural Tourist Attractions in Khoy City is indicated in Fig 4.

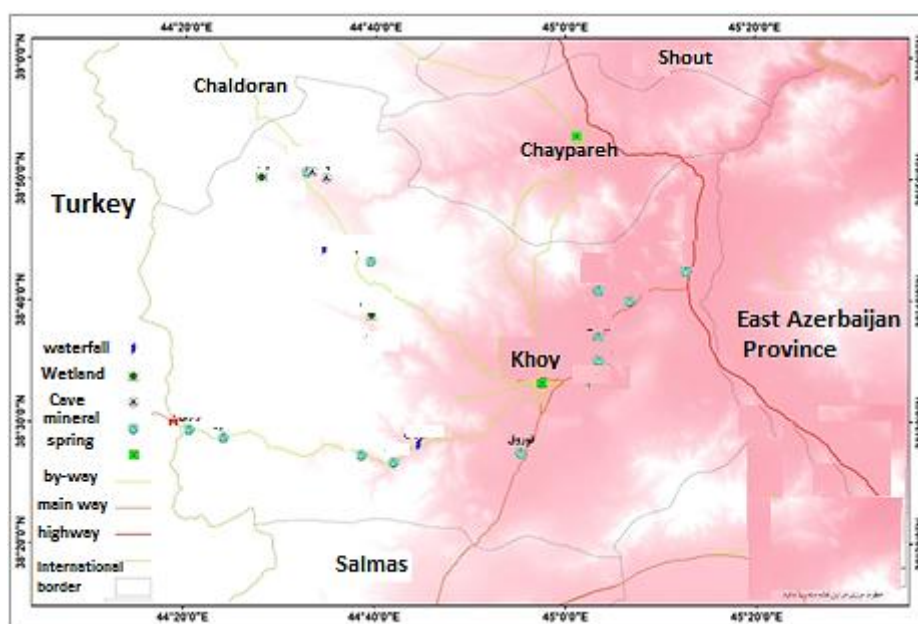


Fig. 3. Map of Natural Tourist Attractions in Khoy City

In preventative tourism, individuals travel to destinations to utilize the natural facilities available. These facilities encompass favorable climatic conditions, warm water springs, mud therapy complexes, and so forth (Akhavan Behbahani, 2010).

2.1.3.2. Historical Tourism (Immovable Heritage)

Historical tourism stands as one of the earliest forms of tourism globally, rooted in the essence of human nature. The process is inherently tied to humans' perpetual curiosity for discovering new and, importantly, gaining a more detailed understanding of the past—both their own ancestral history and that of other individuals and societies. Within historical tourism, individuals strive to directly and personally observe, without intermediaries, whatever they seek to encounter by traveling and witnessing it firsthand. In the realm of historical tourism, visitors, whether citizens of the same country or from other nations, enter destination lands with the aim of spending leisure time due to their interest in the historical artifacts of other societies. During their specified period of stay, they engage in visiting historical sites and attractions. A complex of continuously connected or separate structures, buildings, etc., is considered globally valuable from a historical, artistic, or scientific perspective due to architectural style, uniformity, or scenic locations=

Enclosed spaces also include human-made structures or structures co-created by humans and nature, encompassing archaeological sites that hold global value from historical, artistic, ethnographic, and anthropological viewpoints. In total, there are 102 historical works in Khoy city, out of which 86 are registered in the national list of the country's monuments. Some of the historical tourist attractions in Khoy City include=

- Bridges: Khatoon Bridge, Qarah Qushun Bridge
- Mosques: Motaleb Khan Mosque, Seyyed al-Shohada Mosque in Khoy, Molla Hasan Mosque, Dash Aghlayan Mosque, Sheikh Mosque, Hajjatiyeh Mosque, Haji Baba Mosque

- Churches: Surp Sarkis Church, Holy Mary Church (Qarees), Holy Sarkis Church (Fanaii), Holy Cross Church (Malhzan Village).

- Tombs and Shrines: Shams Tabrizi Tomb, Pouriya Vali Tomb, Al-Yaghoub Tomb, Zehbiyeh Shrine, Pirekandi Tomb (Pir Omar Nakhjavani).

- Buildings and Structures: Former Municipality and City Council Building, Kabiri House, Yusefi House, Hekimah High School

- Castles and Fortresses: Kuraoglu Castle, Seyyed Tajaddin Castle, Stone Gate

- Caravanserais: Khan Caravanserai, Mirza Hashem Caravanserai, Shahabbasi Caravanserai (Darreh Khan)

