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An Analysis of Local Community's Attitude toward Effects of Tourism (Case study: Naqsh-e Jahan Neighborhood, Isfahan city)

Vazin, N^a. Mokhtari Hashi, H^b. Taheri, A^{c,1}

^a Assistant Professor, Faculty of Geographical Sciences and Planning, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

^b Assistant Professor, Faculty of Geographical Sciences and Planning, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

^c Ma of Geography & Tourism Planning, Faculty of Geographical Sciences and Planning, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

Research Article

Extended Abstract

Objective: The study shows that the neglect of local communities and their attitudes towards tourism is an important gap in the planning of tourism destinations; While sustainable tourism development requires attention to the host communities and understanding their attitudes toward tourism. In other words, development and success in tourism is not possible without knowing the attitude and satisfaction of the residents of tourist areas, because the negative attitude and dissatisfaction of the local community towards tourism may cause tourism failure and even eliminate tourism in the host community. The city of Isfahan, with its valuable historical monuments and cultural heritage, is one of the top destinations for cultural tourism in the country, which annually hosts many domestic and foreign tourists. The presence of a large number of tourists in some days of the year in Isfahan, especially in neighborhood such as Naqsh-e Jahan, where many attractions and historical sites are located there, causes pressure on infrastructure and problems for residents, which in some cases cause dissatisfaction of residents. The present study, using a quantitative-qualitative research method, aims to answer these questions: What is the attitude of the residents of the historical-tourism neighborhood of Naqsh-e Jahan in Isfahan towards tourism? And from the perspective of the local community, what are the appropriate strategies to increase residents' satisfaction with tourism?

Methods: The research method is descriptive and analytic. The survey population consists of 366 local communities of Naqsh-e Jahan neighborhood. The data collection tool in this study are a researcher-designed questionnaire and interview. A questionnaire technique was used to assess the attitude of local residents towards tourism and the interview technique was used to provide appropriate solutions to increase residents' satisfaction. Out of 366 sample population, 60 people participated in providing solutions that is sufficient for qualitative research. The data were collected through the simple random sampling from respondents in Naqsh-e Jahan neighborhood. In review of the literature, measurement items involved in local residents' attitude were extracted. Thereafter, items were reviewed by ten professors specialized in tourism in Isfahan University. This questionnaire was designed with key measures related to residents' attitude. The questionnaire is based on the five-point Likert-type scales from 5, 'very high', to 1, 'very low'. Reliability of the questionnaire was measured through Cronbach Alpha as 0.856, which is acceptable. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, including exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and one-sample T test, the information obtained from the interview was analyzed using qualitative analysis. The total number of respondents was 366, in which

¹ Corresponding author at: University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran, P.C: 8174673798. E-mail address: n.vazin@geo.ui.ac.ir (Vazin, N).

61.5% of the respondents were male, and 38.5% were female. In terms of the length of stay in the neighborhood, most respondents were in the range of 15 to 25 years.

Results: Firstly, to measure the attitude of local residents towards tourism, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with principal components extraction and the varimax rotation method were employed to identify the main factors of the local social attitude towards tourism. The result of KMO (0.761) and Bartlett's Test (p -value=0.000) suggests that the exploratory factor analysis is appropriate. The results found nine factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The factors were named as follows: employment opportunities, crowds and annoyance, capital flow and economic growth, social interaction and hospitality, cultural change, increased cost of living and lack of widespread benefits, beautification of urban space, preservation of historical monuments and strengthening of urban infrastructure, social disorder. The results of one-sample T test indicated that attitudes of local residents towards the following areas was positive: employment opportunity ($M= 3.96$), capital flow and economic growth ($M= 3.75$), social interaction and hospitality ($M= 3.71$), beautification of urban space ($M= 4.14$), and preservation of historical monuments and strengthening of urban infrastructure ($M=3.63$). In addition, attitudes of local residents towards the following areas was negative: crowds and annoyance, cultural change, increased cost of living and lack of widespread benefits, beautification of urban space, and social disorder. In addition, based on the analysis of the interview, 28 strategies in 7 categories to increase satisfaction by the local community were obtained, including job capacity development, capital attraction, participatory planning, strengthening the interaction of the host and guest community, culture building, strengthening urban security and strengthening neighborhood infrastructure. The proposed solutions can be implemented either by tourism officials and planners or by local people and local institutions, so it can be useful for tourism planners and decision makers in Naqsh-e Jahan neighborhood, and Isfahan city to increase satisfaction of the local community towards tourism and finally the sustainability of tourism in Naqsh-e Jahan neighborhood.

Conclusion: The results indicated that tourism and the presence of tourists in Naqsh-e Jahan neighborhood have had many positive and negative effects in various economic, socio-cultural and physical sectors. In addition, the results showed the positive effects of tourism have been more than the adverse effects. The local community has understood the positive effects of tourism in the neighborhood and city of Isfahan and is relatively satisfied with tourism and the presence of tourists. However, from the perspective of the local community, tourism development has had several negative consequences on the residents of the neighborhood. Tourism has caused social unrest, and disrupted the peace of the local community. Also, tourism has increased the cost of living, but the benefits of tourism have not spread to the whole neighborhood, which if the needs of the local community are ignored and this trend continues, will lead to dissatisfaction and negative reaction of the local community. According to the social exchange theory, which proposes that if the benefits of tourism outweigh the costs, tourism is supported by local people; In Naqsh-e Jahan neighborhood, the local community will support tourism in the future if the perceived benefits of tourism in all economic, socio-cultural, environmental and physical areas outweigh the costs.

Keywords: Tourism, Attitude, Local Community, Naqsh-e Jahan Neighborhood, Isfahan City.

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