

The Priorities of the Government's Role in Rural Tourism Development in Tehran Province (from Local People, Tourists and the Authorities' Point of View)

Farideh Azimi*

Department of Extension & Education, Jihad-e-Agriculture Organization, Tehran, Iran

*Corresponding author: Farideh.Azimi96@yahoo.com

Received November 28, 2014; Revised January 01, 2015; Accepted January 09, 2015

Abstract Because of various and important effects of tourism on different parts of society, governments are obliged to intervene or to participate in its activities in a wide-ranging level. In local, national, regional, and international levels, there are important relationships between government and tourism. Many governments are already actively engaged in supporting tourism. With regard to suitable situation for rural tourism development in Tehran province, rural tourism can play an important role for rural regions development. Government can play a crucial role in this field and pave the ways for attaining to rural development. In this research we tried to find the important roles of government in rural tourism development in Tehran province from local people, tourists and the authorities' point of view. Based on results found the important roles of government are in the field of preparing infrastructures, educating the people, tourists and nongovernmental organizations, providing the security and hygiene in touristy regions, doing rural tourism supervision, investment on rural tourism and etc. Based on the researcher's opinion, the Government's all - embracing support from tourism and rural tourism development, doing the education of local people & nongovernmental organizations and making the human resources developmental programs are the most important roles of government in rural tourism development.

Keywords: rural, rural development, tourism, rural tourism, government

Cite This Article: Farideh Azimi, "The Priorities of the Government's Role in Rural Tourism Development in Tehran Province (from Local People, Tourists and the Authorities' Point of View)." *American Journal of Rural Development*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2015): 1-4. doi: 10.12691/ajrd-3-1-1.

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.

"Tourism has many potential benefits for rural areas" [8]. Rural tourism is a subject which can be seriously taken into account in a bid to achieve rural development.

Since rural tourism is regarded a most popular form of tourism, the industry can be expected to help the rural economic growth and its diverse activities on one side, and on the other, it paves the way to create more jobs and generate income for the rural inhabitants through attracting the surplus of human forces; generally speaking, it can be considered as an opportunity for an all-encompassing development.

Iran ranks the tenth in the world concerning natural resources and tourism attractions. Unfortunately the statistics released over the past years by the World Tourism Organization prove that there has been a very slow trend regarding the number of tourists visiting Iran. Accordingly, the bitter fact reveals how small the part is that the tourism industry plays in Iran's gross national income.

With regard to abundant natural, historical, cultural, agriculture and handicraft potentials in rural areas in Iran, rural tourism can play a prominent part in wide-ranging fields. These fields can be included creation of jobs, enhancement of agricultural and handicraft products, formation of rural organizations, protection of natural resources, enrichment of cultural issues and safeguarding of historical sites. It can result in the rural development, on one side, and pave the way for a safe leisure time for the large urban population of megacities like Tehran from other side. Psychologically speaking, this might play an important role in improving the people's mental and spiritual conditions in a megacity.

The statistical methods of this research are based on three groups including, local people, authorities and tourists. For studying the descriptive and demographic results, descriptive statistical tests are used by one sample compare kolmogrove Smirnov test. For getting results in third group, we used of mean ranking method.

2. Research Literature

Tourism is much more than an economic sector; it is also a social, cultural, political, and environmental force that drives societal change [7].

Beside, "Rural tourism spans both natural and built environments, and everyday activities, as well as those purposely designed for tourism." [5]. Ganon believes that "Rural Tourism is a mild form of sustainable tourism development and multi-activity in the rural region" [9]. According to Cooper, "Because of various effects of tourism on different parts of society, governments are obliged to intervene or to participate in its activities in a wide-ranging level. In local, national, regional, and international levels, there are important relationships between government and tourism." [3]. Since various beneficiaries use from touristy resources; like natural environment, substructures and cultural resources, tourism development without any control can damage above resources. For this reason, 'Show and Williams' mentioned six reasons for government intervention in tourism as follows: -economic aims, -legitimacy of policies, -equality and social needs, -foreign factors, -social investment, and -adjusting the negative controls on regional development [14]. Many governments have done proceedings in the field of infrastructural development investment. Sharply and Southgate confirmed that government is in the center of sustainable development. Government participation can occur in many fields such as: making environmental planning, formulating needed laws and regulations, preparing and maintaining infrastructures, building organizational capacity, promoting tourism flow, supervising development control, creating protected locations, and providing financial supports [13].

