

**Investigating the Aspects of Urban Tourism in Developing countries
(With particular reference to Kohgoliyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province in Iran)**

Abdolkarim Azizi

Ph.D. student, Department of geography and urban planning, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Research branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

Azizi456@gmail.com

Abstract: Tourism industry puts a lot of influence on the development of cities. The experts of European society emphasizes that because of an increase in the speed of information, an increase in culture level of citizens, and an increase in their level of living, the tourism in next years will belong to urban tourism. Based on a principle and a general definition, urban tourism is a kind of tourism which takes place in geographical limit of the city. Urban tourism is one of the most important sections in tourism industry which attracted the attention of tourists and travelers. In this article, the position of tourism in developing countries is investigated with particular reference to the tourism aspects in Kohgoliyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province in south-west Iran.

[Abdolkarim Azizi. Investigating the Aspects of Urban Tourism in Developing countries (With particular reference to Kohgoliyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province in Iran). Journal of American Science 2011;7(5):892-895]. (ISSN: 1545-1003). <http://www.americanscience.org>.

Keywords: Iran, Developing Countries, Urban Tourism, Kohgoliyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province.

1. Introduction

The emergence of urban tourism through a process when tourism was seen as a danger in 1970 is described by Ashworth (1989) as a defensive approach to tourism in the city.

However, the economic conditions after the 1970's were the most significant phenomenon in the city, which allowed tourism to be placed as an important urban function. The economic decline of the cities in the UK, Western Europe and Northern America in the late 1970's highlighted the role of tourism as a catalyst to boost urban economies. Therefore, tourism is suggested as a mean to manage the change and transition of city functions, and then is expanded to become the principal sector in the city economies. In parallel with this, tourism and urban regeneration started to become important activities and received greater attention in the 1980's related to the problems that exist in the city. Tourism industry puts a lot of influence on the development of cities. According to Kazes (2003), the experts of European society emphasizes that because of an increase in the speed of information, an increase in culture level of citizens, and an increase in their level of living, the tourism in next years will belong to urban tourism (p.1941). Based on a principle and a general definition, urban tourism is a kind of tourism which takes place in geographical limit of the city. The major elements of this industry include urban transportation, urban green space, urban services, night clubs, urban structure and organizations, etc (Mahmoud Sohrabi, 2004, p.5).

2. Tourism

Tourism is travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people who "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four (24) hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited." Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. In 2008, there were over 922 million international tourist arrivals, with a growth of 1.9% as compared to 2007. International tourism receipts grew to US\$944 billion (euro 642 billion) in 2008, corresponding to an increase in real terms of 1.8%. As a result of the late-2000s recession, international travel demand suffered a strong slowdown beginning in June 2008, with growth in international tourism arrivals worldwide falling to 2% during the boreal summer months. This negative trend intensified during 2009, exacerbated in some countries due to the outbreak of the H1N1 influenza virus, resulting in a worldwide decline of 4% in 2009 to 880 million international tourists arrivals, and an estimated 6% decline in international tourism receipts. Tourism is vital for many countries, such as Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, Spain, Malaysia and Thailand, and many island nations, such as The Bahamas, Fiji, Maldives, Philippines and the Seychelles, due to the large intake of money for businesses with their goods and services and the opportunity for employment in the service industries associated with tourism.

In fact, urban tourism is a part of spending the leisure time of citizens which places between spending leisure at home and out of the place of residence (national and foreign tourism). In other words, urban tourism is the part of spending leisure time which can be realized at the area of citizens' residence and in urban and regional open spaces and it is considered as a part of permanent leisure needs and activities of all citizens such as daily, weekly and weekend activities (Mahdizade, p.126).

Urban tourism includes an inseparable part of city services which are necessary for temporary and permanent citizens, and based on this principle, is defined in the area of planning and city management. On the other hand, with respect to this fact that there is a close relationship between urban tourism and the values of natural environment and cultural and historical heritage, it is necessary to pay attention to this area during the urban development and construction plans (Akbarzade Ebrahimi, 2007, p.78). One of the spaces which is visited by tourists in different countries is urban space. The influence of tourism on cities and urban structure is so high that nowadays a new area in tourism, entitled "urban tourism", has been come into existence. Urban tourism causes the renovation of cities, the creation of a beautiful sightseeing, the creation of information and tourism centers, and the creation of the necessary facilities for tourist in cities such as guesthouses, hotels, and places for recreational purposes which pave the way for providing a lot of income for cities (Stephen, 1998, p.137).

