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Rural Tourists' Opinion about Tourism Situation in Tehran Province and the Duty of Government, Local People and Non Governmental Organizations in Rural Tourism Development"

Farideh Azimi*

National Agrarian University of Armenia Faculty of Economy and Management

Email: farideh.azimi96@yahoo.com

Abstract

As one of the tools for the rural development, Rural Tourism can play a prominent role in the development of villages. Tehran province enjoys a unique condition for the rural tourism planning. There is more than 13 million urban population and 1050 villages in Tehran province. Also the climatic diversifications provide a suitable situation for the rural tourism to form and develop. Government, local communities, and nongovernmental organizations (companies, NGOs, private sector, etc.) can play a crucial role in rural development process. In this survey we tried to find rural Tourists' viewpoint about tourism situation in Tehran Province and the duty of government, local communities and nongovernmental organizations in rural tourism development from. Based on research findings, the most important tourists' issues refer to hygiene, camping and staying problems in touristy places. The most important duties of the Government refer to providing the infrastructures and security in touristy places. Nongovernmental organizations' important duties are in the field of providing tourism centers, providing necessary land for tourism and introduce the attraction of villages. Also, the first priorities duties of the local people are their participatory role in planning, implementing and investment in rural tourism programs.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: farideh.azimi96@yahoo.com

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1. Introduction

Rural development programs are considered as parts of the national development program in any country where they are used to achieve a sustainable and all-embracing development. The governments play a key role in these programs, and once accomplished with the help and participation of the local/rural people and nongovernmental organizations such planning and plans are guaranteed to be tremendously successful. Based on the census taken in 2006, the Iranian rural population exceeded 22 million or about 33% of the total population. Considering the enormous rural population and, more importantly, the growing number of villagers migrating to urban areas, the I. R. of Iran needs a multi-faceted and wide-scale rural developmental planning.

Tourism is much more than an economic sector; it is also a social, cultural, political, and environmental force that drives societal change [6] and rural tourism is a subject which can be seriously taken into account in a bid to achieve rural development [9].

Hence, a well-known but nontraditional strategy for rural development is nowadays regarded to be tourism and it entails the opportunities for entrepreneurship [13]. The government, local people and nongovernmental organizations have crucial role in planning and implementing the developmental programs. In this survey we tried to find their roles in rural tourism development beside, the problems of rural tourism in Tehran province from the tourists' point of view.

2. Research literature

2.1 Rural Tourism

"Rural tourism is a complex multi-faceted activity; it is not just farm-based tourism. It includes farm-based holidays but also comprises special interest nature holidays and ecotourism, walking, climbing and riding holidays, adventure, sport and health tourism, hunting and angling, educational travel, arts and heritage tourism, and, in some areas, ethnic tourism. There is also a large general interest market for less specialized forms of rural tourism" [14]. "Rural tourism has developed significantly worldwide and has acquired an important role for the development of each country's rural territories" [2].

Rural Tourism is a mild form of sustainable tourism development and multi-activity in the rural region to a broad one such as "a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income for their businesses" [1].

2.1.1 Government Interference in Rural Tourism Development

The government may initiate actions and activities for tourism development by ensuring funds or setting quality standards [3].

Offering the rural tourism as an economic replacement approach for rural societies paves the way for increasing focus by the governments on rural tourism development phenomenon.

Governments have a crucial role to play in all steps of rural tourism process.

"What communities do in tourism depend on the opportunities and power they have, the incentives and prices they face, and their access to skills, training, capital and markets. All of these are shaped by government policies, regulation, and taxes" [5].

The infrastructure for tourism is critically important and wide-ranging. It includes telecommunications, rail and road networks, signage, information centers, convention and conference facilities, etc, [7]. Roads and accommodation infrastructures were cited as the two main barriers for growing rural tourism development [8].

2.1.2 The role and duty of local people in rural tourism development

If tourism development lacks a reliable support from local communities, there will be resistances and conflicts. This will naturally weaken the rural tourism development flow.

