



ISSN: 0975-766X  
CODEN: IJPTFI  
Research Article

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## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Received on 04-03-2016

Accepted on 25-03-2016

### Abstract

Today, tourism is one of the largest industries in meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, and is considered as an important factor for social, cultural and economic development. Tourism industry can influence other social, cultural and economic activities directly or indirectly. According to Iran's 20-year vision plan, this country should welcome 20 million tourists by 2025. The number of tourists entering the country shows a growth rate of 20% and has increased from 1,816,900 by 2006 to 2,171,299 by 2007. Examining and recognition of the factors and resources available, considering environmental protection and its sustainable development for future generations, expanding economic development as a door for entering foreign exchange into the country, as well as promoting culture to other nations need an appropriate planning. This article aims at introducing tourism and how to generate income through it. Desert forms most parts of Iran's land areas which contain beautiful places attracting tourists. Mesr and Matinabad villages have been introduced as the best places based on sustainable tourism development in Isfahan province, Iran. They can develop economic and expand infrastructures to boost employment status. This article enjoyed both qualitative and quantitative methods.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Sustainable Development, Village TPURIST.

### Introduction

Today, travel has become a habit in humans' lives. Using modern transportation industry, every person having an appropriate financial status can travel the world in a short time. This has caused people to put travel in their life programs. Countries can use this approach to attract tourists, create an appropriate atmosphere for economic growth as well as promote and introduce their culture to the world. Iran has rich historical and geographical attractions and is

considered as a country attracting foreign tourists easily. Tourism can be helpful to get rid of problems such as unemployment, single-product economy, etc. especially for countries like Iran which relies heavily on revenues from oil (3). Sustainable tourism development shows a shift from traditional neoclassical economic approaches to a more systematic and general approach in which not only the needs of the market are concerned but the needs of society and the natural environment is important (14). It should be noted, however, that if tourism development only considers the economic development, an irreparable damage occurs to the nature of tourism sector because the economic matters will become the criteria for development and attracting tourists will forget. Today, tourism as a clear industry and the third dynamic and prosperous economic phenomenon after oil and auto industry has attracted the attention of many countries (9). Lack of sufficient attention to the four principles of tourism, i.e. structure, education, culture and health are among the barriers of this industry in Iran (22).

This paper aims at reviewing the definitions of sustainable tourism development in Iran, examining the challenges and solutions to improve the development and expansion of tourism as well as promoting economic development and introducing Iranian's culture it to the world.

## **Literature Review**

One of the first books published on tourism with an economic view is *Economics of Outdoor Recreation* by Clawson and Knetsch (5) explaining environmental issues and the works of Gray (10), Guthrie (12) and Gerakis (8). Some years later, Gray (11) discussed relationship between international travel and international trade in his book. Perace (1989) in his study argued that tourism research indicates that the industry will eventually lead to a series of economic impacts in each country. Jamshidian (15) examined the impact of tourism on the economy in some cases and stated that from an economic point of view the main functions of tourism are monetization from lands, redistribution of income, creating new employment, sale of goods required by tourists, especially traditional products and handicrafts, and development of transportation and economic.

For transformation of the social and economic structures in relation to tourism, Parsaeyan and Arabi (17) explained that if local people participate in planning, managing and executing the programs when developing strategies and programs, they will accept more responsibility in various sectors of tourism planning. This makes the local communities and society can control the activities done on tourism more. Kargar (16) also suggested strategies for the development of tourism industry in Iran and explained its direct impact on the economy of the country. During the last 50 years, a good growth in tourism studies can be felt. In practice, by publishing scientific journals such as

