Effective Factors on Urban Brand and Their Prioritization from Perspective of International Tourists (Case Study: Tehran's Milad Tower)

Hossein Mohammadpour Zarandi
Faculty Member, Faculty of Humanities, University of Science and Culture, President of Iran Urban Economics Scientific Association
Ali Hassani
Faculty Member, Faculty of Tourism Sciences, University of Science and Culture, Tehran, Iran
Naser Aminian*
Ph.D. Student of Tourism Management, University of Science and Culture, Tehran, Iran

Received: 2015/11/30 **Accepted: 2016/04/06**

Abstract: Urban tourism is a part of international tourism market having the most development potential in the recent years. In 2015, tourists' willingness to visit Iran and its historical and cultural attractions and symbols has been increased. Tehran, as the capital, is the most suitable alternative of urban tourism destination for international tourists. Its urban attractive symbols have had important role in this regard; therefore, the main purpose of this research is to identify and determine prioritization of Tehran Milad Tower brand aspects from perspective of international tourists. This research is descriptive-survey, with applied purpose, by using documentary and field studies. To collect data, questionnaire was used; it was distributed among international visitors of Tehran Milad Tower during September to November 2015. At first, primary questionnaire was distributed as pilot among a group of 30 international visitors of Milad Tower, and its validity and reliability were confirmed. Then, revised questionnaires, including 20 items, were distributed among 240 people as sample based on available sampling. Data were analyzed by using Friedman test and SPSS software. The results indicated that popularity of brand name, with the ranking average of 4.98, as the most important priority in choosing a visiting place, was identified from perspective of tourists.

Keywords: urban brand, aspects of urban brand, Friedman test, urban tourist, Tehran Milad Tower
JEL Classification: N95, L83, C12, R00

The Scientific-Research Quarterly Journal of Urban Economics and Management
ISSN: 2345-2870
Indexed in: ISC, Econbiz, SID, Noormags, Magiran, Ensani, Civilica, RICeST
www.Iueam.ir
Vol. 4, No.14
Spring 2016
Pages:c117-136

Corresponding author:naser.aminian@ymail.com

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

1- Introduction

Given UN forecast for 2030, urban residents will be reached to 5 million people in the world. This growth increases the role of travel and tourism in cities and using domestic, cultural, historical, architectural, and urban symbols (Judd & Feinstein, 2014).

Urban tourism has been changed into one of the important issues in tourism literature and one of the main types of tourism since 1980s. Despite this importance, it has not reached to its real position in the scientific literature. Its definitions are almost unclear and its structure is unknown. Yet, currently, urban tourism constitutes about 37 percent of the volume of the world tourists and it is expected it will be increased continuously (Wang et al., 2010).

Cities, as tourism destinations, have multi-purpose function. They, as entrance gate into the country, are centers of residence and travel origin to other neighboring regions. Different elements, including museums, recreational centers, historical areas, exhibitions, elements of public memories, medical centers, parks and urban green spaces, shopping centers, and urban symbols all together, form urban attractions (Noorbakhsh and Akbarpoor, 2011).

In today's competitive world that cities try to surpass each other in different arenas, urban tourism has been turned into an arena for cities' competitions. In this regard, branding and marketing for tourism destinations have become increasingly popular in recent years. In fact, city's brand in tourism is a controversial issue for it in socio-economic competitions for tourism development (Heydari Chiyaneh, et.al., 2015). One of the elements that different cities through which they create brand is urban symbols including towers and high buildings. Tourists' interaction with symbols provides a deep perception between tourists and attractions in forming travel experiences and their interpretation of urban symbols (Poria et al., 2001). Tourists' satisfaction rate experienced in their visits can affect their next decisions in revisit of a tourism destination and they may offer the destination to others (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Consequently, each symbol that is turned into an urban symbol and identity has competitive features and it affects tourists' attraction rate, hospitality, attracting foreign investors, and creating welfare for citizens leading to competitive advantage of urban symbol.

Today, in many world metropolises, such as Paris, New York, Kuala Lumpur, and Dubai, urban symbols have been of great importance in determining tourism destinations for urban visitors. Therefore, Tehran Metropolis, as administrative, political, economic and cultural center and having the most museums and tourism attractions, can attract recreational and urban tourists from around the world to its multiple attractions. Tehran Metropolis, as a 200 hundred-year capital with more than 8 million people and 730 square kilometers area, is the largest city in the Middle East and the world 27th large city having many urban attractions that they can be used as advantage in urban tourism in order to absorb more tourists (Lamza–Maronić et al., 2009).

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

One of the unique symbols of Tehran is Milad Tower that currently, it has influential role on attracting domestically urban tourists, but it could not prepare a suitable ground to attract international tourists and to be proposed as one of important urban tourism destinations in the Middle East and the world despite its valuable potentials such as Eifel, Shanghai, Vancouver and Burj Khalifa towrs.

This research aims to identify and prioritize Milad Tower urban brand aspects in Tehran tourism development, how to change this urban symbol into an internationally strong brand in urban tourism arena, and to determine the position and aspect of this symbol in creating urban brand and absorbing tourists from tourists perspective.

Importance and Necessity

It is necessary to plan in line with marketing and branding for this urban symbol and help Tehran urban economy in international arena. This measure has not been done so far; therefore, this research has innovation of its kind. Given the importance of this issue, indexes of urban brand have been measured in line with absorbing tourist by using to determine tourists' evaluation aspects. Thus, by identifying the tourism priorities of Milad Tower, urban tourists may be increased in this tower and in the city of Tehran.