3. Etymology

Theobald (1994) suggested that "etymologically, the word tour is derived from the Latin, 'tornare' and the Greek, 'tornos', meaning 'a lathe or circle; the movement around a central point or axis'. This meaning changed in modern English to represent 'one's turn'. The suffix -ism is defined as 'an action or process; typical behavior or quality', while the suffix, -ist denotes 'one that performs a given action'. When the word tour and the suffixes -ism and -ist are combined, they suggest the action of movement around a circle. One can argue that a circle represents a starting point, which ultimately returns back to its beginning. Therefore, like a circle, a tour represents a journey in that it is a round-trip, i.e., the act of leaving and then returning to the original starting point, and therefore, one who takes such a journey can be called a tourist." In 1941, Hunziker and Krapf defined tourism as people who travel "the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, insofar as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity." In 1976, the Tourism Society

of England's definition was: "Tourism is the temporary, short-term movement of people to destination outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities during the stay at each destination. It includes movements for all purposes." In 1981, the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism defined tourism in terms of particular activities selected by choice and undertaken outside the home.

4. Urban tourism in developing countries

Maybe the first question ought to address is the main features of urban tourism development in developing countries. It might be difficult to be answer without more studies since urban tourism or even overall systems of tourism in developing countries still receive limited attention (Oppermann, Din and Amri, 1996; Oppermann and Chon, 1997). Moreover, Oppermann and Chon (1997:62) noted that in developing countries 'compared to seaside resorts, city tourism and urban models have attracted less attention'. However, there are some attempts by a few tourism and urban/geography researchers that directly try to examine more detail related to (1) how the urban tourism concept should be applied (Singh, 1992), and (2) the evolution of urban tourism space (Weaver, 1993) with specific reference to case studies in developing countries.

According to Singh (1992), in the case of cities such Lucknow in India, tourism should exist in the city as part of a concern to secure its heritage assets. In addition, the increasing population and migration to the city has forced those responsible to takes tourism as the means to (Sigh, 1992):

Secure open spaces and buildings from illegal construction through the creation of greenbelts or buffer zones for leisure activities. Battle against pollution by reinforcing the effort to increases the quality of the urban landscape especially in the highly populated downtown area. At the same time, Weaver (1993) introduced models of urban tourism space in Carribbean Islands, which also reflect an example of developing countries. It focuses on the evolution of small island space in providing tourism activities, and how it then influences the urbanisation from port or dock areas, which can be compared to larger cities especially in geographic or spatial structure, size and different size of population. At least, one can be determine from here that tourism has strong influences in the process of urbanisation beginning in the port or dock area. Firstly, as a node of tourist development area that changes and influences the urbanization of the whole island especially in creating tourist sites, which consist of individual attraction features and tourist business district (TBD). Secondly, it played a role at a regional

level as a gateway or hub that allowed tourism activities to exist and then distribute tourists to the whole area of the Caribbean island.

Mullins (1999:246) notes that most of the largest cities in developing countries in Southeast Asia have realised that they could take tourism as a way to 'expand consumption opportunities' and therefore, contribute to the growth of their economies.

Related on this, three characteristic that influence urban tourism and tourism urbanization in Southeast Asia can be seen, which are (Mullins, 1999): Tourist as demand for tourism product. Economic supplier as those who manufacture, market and sell good and services to tourist. These involve transnational corporations as leader in the tourism industry, and local producers and merchants that sell goods and services directly to tourist. Political actors that use 'political means' in projecting urban development. Moreover, international tourism is the central development for this region and for growing cities in Southeast Asia especially principal countries of tourism destination in the middle 1990's such as Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand (Mullins, 1999). In addition, Mullins (1999:250) found that in Southeast Asia, 'the more dynamic and capitalist the economy, the more urbanized the country and the greater the likelihood of having the infrastructure and facilities to cater to international tourists'.

5. Urban Tourism in Iran

Tourism attracted 2.3 million people to Iran in 2009. Iran plans to have 20 million tourists annually by 2015 (including domestic tourism). The landscape of Iran is diverse and beautiful, providing a range of activities from hiking and skiing in the Alborz mountains, to beach holidays by the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. Over the next five years a number of tourism-friendly infrastructure projects will be undertaken on the Persian Gulf island of Kish, which at present attracts around 1m visitors per year, the majority of whom are Iranian. In general, Iranians are warm, friendly and generous individuals with a strong interest in foreigners and other cultures.

Before the Iranian revolution and the subsequent Iran-Iraq War, tourism was characterized by significant numbers of visitors travelling to Iran for its diverse attractions, boasting cultural splendours and a diverse and beautiful landscape suitable for a range of activities. Tourism declined dramatically during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s. Since the Iranian revolution in 1979, the majority of visitors to Iran have been religious pilgrims and businesspeople. Official figures do not distinguish between those travelling to Iran for business and those coming for pleasure, and they also include a large number of diaspora Iranians returning to visit their families in

Iran or making pilgrimages to holy Shia sites near Mashhad and elsewhere. Domestic tourism in Iran is one of the largest in the world. Despite the international tensions, the government continues to project strong rises in visitor numbers and tourism revenue over the forecast period, and to talk of projects to build an additional 100 hotels, for example, to expand its currently limited stock.

