

Policy-making Implications in Cultural Tourism Development of Toos Area of Mashhad

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The present study seeks to provide answers to the following key question: Based on what considerations should a city with multiple tourism capacities in political economic terms edit and compile the strategic model for its urban development within the area of cultural tourism? In other words, what are the considerations behind policy-making considerations in cultural tourism development of Toos area?

2. Review of Literature and Theoretical framework

Policymaking and planning for sustainable tourism development has gained special significance as an administrative strategy. In this paper, given the nature of the selected destination for examining policy-making implications in multiple dimensions of access to sustainability, more emphasis is placed on considerations of political economy; this is because the development of Toos region would be interpreted as the gravitation of Mashhad religious tourism as the dominant discourse towards cultural tourism development that encompass a wider context. As Nanco, Ramixon, and Gorsy (2012) stated, the tourism development approach from the political economy perspective seeks to provide a basis for better understanding of the share of government as well as the importance of people's trust in governmental institutions. Purcell and Nevin pointed out that sustainable political relations between government and the people are considered as important

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elements of political legitimacy and power efficiency (Purcell and Nevin, 2005), guaranteeing the application of the public will. According to Bramole, absence of legitimacy results in sociopolitical unsustainability which, in turn, puts the sustainability of economic activities at risk (Bramole, 2011). Therefore, urban managers in tourist-attracting cities should seek to increase citizens' level of satisfaction and raise the social support of developmental investments in the tourism sector. Such a measure can be explained under the framework of sustainable tourism development and logistics policy of the region as well. The majority of recent studies conducted in Mashhad on monitoring citizens and tourists' satisfaction and optimizing their relationships should be considered to be within the same scope.

3. Method

The present study was conducted using the mixed method. The first step was based on systematic review study and the second involved comparing the extracted theories with a single case of field study. Accordingly, the VIKOR technique was used to rank multilateral tourism development programs in Mashhad via considerations of program implementation and the involved groups.

A structured questionnaire was prepared to collect the comments of experts. The questionnaire included open-ended and closed questions, filled by 12 tourism experts in both public and executive bodies in Mashhad as well as the researchers in this area.

4. Results and Discussion

Results showed that based on both indices, tourism development of Toos region in Mashhad was ranked third according to the groups involved or related to the program and VIKOR index value of 0.64; based on considerations of program execution and VIKOR index value of 1, it was ranked fifth. As a result, it is not among the main priorities of experts. Its realization requires improving the position of the private sector in decision making for the process of management and point planning of Toos tourism which would result in parallel activities of government and the people at this region.

5. Conclusion

Though the debates in political economy of tourism are focused on interaction or consequential effect of the three axes of political activists, beneficiary groups, and political structures, it should be note that each tourism destination involves multiple capacities; moreover, the extents of activists' sensitivity, beneficiary groups' conflict of interest, and the capacity of political structure in facing those centers are different. In other words, when describing and predicting

developmental programs of tourism centers, reducing the level of analysis from the tourism target to a single tourism site or spot can provide the means for more accurate predictions separated by tourism centers. Therefore, tourist-attracting spots can be graded in terms of conceptual complexity of the political economy specific to that spot based on complexity criterion of multiple areas of the tourism services cycle. Subsequently, regions can be classified as single-area, low area, and high area. Single-area centers are majorly a territory of conflict of interest among beneficiary groups, activists and political structure in terms of planning with respect to the six-fold chain of tourism service that include informing, transportation, accommodation, nutrition, security, leisure time and souvenirs. A tourism spot can be regarded as a single-area center due to its structural simplicity or the centralized political structure of the region. Single-area centers involve the lowest level complexity in terms of tourism political economy. These spots are rarely the subject of conflicts in policymaking; in other words, tourism policymaking in said spots do not necessitate the consideration of multiple criteria. Low area spots involve limited number of areas or components of tourism services chain, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. Compared to high area centers, policymaking in these spots are usually more fluid and sustainable and involves fewer challenges. In high area spots, tourism planning requires comprehensive outlooks. Tourists who visit these areas require diverse services, information, intra- and extra-regional transportation, consideration of settlement preparations, predication of dining centers and restaurants, consideration of security preparations and secondary centers for leisure time as well as souvenir shops.

Keywords: Spot-based Tourism, Tourism Policymaking, Local Government, Urban Management, VIKOR technique, Cultural Tourism

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