2- Literature Review

a. Foreign researches

One of the concepts have been considered in recent years with a direct relationship to implement marketing models in cities is the concept of branding in cities that is based on basic concepts, visualization and urban identity as a theoretical concept (Balmer & Greyser, 2013).

Fernandez & Meethan (2014) in their article entitled, "the relationship between urban branding and urban development; case study: Plymouth, England and Malaga Spain" did a comparative study between these two cities. Finally, they concluded that the city of Plymouth could create brand by referring to elements such as war, emperor eras, and such methods as a marine city, using liberty symbol and accepting cultures and ideas, in order to attract tourist, but city of Malaga has replaced its brand from a colorful city with moderate climate to a city based on Picasso paintings, considered painting as a symbol to strengthen relationship, welcome cultures, values, creativity, and Avant-garde art.

Young (2012) in a research entitled, "city branding and urban tourism; case study Seoul and Taipei" considered urban branding as an attempt by local governors and managers to strengthen cities' competitiveness, concluding that both cities of Seoul and Taipei follow branding by urban design and planning based on holding big events such as Olympic games and global exhibitions, and they try to design mega-projects by famous architects in order to access to the world standards to attract tourist.

Rabbiosi (2015) considered shopping as a historical heritage of Paris in his study. Although shopping is done in leisure time in other cities, the situation is different in Paris so that the world and the

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

Europe consider Paris as a shopping center. Shopping is the city's brand through which attracts tourists.

Zamri & Rahmat (2010) studied the impact of some aspects such as popularity and quality of brand services on satisfaction of brand and tourists' loyalty and introduced as influential factors.

According to Parkerson & Saunders (2005), increasing visitors to improve city's attraction is a mega purpose of branding a city to provide better conditions. According to them, ultimate limit of urban branding will be achieved in economic area.

Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2005) argued that the first goal of urban branding is to attract investment domestically for cities and tourism destinations in order to increase tourists. It is necessary to create a unique identity for cities in the world highly competitive markets i.e. differentiating themselves from other competitors is very important, and new environment of cities are changing rapidly.

Rainisto (2003) argued that it is possible to take advantage of image value of a place in locational brand. Brand of a product or service has been created by positioning than competition and its characters distinctively and it consists of a unique composition of functional features and symbolic value.

Rouiz & Garsia (2010) questioned indexes such as quality of services, convenience of services, and experience of presented services to tourists in a site in Thailand. Finally, they concluded that positive impacts of perceived quality of services are the most important and influential factor in measured index. Visitors' general perception of their travel indicated that enjoyable travel experience will result in positive behavioral willingness and satisfaction, tourists' revisit, and offering it to others.

b. Iranian Researches

Scientific attempts regarding urban tourism are significant in domestic literature, but, particularly, little work has been done in the field of branding and its role in tourism.

Heydari Chiyaneh et.al. (2015) in an article entitled, "an analysis on the role of brand image on urban tourism development, case study: Tabriz Metropolis", studied the relationship between brand image after travel and tourism development, and concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between them.

Zargham Borujeni and Barezani (2013) in an article entitled "pathology of tourism brand in Iran by using Harkinson model" studied the degree of attention to branding concepts and tourism brand situation in Iran. The results indicated that the degree of attention to branding activities in the country was very poor.

Poorfaraj et.al. (2013) in their article entitled "customer's particular value and foreign tourists' satisfaction with five stars hotels of Tehran" studied clients' satisfaction changes that are effective on profitability.

Ranjbaran and Khazayipool (2013), considering the impact of marketing structures of city management on behavioral willingness than tourism destinations, specified that tourists' perception of quality affect value and mental involvement

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

level toward tourism destination and their satisfaction. This affects tourists' willingness level to their revisit, leading to better perception of behavioral mechanisms, and maintaining and increasing tourists' visit from a tourism destination.

Tajzadeh Namin and Esmaeil Moshrefi (2014) in an article entitled, "prioritizing components of brand particular value in tourism destination from perspective of domestic tourists," concluded that the priorities of brand image, loyalty to brand, perceived quality, and awareness of tourism destination brand affect directly particular brand value of Ramsar city. In terms of brand, loyalty to brand has been considered as the most important and influential factor.

3- Theoretical Principles

Basic thought for branding is to determine city's identity. Urban identity is a general concept presenting a kind of sense helping to differentiate within competitive environment of cities (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). The key to branding success is to create relationship among brand, consumer, and functional features of brand and symbolic values (Hankinson & Cowking, 1993). This definition of brand and branding represents a relationship among brand, urban marketing purposes, and management of city's image. Like branding, cities meet functional, symbolic, and emotional needs. Features meeting these needs should be unique and in accordance with city. In fact, having an urban brand means one or several signs. With their assistance, we can give a kind of new meaning and identity for urban places and locations. Branding creates a full awareness toward this experience and it will double the attractiveness of cities (Munda, 2009).

Brand and popularity of a symbol is a suitable beginning for urban symbol marketing. However, it is an appropriate framework to express urban image and identity by it. Urban symbols are dynamic and meaningful entities that are associated with welfare, convenience, wealth, and identity for cities in their natures. Urban branding is a rich source of emotional and effective communication leading to memorable experiences of a place, city, or brand. By branding for a city, city's position improves as a place for residence, business, or tourism destination (Braun & Zenker, 2010).

Decline (2010) believed that urban branding is a fundamental factor for development of policy-making in cities since it leads to economic growth and development of cities; on the other hand, it acts as a conduit for city's identity.

If branding of urban symbols has an opportunity for their manifestation in cities' arenas, these urban symbols will have conditions of growth and competition in all economic, cultural, and urban identity arenas, and will result in honor and increasing citizens' pride and identity.

