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Facility Level Offered to Tourists Visiting Fars Province in Iran*

MEHRNOUSH SAADAT ABADI, S. INDUMATI
University of Mysore, India

Abstract

Tourism can play an important role in the economic growth of developing countries like Iran. The economy of this country depends mainly on income from oil exports which is affected by large price fluctuations. In order to empower the tourism industry in Iran, a detailed investigation can be helpful for improving the present situation of this industry. Every tourist who comes to Iran can be regarded as a valuable source for attracting more tourists; therefore offering high quality facilities to them is a good advertisement. In this regard, this paper examines the quality of facilities and services offered to tourists visiting Fars province. Although Fars is one of the most facilitated provinces in the country, service industries which include accommodation, eating and drinking establishments, and other hospitality services are far from international standards. In this study, the quality level of the facilities and services provided for tourists visiting the region is illustrated. The results show that significant investment is required to develop Iran’s tourist infrastructure to international standards.

Keywords: Iran; Fars province; Facilities, Services; Accommodation; Quality

1. Introduction

Travel has been a part of human life since ancient times and is associated with pleasure, adventure and gainful experiences. However, travel in our present times has become a commercial proposition, and it has grown into an industry under the name of tourism. Indeed tourism has become the second largest industry after oil and gas, and is one of the world’s fastest growing industries as well as a major source of foreign exchange, employment, and revenue for other developmental activities. In these respects, the tourism sector can play an important role as a driving force of economic development. Whether tourism does indeed constitute the world’s biggest industry, however, depends on the sectors against which it is compared. For example, tourism is larger than the oil or grain industries, but as of now, probably does not exceed the global mining or agricultural sectors as a whole.

Tourism is now a major area of academic, government, industry and public concern. Almost all economists and commentators as well as government officials and other policy-makers have accepted that the tourism industry is an important source of earnings for a country. This is especially true of those countries such as Iran and other developing countries which are dependent on export income from raw materials that are always affected by large price fluctuations. Tourism, therefore, has been regarded as an important element in their development plans, and they have allocated part of their overall budgets to the provision of the necessary infrastructure for hosting a large number of tourists.
This industry is significant not just because of the enormous impact it has on people’s lives and on the places in which they live. It is also significant because of its size in terms of the number of people traveling, how many people it employs, and how much money it brings into a destination. According to the UNWTO Secretary-General, Francesco Frangialli, “Tourism keeps the world economy on the move. It is number one in world services trade, the largest export earner, and employs millions of people. Most of these jobs are in small or medium-sized, family-owned businesses.”

In recent years, virtually every country throughout the world has taken steps to increase its number of visitors. In the first four months of 2006 there were some 236 million international tourist arrivals worldwide, 10 million more than in the same period of 2005, reflecting the sustained growth in global tourism. World tourist arrivals passed another milestone in 2007 to reach 900 million - overtaking tourism forecasts for the fourth successive year. This 6% year-on-year increase is even more remarkable given that the worldwide figure hit the 800 million mark just two years previously, according to the World Tourism Organization. Meeting this growth with well-planned, environmentally sound development is a challenge for planners all over the world whether in Europe, the Americas, Australia, Africa or Asia.

Tourism is vital for many countries due to the income generated by the consumption of goods and services by tourists, the taxes levied on businesses in the tourism industry, and the opportunity for employment in the service industries associated with tourism. These service industries include transportation such as cruise ships and taxis, accommodation such as in hotels, eating and drinking establishments such as restaurants, bars, and entertainment venues, retail shops, and other hospitality services provided for individuals or groups traveling away from home.

