

Evaluation of Health Tourism in Sustainable Development

Jalal Mozaffari*, **Mohammad Reza Pourmohammadi**, **Bakhtiar Ezzatpanah**

Received: 05 January 2018 / Received in revised form: 29 Jun 2018, Accepted: 06 July 2018, Published online: 05 September 2018
© Biochemical Technology Society 2014-2018
© Sevas Educational Society 2008

Abstract

Tabriz, as the city of the firsts and the most developed city in Iran, has not been able to reserve itself a favorable stance in health tourism even with its optimal potentials, including infrastructures and specialized hospitals and versatile physicians, medical sciences university and a distinguished geopolitical situation. The current research tries to assess the role of health tourism in sustainable development and in line with overcoming the problems of single-product economy, diversification of economic products and resolving unemployment issues, eventually make the sustainable development happen. Delphi method and Likert's five-point scale with experts' choices are utilized in four rounds in the current research paper in Excel environment. Delphi is the method for performing prospective research and helps the planners to achieve the sustainable development objectives. The study findings are reflective of the followings: 1) employment; 2) foreign currency intake and 3) security and sustainable development.

Keywords: Evaluation, Health Tourism, Sustainable Development, Delphi Method, Expert Choice.

Introduction

Security, foreign currency intake and employment in urban environments are amongst the important factors in countries' development. With the spread of urbanization, tourism industry found a desired context for sustainable development. The industry is also called third world industry and hidden export. The futurists believe that tourism will turn into one of the greatest world's economic activities in near future.

In the beginning of the 21st century, tourism has become one of the most lucrative industries of the world. It is also called clean industry for its meaning of no harm to the environment and keeping it safe and sound for the future generations. Tourism, as a clean industry, allows the hosting society to take advantage of it in order to supply livelihood and create jobs; moreover, improving the quality of life and getting rid of unemployment will result in decreasing the rate of crime and increasing the security for the society which are derived from religious teachings and social justice put forth by David Harvey; in addition, tourism allows officials to benefit from its currency intake and creating employment in order to keep citizens satisfied and balance the revenues earned from tourism. The term "development" is a concept transcending beyond growth because development is a qualitative concept, but growth is a quantitative concept. In Oxford dictionary, development is defined as gradual growth to achieve progress (Simpson, 1989). Human development as increase in income is only a part of the people's demands (Papeli Yazdi, 2006, 46).

Michael Todaro considers development as a multidimensional stream entailing change in the social structures and economic growth (Todaro, 1987, 135). Development has also been interpreted as reduction in poverty, unemployment and inequality as well as creation of a justice-based social system and people participation enhancement (Azkiya, 1995, 8).

Importance and Necessity of Research:

- 1) Foreign currency intake (Exchange of Technology)
- 2) Creating employment
- 3) Regional integration

Jalal Mozaffari*

PhD student of Urban Planning, Islamic Azad University of Marand Department of Geography and Urban Planning, Marand Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marand, Iran.

Mohammad Reza Pourmohammadi

The head of Tabriz University and Professor of Islamic Azad University, Marand, Iran.

Bakhtiar Ezzatpanah

Assistant Professor at Islamic Azad University of Marand, Iran.

- 4) Sustainable development
- 5) Tourism security

Study Hypotheses:

Tourism leads to sustainable development via job creation, foreign currency intake and technological exchange.

There is a significant relationship between establishing tourism and security.

Security is the driving engine of the sustainable development and tourism industry.

Research Method:

The present study is conducted based on a descriptive-analytical and Delphi methods and experts and specialists' consensus are utilized. The ideas and notions collected from the experts are scored based on Likert's five-point scale (completely agree, agree, no idea, completely disagree, and disagree) which are qualitative; then, by turning the qualitative answers in to quantitative values using Likert's five-point scale and presenting tables and diagrams, the subject is studied.

The studied indices are as follows: 1) employment; 2) foreign currency intake and technological exchange; 3) sustainable development and 4) security which were obtained through interviewing elite experts and distributing questionnaires amongst them.

Delphi is the method for reaching consensus in a study and the research is carried out through sending and receiving questionnaires and answer sheets in order to reach the consensus among the experts and specialists.

The anonymousness and confidentiality of the participants' identities is one of the requirements of performing research based on Delphi method (Nasiri, 2003, 221).