The local residents have moral right to participate in the development of an activity that may have benefits and at the same time costs that may be incurred on them. This subject is very important especially for rural tourism where local people have "coexistent relationship" with their environment [16].

So, it seems participation of local community is not only favorable, but also a necessary factor for sustainable tourism development, principally in the field of rural tourism [15].

2.1.3 The role and duty of nongovernmental organizations in rural tourism development

Besides rural population and public administration, another key group of actors is present in the rural development framework, namely the local non-profit oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as association and foundations aiming at helping rural communities in improving their quality of life [4].

These organizations can play different parts in tourism plans development such as: collaboration, coordination, management, control and guiding. The focus of these organizations is on targeted people who are organized to realize common purposes [12]. "Beside N.G.Os the private sector can contribute to local economic development and poverty reduction by changing the way that it does business and through philanthropic activity. There are strong commercial motivations for private sector engagement in local economic development and poverty reduction, principally by creating an enhanced range of products, which adds market advantage, and improving the business environment, which fosters favorable staff attitudes and morale" [17].

3. Research Boundary

3.1 Subjective Boundary of the Research

The subjective boundary of this research is restricted to studying the role of the government and local people in rural tourism development from the viewpoints of domestic tourists in Tehran province.

3.2 Geographic Boundary of the Research

This research is conducted in Tehran Province with a focus on 9 towns.

4. Problem Explanation

Tehran province has an urban population of about 13,000,000 and 1050 villages. Most of villages are located in mountainous areas with a very pleasant weather and many potential tourism attractions. Tehran province is regarded as one of the provinces that enjoy a suitable position to plan and create rural and eco-tourism for it. However, it still lacks regrettably a compiled and sustainable plan in this field; only some well-weathered rural regions adjacent to Tehran are spontaneously arranged to be as tourist sites.

Over the past recent years, only a few villages of Tehran province were selected as pilot tourism villages in a top-down planning. This selection have been done in a top-down planning way and only based on their available potentialities in order to implement future plans for them. In this way, the real and hidden potentialities of these and other villages are missed. It is obvious that this few number of villages is not enough for the large number of urban people in Tehran megacity. Thus, this small activity about rural tourism will not have a significant impact on rural development in Tehran province.

5. Research methodology

In this survey we used from field research method based on questionnaire in presence of questioner.

5.1 Statistics society or research group

In this research there is a group of domestic tourists including 72 people that they have a trip to different rural touristy places in Tehran province.

5.2 Statistic methods and results analysis

The statistic methods of this research are based on one group including domestic tourists that were delivered especial face to face questionnaire, after data collecting, that was determined the priorities of the factors based on finding the frequency of them. Also there were used by ranking method for finding the roles of three above groups in rural tourism development.

5.3 What are the important problems with rural tourism in Tehran province from tourists' point of view?

Based on table No.1, They were asked about 11 factors and the first 3 priority problems are:

- 1- Hygiene
- 2- Camping
- 3- staying

Table 1: The important rural tourism problems in Tehran province from tourists' point of view

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| staying | 13 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 18.0 |
| hygiene | 18 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 43.0 |
| security | 5 | 6.9 | 6.9 | 49.9 |
| camping | 16 | 22.2 | 22.2 | 72.1 |
| road | 4 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 77.62 |
| restaurant | 8 | 11.4 | 11.4 | 89.02 |
| parking | 4 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 94.54 |
| environment pollution | 1 | 1.25 | 1.25 | 95.79 |
| Non-satisfied local people's behavior | 1 | 1.25 | 1.25 | 97.04 |
| lack of touristy attractions | 1 | 1.25 | 1.25 | 98.29 |
| telecommunication problems | 1 | 1.25 | 1.25 | 100.0 |
| Total | 72 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

It seems the most important rural tourism problems from tourists' point of view refer to infrastructural problems specially hygiene, staying and camping.