Illustration: It is very important that how an urban place is presented. It can be an appropriate motivational factor for tourists' visit and their revisit. Reputation of a place is not created in a vacuum and it is not merely because of tourists' selection, but marketers of a tourism place should create its image in order that

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

it has the ability to compete with major competitors (Divandari, et.al, 2011).

Urban Branding: It refers to a set of activities aiming to change a place to tourism destination. Unlike conventional beliefs that consider tourism branding only as communications and background, tourism branding identifies, organizes, and coordinates all existing variables (actual and potential) affecting brand image of tourism destinations. The term of place branding is sometimes synonymous with place marketing that refers to competition to absorb tourists, visitors, investors, citizens, and other domestic resources of cities (Avraham & Ketter, 2008). In other words, urban brand presents an image and package about place emphasizing on unique features of city in order that the city can surpass other competitors. Urban branding is also a continuous process (Dinnie, 2011). Planners who act in urban affairs and branding all have the same understanding of this term that new tourists to cities develop urban marketing, create value added with brand in cities (Braun, 2008). Symbol brand can prepare a suitable point for urban brand as well as appropriate framework to manage urban image, and urban branding can be one of the most important factors for success of that brand. In most popular cities in the world, they concluded to brand purposefully in accordance with features and its capabilities on one hand, and international needs and necessities on the other hand. Conscious branding gives a new identity to cities. In the modern era of globalization symbols and places, cities try to describe distinctive features. In addition to urban economy and development of urban infrastructures, factors such as citizens' quality of life, urban aesthetic, and policy-making for local development are considered as development criteria. In the last framework, the role of place and branding marketing has been increased significantly in all cities in the world (Monavarriyan, et.al, 2013).

Generally, cities should create distinct urban brand at regional and international levels in line with efficient and effective competition to absorb financial resources, investment, attract social capital, tourists, boom cities' business and economy, more respect, dignity, and validity, and improve citizens' quality of life. In a way that those cities could create a particular brand in global arena were known more rapidly to the world public opinion, could affect more in the world widespread network, and take more advantage of tourism, business, and investment, yet to attract more respect and attention to their symbols in the world. In a concept of modern marketing, a brand supplies a related value added to consumer's brand. Successful branding for cities and urban tourism destinations are done according to their potentials (Movahed, 2011).

Brand of a symbol is created by locating toward competition and city's identity distinctively, including a unique composition of specific features. Its ultimate goal is to increase living standards for residents, emphasizing mainly on city brand. Loyalty to brand is one of the most important issues in tourism field. Planners and managers of tourism destination

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

countries look for ways for marketing and attracting clients' loyalty. One of the most important criteria of loyalty to brand is dimensions of brand attractiveness, preparing the ground for customers' repurchase and their revisit to tourism destinations (Mohammadpour Zarandi and Aminian, 2015).

Urban tourism: It is a combination of variety of different activities, creating by joining environmental features to strength and elasticity of the city in attracting tourists and presenting services to them. Condition for the success of any city in tourism development is the existence of urban infrastructures, integration of city management, and wise and clever management practice. On the other hand, urban symbols, as sustainable resources of urban economy and tourism, meet tourists' needs and local community, and they are secondary condition in urban tourism development (Mohammadpour Zarandi and Aminian, 2015).

Brand: According to American Marketing Association (1960), brand is a plan, symbol, or other features identifying services or selling a certain product by which it is distinguished from other similar products and services. Brand is a trademark, a mindset or functional, emotional, intellectual associations, and advantages that occupy mind of target market, including all feelings, features and concepts that are tied to a name.

Brand is a name, term, sign and symbol aiming to introduce a product or service having high credit and social value, supplied by a sellers or group of sellers and thereby it distinguishes that product from goods of other companies (Kotler, 2006).

Urban brand: The term of urban brand has a similar concept like place marketing and it presents the location of a place (Bradley et al., 2002). The key to branding success is to create relationship among brand, consumer, and functional features of brand and symbolic values (Hankinson & Cowking, 1993). This definition of trademark and branding represents a relationship among trademark, urban marketing goals, and management of city image. Like branding, cities meet functional, symbolic, and emotional needs. Features meeting these needs should be unique and in accordance with city.

Table1. Definitions of urban branding from perspective of theorists

Researchers	Concept
Hall (1999)	Urban branding aims to create relationship between people and an image of their city, and adoptability and strategic focus of communications with urban symbols.
Cai (2002)	Urban branding means choosing a combination of brand factors including name, term, symbol, sign, plan, or a combination of mentioned issues, causing a distinction of cities from each other by creating a positive image.
Julier (2005)	Urban branding is an attempt to create and enrich urban quality.
Anholt (2009)	Urban branding is cities' identity and competition.
Reinisto (2013)	Urban branding is a method to increase urban attraction, and it is a basic factor of urban recognition and identity.
Judd and Faintein (2014)	Urban branding tries to attract tourists and it is a ground for urban sustainable revenue and citizens' quality of life.

Reference: (Researchers' studies)

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

Elements Forming Urban Brand

Sustainability of urban brand requires socio-cultural dynamism and citizens and tourists' participation. In other words, identification and urban sustainable branding provides a process of social, cultural, and political development. First, this process needs conceptual and practical recognition and modeling of principles and indexes of urban identity. These principles and indexes can be generalized into all cultural and civilizational tangible and intangible dimensions including values, beliefs, customs and traditions, architecture, urbanization, physical infrastructures, and natural environment. Organizing these elements should ensure the preservation of the domestically basic principles, and somehow, it should be compatible with cultural process and globally modern approach as well. This orientation leads to competitor's spatial production, improvement of quality of life, and urban sustainable development along with appropriate services (Kamanroodi, 2014).

