

Meta-analysis on Rural Tourism Studies in Iran: A Q-Methodology Research

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

In the past few decades, rural tourism has been developed as one of the most prominent industries for diversification and reconstructing rural economy and, therefore it has stimulated the attention of scholars and rural development planners. In Iran, from the early years of the twenty-first century rural tourism phenomenon has been entered in scientific/academic literature, especially in Geographical studies. However, until now it has not been considered as a strategy for rural economic development at administrative and executive levels of rural development. This research was conducted on the development of Q-methodology. First, based on the pervious research findings on rural tourism in Iran and the analysis of the available discursive atmosphere, it provides a comprehensive understanding about strategies and guidelines of rural tourism planning and management, and then, drawing on the contribution of experts, different perspectives were identified and classified. This paper ultimately aims to introduce an appropriate framework for comprehensive approach in relation to all dimensions of rural tourism development, including: Economic, social, cultural, and environmental (natural, manmade); and accordingly, provides an appropriate circumstances to achieve integrated rural tourism development on the base of the sustainable rural development

2. Literature & backgrounds

The use of rural areas for tourism and recreation has become increasingly widespread across the global north and in many parts of the global south Consistent with conceptualizing the rural tourism in academic literature since, increasingly, rural tourism has been considered as a strategy to contribute to sustainable rural areas. Distinctive

characteristics of rural areas and diversity of rural communities, as well as different interpretations and perceptions of the terms 'rural' and 'tourism' lead to further complications, which eventually cause the emergence of various definitions of rural tourism in the literature. One of the most frequently used definition has been proposed by Lane (1994) . In his view, rural tourism in its purest form should be: located in rural areas; functionally rural—built upon the rural world's special features of small-scale enterprise, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, 'traditional' societies and 'traditional' practices. The Rural areas in scale—both in terms of buildings and settlements—and, therefore, usually small scale, traditional in character, growing slowly and organically, and connected with local families. It will often be very largely controlled locally and developed for a long term good of the area; and of many different kinds, representing the complex pattern of rural environment, economy, history and location. Most of the early studies in rural tourism related to complex changes of modern era, including all dimensions of economical, political, social - cultural and technological, economic, political, socio - cultural and technological, etc.; the backgrounds that gradually provide appropriate conditions for mass tourism development from few years after World War II. Since that time until the late twentieth century different discourses and approaches rose in the context of rural tourism studies, that Jafari (1990), concludes them under the four platforms. The first of them was "Advocacy Platform" that featured mostly economic prospects of tourism and accentuated on its benefits. Second, "Cautionary Platform" focused on the socio-cultural aspects of tourism and brought benefits of tourism under scrutiny. Third, "Adaptancy Platform", when both the

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positive and negative aspects of tourism had been conjured, research focus was placed on those alternative forms of tourism developments which were potentially sustainable, with minimal unwanted consequences. Finally, “Knowledge-base Platform” maintained bridges with others but the goal is to form a scientific body of knowledge on tourism.

3. Result

The Results show that from the early twenty-first century to July 2013, about 136 articles have been published in Persians scientific journals. In summary, after studying all of these articles we have reached 50 propositions in the context of rural tourism planning and management. Finally, these propositions were used as Q-Sample for Q-Sorting. Research findings, based on Q factor analysis represent three perspectives in planning and managing of rural tourism development in Iran. The first viewpoint is institutionalist, holistic, integrated approach, participation-oriented, and community – based, and has a high emphasis on planning of rural tourism development. The Second viewpoint is environmentalist-conservationist and integrated-approach, and place greater emphasis on the management of various aspects of rural tourism. The third viewpoint is participation-oriented, Supportive- facilitative, conservationist, also put emphasis on land use planning, and managing rural tourism with respect to rural land conservation against inappropriate changes.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

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As tourism achieves significance as an economic generator, many rural communities have adopted it as an economic development strategy. In Iran, from the early years of the twenty-first century increasingly rural tourism phenomenon has been entered in scientific/academic literature, especially in human geography. Understanding and development of successful tourism is to understand all dimensions of tourism development in rural area. Based on literature, three main approaches of Iranian specialists in rural tourism are acknowledged that: “Lacking any concrete understanding about the complexities and dynamics of the tourism system and proper planning processes, many of them have been unsuccessful. As tourism continues to develop within a globalizing context, such theories become ‘realities’ in many countries, regions and communities”. Employing professionals and skilled workforce in rural tourism planning and management is another important issue that is considered in all three specialists approaches. It has always emphasized that understanding and development of successful tourism is to understand all dimensions of tourism development in rural area. Eventually, utilizing a variety of perceptions and attitudes in rural tourism planning and management aims to overcome stereotypical barriers that often exist as a problem in rural development policies, which also includes rural tourism.

Keywords: Rural tourism, Meta-analysis, Tourism studies, Q-methodology.

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