Iran

Iran is considered as an attractive country for tourists, and most often those who visit Iran for the first time are astonished by the marvelous historical and pre-historical sites in this country. It has all the potential for attracting large numbers of tourists. The introduction of international tourism as an economic growth strategy in Iran is relatively recent. As yet, the tourism industry has not shown any considerable development because of the unwanted problems of the revolution, war and the oil-based economy. This is despite decision-makers having committed themselves to removing the obstacles. Iran has experienced difficulties caused by war, and also neglect of this profitable and job creative industry. Compared to countries like Turkey and India in Asia, Morocco and Tunisia in Africa, which are roughly equal with Iran in many basics, a glance at the Iran’s ancientness, history, strategic situation and weather conditions shows that fundamental revision in the infrastructures of Iran’s tourism industry is needed. According to this study and analysis of the weaknesses and strengths of Iran’s tourism industry, in order to empower positive aspects and weaken negative ones, changing the present situation seems to be very necessary. Therefore, to reach the ideal for Iran’s tourism industry, an analytical study of the present situation based on data and an analysis of the existing evidence seems to be needed. Every tourist who comes to Iran can be regarded as a valuable source for attracting more tourists. Therefore, offering high quality facilities to tourists is a good advertisement. On the basis of the above, this paper will go into detail regarding the quality of facilities and services offered to tourists visiting the Fars province in Iran.

Fars province

Fars province has an area of 133,000 km² and is located in the south of Iran. In 2006 this province had a population of 4.1 million, out of which 42% resided in rural areas and the rest were urban residents. The culture and the art of the province account for a large part of the world’s cultural and art resources. National and local culture in Fars is extremely rich and includes different kinds of ceremonies, poetry, literature, song and dance. The geographical and climatic variation of the province results in a great variety of plants,
green lands and lakes. Consequently, variation of wild life has been formed in the province. Additional to the native animals, many kinds of birds migrate to the province every year. All these significant characteristics form remarkable tourism attractions.

Fars is one of the most facilitated provinces in Iran. It has planned to receive national and international tourists because of its long background in tourism. Consequently, the province is provided with modern roads and transportation, communication, and health systems, hotels and restaurants of different kinds. Therefore, traveling among all towns and destinations in the province is very easy. All cities and towns of the province are equipped with different kinds of hotels and guest houses, especially the capital city of Shiraz which is significant for its tourism facilities among all the cities of the country. The people of Fars are familiar with tourism culture, and tourists will definitely enjoy good hospitality.

2. Methodology

The results reported in this paper are part of a study examining the quality of the facilities for those visiting Iran. The goal is to develop a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the present situation of the tourism industry in this country. The data have been collected through a questionnaire. Random sampling was used to select participants, with guests at five hotels targeted. The data collection period ran from the spring to summer 2008 and the achieved sample size was 126 respondents. Most of the questions were closed questions to minimise errors, and the analyst misinterpreting the recorded responses.

Table 1. Gender, age group, occupation, and home location of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Gender of the respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Age Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 &amp; above</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Occupation of the respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Home location of the respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Findings

Table 1 contains four parts. Part A presents the results obtained from the respondents on the basis of their gender. It can be observed that there were more men (60.3%) than women (39.7%). It is rather surprising that the numbers of men and women were so unequal. A bone of contention for foreign tourists in Iran is the strict dress code for women. This requires them to wear a headscarf and in some cases a long coat. When female tourists were asked about their satisfaction with their travel to and in Iran, a considerable percentage of them felt unhappy because of the social rules and religious restrictions which they had to obey. They believed that these restrictions should not include international tourists.

Part B shows that tourists were mostly older people: 28.6% of the respondents were aged 50-59, and 32.5% were 60 and above. This result reveals that 61.1% of the total respondents were above 50. The reason for this situation is probably that Iran has little to attract youth. To some extent, this is because of the Islamic social rules governing the society, which limit the activities of the youth of other countries with different cultures, ethics and beliefs. Furthermore, there are no bars, night clubs, or other kinds of nightlife of the quality that can provide fun for younger people visiting Iran. In Table 3 it can be seen that two options, poor and no comment, were chosen by most respondents when questions regarding the quality of night clubs and nightlife were asked.