5.4 Determining the priorities of the role of government, local people and nongovernmental organizations in tourism development from tourists' point of view

a- Government's role in rural tourism development in Tehran province from tourists' point of view.

Based on table No.2, the 10 factors priorities were determined and the first three priorities are:

- 1- Providing suitable roads
- 2- Providing the security of the region
- 3- Making tourists' staying places.

The last priority was: maintenance of natural places

Table2: the priorities of the government’s role in rural tourism development in Tehran province from tourists’ point of view

| | Mean Rank |
|---|-----------|
| maintenance of natural places | 9.33 |
| remaking and maintenance of heritage buildings in touristy region | 8.13 |
| making handicraft products shops | 7.6 |
| making agricultural products shops | 7.27 |
| preventing of environment pollution | 6.2 |
| making food places for tourists | 5.53 |
| providing the region’s hygiene | 4.2 |
| making tourists’ staying places | 2.47 |
| providing the security of touristy region | 2.4 |
| providing suitable roads | 1.87 |

b- The local people’s role and duty in rural tourism development in Tehran province from tourists’ point of view.

Based on table No.3, the priorities of 14 factors were determined and the first three priorities are:

- 1- Participation in providing tourism plans
- 2- Participation in implementing tourism programs
- 3- Investment on tourism projects

The last priority was: giving land as a gift for tourism development

"Participation of the community is considered as a range of processes through which local communities are involved and play a role in issues which affect them." [10]. Based on founded results, the most important role of the local communities in rural tourism development is their participatory role.

c- The role and duty of nongovernmental organizations in rural tourism development in Tehran province from tourists’ point of view.

Based on table No.4, the priorities of 13 factors were determined and the first three priorities are:

- 1- Providing tourism centers in village
- 2- Providing the necessary land for tourism
- 3- Introducing village attractions

The last priority was: tourist attraction

Table 3: The priorities of the role of local people in rural tourism development in Tehran province from tourists' point of view

| | Mean Rank |
|--|-----------|
| giving land as a gift for tourism development | 13.29 |
| giving cheap land for tourism development | 12.71 |
| tourism evaluation | 12.29 |
| tourism supervision | 10.29 |
| tourism assessment | 9.43 |
| following the tourism problems | 9 |
| getting loan for tourism development | 8.14 |
| giving free land for tourism development | 7.14 |
| mutual relation with council | 6.43 |
| opening related tourism places | 5.21 |
| suitable behavior with tourists | 4.71 |
| investment on tourism projects | 2.71 |
| participation in implementing tourism programs | 1.86 |
| participation in tourism planning | 1.79 |

Table 4: the priority of the duty and role of nongovernmental organizations in tourism development from tourists' point of view

| | Mean Rank |
|---|-----------|
| tourists attraction | 13.29 |
| doing activities in tourism projects | 12.71 |
| tourism supervision | 12.29 |
| following the tourism needs | 10.29 |
| tourism evaluation | 9.43 |
| people participation in tourism development | 9 |
| providing camping places | 8.14 |
| investment on tourism development in village | 7.14 |
| performing participatory meetings for getting people's opinions | 6.43 |
| making tourism plans | 5.21 |
| introducing village attractions | 2.71 |
| providing the necessary land for tourism | 1.86 |
| providing tourism centers in village | 1.79 |

It seems the tourism places and spheres are important for tourists and based on their opinion nongovernmental organizations should provide these places.

6. Conclusion

Based on results found, the most important rural tourism problems in Tehran province refer to infrastructural subjects. Also, staying problems in touristy places are more important from tourists' point of view. Beside, the determined priorities of government, rural people and nongovernmental organizations' role show that the most important roles of them refer to providing the infrastructures, especially, the roles of government and nongovernmental organizations. The first priorities roles of the local people show that their participation in planning, implementing and investing on rural tourism programs are in a high degree of importance from tourists' belief.

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