To this end, 20 specialists were selected based on expert choice method; in the beginning, an open question was provided in which the experts were required to express their ideas about exiting the single-product economy, diversifying to economy, creating jobs, in taking foreign currency and sustainable developing, reducing crimes and increasing the security; also, they were asked to explain their reasons about the relations between tourism, employment, intake foreign currency, sustainable development and security. After receiving the experts' answers based on Likert's five-point scale in Excel and converting them to quantitative points along with analysis, the corresponding questions were designed and sent to the experts in four rounds. Upon reaching a consensus, the related issues were analyzed and the conclusion was made. By gathering the final ideas and notions in the fourth round and consensus views of experts in Excel, the percentage and average values of experts' responses were calculated. The consensus percentages of the elite experts' notions above 51 indicated the confirmation of the consensus over the indices and the percentages below 51 were reflective of the indices' rejection. The mean values of experts' answering rates were obtained in the form of mean from Likert's points (ranging from 1 to 5) in which mean values above 2.5 indicated the confirmation of the index and the mean values below 2.5 were suggestive of the index rejection; these values can be associated with mean and percentage, simultaneously. To verify the index of "technological exchange", an independent investigation was conducted on 30 patient tourists. In this survey, the mean value of medical tourism's technological exchange and foreign currency intake was about 2500 dollars; therefore, health tourism is followed by more foreign currency intake and technology exchange than the other types of tourism.

Study Population:

20 individuals of health tourism experts and elites were participated in this survey by being presented an open question, in four rounds and stages with structural questions about the relations between tourism and employment, the foreign currency intake, sustainable development and security. To verify and achieve the mean value of technological exchange and foreign currency intake, 30 health tourists were interviewed within the format of an independent research.

Study Background:

Many studies have been carried out about tourism and each of them has portrayed tourism from economy, politics and society perspectives that can be followed as:

- 1) Saida'ei, Eskandar, the role of security in tourism development, seasonal specialized journal of social sciences, Islamic Azad University, Shooshtar Branch (Saida'ei, 2010, 97)
- 2) Zahedi, Shams Al-Sadat, basics of sustainable tourism and ecotourism, Ministry of Islamic Guidance (Zahedi, 2006)
- 3) Rezvani, Ali Asghar, geography and tourism industry, Payam-e-Noor University (Rezvani, 1995)

4) Ebrahimzadeh, tourism potentials in Iran and India (Ebrahimzadeh, 2013)

In this study, Ebrahimzadeh presents the comparative health tourism capabilities of Iran and India within the format of tables and diagrams.

Defining Tourism:

Tourist is a person who takes a trip for recreation and/or amusement and/or with the cultural intentions (Kazemi, 2006, 21). Health tourism includes the activities performed in line with treatment and curing of the patient tourists in the entire stages from identification and diagnosis of the disease to its treatment. The industry was launched in 1990 and England is a pioneer in health tourism.

Importance of Tourism:

Tourism can be a solution in terms of technology exchange, creation of employment and economic and cultural integration in countries encountered with financial resources deficits and rooted unemployment. In terms of history and touristic attractions, Iran is enumerated amongst the top ten countries of the world; also, in respect to tourism diversity, Iran is amongst the first five countries of the world and it is ranked amongst the first three countries of the world concerning the diversity of artefacts.

According to the statistics of (WTO), the global tourists will create jobs for 300 million individuals around the world in 2020 and the number will be increased thereafter while the tourism industry accounts for 11% of the global employment.

Tourism Elements:

Domiciles, tourism attractions, transportation and infrastructural installations are amongst the tourism elements and these elements in association with security are effective in attracting tourists; technological exchange and employment indicate the successful association of security and tourism.

Factors Threatening Tourism:

- 1) Absence of people's institutionalized participation and their playing of certain responsible roles
- 2) Absence of effective control of the borders and drug and narcotics smuggling
- 3) The presence of immigrants and refugees from neighboring countries
- 4) Competition between the neighboring countries for taking the first role in tourism establishment

Tourism and Employment:

A job opportunity is created with the entry of every four tourists into a country. According to the estimations, the number of health tourists visiting Tabriz will reach to 300000 individuals in 2030 which based on Butler's theory, conveys the idea, that each city can attract tourists quite the same size of its population and this is so-called tourism resilience. The global organizations estimate that the number of tourists will be increased to one billion and six hundred thousand individuals (WTO, 2001). With the effort of planners and decision-makers, health tourism can gain a larger contribution of this clean industry and account for a considerable share of job creation.