- Other Items: Mohammad Beyg Bath, Khoy Bazaar

2.1.3.3. Cultural- Religion tourism

Cultural tourism refers to the travel of individuals from their place of residence to destinations with cultural attractions. This displacement is undertaken with the aim of acquiring information and engaging in commerce to satisfy the cultural needs of tourists. Cultural tourism constitutes a significant portion of the global tourism demand; according to the World Tourism Organization statistics, approximately 37% of international tourism is motivated by cultural interests. Cultural tourism in Khoy City encompasses intangible heritage and spiritual cultural heritage. Dialects, clothing, customs, rituals, and specific ceremonies are considered attractions in cultural heritage tourism in Khoy city. These elements contribute to the cultural tourism appeal and sometimes complement other tourism sectors. Examples of cultural events in some of the cultural tourism attractions in Khoy City include the Shakh-Si ceremony, the Golabgiri Festival, and the Eid gift (Paye Aparmaq) for newlyweds. The religious-spiritual tourism resources include Seyyed Behloul Shrine, Seyyed Tajaddin Shrine, Mirfatah Pilgrimage Site, and Mirhadi Imamzadeh. Map of the Location of Historical Sites and Attractions in the City of Khoy is indicated in Fig 4.

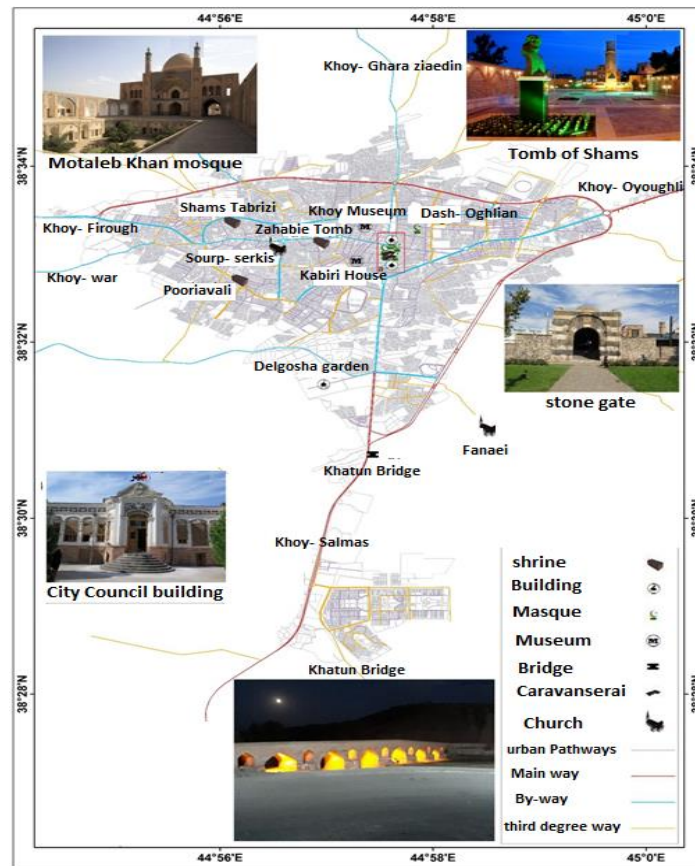


Fig. 4. Map of the Location of Historical Sites and Attractions in the City of Khoy

In Khoy city, man-made tourist attractions, which are also classified as special tourist attractions, are less so that they cannot be called as tourism resources.

2.2. Criteria and Methods

2.2.1. Criteria

In order to prioritize tourist attractions in Khoy city, seven main criteria and 29 sub-criteria have been employed (see Fi 5). The main criteria for prioritization are=

Legal Indicators: This includes sub-criteria related to financial and capital facilities laws, land use laws, cultural heritage laws, and environmental laws=

Infrastructure Indicators: This involves sub-criteria such as sewage, gas, water, electricity, accessibility, and welfare facilities=

Geographical Indicators: These encompass infrastructure elements like the spatial status of future tourist activities, spatial performance of tourist activities, and the climate's comfort=

Socio-cultural Indicators: This category includes cooperation among agencies and tour operators, avoiding conflict with the host society's values, and social participation=

Tourism Impact Product: This entails sub-criteria like the possibility of operation throughout the year, proximity to surrounding attractions, and the uniqueness of the impact=

Environmental Indicators: These involve sub-criteria such as non-destruction of limited attraction resources, absence of noise pollution, absence of visual pollution, and air pollution=

Economic Indicators: This category includes sub-criteria like the level of capital investment attraction, length of stay, tourist spending, job creation, income generation, and demand volume=

2.3. Methods

2.3.1. Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP)

Prioritization of tourist attractions has been conducted within the study area, encompassing both urban and peri-urban scales (Khoy city). Various matrices have been created in the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) for the rational decision-making process, evaluating criteria and sub-criteria to prioritize attractions in line with the established objectives. The data analysis in this section has been carried out through expert opinions from executive officials, urban elites, the academic community,

and planners familiar with the region's tourist attractions. The process was facilitated using the ExpertChoice software. The diagram below

