

## Measurement and Evaluation of the Rural Sustainable Tourism of Life Cycle, (Case Study: Comparative Survey of Village Located in Tourism Pivots of Tehran and Alborz Province)

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Received: 21 October 2014

Accepted: 2 January 2015

### Extended Abstract

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Monitoring the evolution of tourism life cycle in Iran is relatively new; and despite of the fact that this approach can be a useful framework for understanding the relationships among the activities of tourism destinations, limited methods and approaches are introduced. Therefore, this research introduces a new approach to monitoring and evaluating tourism activities in tourism rural destinations from Tourism Life Cycle point of views.

According to Butler approach resort areas undergo an evolutionary cycle of six stages. In the *exploration stage*, the resort is isolated with a 'sleepy' appearance and with little or no development. In this stage, limited number of businesses exists, the provided facilities are used and owned by locals, and there is only a road that connects the settlement with an urban center. In the *involvement stage*, visitors from the overcrowded urban centers are attracted by the relaxing and unspoiled landscape of the resort. In this time, local entrepreneurs realize the economic significance of tourism and begin to provide facilities and services to tourists.

In the stage of *development*, the number of tourists increases; and in the specific seasons, it reaches at its peak that is way more than the size of the local population. The accessibility to the resort areas, through the extension of the road network, makes more tourists visit these places. In the *consolidation stage*, building construction follows international standards and the road network expands further in order to provide access to the accommodation establishments, businesses, and residences. Awareness of these stages helps planners and managers to plan tourism destination effectively. This approach in tourism planning is

relatively new in Iran. In the lack of such methods, tourism destinations have been remained stagnant. Since rural areas in Ardabil province have been faced with poverty and exclusion, it is necessary to fulfill its potential by means of tourism. This study tries to discover the evolution of tourism life cycle in rural destinations of Ardabil. The main targets of this article include:

1. An investigation of the influential factors on the sustainability of tourism destination
2. Proposing an appropriate methodology to measure Tourism Life Cycle
3. Proposing and designing indicators to evaluate TLC
4. Tourism destination assessment of Ardabil province in TLC
5. Sustainability levels' evaluation of rural destinations.

#### 2. METHODOLOGY

This research is based on the theory of fundamental analysis and has been done through a descriptive-analytic method to analyze the tourism destination rural in Ardabil province. The data was gathered through surveys and by using librarian methods. The study area consisted of four villages including boosinej, Ganzagh, Gazaj, and Biledaragh. Statistical population of this study consisted of 3541 people (1388 households). The sample society (210 people) has been estimated through Cochran techniques. Households sample was selected through systematic sampling and tourists were chosen by simple random sampling.

Based on the aforementioned theoretical literature, this study explains tourist destination evolution through the application of the tourism area life cycle model (TLC). The life cycle model proposed a hypothetical evolution of a tourist area and suggested

that destinations pass through six stages (Exploration, Involvement, Development, Consolidation, Stagnation, Decline, and Rejuvenation), each with specific characteristics.

### 3. DISCUSSION

The result of this research shows that since there are not easy and accessible ways, from the villages to the destination of Ardebil, these villages are placed in the early stages of development. Hence, Gazaj (with a score of 0.499) and Boosnij (with a score of 0.432) are placed in the intervention and involvement of the local community and the village of Ganzagh (with a score of 0.269) and Bilehdaragh (0.206 points) in the exploration stage. The analysis of the results also shows that the evolutionary perspective of all destinations is placed in tourism era.

### 4. CONCLUSION

According to the findings of this study, we need to propose suitable strategies to the tourism destinations which are appropriate based on their place in TLC model. Therefore, the following strategies are proposed for the villages of

Biladaragh and Ganzagh which are placed at the discovery stage.

- Training local community (as a basic strategy for the development of rural tourism activities in this phase)
- Developing infrastructure (transport, communications, accommodation, etc.)
- Identifying capacity and attractions in destination rurals
- Identifying infrastructure investment

Also, the following strategies are proposed for the villages of Gazna and Boosnij that are placed at the involvement stage.

- Engaging local stakeholders
- Developing infrastructure services, welfare, etc.
- Developing advertising and information systems to introduce tourism potential and opportunities
- Developing attraction system
- Completing infrastructure, residential, and recreational levels
- Expanding private sector investment

**Key words:** Sustainable tourism, rural tourism, tourism life cycle, Allen - Butler, Ardabil.

#### How to cite this article:

Yari Hesar, A. & Heidari Sarban, V. (2016). Measurement and evaluation of the rural sustainable tourism of life cycle, (Case study: Comparative survey of village located in tourism pivots of Tehran and Alborz Province). *Journal of Research & Rural Planning*, 4(4), 17-56.

URL

<http://jrrp.um.ac.ir/index.php/RRP/article/view/40484>

ISSN: 2322-2514

eISSN: 2383-2495