Generally, the elements of urban brand consist of identity, image, and location of urban brand. There are close relationship between urban brand and city's identity. Urban brand focuses on existing strengths of city. Elements such as physical, economic, and visual symbols as well as aspects distinguishing a city from others determine main core of urban brand strategy and brand position (Decline, 2010).

Regarding place, branding includes the following three parts:

1- National branding 2- Regional branding 3- Urban branding

A top urban brand has following indexes:

1- Appropriateness and beauty 2- Appropriate position 3- Wining capacity and suitable tolerance 4- Credit 5- Inspiring 6- Uniqueness 7- Attractiveness

In branding process of urban symbols, a symbol should have following conditions:

1. It should represent host country culture in the city of tourism destination.
2. It should have necessary infrastructures in urban destination (place of brand).
3. There should be high quality of local services standards (host) in urban element (commitment of implementing services).
4. High mental and physical safety should be created while using urban tourism destination symbol.
5. Unique make-up and design of urban symbol works as a tool for expressing character, identity, and visitors' honor.
6. Conditions of public infrastructures, including public transport network and access roads from urban residences to urban symbol should be created.
7. Facilities, sanitary conditions, and environmental sanitary should be considered in all parts and levels (external and internal) of urban symbol.
8. Particularly certain products should be produced in urban symbol of tourism destination (brand reputation).

Experience of Perceived Services by Tourists: Given that tourists obtain their visit experience in environment, servicing

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

environment can be of great importance affecting their experience (Bradley et al., 2002).

Quality of Services: Quality of services is an important driving force in attracting and retaining customers. It is the most important factor affecting tourists' behavior and attitude. Quality of perceived services is also a long-term evaluation having positive and direct impact on satisfaction, assessment of value, and customers' behavioral willingness (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

Quality of Services Against Experience of Services: Quality of services goes back to efficiency of them in features of servicing goods. Quality of services has been defined as the feature of a service controlled by supplier while experience of services includes characteristics that that turn into opportunity by tourists. Experience of services can be considered as tourists' emotional response and their overall satisfaction with the imagination (Lian Chan & Baum, 2007).

Costs of Services (Material and Immaterial): Perceived servicing costs by tourists include financial and immaterial costs such as time and effort. Financial costs are spent for buying the product. In fact, monetary value is a difference between paid cost by tourists and their satisfaction from presented services to them. Although the non-financial costs may be not to be counted, financial costs are more important for some customers (Ruiz et al., 2008).

Service Satisfaction: Different studies have indicated that revisits of a destination relates to higher levels of tourists' satisfaction in order to visit that destination again. Overall satisfaction from felt pleasure is considered as an instrument to evaluate tourists' travel experience (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

Perceived Value of Services: Perceived value is made up of two parts: Perceived benefits (economic, social, and communicative) and undertaken costs (price, time, effort, risks and convenience) by customers and their realization i.e. their judgment about obtained value, depend on consumers' experiences (Nasution & Mavondo, 2005).

Tourists' Behavioral Tendencies: Bonn et.al, (2007) argued that desirable behavioral tendencies include tendency to revisit a tourism destination, verbal advertisement, or offering that place to others. Undesirable behavioral tendency are verbally negative advertisement (rumors), less payment, leaving the place, and doing legal measures.

Milad Tower

Tehran Milad Tower is a multi-purpose tower locating in Northwest of Tehran and among a hill with an area of about 62 hectares in the south of Qarb town neighborhood (west township neighborhood) and north of Gisha in municipality district2. It is 435 meters height, 12 floors, with 7 elevators, the highest tower in Iran, and the world sixth telecommunication tower, and the 19th tallest shoddy structure in the world. With 13 thousand square meters foundation, it has the first rank in terms of extent of the tower among all telecommunication towers in the world. Because of its height and different appearance, it can be seen almost from everywhere in Tehran, considered as an urban symbol and

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

tourism attraction. Thus, it is counted as one of the unique symbols of Tehran and Iran. As it is situated in one of the highest point of Tehran, overlooking beautiful landscapes and parts of Tehran (unique perspective), ability to have green spaces and other elements of environmental design, it has a visual relationship with other symbols and urban spaces. It has infrastructure equipment, tourism, commercial, and cultural attractions, revolving restaurant, special restaurant, open and closed viewing platform, art arcades, the dome of the sky, Iran Fame Museum, Museum of coins, food courts, commercial units, exhibitions, international conference center with fifteen different halls, dolphin park, cycling, paintball, six-dimensional theater, cinema, traditional restaurant (Online Hamshahri, 2015).

Research Purposes

1. Prioritizing effective factors on urban brand of Tehran Milad Tower from perspective of international tourists
2. Determining types of services that should be provided by tourism services presenters in Milad Tower

4- Research Method

Research method is library-survey, and data were collected by field study and documentary methods. In terms of purpose, this research is applied. Questionnaire was used as tool, and data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and Freidman test in descriptive-analytic form.

Statistical Population

Since statistical population was not clear exactly and there was no accurate estimate of statistical population size for previous years, equation was used in simple random sampling method. Sample size was used by Cochran formula. Pretest was used for validity of questionnaire. Thus, 30 questionnaires were designed in elementary test in English and distributed among an international group of 30 people. Finally, Cronbach's alpha was calculated at the rate of 0.79 by using SPSS and calculating validity coefficient. To determine necessary sample size, preliminary sampling has been used. In this regard, confidence level of 95 percent and error of 5 percent were obtained respectively. 240 people were selected as sample; therefore, 240 questionnaires were distributed in Milad Tower in October and November. All of them were completed and returned.