According to *UNEP and WTO*, many governments are already actively engaged in supporting tourism through marketing, information services, education and in other ways, often through joint public-private frameworks [15].

Douglas and Derrett believe that, rural tourism as an economic replacement approach for rural areas paves the way for increasing focus by the governments on rural tourism development. This can lead to capital generation and job creation in rural regions [6].

Butler and Hall describe the reasons of government intervention in rural tourism as follows:

- **Economic importance of tourism in job occupation and diversification of economic activities,**
- **Protection of attractive areas,**
- **The protection of environment and pollution control,**
- **Development of tourism services,**
- **Public economic, social, and political goals such as: better life quality for rural people, sanitation, education, and equality to get recreation resources [1].**

"Governments have a crucial role to play. What communities do in tourism depends 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" [4].

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" [10]. In this regard Surjit has been declared "roads and accommodation infrastructures were cited as the two main barriers for growing rural tourism development." [12].

The government may initiate actions and activities for tourism development by ensuring funds or setting quality standards [11].

To operate effectively for long-term benefit of the destination government must mobilize the Tourism sector as a critical driver of the greater Economic, Social, Cultural, Industrial and Infrastructural development of the destination for its people and their future [2].

3. Rural Tourism in Tehran Province

Tehran province has a unique condition for the rural tourism planning; On the other hand, the climatic diversifications make it possible for the rural tourism to develop in each season.

Tehran has an urban population of about 13,000,000 and more than 1,500 villages, most of which being located in mountainous areas with a very pleasant weather and many potential tourism attractions. It is regarded as one of the provinces that enjoy a suitable position to plan and create rural tourism for it.

Over the past recent years, only a few villages of Tehran province were selected as pilot. This selection have been in a top-down planning way, based on their available potentialities and not on the basis of their real and hidden potentialities in order to implement future tourism plans for them. 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. Nonetheless, such action has seriously damaged the local environment, due to the lack of planning and insufficient monitoring.

3.1. Sightseeing Potentialities of Rural Tourism in Tehran Province

- **Historical sites:** including cisterns, ice places, bathroom houses, bridges, caravanseraes¹, caves, thrones, bas-relief inscriptions, Prisons, cemeteries, etc.

- **Pilgrimage shrines:** there are numerous religious shrines in rural areas of Tehran province; some of them have historical values.

- **Natural attractions:** Tehran province has many protected natural sightseeing regions, national parks, afforest parks, springs, mineral water springs, waterfalls, natural caves and three small lakes.

4. Research Methodology

This research is conducted in a quantitative method based on questionnaires and statistic analyses. In this survey we used from field research method based on questionnaire in presence of questioner. Three kinds of questionnaires were used for three groups of people that were questioned in this research.

4.1. Information Foundation

-**Statistical society:** The statistical society in this research includes three groups:

1- First group consist of Local people society including 122 people

¹ Caravansera, or caravansara in English or Sarai in Indian subcontinent (Persian: کاروانسرا *kārvānsarā* or کاروانسرای *kārvānsarāi*, Turkish: *kervansaray*) was a roadside inn where travelers could rest and recover from the day's journey.

This group consists of non-permanent and permanent rural residents in Tehran province. They are questioned in a randomly manner.

2- The group including 119 people of the authorities divided into two subsets:

a- Governmental authorities and managers, most of them, are in top managerial levels concerning rural affairs management in governmental organizations, and

b- Local authorities including officials and managers responsible in different parts of governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

3- Tourists category including 72 people

This category is comprised of the tourists visiting rural tourist-attracting places in Tehran province. They are questioned in a randomly manner.