Part C shows the occupations of the respondents: 9.5% were engaged in business, while officials and professionals constituted 20.6% and 17.5% of all respondents respectively. Probably due to the variety of occupations other than those specified in Table 1, 52.4% of the respondents selected the ‘any other’ option in the questionnaire. These results reveal that although Iran has a good potential for business operations, not many of those who visit the country as tourists are from business occupations. The majority of the respondents, 80.2%, had come to Iran to see ‘historical sites and sites of cultural significance’ which may not hold special attraction for the young. The results are summarized in Table 2, and demonstrated graphically in Graph 1.

In Part D the home locations of the respondents are reported. As can be observed, half the respondents were from Western Europe, 13.5% were from Asia and the rest of the home locations were less than 10% each. According to the report of CHN in 2007, on average over 55% of foreign tourists visiting Iran are of European origin, about 25% are from south-east Asia countries, just over 10% are from middle-east countries and the remaining 10% are from other countries. These reported results are confirmed by those obtained from this study to some extent. Although, Iran enjoys enormous potential for attracting tourists, due to weak advertising, poor marketing and lack of authentic and reliable information available about the country, it has
Table 3. Data obtained from rating facilities offered to the tourists in the hotel (place of accommodation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guest Service</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>No comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRONT OFFICE/RECEPTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>24 19.0</td>
<td>74 58.7</td>
<td>24 19.0</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information; Check-in/</td>
<td>15 11.9</td>
<td>81 64.3</td>
<td>25 19.8</td>
<td>1 0.8</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check-out</td>
<td>13 10.3</td>
<td>74 58.7</td>
<td>31 24.6</td>
<td>1 0.8</td>
<td>7 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOOD &amp; BEVERAGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>7 5.6</td>
<td>47 37.3</td>
<td>60 47.6</td>
<td>5 4.0</td>
<td>7 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobby Lounge</td>
<td>6 4.8</td>
<td>41 32.5</td>
<td>62 49.2</td>
<td>8 6.3</td>
<td>9 7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bars</td>
<td>3 2.4</td>
<td>33 26.2</td>
<td>51 40.5</td>
<td>13 10.3</td>
<td>26 20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café</td>
<td>3 2.4</td>
<td>42 33.3</td>
<td>61 48.4</td>
<td>7 5.6</td>
<td>13 10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini Bar Services</td>
<td>7 5.6</td>
<td>42 33.3</td>
<td>57 45.2</td>
<td>10 7.9</td>
<td>10 7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Services</td>
<td>6 4.8</td>
<td>45 35.7</td>
<td>63 50.0</td>
<td>5 4.0</td>
<td>7 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Restaurant</td>
<td>5 4.0</td>
<td>50 39.7</td>
<td>59 46.8</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
<td>8 6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KITCHEN</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>2 1.6</td>
<td>51 40.5</td>
<td>63 50.0</td>
<td>6 4.8</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>3 2.4</td>
<td>59 46.8</td>
<td>52 41.3</td>
<td>7 5.6</td>
<td>5 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>8 6.3</td>
<td>60 47.6</td>
<td>48 38.1</td>
<td>6 4.8</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Variety</td>
<td>5 4.0</td>
<td>52 41.3</td>
<td>54 42.9</td>
<td>11 8.7</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Food</td>
<td>8 6.3</td>
<td>56 44.4</td>
<td>52 41.3</td>
<td>6 4.8</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Food</td>
<td>6 4.8</td>
<td>55 43.7</td>
<td>56 44.4</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
<td>5 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSEKEEPING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Appearance</td>
<td>3 2.4</td>
<td>44 34.9</td>
<td>69 54.8</td>
<td>6 4.8</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Furnishing</td>
<td>6 4.8</td>
<td>45 35.7</td>
<td>63 50.0</td>
<td>8 6.3</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath Room</td>
<td>3 2.4</td>
<td>36 28.6</td>
<td>74 58.7</td>
<td>8 6.3</td>
<td>5 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>7 5.6</td>
<td>38 30.2</td>
<td>65 51.6</td>
<td>12 9.5</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Area</td>
<td>5 4.0</td>
<td>40 31.7</td>
<td>65 51.6</td>
<td>11 8.7</td>
<td>5 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>5 4.0</td>
<td>43 34.1</td>
<td>60 47.7</td>
<td>8 6.3</td>
<td>10 7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pool</td>
<td>3 2.4</td>
<td>33 26.2</td>
<td>59 46.8</td>
<td>13 10.3</td>
<td>18 14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>4 3.2</td>
<td>37 29.4</td>
<td>60 47.6</td>
<td>11 8.7</td>
<td>14 11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENTERTAINMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Activity</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>21 16.7</td>
<td>39 31.0</td>
<td>13 10.3</td>
<td>53 42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night Club</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>11 8.7</td>
<td>25 19.8</td>
<td>38 30.2</td>
<td>52 41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night life</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>9 7.1</td>
<td>24 19.0</td>
<td>39 31.0</td>
<td>54 42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEALTH CENTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome/Information</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>21 16.7</td>
<td>39 31.0</td>
<td>13 10.3</td>
<td>53 42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>20 15.9</td>
<td>35 27.8</td>
<td>17 13.5</td>
<td>54 42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor Pool</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>18 14.3</td>
<td>38 30.2</td>
<td>15 11.9</td>
<td>55 43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>20 15.9</td>
<td>39 31.0</td>
<td>18 14.3</td>
<td>49 38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauna</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>19 15.1</td>
<td>38 30.2</td>
<td>15 11.9</td>
<td>54 42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENERAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Service</td>
<td>1 0.8</td>
<td>20 15.9</td>
<td>42 33.3</td>
<td>23 18.3</td>
<td>40 31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Center</td>
<td>1 0.8</td>
<td>21 16.7</td>
<td>45 35.7</td>
<td>21 16.7</td>
<td>38 30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>21 16.7</td>
<td>38 30.2</td>
<td>14 11.1</td>
<td>53 42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>19 15.1</td>
<td>56 44.4</td>
<td>20 15.9</td>
<td>31 24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Facilities</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>24 19.0</td>
<td>48 38.1</td>
<td>19 15.1</td>
<td>35 27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Information Channel</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>29 23.0</td>
<td>56 44.4</td>
<td>13 10.3</td>
<td>28 22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Impression</td>
<td>1 0.8</td>
<td>27 21.4</td>
<td>58 46.0</td>
<td>15 11.9</td>
<td>25 19.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
remained unknown for most foreigners and the number of visitors for a country of 72 million people is low.