In the questions of the first part the questionnaire, tourists' demographic features were studied. By using it, tourists' information, times, way of travel, education, marital status, and revenue were collected. In the second part, priorities of Milad Tower brand were specified by using five-point Likert scale.

Studied area

Tehran Milad Tower is the studied area in this research, using statistical population of international visitors of this tower during October and November 2015; travel season to Iran for international tourists.

5- Research Findings

Research findings were regulated in two parts. In the first part, information related to tourists' demographic features,

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

age, gender, education, nationality, occupation, household's income, marital status, way of travel, and number of visits was analyzed, and priorities of Milad Tower brand were specified by using survey method.

Data related to tourists' demographic features have been listed in tables 2 to 10.

Table2. Frequency of gender and age of international tourists visited Milad Tower

Gender / Age	Number and Percentage of Men (Foreign)	Number and Percentage of Women (Foreign)	Total Numbers and Percentage
19-29	5.8%-14	6.7%-16	12.5%-30
30-39	8.3%-20	27.5%-66	35.8%-86
40-49	13.3%-32	20%-48	33.3%-80
50-59	8.3%-20	9.2%-22	17.5%-42
More than 60	0.8%-2	-	0.8%-2
Total	36.7%-88	63.3%-152	100%-120

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

Table3. Frequency of international tourists' education who visited Milad Tower

Education	Tourists (person)	Percentage
To diploma	34	14.2
B.A.	54	22.5
M.Sc.	104	43.3
Ph.D.	48	20
Total	240	100

Reference: (Researchers' Findings)

Table4. Frequency of international tourists' nationality who visited Milad Tower

Continent	Frequency	Percentage
Europe	104	43.3
America	54	22.5
Asia	82	34.2
Africa	0	0
Oceania	0	0
Total	240	100

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

According to tables 3 and 4, considering tourists' education and nationality visited Tehran Milad Tower, most of international tourists were educated from the Europe, Asia (only Iraq), and America. There were no visitors from the Africa and Oceania in this period. It seems that city of Tehran is an attractive tourism market for mentioned countries. Most of visitors (158 people- 65.8%) traveled to Tehran by planned tours. 82 people (34.2%) of Asian visitors were from Iraq entered into Tehran through Mehran, Ilam land borders and Imam Khomeini International Airport. 200 people of tourists (91.6 percent) visited Milad Tower for the first time, and 20 tourists had visited Milad Tower before (for the second time).

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

Table5. Frequency of international tourists' employment who visited Milad Tower

Employment	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	96	33.3
Retired	72	30
Student	36	15
Housekeeper	30	12.5
Unemployed	6	2.5
Total	240	100

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

Table6. Frequency of international tourists' annual revenue who visited Milad Tower

Annual revenue	Frequency (person)	Percentage
Less than 20000 USD annually	34	14.2
Between 20000 to 30000 USD	56	33.3
Between 30000 to 40000 USD	90	37.5
Between 40000 to 50000 USD	36	15
More than 50000 USD	24	10
Total	240	100

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

Tourists' revenue and employment have been listed in tables 5 and 6. This issue is important for planners and service rate of Milad Tower in order to prepare appropriate services considering to tourists' financial ability to create suitable revenue for different parts of Milad tower as well as maintain quality of services. Frequency for the reason of visiting Milad Tower and its attractions have been listed in tables 7 and 8.

Table7. Frequency for reason for international tourists visiting Milad Tower

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Learning about Iranian society	48	20
Attractions and entertainments of Tower	80	33.3
Program of group tour	70	29.1
Conference and job	36	15
Other reasons	6	2.5
Total	240	100

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

Table8. Frequency for Milad Tower attractions from perspective of international tourists after visiting

Type of symbol	Frequency	Percentage
Urban symbols	80	33.3
Industrial symbols	96	40.0
Scientific symbol	36	15
Recreational symbol	24	10.0
Other symbols	4	1.7
Total	240	100

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

Table9. Frequency of international tourists encouraging their friends to visit Milad Tower

Encouraging friends to visit Milad Tower	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	236	98.2
No	4	1.8
Total	240	100

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

Findings in table 9 indicate that 236 people (98.2 percent) of foreign tourists stated that they would encourage their friends and relatives to visit Milad Tower. This confirms the importance and role of Milad Tower in attracting and booming urban tourism.

Table10. Frequency for attraction rate of Milad Tower for visitors

Impact on Increasing Knowledge	Frequency	Percent
Very high	84	35
High	108	45
Low	46	19.2
At all	2	0.8
Total	240	100

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

According to table10, 45 percent of foreign tourists stated that they were affected by attraction of Milad Tower. About 20 percent of them declared that they evaluated this issue at low level. Thus, Tehran Milad Tower, as an urban brand, is an influential factor to attract international tourists in the city of Tehran.

Results of Research Questions

This research has been done by survey method. In order to prioritize obtained data, Freidman test was used. According to the results based on six criteria of Anholt's researches, six top factors were selected from 20 variables of obtained from questionnaire. To answer research questions, main components of city's identity were categorized into six aspects of urban brand:

1. Based on reputation and awareness of international position of the symbol and its share in development of culture, politics, economy, and urban tourism attractions

2. Based on people's perceptions from experience of presented services in a symbol; for example, parking hygiene and clean environment

3. Perspective priorities and aesthetics of the symbol from tourists' perspective and local host community

4. Financial capacities from created economic opportunities in symbol

5. Determining people's perceptions from quality of a symbol; for example, services of transport system, sport and recreation facilities, health, and environmental sanitary

6. People's awareness of leisure facilities in the symbol (time and place)

Question1) How is prioritization of urban brand aspects of Tehran Milad Tower from perspective of international tourists?