4.2. Statistical Methods and Results Analysis

The statistic methods of the study are based on three groups including tourists, local people and the authorities that were delivered especial face to face questionnaire to each group. After collecting, they were edited in excel format. Then for studying the descriptive and demographic results, descriptive statistical tests are used by one sample compare kolmogrove Smirnov test. Also the mean ranking method was used for accessing results in tourists group.

4.2.1. Tools of Data Collection

In this research in addition to collecting data with questionnaires we used interview method and recording square data.

4.2.2. The Local People’s Point of Views about Government’s Role in Rural Tourism Development in Tehran Province

In this part local people were asked about 11 related factors in the field of government’s role in rural tourism development in Tehran province.

Based on table No.1 all of the means are upper than 2.5 and it shows that they are in agreement or favorite range of local people’s belief.

- The first 3 priority factors that are in agreement range of local people’s belief:

1. Providing the security of tourists by government
2. Doing local people education about tourism by government
3. Providing the rural tourism infrastructures by government

- The last factor that is in agreement range of local people’s belief:

- Providing the rural tourism finance by government

Table 1. The government’s role in rural tourism development in Tehran province from the local people’s opinion

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
tourism plans implementation by government	121	3.6033	.95288	3.094	.000
providing the rural tourism finance by government	122	4.2049	.81249	2.703	.000
giving the facilities to local people by government	120	4.2083	.83913	3.399	.000
rural tourism local management by government	121	3.2397	1.25847	3.033	.000
making tourism laws by government	122	4.0984	.72054	3.293	.000
tourism supervision by government	122	4.0574	.86530	3.601	.000
tourism investment by government	122	4.3770	.62095	3.236	.000
providing the tourists security by government	122	4.4262	.77051	3.726	.000
doing local people education about tourism by government	122	4.3934	.81876	3.713	.000
providing the rural tourism infrastructures by government	122	4.4836	.64582	3.634	.000
providing the hygiene of touristy places by government	122	4.3852	.66116	3.123	.000

4.2.3. The Priorities of Government’s Role in rural Tourism Development in Tehran Province from the Authorities’ Opinion

Based on Table 2, the authorities were asked about 9 related subjects in the field of government’s role in rural tourism development in favorite situation. Based on results all of the means are higher than 2.5, it shows that they are in agreement or favorite range of the authorities’ belief.

- The first 3 priority factors that are in agreement range of the authorities’ attitude:

1. Providing rural tourism infrastructures by government
2. Rural tourism supervision by government
3. Doing local people and nongovernmental organizations’ education about tourism by government

The last factor that is in agreement range of the authorities’ belief:

- Investment on rural tourism by government

Table 2. The government’s role in rural tourism development in Tehran province from the authorities’ opinion

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
providing the rural tourism finance by government	119	4.5210	.64897	3.814	.000
giving the facilities to local people by government	119	4.4622	.64820	3.465	.000
making rural tourism laws by government	119	4.5042	.62265	3.819	.000
doing local people and nongovernmental organizations’ education about tourism by government	119	4.2353	.57793	3.970	.000
investment on rural tourism by government	118	4.3136	.72441	2.830	.000
providing tourists security by government	119	4.5378	.51733	3.932	.000
rural tourism supervision by government	119	4.4538	.79987	3.994	.000
providing rural tourism infrastructures by government	119	4.5882	.57360	4.205	.000
providing the hygiene of touristy places by government	119	4.2185	.73829	3.268	.000

4.2.4. Determining the Priorities of the Role of Government in Tourism Development from Tourists' Belief

Based on Table 3, the priorities of 10 factors related on government's role in rural tourism development were determined and the three first priorities were:

1- Providing suitable roads, 2- Making rural regions' security, 3- Making tourists' staying places

- The last priority: Maintenance of natural places

Table 3. The priorities of the role of government in rural tourism development from tourists' point of view

