

Research Paper

The Motivation Analysis for Tourists Choice of Agritourism Destination: A Case Study of East Alamut, Iran

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ABSTRACT

People's increasing demand for outdoor recreation, particularly those who live in metropolis and industrial cities, has created appropriate opportunity for income generation through agritourism by villagers. However, it may cause problems regarding the change of agricultural land use, should poor management practices be applied. One of the most important factors affecting income generation through agritourism is the recognition of tourism market and motivations of tourists. This study analyzed motives of tourists affecting the choice of agritourism destination. This study was a descriptive-analytical type of quantitative research conducted by a survey. The study population consisted of 18 years and older tourists visited the East Alamut region in summer. The sample size (n=255) was determined based on tourists' motives and factor analysis prerequisites. Convenience sampling method was employed because of lack of appropriate sampling frame. Respondents determined their highest priorities and motivations such as benefit from clean air, contact with nature, relaxation, and having a good time with family in a calm atmosphere. Also this study indicated that factors such as "being with family", "learning and spending less", and "self-actualization and change" were the most important factors in the choice of agritourism destination by tourists.

Keywords:

Destination choice, Agritourism, Motivation, Marketing, Alamut

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Currently Iranian small farms lack viable situations. Usually small villagers did not look at agriculture as a remunerative profession. Holistic and systemic look at various functions of a rural system, such

as conservation, recreation activities, and non-use values and avoidance from reducing its functions to mere production, is one of the most important policies for complementary income generation and value adding in a farming system and improving its competitiveness. Establishing connection between agricultural sector and other sectors can create ample benefits for the communities, through developing backward and forward linkages. Tourism is one of the most important sectors that can contribute in

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fair and suitable agricultural marketing formation and reverse rural-urban outflow.

Regarding rapid growth of urbanization particularly in metropolises of Iran, dominance of small landholdings and existence of globally important agricultural heritages, sustainable agritourism is one of the most important strategies which could increase farmers' income and slow down agricultural land use change in Iran. In fact, the increasing demands of people, particularly in metropolises and industrial cities, for outdoor recreation has created appropriate opportunity for income generation through agritourism development. Of course it may cause problems regarding the change of agricultural land use, if good management practices do not be applied.

Recognition of tourism market and motivations of tourists strongly influences tourist attraction. Indeed understanding of customer motivation is a prerequisite for achievement of tourism enterprises, especially agritourism enterprises (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). Motivations of tourists determine their decision about destination. Researchers should consider that the motivators of the individuals are different from each other (Castan, Moreno, García, & Crego, 2003). Study of travel motivation is start point of psychological inquiries of tourist behavior. The best method of understanding favorite services of tourists and determining effective motivators is asking questions from themselves (Ranjbarian & Zahedi, 2013). Nonetheless, motivations of Iranian tourists in the choice of agritourism destination have not studied yet. Thus this study has investigated these motivations.

2. Methodology

The necessary data for the study were collected through a survey conducted in Alamut County, Qazvin. After providing necessary explanations, respondents were asked to fill a 28-item questionnaire. In other words, the respondents were subject to 28 probable motivations which would influence agritourism destination choice.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted for completion of questionnaires, because citizens were not familiar with the term of agritourism. In other words, agritourism has not been publicly and formally initiated in the Iran. Respondents were provided with a brief introduction and explanation about the agritourism. After explaining the purpose of the study and agritourism, participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire on-site. On the basis of their importance in destination selection, respondents rated motivations from 1 to 10. Some of these motivations

were derived from the previous studies such as pleasure travel market survey and agritourism activities and others were provided in this study. These motivations were prioritized by CV. Then principal component factor analysis and Varimax rotation were employed to determine the effective components in agritourism destination choice.

3. Results

According to the findings, the average age of the respondents was 35 years and their average family size was 3 persons. The visitors were planning to spend on average 22 hours in Alamut. Only 18% of the visitors reported that they have resided in rural houses and pay money for it. Others have not paid any money for their residency, because they had resided in tents or in the open air and under trees shadow and houses of their relatives. On the other hand, about 74% of the respondents had gotten familiar with the rural areas of Alamut by face to face communication and word of mouth and only 4% of them had gotten familiar via the internet.

This study analyzed motives of tourists affecting the choice of agritourism destination. Respondents assigned the most priority to motivations such as benefit from clean air, contact with nature, relaxation, having a good time with family in calm atmosphere. Also this study indicated that factors, including "being with family," "learning and spending less cost," and "self-actualization and change" were the most important factors in the choice of agritourism destination by tourists.

4. Discussion

Iran is considered as a center of evolution of world agriculture and hosts several agricultural heritages. Unfeigned customs and traditions, traditional farming practices, indigenous knowledge, being as origin of many genetic resources, natural beauty and unique architecture have given competitive advantage for rural areas of Iran with respect to agritourism. Thus, Iran can open up new opportunities for agritourism development in the world. Nonetheless, agritourism has been not benefited from long and intensive research tradition, especially in Iran which is in turn necessitated more focused and organized research. The current study aims to fill this gap via motivation analysis for tourists' choice of agritourism destination.

5. Conclusion

The respondents of this study belonged to small and young families. It can be concluded that there is an ap-

propriate opportunity for local community to formulate suitable plans and consequently job and income creation through tourism, because the visitors were planning to spend on average 22 hours in Alamut. The findings showed that tourism income derived from residency would decrease. On the other hand, there was dominance of conventional channels in marketing of agritourism destinations among the citizens. Finally this study presented some solutions to improve income generation via agritourism, as follows: 1) Emphasizing on small and young households; 2) Informing, educating, and trust-building among urban dwellers about residence at houses of rural people; 3) Providing better services for tourists to improve their royalty and use them as a part of marketing strategy; 4) Providing appropriate environment for visitors to spend a great time with their families in calm atmosphere; 5) Developing secure and convenient cites and facilities in rural areas for children enjoyment; 6) Catering local and safe food.