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

Detailed ranking average of indexes forming each factor of questionnaires' responses have been listed in table11 from the highest obtained value by tourists including stated aspects.

Table11. Summary of statistical results related to the first question of the research

Questions	Number of statistical population	Mean	Standard deviation	The standard error of the mean
1. Reputation aspect of Milad Tower	240	4.56	0.684	53
2. Facilities and area of structure in top of the tower	240	4.32	0.847	66
3. Aesthetic aspect of tower (perspective tower)	240	4.02	0.869	68
4. Visiting Milad Tower (aspect of experiencing services) quality of services aspect	240	3.87	1.031	80
5. Meeting tourists' expectations from presented information by tower guides	240	3.79	0.986	77
6. Tower cleanliness	240	4.51	0.668	52
7. Appropriateness of environment temperature in travel time (aspect of non-financial costs)	240	4.46	0.800	62
8. Spent time to visit tower (aspect of non-financial costs)	240	4.45	0.752	59
9. Improvement of visit experience because of buying products and handicrafts in tower (experience of services)	240	4.25	0.853	66
10. Satisfaction with payment of services (aspect of financial costs)	240	3.95	1.035	81
11. Easy access to Milad Tower from hotel (aspect of immaterial costs-time)	240	4.55	0.711	55
12. Low costs for Tower entrance and elevator compared to other countries (aspect of financial costs)	240	4.46	0.703	55
13. The appropriateness of fees compared with presented services (aspect of financial costs)	240	4.22	0.805	63
14. Pleasurable acquired experience inside the Tower (service experience)	240	3.79	0.966	75
15. Tower relaxation and no noise pollution (aspect of non-financial costs)	240	4.24	1.833	65
16. Pleasant smell during the visit (aspect of non-financial costs)	240	4.00	1.006	78
17. Tower officials and employees' behavior (aspect of service quality)	240	3.94	0.824	64
18. Satisfaction with presented recreational facilities and services (quality of services)	240	4.15	0.912	71
19. Using modern technology to attract visitors (quality of services)	240	4.21	0.854	66
20. Schedule program of visit (aspect of non-financial costs)	240	4.05	0.81	63

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

The results of descriptive test indicate that responses range mean were above 3, and standard deviation was more than 0.5 i.e. all aspects of Milad tower brand are confirmed.

In order to determine priorities, these factors were ranked by using Freidman

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

test (to compare several groups according to their mean scores). The results are as follows:

According to the obtained significance level, since its value is less than 0.05, it can be said that the obtained ranking is significant. Prioritization of aspects has been listed respectively in Table 12.

Table12. Prioritizing 6 aspects of urban brand based on international tourists' perspective

Aspects	Average Rating	Priority
Brand reputation	4.98	1
service experience	4.28	2
Priority of perspective	4.17	3
Financial and economic costs	4.15	4
Quality of services	3.84	5
Non-financial costs (time, place)	3.82	6

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

According to this ranking, it was specified that main priorities are name and reputation. The most important weakness of Milad Tower is brand aspect and global reputation as the most important index from tourists' perspective.

Table13. The results of Freidman test- Aspects of identified priorities

Number	240
Error level	0.05
Degree of freedom	5
Significance level (P-value)	0.002

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

In this research, after studying research hypothesis, independent variables i.e. aspects of urban brand were prioritized by using Freidman test. Hypothesis used in the test are as follows:

H0: Identified aspects have same effect on international tourists' perspective.

H1: Identified aspects have unequal impacts on international tourists' perspective.

Since P-value (0.002) is less than 5 percent in table 13, H0 is rejected, and H1 is confirmed. In other words, each of identified aspects has unequal impact on tourists' perspective.

Question2) what services should be provided for tourists by presenters of tourism services in Milad Tower, and how?

Demographic outputs of this research will affect the services that should be provided for tourists in this tower as an urban symbol. Since most tourists (152 people-63.3 percent) are women and 206 people (85.8 percent) have academic degrees with annual income of average and more (more than 15 to 25 percent of tourists earn more than 40 thousand USD annually), following characteristics should be considered after presenting provided services: these services should be ideal in terms of aesthetic and qualitative aspect. This issue is of great

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

importance for tourists since most of them are women. Using managerial creativity to increase visual aspects and night vision, and visit time to mid-night is an important issue that it can increase quality of presented services and tower perspective. Another important issue is aged and European visitors. They need services appropriate to their age and country. Although tourists are educated and some of them have implicit mastery of English and Arabic, it is necessary to have translators familiar with European languages (particularly French and German) in order to raise service experience. Because of higher revenue, these people call for more welfare since they experienced other countries and they compare presented services, causing dissatisfaction among them.

Regarding increase of local tourists and visitors and coinciding with holding conferences, it is suggested to consider more places for groups and catering services. Given perspective of Alborz Mountains and city of Tehran, it will be located and achieved easily.

However, it is recommended to use public restrooms appropriate with European and American tourists' culture and to increase them in all floors including ground floor and parking. Given that, 220 people of tourists have visited Milad Tower for the first time, providing high quality services can affect greatly tourists in order to be loyal tourists to destination.

Given the novelty of facilities and equipment, protecting and cleanliness are of great importance for tourists. Training staff and guides appropriate for international tourists, planning to avoid interference of visitors' programs with holding conferences, and using different entrances and parking considering spatial area are possible. Lack of bilingual signs and maps for tourists, inelegance of these signs considering aesthetic and quality of view, and inappropriate location of these signs have resulted in tourists' dissatisfaction particularly Iraqi tourists. However, existing technology in the Tower, particularly touch screens, large monitors, and high speed of elevators have increased Tower's attraction and tourists' satisfaction.