Security and Tourism:

Literally, security is associated with a state of being free of any threat. Sustainable development in each country is owed to sustainable security. One of the reasons of developing European and advanced countries is the existence of security. No trip is taken in tourism world unless the security is established for the tourist during the trip. The Global Tourism Organization proposes security and comfort as a global power to support the tourism industry.

Sustainable Security:

Only life and financial security strike the mind when it comes to tourists' security and sense of safety whereas the tourists are faced with a series of threats some of which originate from human resources and some others are natural in their origins.

Financial and Life Security:

Life and financial security in the host country mean that the protection and safeguarding strategies should have been codified and well enforced to keep the tourists' life and money safe. Prevention of performing offensive actions and robbery towards the tourists are amongst these measures.

Hygiene Security:

Observation of healthcare and sanitary issues are some matters to which tourists are very sensitive. Bioenvironmental issues, garbage and waste residues, food security, self-services and the security of the accommodation centers are some of the concerns in terms of security. Spread of diseases, including cholera, bird disease and avian influenza are amongst the cases that influence attraction or repelling of the tourists.

Road and Transportation Security:

The security of the road, aerial, marine and railroad infrastructures, the death tolls of road and aerial accidents, standard roads and transportation systems, aerial fleet and equipping of the airports are amongst the issues involved in the attraction and/or repelling of the tourists.

Natural Disaster Security:

Natural disasters like flood, earthquake and storm are considered as natural security factors. For instance, Katrina Tornado damaged the tourism in New Orleans in 2005.

Security and War:

War, chaos, and the existence of immigrants are amongst the other challenges of security and tourists' sense of safety. As it is known, ISIS existence and its infiltration in Turkey resulted in losing a great deal of its tourists.

Security and Urban Space:

There is a fear atmosphere in some cities for in terms of skin color for some people or gender, for women which makes feminists worry about. Moreover, the older people as well as the ethnic minorities are in the fear atmosphere, as well. Consequently, this issue causes the reduction in the number of tourists because, in such fearing atmospheres, the tourists are worried about being attacked. The issue is generally known as fear ecology. Using Ernst Bergs's theory of fear space for Chicago, Davis offers the theory of fear atmosphere for Los Angeles in respect to urban space development. In transition region, we face the slum areas and catastrophe-stricken regions caused by poverty and crime that play a major role in tourism reduction. Use of adequate lighting in Parks and tourism environments leads to reducing in the number of crimes and provides a desired sense of security for the tourists. The existence of subways, highways, safe passenger passageways and secure vehicular routes are amongst the factors creating the security. Developing the tranquilizing parks and architecture, proper land uses around the tourists and keeping them away from any interfering land uses are also the other factors giving rise to tourists' sense of safety and security.

Study Findings:

The present study findings indicated that, amongst the various kinds of tourisms, health and medical tourism can be accompanied by technology exchange and foreign currency intake as well as more job creation; so, health tourism can play a considerable part in sustainable development. Technology exchange and foreign currency intake are estimated to be followed by a 2500-dollar income per every tourist for Tabriz while the rate is 1400 dollars for the other types of tourism. Therefore, health tourism can be followed by a higher job creation rate. Security is another factor that can add to the number of tourists entering a country; the aim of security, in this term, is all aspects of security including food security, road security and an array of other securities.

Data analysis:

The study subject has been evaluated in table (1) using the ideas inquired from 20 elite experts and specialists in regard of four indices, namely 1) job creation; 2) technology transfer and foreign currency intake; 3) sustainable development and 4) security.

Table 1: calculations of experts ideas based on Delphi method in Likert's five-point scale

Elite experts	Index 1	Index 2	Index 3	Index 4
Expert 1	5	5	5	5
Expert 2	5	5	5	5
Expert 3	5	5	5	5
Expert 4	5	5	5	5
Expert 5	5	5	5	5
Expert 6	5	5	5	4
Expert 7	5	5	5	5
Expert 8	5	5	5	4
Expert 9	5	5	5	4
Expert 10	4	5	5	5
Expert 11	5	4	5	5
Expert 12	4	4	4	4
Expert 13	4	4	4	4
Expert 14	5	5	4	4
Expert 15	3	4	4	4
Expert 16	3	3	3	3
Expert 17	4	4	4	4
Expert 18	4	4	3	4
Expert 19	4	4	4	4
Expert 20	4	4	4	4
Experts' mean vale of answering (1-5)	55.4	45.4	40.4	35.4
Delphi consensus percentage	91	89	88	87