extensive researches have been done in the tourism economy. In 2007, with the establishment of Tourism Economy Forum more formal and comprehensive studies are in progress. Eadington and Redman (7) in a study entitled "Economy and Tourism" had a look at the development of tourism economy. This study discussed the elasticity of demand, demand modeling techniques, market structure and economic effects. In his study entitled "Tourism and Economic Development", Sinclair (19) explained the literatures done on tourism and economy during two decades, and discussed issues such as sustainability, environment and Computable General Equilibrium models (CGE). Some years later, Blake and Sinclair (4) limited the range of tourism-economic studies to analyze the demand and supply issues (including various forms of tourism business). Song and Li (21) proposed reviewing in the theoretical modeling studies. In recent years Dwyer et al. (6) in their study entitled “Economics of Tourism” reviewed development of key economic issues in tourism. Today, tourism as a smokeless industry has many fans. Its rapid growth in the last fifty years shows the importance of its economic and social impacts. According to the World Tourism Organization (23) total world tourists were 25 million in 1950, and 700 million in 2000; this figure will increase to 1,600,000,000 in 2020 (World Tourism Organization, 2001). Abdollahzadeh (1) discussed factors such as low facilities (e.g. lack of regulation, proper advertising), lack of proper attractions (i.e. factors and features that are designed for tourists and are favorable from the view point of visitors), insecurity (certainly activities such as riots, robberies, and terrorism cause a decline in tourism industry of a country) and lack of suitable infrastructure (e.g. appropriate land, air and sea transports, as well as amenities for visitors to the ancient and religious centers) which leads to damages tourism industry. Arabi and Izad (2) emphasized the role of government, macro management and duties of tourism organizations on policy making regarding this industry. They believed there is a need for tourism ministry to encourage private sector invests in this section and also to create security rules to attract tourists. Hall (13) explained tourism strategies. He believed these strategies should be designed and developed well. Most countries pay attention to Tourism as an effective tool in political, economic and cultural developments.

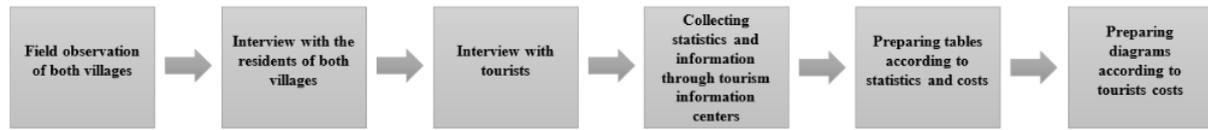


**Figure 1: History of Related Researches.**

## Materials and Methods

### a) Methods

This article enjoying both qualitative and quantitative approaches and employed library research such as books, journals, articles, websites etc. and interview with experts. Figure 2 shows the process this article used.



**Figure 2: The research method process.**

### b) Materials

Isfahan an ancient-tourism city in central of Iran is located in  $51^{\circ} 39' 40''$  longitude and  $32^{\circ} 38' 30''$  latitude (20). This city enjoys a beautiful Islamic architecture and has beautiful boulevards, covered bridges, palaces, unique mosques and minarets. According to André Malraux “The world is a sad place without Isfahan”. This article aims at examining Mesr and Matinabad villages located near Isfahan.

Matinabad camp has a distance of 25 km from Natanz and 45 km from Kashan in  $33^{\circ} 45' 09''$  longitude and  $51^{\circ} 59' 32''$  latitude. It is constructed by Ashraf Vaghefi, an engineer, at the beginning of a desert area located behind the Sand in south of Namak Lake (Salt Lake) and Bandrigh desert near Korshahi Castle and Agha Ali Abbas Shrine. This Camp as the first natural camp in Iran is based on the sustainable tourism and the fundamental principles of ecotourism. Mesr village or Mesr desert, in the heart of Iran’s deserts, is located in the east of Jandaq (30 km) and north of Khor (30 km) and in  $34^{\circ} 04'$  longitude and  $54^{\circ} 47'$  latitude with a population of 120. This desert is limited by the mountain ranges from west, south-west and south-east that are parts central plateau of Iran. It is in natural holes in the foothills of this mountain and form very beautiful sand dunes which are the target of tourism.



