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Barriers to the Realization of Pro-poor Nature- based Tourism (Case Study: Selected Villages in the East of Semnan Province)

Mohammad Reza Rezvani¹

Seyed Ali Badri²

Zabih Allah Torabi³

Abstract

According to its nature, tourism has created a broad perspective to diversify businesses and provides an opportunity for the participation of the poor, who often work in seasonal jobs and informal economy. In general, the goal is that poor people in the rural community receive of the benefits of tourism development as much as they share the cost of economic, socio-cultural and environmental development of tourism. Accordingly, the present study was conducted with a qualitative study of content analysis with purposeful sampling. Obstacles to the realization of nature based tourism pro-poor in selected villages in the eastern province of Semnan. The data collection was also conducted through interviews in the summer and fall of 1396 with six key stakeholder groups (the poor, people left out of poverty, local managers, investors, local residents). The results of the study indicate that the stakeholders classified the barriers to the realization of naturalism supporting the poor in the studied villages in five categories: educational inequality, unequal power relations, lifestyle, fidelity, and problem management and centralization of decisions.

¹ Full Prof, Faculty of Geography, University of Tehran & Member of CERP(Rrezvani@ut.ac.ir)

² Corresponding Author: Associate Professor and member of the Center of Excellence for Rural Planning, Faculty of Geography, University of Tehran. (sabadri@ut.ac.ir)

³ Ph.D. Candidate in Geography and Rural Planning, Faculty of Geography, University of Tehran

Introduction

Tourism has recently become a widely discussed topic by researchers, international organizations, and governments of less developed countries as an effective tool for poverty alleviation. This is while, after failure of the neoliberal approach and the shortcomings of the alternative tourism approach (as a substitute for poverty reduction), the human development approach was arrived in the 1990s to accelerate economic growth and reduce poverty (Sharpley & Telfer, 2014). In the same period, the concept of pro poor tourism (PPT) was introduced by the Department of International Development of Britain into the tourism literature aim at achieving human development goals.

Ashley et al. (2000) refers to the definition of PPT as "an approach seeks to increase net benefits for the poor through the growth of tourism in the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental), and ensuring that tourism growth reduces poverty."

In Iran, after the Islamic Revolution of 1978, the government tried to reduce the severity of their vulnerability through some supportive institutions such as the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee and the Welfare Organization and the Mostazafan Foundation, with material supports from some of the poorest classes. But every year, the number of people who are supported by these two institutions has increased each year, and in 2017, almost one million and seven hundred thousand households were under the material supports of these two organizations (Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, 2017). So it can be said that billions of dollars from oil revenues in the past 39 years have not been able to reduce the severity of poverty in Iran. However, in recent years, the Iranian government has been shifting its policy toward creating job opportunities for poor people. Therefore, in tourism projects, the attention paid to the poor is of paramount importance, but these programs are still based on oil

Methods

Qualitative content analysis method was used to survey tourism and reducing poverty in villages of Turan National Park. Selection of samples was done through targeted snowball sampling. Each participant was asked after the interview to introduce other people by mentioning the address of their place of residence.

Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews of people who have been involved in tourism activities in the region for 2 to 7 years, such as the poor, people who have left the poverty line, local executives, residents and investors. The process of collecting data continued to the level of theoretical saturation and the usefulness of information (Table 1). Data collection in this study lasted more than three months.

The interviews took place by taking the previous time from the participants and at the workplace of these people. Before the start of the interview, the goal of the research was raised for the participants and their written consent was received to participate in the research and use of the recording of the interview. They also

assured them that the information obtained would not be shared with anyone else.

Then the main questions were put forward by the research team, which consisted of three tourism specialists. The duration of the interview was 35 minutes with a standard deviation of 10 minutes and all interviews were recorded. The main question began with tourism experiences and poverty reduction.

In addition, other questions for interviews were conducted with other people as needed. In this study, due to the culture and kind of attitude of some families to women, interviews with women were subject to limitations; therefore, the female interviewer was considered for question. The process of collecting data has continued to the level of theoretical saturation and the usefulness of information thresholds. As a result of this interview (30 interviews), the research team concluded that while learning to achieve this, more information could not be obtained from this method. To encode data, the interview was first repeated several times in order to create a sense of affinity with the implications of the data; then it turned into a written text, and again the entire text was read several times from beginning to end, and finally a summary of the entire interview and the flood of its text were written. This action helped the researcher to more easily discover the underlying implications of the data during the coding process. The NVIVO version 10 software program was used to analyze the concepts as regular code. Then the main themes and subtopics were extracted.

Results & Discussion

Accordingly, the present study was conducted with a qualitative study of content analysis with purposeful sampling. Obstacles to the realization of nature based tourism pro-poor in selected villages in the eastern province of Semnan (Qala bala, Reza Abad and Abr). The data collection was also conducted through interviews in the summer and fall of 1396 with six key stakeholder groups (the poor, people left out of poverty, local managers, investors, local residents). The results of the study indicate that the stakeholders classified the barriers to the realization of naturalism supporting the poor in the studied villages in five categories: educational inequality, unequal power relations, lifestyle, fidelity, and problem management and centralization of decisions.

Keywords: villages of Semnan province, obstacles, pro-poor, nature-based tourism

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