6- Conclusion and Suggestion

Branding urban symbols can be proposed as one of the strategic policy of marketing in urban integrated management. Several factors are involved in the issue of urban brand. Prioritizing them will lead to urban managers' attention and sustainability of urban brands in order to attract more tourists. Successful competition in international arena will result in growth of sustainable tourism in cities. Answering the first question, considering brand reputation, the results are the same as Heydari et.al (2015), Zamiri and Rahmat (2010), and Taylor (2007). Considering quality of services aspect, it is in accordance with the studies of Ranjbariyan and Khazayipool (2013) and Taylor (2007). About service experience, it is equal with the study of Lemmon et.al. (2001).

Thus, in order to improve current position of Tehran Milad Tower at international levels, it is necessary to have purposefully administrative strategies in

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

international marketing arena. Therefore, we should combine the concept of urban brand with national values, historical identity, urban culture, social features, attractions, and famous figures. Localized strategies in this arena should be adopted by comparative studies in other similar symbols in international area. However, we should take advantage of modern advertisement and effective visualization in tourists' mind, as effective tool to improve qualitative level of cities' tourism. It has been tried in this research to prioritize urban tourism brands in Tehran Milad Tower from perspective of international tourists in order to be considered according to their degree of importance to elevate the position of Milad Tower brand based on proposed strategies and to implement proposed strategies based on following priorities:

1. Tourists' top priority is based on name and position of international symbol. This should be developed by advertising strategies in the international arena. For instance, it can be highlighted by creating events, and national or international conferences. A slogan, short phrase, and proper logo for Tehran Milad Tower can be used in order to keep in minds.

2. The second priority is based on people's perceptions of service experience, mental image of Milad Tower, and creating urban space with desirable quality. For example, quality of transport system, and sport, recreation, catering, sanitary, environmental health facilities should be based on international standards.

3. The third priority is based on tourists' perceptions of Milad tower aspects and visual priorities. Thus, more attention should be paid on aesthetic and visual aspects from perspective of tourists and experts.

4. The fourth priority: aspect of financial and economic costs and pricing presented services in Milad Tower. For example, paid cost for using services, sport, recreation, catering, and parking facilities should be balanced in accordance with service costs in other similar areas in Iran.

5. The fifth one: From perspective of tourists' perception of quality and facilities, it should be compared with other countries and similar symbols and present a domestic model.

6. The sixth one relates to immaterial, cultural, social, and political costs (time and place) of Tehran Milad Tower. Metro facilities should be considered.

7. Attempt in order to improve management and continuous supervision on presented services in Tehran Milad Tower and raise environmental standards

8. Preparing ground for cooperation of all organizations for active participation, informing in Milad Tower, and holding national and international conferences and events at this place

9. Increasing international interactions in order to introduce Milad Tower in important events and cultural conferences, and comprehensive display in related publications and catalogs

According to the results, and in order to increase international tourists in Tehran Milad Tower, improve quality of services, and elevate its reputation and brand name, following recommendations have been suggested in table14.

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

Table14. Necessary strategies and solutions for development of urban symbols branding

Analysis topics	Urban branding strategies
Strategy for awareness of brand	Increasing effective recall power in visualizing urban features of brand and brand differentiation than other urban tourism destinations
Strategy for loyalty to brand	Revisiting brand, more advantages than competitors, updating development, recommending to others
Strategy for increasing perception quality	Multi-aspect attitude in presenting services, service experience, understanding perspectives, and quality of services for tourists should be increased such as creating high quality infrastructures, clean environment, appropriate price of services, advertisement, and proper information
Strategy for brand image	Improving host image in destination, cultural attractions, and appropriate places for leisure time
Strategy for integrated management	Integrating joint policy-making of city managers and tourism organization managers in order to integrate proper marketing and advertisement purposes in urban symbols particularly in Tehran Milad Tower
Financial and economic strategy	Creating relationship between financial and economic resources with natural elements and tourism attractions, and holding conferences so that they have harmony to each other leading to successful branding
International marketing strategy	In order to achieve suitable and top branding of urban symbol, globally available experiences should be localized based on existing realities of Iran and a visualization appropriate for reputation of Milad Tower should be done nationally and internationally
Investment strategies	Strategies appropriate for attracting domestic and international investors in line with increasing cultural, historical, recreational, and economic capabilities of Milad Tower should be adopted

Reference: (Researchers' findings)

7- References

Anholt, S. (2006). The Anholt-GMI city brands index: How the world sees the world's cities. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, *2*(1), 18-31.

Avraham, E., Ketter, E. (2008*). Media Strategies for Marketing Places in Crisis: Improving the Image of Cities, Countries, and Tourist Destinations*. Butterworth Heinemann.

Balmer, J.M.T., Greyser, S.A. (2013). *Revaling the Corporation*. Routledge London,UK.

Bonn, M.A., joseph-mathews, S.M., dal, M,. Hayes, S., Cave, J. (2007). Heritage/ Cultural Attraction Atmospherics: Creating the Right Environment for the Heritage/ Cultural Visitor. *Journal of Travel Research, vol. 45*, 345-354.

Bradley, A., Hall, T., Harrison, M. (2002). Selling cities: promoting new images for meetings tourism. *Cities, 19*(1), 61-70.

Braun, E. (2008). *City Marketing: Towards an integrated approach* (No. EPS-2008-142-ORG).

Braun, E., Zenker, S. (2010). Towards an integrated approach for place brand management. In *50th European Regional Science Association Congress* 19-23.

Cai, L. (2002). Cooperative branding for rural destinations. *Annals of Tourism Research. 29*(3), 720-742.

