Policies and Strategies for Integrated Tourism Planning and Sustainable Development: The case of Iran

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The significance of tourism

• Tourism industry accounts for 9.3% of the world’s GDP and has become one of the main generators of employment.

• The number of international arrivals exceeded 1.87 billion tourists in 2013.

• International tourism receipts reached US$1159 billion worldwide in 2013.
Importance of Tourism to Iran

• Iran’s tourism has grown fast since the early 1990’s.

• Tourism has been defined as one of the high priority for economic development in Iran.

• The total contribution of travel & tourism to the country’s GDP was %6.1 in 2013.
• The total contribution of travel & tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry was 5.3% in 2013.

• According to ICHTO, the number of international arrivals reached 4.8 million in 2013, up from 3.8 million in 2012.

• International tourist receipts increased up to $US 2.4 billion in 2013.
International Tourist Arrivals To Iran

International arrivals

Year

0 1000000 2000000 3000000 4000000 5000000 6000000

Iran’s share from worldwide arrivals
What are policies and strategies?

- **Policies are the plan of action adopted or pursued by governments or businesses whereas strategies represent the steps to achieve them.**

- **Policy is determined based on several considerations, of which the most important is achieving the objectives of developing tourism.**

- More generally, tourism policy should reflect the overall development policy of the country so that tourism is well integrated.

- **Policies and strategies should be flexible to the new changes.**
Tourism policy-making in Iran

• Tourism in Iran is government-led, under the control of public sector.

• Responsibility for the development & management of tourism falls more & more to national government.

• Policies are made based on the Islamic laws & values.

• The planning policies covering tourism development in relation to the other economic sectors are contained in the country’s five year economic plans.
Tourism policies (Iran’s Tourism Management Master Plan)

• Introduce, develop, and maintain Islamic culture to the world, especially to countries that have the most relationships with Iran;

• Recognize and cooperate with these countries in order to develop stronger international relationships including developing a dialogue to develop Islamic culture;
• Contribute to the promotion of national unity on a continuing basis by emphasizing a respect for cultural diversity;

• Continually seek to use Iran’s strategic geopolitical position as a basis for developing it as a regional center for the transmission of goods, tourists, and investment;
20-Year National Vision Policies

• Sustain, develop & introduce Iran’s cultural & natural heritages to the world;

• Enhance the continuous value of Iran’s cultural heritage at the local, national & international levels;

• Enhance the public culture in the area of cultural heritage & tourism through capacity building;
• **Sustainable development of tourism for the benefit of the nation & with regards to the country’s cultural value;**

• **Increase & develop domestic tourism & acquire an appropriate portion of international market via utilization of the country’s capabilities,**

• **Priority should be given to the tourist exchange with Islamic countries & those that have common cultural background with Iran.**

• **Increase & ensure tourist justice & their safety & security.**
### Policies addressing the sustainable development of tourism in Iran

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What are tourism strategies?

• Supporting foreign and domestic investments and providing the basis for obtaining these resources;

• Reducing the government intervention, bureaucratic process, and paying more attention to the role of private sector in tourism development;

• Implementing the global tourism code of ethics throughout the country;

• Facilitating the movement of international tourists and eliminating the negative views towards them;
• Developing different types of tourism (e.g. ecotourism, health tourism, religious tourism, cultural and events tourism) and providing related facilities and services;

• Changing the tarnished image of the country in international tourism markets by implementing appropriate marketing and promotion programs;

• Increasing the country’s share of international tourist arrivals and the revenue generated;
• Establishing infrastructure and tourist facilities and services in places with high priority in national and local plans;

• Increasing the local community participation in tourism planning and management and empowering them.

• Reducing the negative impacts of tourism on sensitive destinations, local communities and natural and cultural heritages.
• Promote economic development, especially employment for youth and the unemployed, promoting greater income equity between city and rural areas, and increasing net foreign exchange earnings;

• Contribute to the sustainable development of the natural and socio-cultural environment by promoting the importance of these values to the population and adopting sustainable development practices.
Challenges & Obstacles

• As a main pillar of sustainable development, limited attention has been paid to the local participation & empowerment of local communities in policies.

• In practice, policies haven’t been able to combine simultaneously, economic growth with welfare, empowerment, cultural reinforcing manner, social transformation & sustainability.
• The investigation on tourism policies & practices reveals a gap between sustainable tourism as a theoretical ideal (what has been planned) & what has been actually achieved.

• Little has been done to develop effective mechanisms to monitor & control developments aimed at curbing environmental degradation, social & cultural erosion & economic marginalization of the poor.

• The social injustice & economic unviability of tourism projects, especially at the local level, is a grave concern of both local communities & critics.
• The safety of tourists was seen to be an important issue given the political problems in some of the countries surrounding Iran.

• Iran’s tourist facilities and services are limited in scope, quantity, & quality, but limited attention is being paid to in the current policies & strategies.

• The private sector is limited in scope with much of the tourist plan in the hands of public sector; therefore, much emphasis should be given to the private sector’s role in the country’s future tourism.
• Poor profitability & high risk is a big challenge of investment in the sector & need to be considered in the future strategies.

• Misinformation has led to an incorrect international image of the country in the community of nations. Hence, the current policies & strategies should offer possible solutions to correct this negative image.

• The institutional organizations, tourism management capabilities, & especially human resources at the national & provincial levels are not appropriate & need to be considered in the development plans.
Conclusion

• However, a hard look at the overall situation leads us to conclude that the policies & strategies pursued by the industry stakeholders have been those most suitable for promoting mass tourism rather than sustainable tourism.

• Grim realities such as unsustainable development of some tourism activities leave serious doubts as to whether tourism development can be propelled towards more sustainability in the long term.

• We should measure policy performance by developing appropriate mechanisms.
Thank You