**Figure 3: the location of Mesr (red) and Matinabad (green) Villages (source: authors).**

## Results and Discussion

### a) Tourism Descriptive Statistics

Matinabad camp containing permanent tents in the sand, camel trekking camp with 40 camels, restaurant, suites and natural and organic farms is considered as one of the beautiful tourist centers. Camping is possible in two ways: staying in traditional suites or tents. Each suite has an area of 25 m<sup>2</sup>; there are also two kinds of tents: in traditional (screw bed) and modern (1 single bed) styles. Each tent has a capacity of two persons. The tents tried to be designed according to Iranian desert nomads' tents. The material used is polyester cotton to be resistant to moisture. These tents have one wide windows through which the visitors can look at the out in any position and enjoy the nature. These tents also have electricity. The purposes of establishing this camps are learning from nature, watching unique wildlife especially birds, being familiar with desert vegetation and local agricultural crops, taking exquisite landscape photos, observing the stars at night and more adventurous camel trekking and biking in the desert, using climatic characteristics of the region, along with relaxation and meditation on the sands of the desert. Cultural diversity in traditions and customs provide an opportunity to attract tourists. Harvest festival (wheat, pomegranate, etc.) and the ancient celebrations such as Sada festival<sup>1</sup>, Chaharshanbe Suri<sup>1</sup> and Yalda<sup>1</sup> are among these opportunities.

Geographical location of Matinabad and being near the major cities of Kashan and Isfahan in one hand and closeness to the desert and mountains on the other hand make it possible to have short-term travels. Among beautiful places of this echo camp Yakhab mountain ranges (with an altitude of 1700 m), beautiful sand hills of Bandrigh, Korshahi plain, Namak Lake, and the roads Afrod Korshahi-to-Sefidab (in national desert park) and Poshtrig-t-Maranjab that each have their own unique beauty can be mentioned.

Alfons Gabriel (1982) a geographer and travel writer who made several trips to the deserts of Iran believed "Desert will never leave you who is captured by its charm". This quote can be used for Mesr village. Salknon hole, Tkht-e-Abbasi, Takht-e-Aros and sandy hills are attractions of this village. Amirabad which is near this village (with a distance of 2 km) has beautiful sand dunes covered with rich vegetation such as tamarisk shrubs and palms. Farahzad village in the north of Mesr has beautiful palms surrounded by sand dunes. A canebrake also is in the east of Mesr which emerged by a wonderful spring, a watering place for animals. Other landmarks contain Namak Lake of Khor, Tabagheh desert, Garmeh, Mohammadabad, Arosan, and Farahzad villages, Arosan-to-Bidestan, Afrod-to-Ebrahim Zahra, and Rigkaleh and Central desert roads. Factors that attract tourists can be count as: existence of deep water wells, green areas and cultivation of tamarisks, etc. in order to prevent the movement of sand dune, historical and

traditional buildings and their renovation for tourist accommodation, motorcycling, camel trekking, and most importantly, a vast and lush Marshes (5 km from the village) and sand dunes around it. Many Iranian and foreign astronomers know this village's dark clear sky appropriate for their observations and setting up workshops. A lot of photographers also prefer this region for working. Visitors can stay in local houses and inns.

b) A Comparison on income and environment

Revenues obtained by farming, live stocking, tourism camp (including places of residence, tents and suites, cycling, camel rides and observatory) in both villages. Despite the construction of accommodation and welfare facilities for visitors there is no degradation in the natural environment of the desert. The results obtained by questionnaires are presented in the following tables and figures.

**Table 1: The numbers of tourists visiting both villages (source: authors).**

|         |          | Matinabad |      |          |                    | Mesr   |                    |
|---------|----------|-----------|------|----------|--------------------|--------|--------------------|
|         |          | Nowruz    | Sada | Mehregan | other celebrations | Nowruz | other celebrations |
| Tehran  | agency 1 | 150       | -    | -        | 120                | 100    | -                  |
|         | agency 2 | 120       | 60   | -        | -                  | 100    | -                  |
|         | agency 3 | 200       | -    | -        | -                  | 150    | -                  |
|         | agency 4 | 100       | 50   | -        | 70                 | -      | -                  |
|         | agency 5 | 120       | -    | -        | 50                 | 100    | -                  |
| Shiraz  | agency 1 | 130       | 50   | -        | 50                 | 50     | -                  |
|         | agency 2 | 150       | -    | -        | 50                 | 120    | -                  |
| Isfahan | agency 1 | 150       | -    | -        | 50                 | 200    | -                  |
|         | agency 2 | 200       | 150  | -        | 100                | 120    | -                  |
|         | agency 3 | 200       | 150  | -        | 80                 | 150    | -                  |