illustrates the hierarchical tree of criteria and ranking indicators=

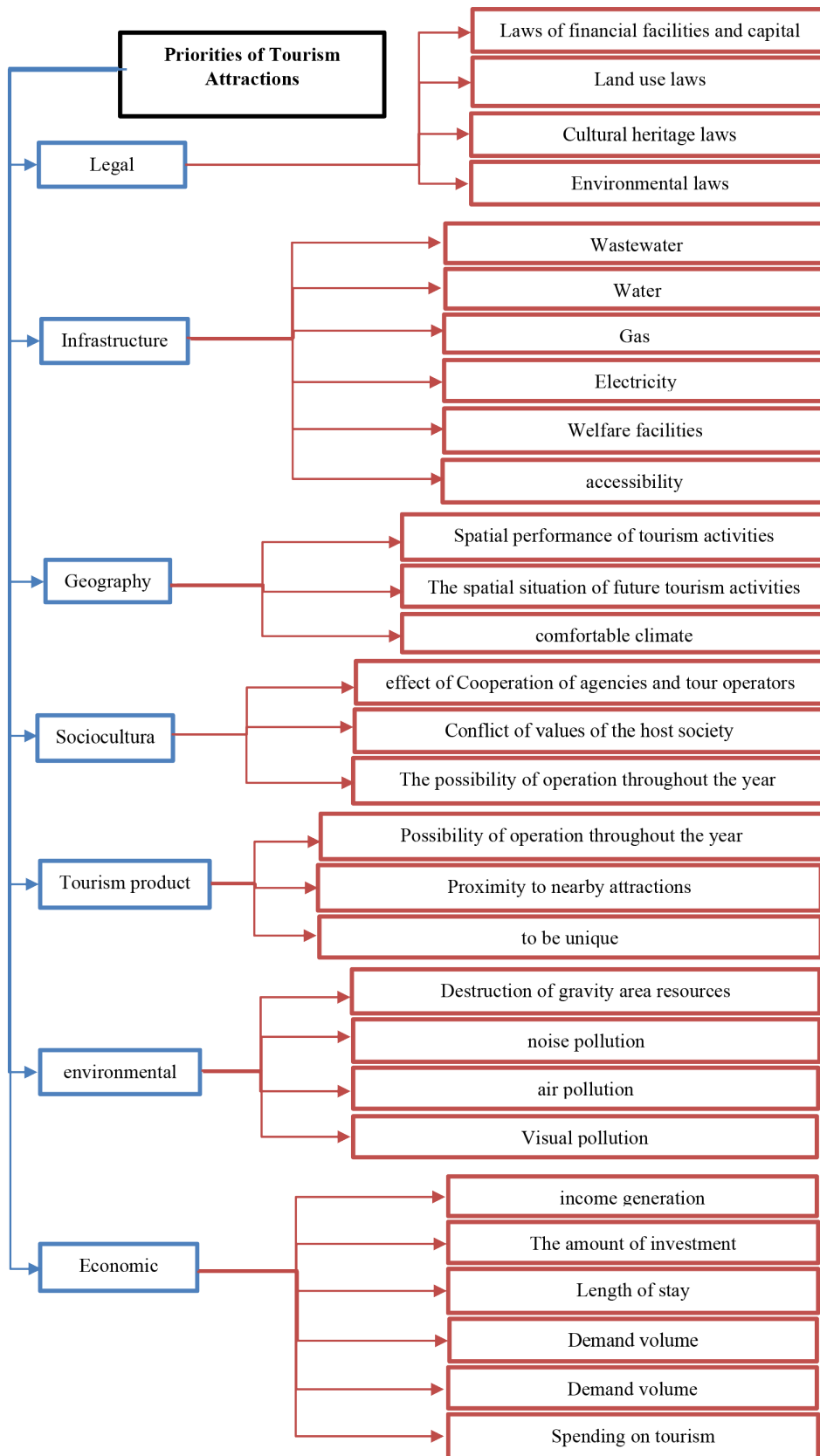


Fig. 5. Hierarchy of prioritization of tourist attractions in Khoy City

2.3.2. Multi-Criteria Decision-Making Method

Technique for Order of Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution (TOPSIS)

In recent years, researchers have shown increased interest in multi-criteria models for complex decision-making. Instead of relying on a single efficiency measurement criterion in such decision-making processes, multiple criteria may be considered. The TOPSIS method has proven to be one of the most useful multi-criteria decision-making methods for addressing real-world issues and was initially introduced by Hwang and Yoon in 1981 (Hwang and Yoon, 1981). In this method, m options are evaluated based on assessment indices. The steps of the process are outlined as follows:

a) Formation of the Decision Matrix:

In the TOPSIS technique, evaluation is conducted for m options using n criteria. Therefore, each option is assigned a score based on each criterion. These scores can be quantitative and real values or qualitative and theoretical. In either case, a decision matrix of m×n must be formed:

b) Normalization of the Decision Matrix:

Similar to other multi-criteria decision-making methods, the TOPSIS method requires normalization of the decision matrix. Vector normalization is employed for this purpose, and contrary to simple linear normalization methods, it is performed based on the following relationship (Anvari Rostami and Khatanloo, 2006).

$$n_{ij} = \frac{r_{ij}}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^m r_{ij}^2}} \tag{1}$$

