

Research Paper

Assessing and Prioritizing the Factors Affecting Rural Tourism Marketing Using the Marketing Mix Model (A Case Study: Jozan District, Malayer Township)

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism is one of the most productive economic activities and entrepreneurships in Juzan District, Malayer Township. The prosperity of this economic sector can transform financial resources and result in sustainable rural income. In order to develop and expand this economic sector, special measures such as marketing are required in accordance with the principles of marketing science. This research aimed to evaluate and prioritize the factors affecting the marketing of rural tourism. The research method is descriptive-analytic based on quantitative methods and marketing mix model of 7p. This marketing mix model consists of 7 components of place, promotion, physical facilities, planning and management, people, production, and price. The statistical population included Malayer Cultural Heritage and Tourism Center staff, tourists, and tenants in rural districts. A total of 93 people were selected as sample size, which included 4 experts, 7 village headmen, and 82 tourists. The relevant data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire. Data were analyzed by factor analysis, Friedman ranking, and t tests using SPSS. The results of the survey and prioritization of rural tourism marketing factors indicate that the factors of people and place are very important. Also the results of factor analysis model showed that among 7 factors, 2 factors of place and planning have the highest percentages of the variance.

Key words:

Rural tourism, Marketing, Marketing mix model, Jozan district, Malayer township

Extended Abstract**1. Introduction**

Tourism is known as a creator of job opportunities in the context of economic and socio-cultural interaction (Pourahmad, Hosseini, Arooji, & Alizadeh, 2013). Rural tourism diversifies the local economy by creating strategic opportunities and enhancing the welfare, living standards, income and security in the villages by creating job opportunities based on existing functionality in villages. It also keeps stable rural population, prevents migra-

tion, balances ecological and natural resources, preserves the traditional context and cultural characteristics in the villages. On this basis, we can say that development of rural tourism is one of the best ways to save the village from social, economic and environmental problems and achieve social justice and geographic expansion (Ghadiri Masoum, Estelaji & Pazooki, 2015). In order to succeed in this field, besides having policies in attracting tourists and promote tourist destinations, we must seek plans to attract tourists and introduce better our facilities and conditions to tourism markets (Papoli Yazdi, 2006). Today, all policy makers should pay attention to marketing and philosophy of doing business to implement rural development. Marketing in rural tourism should be considered as a means to achieve

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the strategic development of rural tourism (Mihailovic & Moric, 2012). Mixed marketing model or 7p is one of the topics of interest in rural tourism marketing. It is used in order to explain the plan to achieve sustainable tourism industry for a region. This model of mixed marketing (7p) by combining 7 components (place, promotion, physical facilities, planning and management, people, production, and price) intends to investigate and prioritize the indicators and their impact on the development of sustainable tourism in Juzan rural district of Malayer Township. This rural area has many tourist attractions, including numerous natural, cultural, and historic sceneries.

2. Methodology

The research method is descriptive-analytic. The relevant data were collected by library and field research method. The questionnaire included items related to the components of the mix marketing (7p) (place, promotion, physical facilities, planning and management, people, production, price). Juzan rural district is our case study, which is one of the villages in the central part of Malayer Township. According to Population and Housing Census 2011, the district is occupied by 11 villages, 2204 households, and 7301 people. The study population consisted of tourism and marketing experts, village headmen, the staff of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism and tourists who have visited the county tourist attractions. The selected samples were included 93 people: 4 experts, 7 village headmen, and 82 tourists. The obtained data were analyzed by Friedman test, factor analysis, and t test using SPSS.

3. Results

To analyze the components of the mixed marketing in rural tourism, we used factor analysis. Based on KMO and Bartlett's test results (as 0.77), the variables correlation of this research is suitable and the data were appropriate with 99% confidence. we used Friedman test to study the effect of each variable in the mixed marketing, ranking and prioritizing the seven factors of 7p model in sustainable development of rural tourism. Two components of people and place had the highest rank. The result of t test showed that the average value of all components are higher than 3 that is significant at the alpha level of 0.01. Finally, the results of factor analysis showed that among the seven factors, two factors of place and planning had the highest percentages of variance.

4. Discussion

The most important options of tourism marketing in this area are as follows: 1. Place component: Creating an ap-

propriate atmosphere for the tourists to attend the local ceremonies and festivals as well as celebration of grape juice, grape, and other tourist attractions; 2. Planning and management component: Adopt the necessary policies to attract and retain entrepreneurs in the tourism industry; 3. Physical facilities component: Design and construction of new roads in areas and tourist sites in accordance with the technical principles; 4. Promotion component: Festival of the grape and numerous exhibitions in identifying tourist attractions in the region; 5. People component: Improve public culture in dealing with tourists; 6. Price component: Cost effectiveness and quality of products offered to tourists; and 7. Production component: According to intangible and cultural heritage attractions such as art, music, grape festival, and crafts like carpets. Therefore, the factors that can develop and improve the tourism industry in Jozan District, are revision and positive effect on the marketing and management of tourism demand.

5. Conclusion

In sum, the research findings are consistent with several previous studies such as Barghi et al. (2012), Badri et al. (2014), Ghadiri Masoum et al. (2013), Knowd (1998), Hosseini Kolkuh and Habibi (2014) and Rahmani Seryasat et al. (2014). According to the findings, the following recommendations are made: 1) introducing tourism attractions; 2) training and increasing awareness of the benefits of tourist's presence in villages; 3) changing the land use of some buildings to create a tourism land use; and 4) improving the roads and quality of buildings in terms of landscape and security.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.