Source: the author

In table (1):

Index 1: denotes the relationship between tourism and employment

Index 2: denotes the relationship between tourism and foreign currency intake and technology transfer

Index 3: denotes the relationship between tourism and sustainable development

Index 4: denotes the relationship between tourism and security

Index (1) was found with a mean value of experts' answering equal to 4.55 and a Delphi consensus percentage of 91

Index (2) was found with a mean value of experts' answering equal to 4.45 and a Delphi consensus percentage of 89

Index (3) was found with a mean value of experts' answering equal to 4.540 and a Delphi consensus percentage of 88

Index (4) was found with a mean value of experts' answering equal to 4.35 and a Delphi consensus percentage of 87

All of the indices were accepted and confirmed by the experts and specialists.

The mean value of experts' answering is based on Likert's five-point scale. It is worth mentioning that consensus percentages between 51 and 100 are accepted in Delphi method and the consensus percentages below 51 are rejected accordingly. One hundred percent consensus rarely occurs due to the fact that the respondents and specialists are from different political and economic positions hence having different ideas and notions.

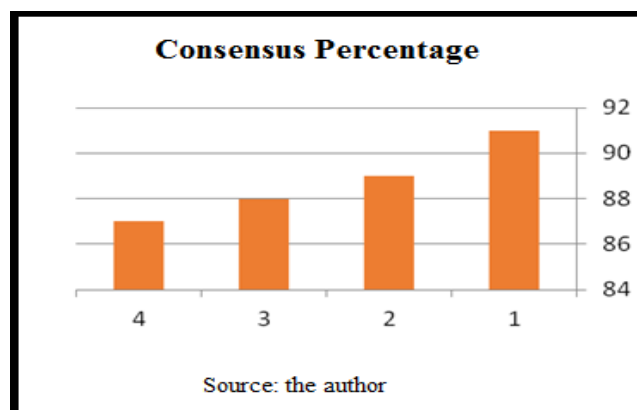


Diagram 1: consensus percentages obtained for 1) job creation, 2) technology transfer, 3) sustainable development and 4) security

Diagram (1) displays the relationship between job creation and tourism. As it can be seen, it has been confirmed in a consensus rate of 91% indicating that job creation, interpreted as reduction in unemployment hence indirectly reducing crime perpetration which leads to sustainable urban security.

A job opportunity is created with the entry of every four tourist to a country. Unemployment is a factor resulting in increase in crimes and harming the urban security and increase in employment results in crime reduction and, as viewed by David Harvey's social justice theory as well as the religious theories about social justice, employment is a prerequisite to the sustainable development and causes social security. Based thereon, job creation indirectly contributes to security establishment and sustainable development achievement.

Index (2) that was confirmed in an 89% consensus level by the study experts and specialists is suggestive of foreign currency intake elevation and technology transfer and these two assist the governments in balancing the payments and making investments in tourism infrastructures via enhancing the quality of the host society thereby to keep the citizens satisfied and lead to the security of the society and cities. In line with this, besides inquiring the elite experts' ideas, an independent research was conducted on 30 health tourists and patients who had come to Tabriz for treatment for verifying index (2) indicating the relationship between health tourism and technology transfer. The mean value of these patients' technological exchange and foreign currency intake was 2500 dollar per each of them and it is higher than the rate, 1400 dollars, obtained from the other types of tourism. This is reflective of the idea that the patients' treatment costs are to be added to their accommodation costs and the other expenditures. Index (3) was confirmed based on an 88% consensus and it is suggestive of the positive relationship between tourism and sustainable development. It is evident that the society and citizens enjoy a greater deal of comfort and security in a developed and sustainable society in terms of economic, social and political sustainability. If Tabriz is introduced based on growth pole theory as a tourism pole, and if tourism is considered as a driving industry, the tourism industry can provide for the development of downstream health tourism industries like medicine, pharmacy and hoteling that will eventually lead to sustainable development considering the dispersion and promulgation rule. Index (4) indicated the relationship between tourism and security and it was also confirmed based on an 87% consensus reached by the experts and specialists. This is suggestive of the existence of a significant relationship between security and tourism; hence, it can be stated that security and tourism are mutually interconnected and they are necessary for each other. Security is a general concept and it encompasses all aspects such as psychological and sanitary, nutrition security types and some other kinds. Enjoyment of security reduces investment risk and results in more future investments.