Thus, each element of the hypothetical decision matrix is divided by the existing norm from column j (for the Xj index). This process ensures that all columns of the normalized decision matrix have similar length units (as vectors), facilitating their comprehensive comparison:

c) Formation of the Weighted Normalized Decision Matrix:

The next step involves forming the weighted normalized matrix based on the weights assigned to the criteria. Therefore, the weights of the criteria must be calculated beforehand using techniques such as AHP or Shannon's entropy. Weighting is a straightforward process where the weight of each criterion is multiplied into its corresponding matrix elements:

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Prioritization of Tourist Attractions in Khoy City (AHP Model)

As previously mentioned, the prioritization indices for tourist attraction centers in Khoy City, based on 7 main criteria, including legal, infrastructure, geographical, socio-cultural, tourism impact product, environmental, and economic criteria, have been compared. The ranking results are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Ranking of Tourist Attractions in Khoy City Based on the 7-Criteria Prioritization (AHP)

Rank	Tourist site	Legal	Infrastructure	Geography	Sociocultural	Tourism product	environmental	Economic	Final weight
1	Bazaar of Khoy	3.67	4.03	3.77	3.82	4.65	3.36	3.00	3.87
2	Tapeh-e Shahada ¹	3.30	3.79	3.85	4.29	3.61	3.86	3.52	3.75
3	Sheikh Nowaei Mausoleum	3.24	4.08	3.92	4.11	4.02	3.69	2.95	3.72
4	Shora Building	3.18	4.27	3.77	3.99	3.92	3.57	3.12	3.69
5	Kabiri House	3.29	4.27	3.76	3.81	3.96	3.46	3.17	3.68
6	Shams Mausoleum	3.18	3.86	3.71	3.69	4.22	3.19	3.53	3.63
7	Imamzadeh Seyed Behloul	3.11	4.08	3.84	4.02	3.94	3.56	2.82	3.62
8	Motaleb Khan Masque	3.00	3.82	3.77	3.92	4.03	3.48	2.40	3.49
9	Seyedoshohada Masque	2.49	4.07	3.60	3.70	3.98	3.69	2.68	3.46

¹ - "The weights assigned to the indices related to the impact of tourism on Shahda Hills are considered under the assumption of the completion of the construction project."

10	Saraye Khan Caravanserai	2.99	3.67	3.58	3.39	4.10	3.49	2.81	3.43
11	Dash Oghlian Masque	2.57	3.76	3.72	3.87	3.89	3.51	2.53	3.41
12	Pooriavali	2.77	3.53	3.34	3.49	3.98	3.24	2.93	3.34
13	Molla Hasan Masque	2.15	3.82	3.54	3.68	3.96	3.51	2.55	3.32
14	Haji Baba Masaque	2.38	3.91	3.39	3.66	3.89	3.40	2.29	3.27
15	Imamzadeh Mirhadi	2.73	3.70	3.46	3.65	3.56	3.26	2.45	3.26
16	Alyaghoub Shrine	2.41	3.80	3.50	3.56	3.77	3.48	2.04	3.22
17	Hojjatieh Masque	2.34	3.56	3.64	3.41	3.74	3.56	2.26	3.21
18	Hashem Caravanserai	2.75	3.22	3.27	2.83	3.92	3.41	2.43	3.12
19	Yousefi House	2.34	3.98	3.13	3.01	3.77	3.11	2.22	3.08
20	Khatoun Bridge	3.23	1.20	3.80	3.52	3.85	2.97	2.95	3.07
21	Sourp Church	3.00	3.67	3.10	2.67	3.25	2.81	2.79	3.04
22	Sheikh Mosque	2.54	3.34	3.22	3.41	3.32	2.99	2.25	3.01
23	Hakimiyeh High School	2.22	3.28	3.46	3.23	3.48	3.25	2.01	2.99
24	Khosravi School	2.62	3.15	3.40	2.95	3.60	3.43	1.66	2.97
25	Stone Gate	2.63	3.01	3.02	3.42	3.52	2.44	2.67	2.96
26	Zehbiyeh Shrine	2.13	3.35	3.50	2.77	3.47	3.35	2.05	2.94
27	Mohammad Beyg Bath	2.05	2.34	2.93	2.21	4.09	2.34	1.53	2.50

3.1.1. Ranking Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Legal Index Using AHP Method

Utilizing the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), the urban tourist attractions of Khoy have been ranked from first to seventh as follows: Bazaar of Khoy, Tapeh-e Shahada, Sheikh Nowaei Mausoleum, Shora Building, Kabiri House, and Shams Mausoleum and Imamzadeh Seyed Behloul. The tourist attractions placed at the bottom of the prioritization, ranked Twenty-sixth and seventh, include Mohammad Beyg Bath, Zehbiyeh Shrine, Stone Gate, Khosravi School, Hakimiyeh High School, and Sheikh Mosque=