A set of questions containing 39 items, a slightly modified set as used previously by Lockyer was included in our questionnaire, and the results are presented in Table 3. This lists the 39 items rating the facilities of the hotel or place of accommodation of the respondents. The items are arranged in seven groups including front office/reception, food and beverages, kitchen, housekeeping, entertainment, health centre and general. The first part relates to the rating of the hotel facilities in the area of front office, which most of the respondents believed were of good quality. Asking the respondents about the attitude of people and hoteliers found that the tourists believed that they were kind and warm receptive people.

In the second category the respondents evaluated various aspects of the food and beverages available in the hotel. Most of the respondents selected the normal option about the quality of the food and beverage servicing.

In the third category, matters related to the kitchen of the hotel such as breakfast, lunch, dinner, food variety, quality and cost of the food were evaluated by the respondents, which resulted mostly in good and normal evaluations as presented in Table 3.

Housekeeping factors such as room appearance and furnishing, bathrooms, cleanliness, outdoor areas, pools, laundry and dry cleaning were ranked as normal by most respondents, also as given in Table 3.

No respondent ticked the excellent option for the entertainment category. This section was mostly rated normal or poor. As demonstrated in Table 3, the percentage whose chose poor was higher than those choosing the normal option. A considerable percentage of the respondents (more than 40%) marked the ‘no comment’ option for the same category.