Conclusion:

Health tourism is one of the tourism types that enjoys of more opportunities in comparison with other types of tourism.

This type of tourism causes the Islamic communities to be incurred with lower cultural loads because in health tourism, the tourist is not after leisure time and enjoying oneself but travels to the other country for treatment. Secondly, it has higher rates of technological transfer and foreign currency intake in contrast to the other types of tourism for the treatment costs, including the hospital and treatment costs, are higher in this type of tourism; therefore, it will result in greater occupational opportunities and higher foreign currency intake as well as larger technological exchange. Considering a 2500-dollar foreign currency intake for health tourism, it can contribute to job creation, foreign currency intake and, eventually, standardization of the infrastructures and sustainable development.

Nowadays, security is one of the most frequently applied principles of codifying tourism development strategy and it is deemed as an optimum option for foreign currency intake, technology transfer and job creation which is quite effective in the reduction of crimes and increase in security coefficient. While being highly profitable, tourism is low costs and brings about sustainable development; because sustainable job creation, high foreign currency intake and technological exchange and enhancement of the citizens' quality of life in the host society, besides keeping the citizens satisfied, influence establishing the security and the sense of safety, directly and indirectly and play a considerable role in tourist attraction. According to elite experts, health tourism is followed by job creation and foreign currency intake and technology exchange; in addition to bringing about the development, it will help the downstream industries and lead to sustainable development.

Based on resiliency theory put forth by Bahler, who believed that a city can welcome tourists quite the same size as its population during a year, and considering the population of one million and six hundred thousand individuals in Tabriz, it can be selected as health tourism resort and absorb the same number of tourists as its population provided that its infrastructures are taken into account.

Suggestions:

- 1) Establishment of pervasive security in domestic and foreign dimensions
- 2) Creation and formation of tourism police

- 3) Making efforts in line with regional integration and tension relief
- 4) Nocturnal lighting for creating security and feeling of safety in parks and popular places for tourists
- 5) Infirming the culture of venerating the citizens for preventing the instigation of Iran-o-phobia
- 6) Constant training of tourism agents
- 7) Prevention of organized crimes against tourists
- 8) Developing of a health estate in Tabriz in line with centralization of health tourism activities and tourists' satisfaction
- 9) Developing of psychological security and the sense of safety for the tourists in terms of sanitary-food and accommodation security
- 10) Making use of architecture for creating tranquilizing architecture and developing parks and places worthy of visiting
- 11) Utilization of proper land uses on tourists' routes and prevention of interfering land uses
- 12) Guiding the city towards vertical development instead of horizontal development which is anti-development
- 13) Supervising the cities with vertical development is easier than supervising the cities with horizontal development
- 14) Making efforts in line with updating the treatment facilities, including Nano therapy and Nano medicine for treating health tourists
- 15) Equipping and developing the urban infrastructures, hospitals and accommodation centers.

References

- Azkiya, M., (1995), "sustainable development", Tehran, Information Center Publication, p.452
- Ebrahimzadeh, (2013), "ISSA", Journal of subcontinent Researches, University of SISTAN, Iran, p.51
- Kazemi, M., (2006), "tourism management", Tehran, Samt, p.282
- Nasiri, A., (2003), "appropriate organizational structure", journal of management knowledge, (60): 219
- Papeli Yazdi, M., (2006), "rural development", Tehran Press, p.306
- Rezvani, A., (1995), "geography and tourism industry", Payam-e-Noor University Press, p.225
- Saida'ei, A., (2010), "the role of security in tourism development", seasonal specialized journal of social sciences, no.8, Shooshtar Branch, p.97
- Simpson, John, (1989), "Oxford English Dictionary", Publisher Oxford London
- Todaro, M., (1987), "economic development in the third world", Farjadi, Tehran Publication Center, p.567
- World Tourism Organization (WTO). (2001).
- Zahedi, Sh., (2006), "tourism basics and sustainable ecotourism", Allameh Tabataba'ei University press, p.215