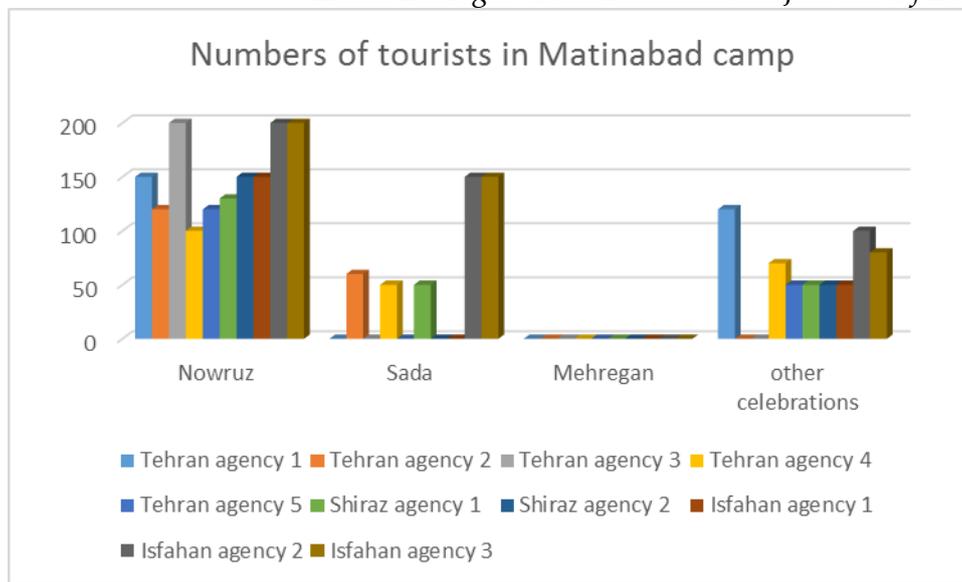


Figure 4: Numbers of tourists in Matinabad camp (source: authors).

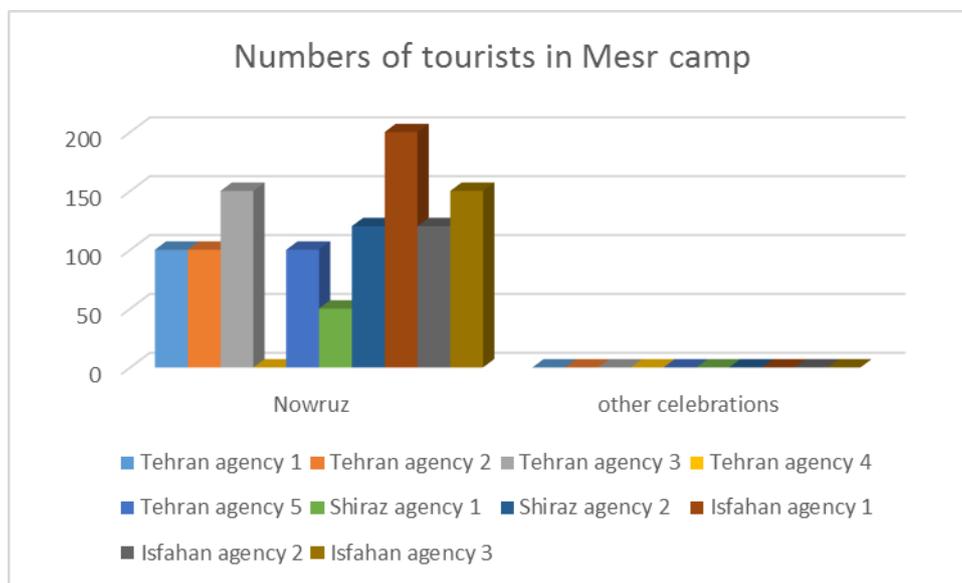


Figure 5: Numbers of tourists in Mesr camp (source: authors).