	Mean Rank
maintenance of natural places	9.33
remaking and maintenance of heritage buildings in rural regions	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
making the rural regions' hygiene	4.2
making tourists staying places	2.47
making rural regions' security	2.4
providing suitable roads	1.87

5. Conclusion

Based on results found the important roles of government in rural tourism development in Tehran province from local people, authorities and tourists' point of view are as follow:

Providing infrastructures (road, tourists need places such as: restaurant, staying places, camping places, shops)

- Doing the education of local people and nongovernmental organizations about tourism
- Providing tourists security
- Doing the tourism supervision
- providing the hygiene of touristy places
- Providing the rural tourism finance
- Giving the facilities to local people
- Investment on rural tourism

It seems the most important roles of government are in the field of infrastructures, education and security.

6. Suggestion

Governments are responsible for many functions that are important for sustainable development of tourism, such as land use planning, environmental regulations and the provision of infrastructure.

Many experts have propounded the necessity of government intervention in tourism development. Many governments have done proceedings in the field of

infrastructural development investment. Government participation in tourism and rural tourism development can be occurred in many fields such as: preparing and maintaining infrastructures, doing education, providing financial supports, promoting tourism flow, supervision on tourism and creating protected areas. Based on results, it seems the government's all - embracing support from tourism and rural tourism development is very important as well as doing the education of local people and nongovernmental organizations. Based on the researcher's belief, making the human resources developmental programs are the most important subject in rural tourism development and other developmental programs, so it can guarantee the success of these programs.

Governments should place the human developmental programs as one of the most important priorities of their rural development plans like rural tourism programs. In this regard, the first step is planning and implementing the projects with educating, empowering and training base for all of tourists, local people, governmental agents and nongovernmental organizations.

References

- [1] Butler, R.W., and Hall, C.M. (1998), *Tourism and Recreation in Rural Areas*. John Wiley and son, chichester.
- [2] CNN (2009), *The Role of Government in Tourism*, Created for CNN's TASK Group by Anita Mendiratta. www.cnnmediainfo.com/task/download/TASK_Compass_5.pdf.
- [3] Cooper, J. (2003), *Toutism is seriousbusiness*. Redland Times, Cleveland.
- [4] CTSA. *Community Tourism in Southern Africa Guidelines for Practitioners No.2*, www.tanzaniagateway.org/.
- [5] DOT, 1995b, *Cultivating Rural Tourism*, Department of Tourism, AGPS, Canberra.
- [6] Douglas N, Derrett R., (2001), "Special Interest Tourism". Wiley, London.
- [7] Dredge. D, Airey. D, Gross. M. J. (2014), *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism and Hospitality Education*, 570 p.
- [8] Frederick, Martha. (1992), *Tourism as a Rural Economic Development Tool: An Exploration of the Literature*. Bibliographies and Literature of Agriculture, No.122, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.
- [9] Gannon A. (1994), Rural tourism as a factor in rural community economic development for economies in transition. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 2, No. 1-2, pp. 51-60.
- [10] G.S.A.D. *The Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa*. Government of South Africa Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, May 1996. <http://www.info.gov.za/whitepapers/1996/tourism.htm>.
- [11] Petrevska B. (2012), The role of Government in Planning Tourism Development in Macedonia. *journal of Innovation Issues and Approaches in Social Science*, Vol.5, No.3, pp. 118-133.
- [12] Sarjit S.G. (2009), *Rural Tourism Development through Rural Cooperatives*. *Nature and Science*, 7 (10), pp. 68-72.
- [13] Sharpley, R. and Southgate, C. (2002), *Tourism, development and environment*, in R. Sharpley andD. Telfer (eds); *Tourism and development: Concept and Issues*, Channel view publication, Clevedon, pp. 62-100.
- [14] Show G., Williams A. (1994), *Critical issue in tourism: A Geographical Perspective*. Oxford: Blackwe, pp. 557-559.
- [15] UNEP&WTO. *Making Tourism More Sustainable*. <http://www.hospitalitynet.org/news/4024647.html>.