

Urban Environment Sustainability through the Tourism Approach (Case Study: Darakeh District, Tehran Metropolitan Area)

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

During the past few years, there has been extensive concerns over environment and the growing tourism, while one of the main subjects of debate in the world involves their protection. On the other hand, the accelerating growth of the tourism industry is regarded as a considerable source of income as well as an effective factor on cultural exchanges between nations; as the most extensive service industry in the world, it occupies a special position. It also affects cities as tourists' places of interest, and for many urban managers and authorities, it has transformed into an economic, symbolic, and significant affair.

2. Review of the Literature

Malmasi (2013) examined the implications of systems and guidelines on environmental impact assessment according to the experiences and standards of countries, and investigated the biodiversity in Central Zagros region. By examining the role of the tourism industry Rasekhi, Karimi, and Mohammadi (2016) concluded that tourism has positive impacts in developed countries while it involves negative effects in developing countries. Habibi, Kaka Jubb, and Abdi (2015) used the Ecological Footprint Model. Al Mohammad, Zebardast,

and Salehi, (2015) concluded that explaining the position of environmental strategic assessment in the country's planning system can help enhance and guarantee consistency in the decision-making hierarchy, identify the gaps within planning systems, increase transparency and integration, support strategic planning processes, prevent additional works, and offer effective views. Delaavar and Moradifar (2013) established that mass tourism, the high extent of seasonal demand with respect to such activities along the shoreline, the absence of essential infrastructure, and lack of relative balance in tourism market's supply and demand have led to more changes in horticultural and agricultural land use along the shoreline, contamination of surface water supplies, decline of coastal landscapes, increased traffic, population congestion, and inefficiency of current facilities. Carr, Ruhanen, and Whitford (2017) concluded that the main directive factors of tourism include opportunity and strength factors. Torres-Delgado and Saarinen (2016) established that the main challenge in this area include compilation of a strategic guideline and theoretical design of indices. Dobrica and Jovicic (2013) showed that sustainable tourism and environment are one of the main components of sustainable developments. Case studies have shown that the examination of urban environment can

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contribute to the sustainability of tourism and local communities and help realize their features. Overall, urban environmental sustainability analysis since the 1990s has opened up new horizons regarding urban tourism development and the protection of universal ecological heritage, in addition to bringing about economic growth, social development, meeting the needs related to leisure and pastime, cultural enhancement of local communities and various tourism-related motivations. The focus of this type of urban environment strategic planning influenced by tourism, minimum effects on natural ecosystems, and its objectives, is on protecting local environment and culture, esp. urban tourism.

3. Method

In terms of contents and nature, the present exploratory inquiry is a descriptive-analytical, development study. The method of research was compiled within the framework of urban environment sustainable development paradigm and community-centered approach with emphasis on urban tourism development. The purpose of the study was to identify and protect urban environment so as to prevent the destruction of urban environments caused by tourist activities; furthermore, planning for development and sustainability through suitable contexts of drawing plans and environmental and urban tourism strategies in this region can result in the conservation of environmental and ecological values, attraction of tourists, development of the whole culture (community-centered development) and their desired impacts. The most important techniques used include SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) to identify the capabilities of urban environment and tourism) and QSPM (Quantitative Strategic Evaluation Matrix) for quantitative evaluation of obtained strategies in drawing scenarios and editing the outlook for Darakeh District, and the results of questionnaires were analyzed based on theoretical foundations of the study

and models. The purpose of this study is to compile a set of strategies to improve the development of Darakeh District with respect to the urban sustainable development process using such models. The required data for the study are of two types: first the library method which involves the study of documents, data and official statistics, internet examinations, theses and books, reports and schemes by related organizations, and providing various plots of the urban environment to identify capacities and extensive capabilities of the region; and second is the field study method including interviews with units of analysis (residents of District 1, especially Darakeh District, foreign and domestic tourists in the region), observation of issues and various spots in the residential and natural area of the region, photography, obtaining statistics on the number of active employees in urban tourism and environment sector, interview with residents of the region and district along with tourists and experts.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of prioritizing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats along with assessing the evaluation matrix on internal and external factors showed that the most important strengths of the region include intimacy, high neighborly relations, and the presence of social bonds. The presence of narrow paths was identified as the most important weakness of the region. Identified opportunities included the positive role of public institutions in planning and managing the region. The identified threats to the region included the integration of Districts 1 and 2, ineffectiveness of urban plans, and environmental pollutions caused by the considerable number of tourists. Overall, the findings of the study denote high intimacy and neighborly relations and increased sense of belonging, using the beautiful nature of the region in line with tourist attraction, easy access of residents to the main streets, strong social bonds among residents and their willingness to live within the district which

are considered as the priorities in planning followed by a set of strategies for sustainable development of the District 1 residents of Tehran metropolitan area. Consequently, given the obtained responses from both models, the answer to the research question is that the presence of suitable contexts for compiling urban environment strategic plans with emphasis on tourism has been able to contribute to the sustainable development of the region and Darakeh District.

5. Conclusion

In general, the outset of urban planning and management is at the micro level (district), in order to provide the means for empowering citizens and attracting real participations, deemed necessary with regards to local sustainability. The status quo of District 1 in Tehran metropolitan area was studied in this research; following the

identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, the grounds for compiling a set of strategic plans to achieve local sustainability were ultimately drawn. The findings of the study demonstrate that increase in the level of intimacy, neighborly relations, and sense of belonging to the district, strong social bonds among the residents of Darakeh, the use of the beautiful nature of the region to attract tourists, easy access to the main streets and increased willingness of residents to live in Darakeh district (due to high SWOT results in peripheral landscape of the region) are suitable grounds to compile strategic plans for sustainable development of tourism and the district itself, in District 1 of Tehran metropolitan area.

Keywords: Community Development, Tourism, Urban Environment, Darakeh Neighborhood, District 1 Tehran City

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