3.1.2. Ranking Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Infrastructure Index

Accessibility to tourist sites is a crucial parameter for tourists in prioritizing attractions for visits and leisure time. Sub-indicators such as sewage, gas, water, electricity, access, and welfare facilities have been used to assess this aspect. In this regard, Kabiri House, Shora Building, Imamzadeh Seyed Behloul Mausoleum, Sheikh Nowaei Mausoleum, and Mosque Seyed al-Shohada are ranked from one to five, respectively, indicating better conditions compared to other attractions=

3.1.3. Ranking Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Geographic Index

Geographical considerations in assessing and ranking tourist attractions in Khoy include sub-indicators such as the spatial state of future tourism activities, spatial performance of current tourism activities, and climate comfort. Among the numerous tourist attractions in Khoy, Sheikh Nowaei Mausoleum, Tapeh-e Shahada (Golzar Shahada-ye Gomnam), Imamzadeh Seyed Behloul, Khatoun Bridge, and Shora Building are ranked from one to five in terms of the geographic index=

3.1.4. Ranking Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Socio-Cultural Index

In the cultural aspect, sub-indicators include collaboration of agencies and tour guides in the impact, lack of conflict with the host society's values, and social participation. Based on these sub-indicators, Tapeh-e Shahada, Sheikh Nowaei Mausoleum, Imamzadeh Seyed Behloul, Shora Building, and Masjed Motaleb Khan, among Khoy's tourist attractions, have been examined and ranked from one to five in terms of the socio-cultural index=

3.1.5. Ranking Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Tourism Impact Product Index

The Tourism Impact Product Index includes sub-criteria such as the possibility of exploitation throughout the year, proximity to surrounding attractions, and uniqueness of the

attraction. Bazaar of Khoy, Shams Tabrizi Mausoleum, Khan Caravanserai, Mohammad Beyg Bath, and Masjed Motaleb Khan, in prioritizing urban tourist attractions in Khoy based on the triple criteria of the Tourism Impact Product Index, have assigned ranks from one to five, respectively=

3.1.6. Ranking Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Environmental Index

Sustainable management and environmental protection in the exploitation of tourist attractions have become important considerations. Sub-indicators such as sewage, gas, water, electricity, access, and welfare facilities have been used to assess this aspect. In this context, Tapeh-e Shahada, Sheikh Nowaei Mausoleum, Masjed Seyed al-Shohada, Shora Building, and Imamzadeh Seyed Behloul have better conditions compared to other attractions and are ranked from one to five in terms of the environmental index=

3.1.7. Ranking Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Economic Index

Indicators such as the attraction of investment, length of stay, tourist spending, job creation, income generation, and demand volume are economic sub-criteria in prioritizing urban tourist attractions. Accordingly, Bazaar of Khoy, Shams Tabrizi Mausoleum, Tapeh-e Shahada (Golzar Shahada-ye Gomnam), Kabiri House, and Shora Building possess the highest potential for investment, job creation, demand volume, and ultimately income generation for Khoy city, assigning ranks from one to five in the economic index. In summary, based on the 7-criteria evaluation in the urban area of Khoy, "Bazaar of Khoy," "Tapeh-e Shahada," and "Sheikh Nowaei Mausoleum" are ranked first to third, while "Stone Gate," "Zehbiyeh Shrine," and "Mohammad Beyg Bath" are ranked at the bottom=

3.2. Ranking Surrounding Urban Tourist Attractions of Khoy (AHP Model)

Similar to the prioritization of urban tourist attractions within Khoy, the 7 main criteria, including legal, infrastructural, geographical, socio-cultural, tourism product impact, environmental, and economic criteria, have been employed for prioritizing tourist centers around Khoy City. The results of these comparisons and the prioritization of surrounding tourist attractions around Khoy City are presented in the following table=

3.2.1. Ranking Surrounding Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Legal Index

Considering sub-indicators such as financial and capital facility laws, land use laws, cultural heritage laws, and environmental laws, historical and religious attractions around Khoy, including Qotour Bridge, Holy Cross Church, Virgin Mary Church, Sarkis Holy Church, and Imamzadeh Seyed Taj al-Din are ranked from one to five, respectively. Regarding this index and among natural tourist attractions, Ghazalkeh Lake, Kolvanis Dam, Ali Sheikh Cave, Orin Mountain, and Giouran Qotour Waterfall are ranked from one to five=

3.2.2. Ranking Surrounding Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Infrastructure Index

The ease of access to tourist locations is also a crucial parameter considered by tourists for prioritizing attractions concerning visits and leisure activities. To investigate this aspect, sub-indicators including sewage, gas, water, electricity, access, and welfare facilities have been employed. In this regard, among the historical and religious tourist attractions surrounding Khoy City, the rankings from one to five are respectively assigned to the Mirfatah Pilgrimage Site, Imamzadeh Seyed Taj al-Din, Holy Cross Church, Sarkis Holy Church, and Shah Abbas Caravanserai. In the natural attractions category, this ranking is assigned to Qotour Hot Spring, Zelzeleh Bolaghi, Ghazalkeh Lake, Kafcherin Hot Spring, and Shaghayi Cave.