Table 2: The cost of tourism agencies in Matinabad camp (source: authors).

|        |          | Nowrouz | Sada | Mehregan | others | price of tour | other cost | one's cost | total cost |
|--------|----------|---------|------|----------|--------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Tehran | agency 1 | 150     | -    | -        | 120    | 189,000       | 150,000    | 339,000    | 91,530,000 |
|        | agency 2 | 120     | 60   | -        | -      | 178,000       | 150,000    | 328,000    | 59,040,000 |
|        | agency 3 | 200     | -    | -        | -      | 170,000       | 150,000    | 320,000    | 64,000,000 |
|        | agency 4 | 100     | 50   | -        | 70     | 190,000       | 150,000    | 340,000    | 74,800,000 |
|        | agency   | 120     | -    | -        | 50     | 170,000       | 150,000    | 320,000    | 54,400,000 |

|         |          |     |     |   |     |         |         |         |             |
|---------|----------|-----|-----|---|-----|---------|---------|---------|-------------|
|         | 5        |     |     |   |     |         |         |         |             |
| Shiraz  | agency 1 | 130 | 50  | - | 50  | 150,000 | 150,000 | 300,000 | 69,000,000  |
|         | agency 2 | 150 | -   | - | 50  | 160,000 | 150,000 | 310,000 | 62,000,000  |
| Isfahan | agency 1 | 150 | -   | - | 50  | 160,000 | 150,000 | 310,000 | 62,000,000  |
|         | agency 2 | 200 | 150 | - | 100 | 165,000 | 150,000 | 315,000 | 141,750,000 |
|         | agency 3 | 200 | 150 | - | 80  | 160,000 | 150,000 | 310,000 | 133,300,000 |

**Table 2: The cost of tourism agencies in Mesr camp (source: authors).**

|         |          | Nowrouz | others | price of tour | other cost | one's cost | total cost |
|---------|----------|---------|--------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Tehran  | agency 1 | 100     | -      | 170,000       | 150,000    | 320,000    | 32,000,000 |
|         | agency 2 | 100     | -      | 168,000       | 150,000    | 318,000    | 31,800,000 |
|         | agency 3 | 150     | -      | 172,000       | 150,000    | 322,000    | 48,300,000 |
|         | agency 4 | -       | -      | -             | -          | -          | -          |
|         | agency 5 | 100     | -      | 170,000       | 150,000    | 320,000    | 32,000,000 |
| Shiraz  | agency 1 | 50      | -      | 150,000       | 150,000    | 300,000    | 15,000,000 |
|         | agency 2 | 120     | -      | 152,000       | 150,000    | 302,000    | 36,240,000 |
| Isfahan | agency 1 | 200     | -      | 120,000       | 150,000    | 270,000    | 54,000,000 |
|         | agency 2 | 120     | -      | 100,000       | 150,000    | 250,000    | 30,000,000 |
|         | agency 3 | 150     | -      | 120,000       | 150,000    | 270,000    | 40,500,000 |

It is estimated that if each tourist pays 1,500,000 Rials to the agency and 1,500,000 Rials to buy handicrafts, souvenir, etc. the cost s/he may pay is about 3,000,000 Rials. By multiplying this amount to the number of tourists the total cost will be obtained. It is present in the above table.

## Conclusion

Iran is a vast country with various cultures and climates which has several thousand years of civilization. These potentialities make out of this country an appropriate place for attracting tourists. One of its beautiful and charming places is desert. These place call for attention and full support of the government and also private sectors to be able to move towards sustainable development. Two places studied in this article were Matinabad and Mesr in Isfahan

province which are located in desert regions. In fact, the entrance of at least 150 tourists into these two villages which comes along with an income about 1500000 IRR for the place, as well 1500000 IRR for the travelling agency, will not only make out of such villages a propitious place, but also will impede the migration of villagers to megacities. It needs good infrastructure and planning to the revival of culture to other nations. Certainly it moves towards direct and indirect employment and finally brings about social prosperity.

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