Chen, C. F., Tsai, D. (2007). How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions?. *Tourism management, 28*(4), 1115-1122.

Decline, J. (2010).A Shared Vision on City BrandinginEurope.http://www.eurocities.eu.

Dinnie, K. (2011). *City branding: theory and cases*. Palgrave macmillan.

Divandarri, A., Allahyari, A., Barari, M. (2011). Identification and assessment of effective factors on organizational image with mixed approach, *Journal of*

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

business management perspective, issue39.

Fernández, D. B., Meethan, K. (2014). The Relationship of City Branding and Tourist Promotion: The Case of Plymouth (UK) and Malaga (Spain), *Athens Journal of Tourism, 1(3).*

Hall, C. M. (2002). Tourism in capital cities. *Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal*, *50*(3), 235-248.

Hamshahri online (194).

Hankinson, G., Cowking, P. (1993). *Branding in action: cases and strategies for profitable brand management*. McGraw-Hill Book Company Limited.

Heydari Chiyaneh, R., Sanoobar, N., Sa'dlooniya, H. (2015). An analysis on the role of brand image on tourism development, case study: Tabriz Metropolis, *Journal of Urban Research and Planning, 6*(22).

Judd, D.R., Faintein, S. (2014). The TOURIST CITY. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Kamanroodi, M. (2014). *Pathology of management for planning and administrative orientations of Tehran urban identification and branding*, 6th national conference on urban planning and management.

Katler, F. (2006). *Marketing Management*, translated by Foruzandeh, B, Isfahan: Amookhteh Publications.

Kavaratzis, M., Ashworth, G. J. (2005). City branding: an effective assertion of identity or a transitory marketing trick?. *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, *96*(5), 506-514.

Lamza–Maronić, M., Glavaš, J., Mavrin, I. (2009). Potentials of Osijek as a Centre of Cultural Tourism. *Interdisciplinary Management Research V/Barković, Dražen*, 711-721.

Lian Chan, J. K., Baum, T. (2007). Ecotourists' perception of ecotourism experience in Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah, Malaysia. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *15*(5), 574-590.

Mohammadpour Zarandi, H., Aminian, N. (2015). Assessment of recreational capabilities of tourism sidewalks from perspective of urban sustainable development (case study: 15Khordad Avenue), *Quarterlyv Journal of Urban Economics and Management, 3*(11).

Monavariyan, A., Abouei Ardakan, M., Poormousavi, S.M., Rahimian, A. (2013). Urban branding process model for Iran metropolises, *Perspective of governmental management*, issue13.

Movahhed, A. (2011). *Tourism management for cities*, Tehran: Azarakhsh Publications.

Munda, G. (2009). A conflict analysis approach for illuminating distributional issues in sustainability policy. *European Journal of Operational Research*, *194*(1), 307-322.

Nasution, H. N., Mavondo, F. T. (2005). The impact of service quality on customer value in the hotel industry. In *Tourism marketing, ANZMAC Conference. Monash University: Australia*.

Noorbakhsh, S.M., Akbarpoor Sareskanrood, M. (2011). A report about the role of management in process of changing village to city around Tehran Metropolis, *Urban Economics*, issue12.

OECD. (2009). *The Impact of culture on tourism.* Paris:Author.

Parkerson, B., Saunders, J. (2005). City branding: Can goods and services branding models be used to brand cities?. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, *1*(3), 242-264.

Poorfaraj, A. Tajzadeh Namin, A., Alipooriyanzadeh, R. (2013). Customers' particular value and domestic tourists' satisfaction with five-star hotel of Tehran, *Tourism Studies*, issue 21.

Poria, Y., Airey, D., Butler, R. (2001). Challenging the present approach to

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]

heritage tourism: Is tourism to heritage places heritage tourism?. *Tourism Review*, *56*(1/2), 51-53.

Rabbiosi, C. (2015). Renewing a historical legacy: Tourism, leisure shopping and urban branding in Paris. *Cities*, *42*, 195-203.

Rainisto, S. K. (2003). *Success factors of place marketing: A study of place marketing practices in Northern Europe and the United States*. Helsinki University of Technology.

Ranjbariyan, B., Khazayipool, J. (2013). Developing a model to explain the structural impact of urban management marketing on behavioral tendency toward tourism destinations, *Quarterly Journal of Urban Economics and Management, 1*(3).

Ruiz, D. M., Gremler, D. D., Washburn, J. H., Carrión, G. C. (2008). Service value revisited: Specifying a higher-order, formative measure. *Journal of Business Research*, *61*(12), 1278-1291.

Tajzadeh Namin, A., Esmaeil Moshrefi, F. (2014). Prioritizing components of bran particular value in tourism destination from perspective of domestic tourists, *Quarterly Journal of Tourism Management Studies, 8*(24).

Van Riel, C.B.M., Balmer. J.M.T. (1997). Corporate identiny: The concept, its measurement and management. *European Journal of Marketing*,*31*(5).

Wang, Y. J., Wu, C., Yuan, J. (2010). Exploring visitors' experiences and intention to revisit a heritage destination: The case for Lukang, Taiwan. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, *11*(3), 162-178.

Young, Y. E. (2012). City branding and urban tourism: a case study of Seoul and Taipei. In *6th Conference of the International Forum on Urbanism (IFoU): TOURBANISM, Barcelona, 25-27 gener* (pp. 1-10). International Forum on Urbanism.

Zargham Borujeni, H., Barezani, H. (2013). Pathology of tourism brand in Iran, *Researches of Modern Marketing*, *3*(1).

[Downloaded from iueam.ir on 2026-11-03]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.23452870.1395.4.14.8.1]