3.2.3. Ranking Surrounding Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Geographic Index

In the assessment and ranking of tourist attractions surrounding Khoy city from a geographical perspective, three sub-indicators related to the spatial state of future tourism activities, the spatial performance of current tourism activities, and the comfort of the climate have been considered. In other words, in this comparison and ranking, the spatial aspect of tourism activities, as an effect or attraction in both the present and future, holds great significance. The investigations in this section indicate that natural tourist attractions around Khoy, including Ghazalkeh Lake, Giouran Qotour Waterfall, Badlan Waterfall, Orin Mountain, and Jehanam Valley, are ranked from one to five in terms of the geographical index. The ranking of Tourist Attractions in Around Khoy City Based on the 7-Criteria Prioritization (AHP) is indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Ranking of Tourist Attractions in Around Khoys City Based on the 7-Criteria Prioritization (AHP)

Rank	Tourist site	Legal	Infrastructure	Geography	Sociocultural	Tourism product	Environmental	Economic	Final weight
1	Qotour Overpass	4.00	2.98	4.20	3.87	4.25	3.54	4.15	3.85
2	Tajeddin Imamzadeh	2.25	3.39	3.67	2.92	3.52	4.13	1.93	3.12
3	Mirfattah Shrine	2.22	3.50	3.63	2.89	3.49	4.09	1.90	3.10
4	Church of the Cross	3.23	2.13	3.27	2.37	3.59	3.96	2.29	2.98
5	Maryam Church	2.93	1.83	3.07	2.17	3.29	3.66	1.99	2.70
6	Givaran Waterfall	1.42	0.63	4.06	2.96	3.79	4.17	1.66	2.67
7	Badalan Waterfall	1.39	0.60	4.03	2.93	3.76	4.14	1.63	2.64
8	Qezelje Wetland /reservoir	2.60	0.91	4.15	2.30	2.77	3.43	2.30	2.64
9	Tomb of Pirkandi	2.25	0.75	3.03	3.47	3.13	3.37	1.82	2.55
10	Kelvans earthen dam	2.45	1.81	3.60	2.53	2.87	2.65	1.65	2.50
11	Sarkis Church	2.86	1.58	2.90	2.00	3.04	3.41	1.74	2.48
12	Qotour Hot Water	1.12	1.40	3.77	2.38	3.65	2.93	2.07	2.47
13	Kafcherin Hot Water	1.00	0.78	3.69	2.30	3.57	3.41	2.44	2.45
14	Ali sheikh Cave	1.52	0.54	3.50	2.47	3.68	3.98	1.28	2.42
15	Churos Big Castle	2.01	0.70	2.93	2.53	3.34	3.50	1.83	2.41
16	Gharenjeh Hot Water	0.88	0.40	3.82	1.73	3.79	4.36	1.86	2.40
17	Avrin Mount	1.44	0.14	3.93	2.64	2.51	4.21	1.90	2.40
18	Chir's Tomb	2.17	0.72	2.87	2.41	3.05	3.74	1.68	2.38
19	Shah Abbas Kervansai	2.18	0.83	2.83	2.70	3.47	3.03	1.50	2.36
20	Kelvans spring	0.34	0.59	3.83	2.07	3.93	3.47	2.20	2.35
21	Sayed Tajuddin Castle	2.15	0.28	2.93	2.50	3.13	4.05	1.33	2.34
22	Qashon Bridge	1.91	0.63	2.96	2.12	3.36	3.98	1.01	2.28
23	Avrin Lakes	0.47	0.22	3.23	3.31	2.92	4.24	1.54	2.27
24	Razi spring	0.60	0.41	3.69	1.58	3.60	3.34	2.07	2.18
25	hell valley	0.66	0.37	3.91	1.69	3.72	3.95	0.99	2.18
26	Kuroghli Castle	1.38	0.18	2.87	2.23	3.23	3.95	1.23	2.15
27	Memish Khan waterfall	0.64	0.52	3.79	1.88	3.22	4.06	0.92	2.15
28	Bolaghi earthquake	0.73	0.98	3.73	1.64	3.51	3.21	1.14	2.14
29	Cave of Wonders	0.82	0.68	3.36	1.80	3.34	3.87	0.97	2.09
30	old trees	0.44	0.46	3.79	2.37	3.23	3.66	0.64	2.08
31	The field of tulips	0.63	0.59	3.42	1.74	2.29	3.27	0.58	1.79

3.2.4. Ranking Surrounding Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Socio-Cultural Index

In the context of the cultural index, sub-indicators such as collaboration between agencies and tour guides, non-conflict with the

host community's values, and social participation have been utilized. Through these sub-indicators, it was determined that among the historical and religious tourist attractions

surrounding Khoy City, the Khoy Aerial Bridge, Pir Kendi Mausoleum, Imamzadeh Seyed Taj al-Din, Mirfatah Pilgrimage Site, and Shah Abbas Caravanserai have assigned rankings from one to five in the socio-cultural index, contributing to the prioritization of attractions or cultural artifacts. In the discussion of natural attractions surrounding Khoy City, this ranking is attributed to Kluvan Spring, Giouran Qotour Waterfall, Badlan Waterfall, Orin Mountain, and Ali Sheikh Cave.

