Community Development through Tourism - IRAN experience

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Introduction

• The tourism industry in Iran has a real natural, historical and cultural potential. The unique and special geographic situation of the country, its four-season climate, historical sites and monuments, ancient civilization, variety of the traditions and customs.

• The total contribution of travel & tourism to the country’s GDP was 6.1% in 2014. The number of international arrivals reached 5 million in 2014. Meanwhile the domestic tourism in the country has its very important place. The surveys show that up to 80% of the people (80 millions habitants) in Iran have at least one journey of three nights stay every year.
Planning & Strategy

• The tourism had an adequate place in different economic, cultural and social development up-stream plans such as I.R. of Iran Development Perspective in, the fifth Plan of Cultural, Economic and Social Development of I.R. of Iran, during the recent decades. The sustainable and creative development of tourism is considered as one of the main strategies of the next 5 years development plan of the country.

• The planning policies covering tourism development in relation to the other economic sectors are contained in the country’s five year development plans within the framework of 20-Year National Vision Policies.

• Responsibility for the development & management of tourism falls more & more to national government. Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts & Tourism Organization is responsible for the implementation of tourism and community-based tourism policies and strategies.
Case Studies / Examples

• Geotourism development: Bisheh waterfall in Lorestan-IRAN

• The Horse based tourism development in Nord- Khorasan-IRAN
Bisheh waterfall in Lorestan

- The Village of Bisheh is located in a mountainous area and due to its location and water fall with 48m height it has eye-catching view. The region’s most important attractions are: historical bridge, mountainous view, jungle, geomorphologic attractions, local customs and conventions and local architecture and construction materials.
- Geo-tourism development in the region is toward specializing tourism trend in the area.
- Tourism infrastructure development will be of great help to local community to experience a better life standard due to the considerable distance to the city.
link or connection to community development

• A great number of local peoples are involved directly or indirectly in tourism sector
• Some of the village’s houses have been automatically transformed to tourists accommodations.
• Some of them are involved in cooking and cleaning services
• An eco-museum was established in village within voluntary cooperation of community and local tourism board, utilizing trained local community members as staff,
• A cultural center established in village to offer cultural and advertising services to tourists
• A great part of the village has been changed to a geo-park with management focused in rural texture
• Arranging boat riding matches down the waterfall at national level and make use of rural lodging to accommodate the participants and fans
• Designing and constructing eco-camps by the waterfall
• Establishing certified center to rent bike to tourists by local community members
• Establishment of tourist police and environment friends group making use of Bisheh students and educated people
• Establishment of Tourists information Center nearby the waterfall using young dwellers
The Horse based tourism
Development in Nord-Khorasan-IRAN

• Turkmen-horse is one of the five original horse-races of IRAN which is known around the world.

• Turkmen horse breeding has historical background in Northern-Khorasan province, especially in “Raz-Jargalan” area. Now-a-days the "thoroughbred" race -which is fames as the fastest and most riding horses in the world- and "Akhal" race -which is the finest and most expensive in the world- are breeding in this region.
Turkmen-horse race being at risk, tourism contributed largely to the preservation of this horse

- In the recent years the Turkmen-horse race was unfortunately at the brink.
- The region was going to be depopulated due to the negative impact of immigration to the cities.
- The young population especially left the villages.
The Mi-Si-No Travel Agency’s Initiative

• The travel agent studied on this area and organized a tour package and itinerary.

• After research and evaluation in “Jarglan” Area which is highly talented for breeding “Akhal-Teke” horse-race and also still retains its originality of natural and cultural attractions, two villages (“Gaz” and “Yekke-Soud”) is considered as the pilot of tourist accommodation.

• The young man started a training program for two families of this villages in terms of how to behaving with tourists and how to entertain them,

• He began the plan of choosing horses which could be suitable for both professional riders and newbie who tend to start their first riding.
Tour itinerary

- **Professional package for** riders who are riders indeed and tend to ride in long distance with different horses. Riding with “Akhal-Tekke” horse is the every rider’s dream! The package including the items and elements such as:
  - Visiting Villages and beautiful areas, tarriance in local home, using traditional foods.
  - Visiting and shopping handicrafts, journey in long distance and patching through the protected areas, visiting wild life and local vegetation while riding horses.
  - Using professional native Coach,
  - Camping in nomad’s tents in nature or stay at local home.
Tour itinerary

• **A combinative Package** for Tourists who are not riders, but interested to learn horseback riding and have short trips with horses. The package including:
  - Historical and ecotourism sightseeing in the area,
  - Introducing with the local community (Turkmen) and their way of life,
  - Terrance in local home and using traditional foods.
  - Visiting and shopping handicrafts of the region.
  - participating in local community ceremonies and traditional folklores (music, weddings, local wrestling competitions).
  - Horseback ride training by local coaches.
Tourism contributed largely to community development in the village

- Due to entrance of domestic and international tourists to the region the villages have changed their attitudes towards tourism:
- Revenue from local rent houses in the village,
- Revenue from using local guides and leaders,
- Horse rental income,
- Revenue of selling handicrafts,
- Hospitality and the sale of traditional local foods,
- The proceeds from the transfer of passengers,
- Proceeds help the bride and groom: when a tour is based on the attending in a Wedding ceremony, usually tourists are invited as guests and have no charge for the food, so they tend to help the bride and groom in cash.
- Revenue for the insurance company: All packages include a passenger’s insurance; the fee is taken from the passenger and paid off to the insurance company.
Issues

In practice, policies haven’t been able to combine simultaneously, economic growth with welfare, empowerment, cultural reinforcing manner, social transformation & sustainability.

• There is a gap between sustainable tourism as a theoretical ideal (what has been planned) & what has been actually achieved.

• The private sector is limited in scope with much of the tourism plan in the hands of public sector; therefore, much emphasis should be given to the private sector’s role in the country’s future tourism.

• The institutional organizations, tourism management capabilities, & especially human resources at the national & provincial levels are not appropriate & need to be considered in the development plans

• Destruction of environment, flora and fauna to construct entertainment and tourism infrastructures

• Accommodating more than carrying capacity of the area and interfering with local community normal life

• The possibility of trouble making and mugging due to great number of visitors to waterfall-more than 500 a day

• Tourism development may cause negatives impacts on local community
Recommendations

• Provision of a comprehensive plan for tourism development concerning local community active participation in ecotourism development and working on its strength and weak points
• Improving self-esteem in the region to make the way for preserving local customs and conventions
• Conceding a part of accommodations and other tourism related services to local people
• Facilitate and make the way for the local people investment
• Determine physical and psychological carrying capacity to monitor the tourist arrivals
• Conceding regeneration of the region flora to local people and NGOs
• To Introduce and highlight local customs and conventions
• Workshops and training courses for local community and stakeholders is required to make them believe that tourism development can help them to have better life quality and more social welfare
• Local guides should be have good competence in tourists’ languages
• Tourists should be quite well-informed to respect social and cultural features of local community
Lessons Learned / Recommendations

• A look at the overall situation leads us to conclude that the policies & strategies pursued by the industry stakeholders have been those most suitable for promoting mass tourism rather than sustainable tourism.

• There is some structural weaknesses in the management and promotion of tourism sector. These include especially in the area of planning for sustainable management of country's important natural and cultural sites. These weaknesses are reflected in the way in which the tourism attractions of the country are currently promoted and need to be addressed in a systematic way.

• So, it is recommended to formulate a strategic plan for community-based tourism in the country as well as in the provinces levels. This plan will provide the long-term framework for the development of the communities through tourism that is currently lacking and allow the locals governments to focus on the things that will deliver growth and development in the tourism sector.
Thank You

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