6. Urban tourism in cities of the Kohgoliyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province

Kohgoliyeh va Boyer Ahmad Province is situated in southern-west of Iran in the limit between Khozestan, Boshehr, Fars, Isfahan and Charmahal Bakhtiari Provinces with an area of 15517 square kilometers including 5 cities and 16 towns. It includes a lot of attractions and other backgrounds for tourism activities. This Province has a tropical and cold climate and each region has its own special potentialities for tourism. With regard to vast vegetation in cold regions, the ecotourism dominating on the region at the south of Iran is unique and untouched. Therefore, it needs a planning for tourism sustainability. The major cities of this Province which are the centers for the cities have their own characteristics and potentialities for regional tourism. Generally, urban areas of Kohgoliye va Boyer Ahmad Province, unlike the rapid growth of their population have been encountered with many restrictions in all areas. The major problem of the cities of the province is that, due to an increase in population and without regard to economic and social infrastructure or based on political decisions, they have changed from the village to the city. Thus, their social structure is still rural, while they are all service cities in terms of economic performance. In other words, while the structure of beliefs and life in these cities and towns are rural, they have lost their own productive aspects and economic activities. Another urban development bottlenecks, is related to a lack of long-term comprehensive plans by which we can present the mid-term and short-term plans of developing and constructing the cities based on these plans. It should be noted that this bottleneck is not only limited to the province but it also exists around the country. Most projects that are performed in the cities of the province except the three cities including Dehdasht, Yasouj and Dogonbadan are related to the development of the physical fabric of the cities whose detailed plans have not been approved due to lack of attention to the economic performance of the city (past, present and future) and not to pay attention to the role of city in social, economic, political and administrative system of the province and country. Some of the effects of urban tourism development in these cities include as follows:

Creating direct sources of income for municipalities

Creating employment and new income for citizens

Helping to develop handcraft industries, arts and national and regional products

Developing the economic and social partnership of citizens

7. Conclusion

Urban tourism development similar to that seen in the cities of developed countries, which is based on the tourist historic city. This form of tourism development comes with the trend of tourism development worldwide and tourist demand, which come either through well planning programmes or 'boosterist' plan by city government.

Urban tourism emerges as a result of intensive development of tourism infrastructure and product that allows a process of urbanisation in the place originally known as a peripheral area. This form of tourism development comes with specific plans from government at all levels, and an economy that is fully generated by tourism activities. Kohgoliye va Boyer Ahmad Province, despite having the important tourism capabilities, has not been recognized as the Province for attracting tourism in comparison to other provinces and big towns of the country. In this respect, extensive and important efforts are in progress by the tourism custodians and we will observe the growth and prosperity of this industry in the field of development and job creation in Kohgoliye va Boyer Ahmad Province in a near future. The unique characteristic and development of such cities in developing countries give a different perspective on how tourism has been adopted. Therefore, these three forms of urban-based tourism require further studies related to the concept of urban tourism that applies in developing countries. It should be address in order to understand the phenomenon and the complexity of urban function, which allow tourism to be accepted.

Corresponding Author:

Abdolkarim Azizi

Ph.D. student, Department of geography and urban planning, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Research branch, Islamic Azad

University, Tehran, Iran

Email: Azizi456@gmail.com

References

- [1] Akbarzade Ebrahimi, M. H. (2007). Urban tourism. Municipalities magazine , No. 78 (March).
- [2] Ashworth, G.J. (1989) "Urban tourism: an imbalance in intention." in Cooper, C.P (ed.)

"Progress in tourism, recreation and hospitality management." London: Belhaven Press.

[3] Bahaman Beigi, M. H. (2007). Bokharaye man ile man. Agah Publication, Tehran, Iran.

[4] Papoli Yazdi, M. H., Saghaei, M. (2006). Tourism (nature and conception), Samt Publication, Tehran.

[5] Dinari, A. (2005). Urban tourism. Vazhegane Kherad Publicaton, Mashhad. Sarabi, M. Urban tourism. Internet.

[6] Kazes, G. (2003). Urban tourism. Translated by Salaoddin Mahallati, Shahid Beheshti Univeristy, Tehran, Iran.

[7] Mahallati, S. (1997). Sustainable urban tourism. Municipalities Magazine, Publication of the Organization of Municipalities of Iran, year 4, No.46.

[8] Willams, S. (1998). Toufism GecgraphJ, Rutleugea.london and nojourk.

[9] Weaver, D.B. (1993) "Model of urban tourism for small Caribbean Islands." *Geographical Review* 134-140.

5/3/2011