3.2.5. *Ranking Surrounding Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Tourism Product Index*

The tourism product index, encompassing sub-criteria such as operability throughout the year, proximity to surrounding attractions, and uniqueness of the attraction, holds paramount importance in assessing and prioritizing tourist attractions. The prioritization of historical and religious tourist attractions around Khoy based on the triple criteria of the tourism product index reveals that the Khoy Aerial Bridge, Holy Cross Church, Imamzadeh Seyed Taj al-Din, Mirfatah Pilgrimage Site, and Shah Abbas Caravanserai have assigned rankings from one to five. The prioritization of natural attractions around Khoy, based on the socio-cultural index, indicates that Kluvan Mineral Spring, Giouran Qotour Waterfall, Qaranjeh Warm Spring, Badlan Waterfall, and Jehanam Valley hold rankings from one to five, respectively.

3.2.6. *Ranking Surrounding Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Environmental Index*

The sustainable exploitation of a tourist attraction with an emphasis on its environmental management and conservation is a crucial and innovative approach to utilizing the tourism potential of a region. Unplanned environmental usage and disregard for specific sustainable operating guidelines for each tourist location ultimately led to environmental degradation in both the attraction area and the attraction itself. Therefore, attention to the environmental index and its sub-indicators, including non-depletion of the resources in the attraction area, absence of noise pollution,

absence of visual pollution, and absence of air pollution, is of special importance. In terms of the environmental index, the prioritization of historical and religious tourist attractions around Khoy indicates that Imamzadeh Seyed Taj al-Din, Mirfatah Pilgrimage Site, Seyyed Taj al-Din Castle, Qara Qeshun Bridge, and Holy Cross Church have better conditions compared to other attractions and are ranked from one to five. It is essential to note that among the natural attractions around Khoy, this ranking is assigned to Garenjeh Lake, Orin Mountain Lakes, Orin Mountain, Giouran Qotour Waterfall, and Badlan Waterfall.

3.2.7. *Ranking Surrounding Urban Tourist Attractions Based on Economic Index*

The level of attracting investment, length of stay, tourist expenditures, job creation, income generation, and demand volume are economic index sub-criteria prioritized in ranking tourist attractions around Khoy. Accordingly, the Khoy Aerial Bridge, Holy Cross Church, Church of St. Mary, Imamzadeh Seyed Taj al-Din, and Mirfatah Pilgrimage Site demonstrate the highest potential for investment, job creation, demand volume, and ultimately income generation for the Khoy city, and they have assigned rankings from one to five in the economic index. This prioritization among natural tourist attractions is assigned to Kafcherin Hot Spring, Ghazalje Lake, Kluvan Mineral Spring, Razieh Mineral Spring, and Qotour Hot Spring. In summary, based on the 7-criteria framework, the attractions "Khoy Aerial Bridge," "Imamzadeh Seyed Taj al-Din," and "Mirfatah Pilgrimage Site" are ranked first to third in the Khoy region, while "Shaghayi Cave," "Ancient Trees," and "Laleh Valley" are ranked at the bottom.

Prioritization of Khoy Tourist Attractions (TOPSIS Model): As mentioned in the methodology, another approach employed by researchers for decision-making is multi-criteria models. In these decision-making processes, instead of using a single efficiency measurement criterion, several efficiency measurements are utilized. The ranking of Tourist Attractions in Khoy Using the TOPSIS Method is indicated in Table 4.

Table 4. Ranking of Tourist Attractions in Khoy Using TOPSIS Method

Rank	Tourist site	TOSIS Weight	Rank	Tourist site	TOSIS Weight
1	Bazaar of Khoy	0.886	15	Church Sourp	0.525
2	Tapeh-e Shahada	0.786	16	Masaque Haji Baba	0.524

3	Shams Mausoleum	0.776	17	Masque Hojjatieh	0.49
4	Kabiri House	0.764	18	Shrine Alyaghoub	0.49
5	Shora Building	0.755	19	Caravanserai Hashem	0.486
6	Sheikh Nowaei Mausoleum	0.741	20	House Yousefi	0.477
7	Imamzadeh Seyed Behloul	0.698	21	Bridge Khatoun	0.458
8	Caravanserai Saraye Khan	0.637	22	Stone Gate	0.453
9	Khan Masque Motaleb	0.608	23	Sheikh Mosque	0.441
10	Masque Seyedoshohada	0.608	24	Hakimiyeh High School	0.401
11	Pooriavali	0.608	25	Zehbiyeh Shrine	0.395
12	Oghlian Masque Dash	0.578	26	Khesrowi School	0.385
13	Mirhadi Imamzadeh	0.542	27	Mohammad Beyg Bath	0.218
14	Masque Molla Hasan	0.54			

In employing the TOPSIS method, the rankings of Khoy Bazaar, Shahid Hill, Shams Mausoleum, Kabiri House, and Council Building, as well as Sheikh Nawayi Mausoleum and Imamzadeh Seyyed Behloul, range from first to seventh. Conversely, Mohammad Big Bathhouse, Khosrowi School, Zehbiyeh Shrine, Hakimiyeh High School, Sheikh Mosque, Stone Gate, and the bottom six rankings=

4. Conclusion

As previously discussed, historical and natural attractions in Khoy include the Old Khoy Bazaar, Al-Yaqub Mausoleum, Shams Tabrizi Mausoleum, Khatoun Bridge, Matlab Khan Mosque, Surp Sarkis Church, Khoy Treasury Museum, Mir Hadi Mausoleum, Imamzadeh Behloul, Stone Gate, Badlan Waterfall, Qotour River, and Aerial Bridge. Sunflower seeds and high-quality honey represent Khoy's primary products, contributing to the city's identity. Khoy's handicrafts comprise Jajim weaving, carpet weaving, Jol weaving, Zilu weaving, mat weaving, carpet weaving, kilim weaving, woolen handicrafts, and pottery. The local population speaks Azerbaijani Turkish, and traditional customs include Ashiq rituals, the Rain Request Ceremony, the Nanhe Tapeh ceremony, the wheat harvesting ritual, squash, and Sayachi. Recognized as one of the prominent cities in the country in terms of civilization and religious significance, Khoy stands as one of the oldest cultural centers in northwest Iran, playing a central role in many historical events. Established in 1348 AH, Khoy Historical Museum showcases ancient artifacts, providing insight into the 7,000-year history and

civilization of Khoy (West Azerbaijan Provincial Management and Planning Organization, 2019). In this study, a logical decision-making process involving the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and various matrices was employed to evaluate criteria and sub-criteria for prioritizing attractions. Data analysis in this section, based on expert opinions from executive authorities, urban elites, and knowledgeable individuals familiar with regional tourist attractions, was conducted using the ExpertChoice software. In summary, based on the 7-criteria framework, attractions such as "Khoy Bazaar," "Shahid Hill," and "Shahid Nawayi Mausoleum" rank first to third, while "Stone Gate," "Zehbiyeh Shrine," and "Mohammad Big Bathhouse" rank at the bottom= Furthermore, utilizing the TOPSIS method indicates that Khoy Bazaar, Shahid Hill, and Shams Mausoleum hold the top three rankings, whereas Zehbiyeh Shrine, Khosrowi School, and Mohammad Big Bathhouse are placed at the bottom. Overall, the top 7 prioritized attractions using both AHP and TOPSIS methods are consistent, with "Khoy Bazaar" and "Shahid Hill" securing the first and second rankings. The third to sixth rankings experience a change in priority, and the seventh position is attributed to Imamzadeh Seyyed Behloul. Factors such as calculation method, and the importance of legal, infrastructural, and geographical criteria may contribute to variations in tourist attraction rankings. It appears that Sheikh Nawayi Mausoleum is favored with higher priority among religious tourists and local residents, while Shams Mausoleum gains higher priority among other visitors=

Table 5. Comparison of the results by AHP and TOPSIS Methods

Rank	Tourist site	TOSIS Weight	Rank	Tourist site	AHP Weight
1	Bazaar of Khoy	0.886	1	Bazaar of Khoy	3.87
2	Tapeh-e Shahada	0.786	2	Tapeh-e Shahada	3.75

3	Shams Mausoleum	0.776	3	Sheikh Nowaei Mausoleum	3.72
4	Kabiri House	0.764	4	Shora Building	3.69
5	Shora Building	0.755	5	Kabiri House	3.68
6	Sheikh Nowaei Mausoleum	0.741	6	Shams Mausoleum	3.625
7	Imamzadeh Seyed Behloul	0.698	7	Imamzadeh Seyed Behloul	3.624

Overall, in the realm of cultural-historical attractions, a suitable budget is required for the conservation and restoration efforts. This is because tourists seek acquaintance with these artifacts, accompanied by visual appeal and appropriate storytelling. An important consideration is that, given the religious-cultural attractions scattered across Iran, regions can successfully attract domestic tourists by shifting their competitive advantage from religious-historical attractions towards human-made attractions and natural landmarks. Although Khoy city boasts numerous pristine natural areas, it remains underdeveloped in terms of human-made attractions. Therefore, investing in the creation of human-made attractions, including recreational, sports, and entertainment venues in this region, can complement nature-oriented tourism. Alongside these aspects, the presence of necessary facilities and amenities (accommodations, transit options, etc.) can complete various tourism facets. Another crucial aspect deserving attention is the accessibility of Khoy city by land and air, requiring the facilitation of road connections and other transportation means. Additionally, the accessibility of tourist attractions from the city center and the traditional district, where most cultural-historical and religious attractions are located, can significantly enhance attraction marketing and tourist engagement.

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