On ‘health centre’ most respondents had no comments as they had no reason to use it. Sport facilities were ranked normal to poor due to the non-availability of them for tourists.

The general category has been divided into seven items: technical services, business centres, hairdressers, shops, meeting facilities, hotel information channel, and overall impression. Most respondents considered all of them to be just normal. The overall impressions of their visits to Iran are demonstrated graphically in Graph 2. It is concluded that most respondents felt that their place of accommodation had been normal or worse.

4. Discussion

Travelers do not often choose their holiday destination based on the food they anticipate, but may still end up remembering their holiday to a certain extent on the quality of the food they consumed at the destination. This creates a conundrum in that many tourists choose holiday destinations based on one perceived aspect (e.g. beaches, accommodation etc.), but their actual satisfaction will be based on aspects (i.e. food) that they did not consider in their original holiday choice.

Asking tourists that what aspects of food they find appealing resulted in the finding that a variety of eating options was an important consideration in their destination choices. This automatically biases tourist consumers towards more developed destinations that receive a sufficient volume of visitors to support a diverse catering industry. In this study less than 40% of the respondents mentioned regional food as being important. A large proportion of consumers emphasise the importance of a variety of

Graph 2. The frequency distribution of the tourist's overall impression

- Excellent
- Good
- Normal
- Poor
- No Comments

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food products being available in their overall satisfaction with a destination. Therefore, promoting a variety of restaurants and food products may enhance destination attractiveness and consequently the economic development of the local area. As an example, it has been reported that international visitors to Australia spent US $2.4 billion on food and drink in the year ending in March 2003. Expenditure on food and drink accounted for 22% of the total expenditure by international visitors in Australia during this period. 

Nowadays, many tourists are not looking for expensive and luxurious places. Instead they are willing to pass their time in less expensive but comfortable and peaceful places. Therefore, the shortage of three star hotels as well as clean and convenient motels creates difficulties in Iran. The only solution will be through close and profound attention to the subject.

Callan summarised a number of research projects, and of particular interest is the finding that in many of these the standard of housekeeping and cleanliness was rated as the most important in the selection of accommodation by guests. The importance of cleanliness has also been identified more recently by Lockyer. In these studies it is important to note that 'price or room rate' was not rated as highly by potential guests as a deciding factor in the selection of accommodation.

Sport tourism is a multi-billion dollar business, one of the fastest growing areas of the US $4.5 trillion global travel and tourism industry. By 2011, travel and tourism are expected to be more than 10% of the global gross domestic product. The economies of cities, regions and even countries around the world are increasingly reliant on the visiting golfer and skier or the traveling football, rugby or cricket supporter. In some countries, sport can account for as much as 25% of all tourism receipts. Sport tourists are passionate, high-spending, enjoy new sporting experiences and often stimulate other tourism. Their direct benefit to a destination is cash – their indirect benefit can be years of follow-on tourists. Sport tourism is now a tool to achieve many things – to make money, create thousands of new jobs and even help change cultural perceptions such as in the Middle-East and South Africa. Regarding the significant role of sport in the tourism industry and its economic impact on the countries, this sector can become vital to enhancing the tourism industry in Iran which has many regional sports that are unknown to foreigners. It could be a useful step to introduce these sports to tourists visiting Iran. Unfortunately, not only is this not happening, but also the few sport facilities exist in the hotels, which will disappoint many tourists.

Leisure aspects typically associated with travel and tourism may be included on medical travel trips. Prospective medical tourism patients need to keep in mind the extra cost of travel and accommodation when deciding on treatment locations. Medical tourism, also known as global health, is one of the fastest growing industries in global healthcare. As the healthcare crisis worsens in the United States, Canada and Europe, the world realises the potential of attracting international patients to overseas hospitals. Iran has many expert and professional doctors in different medical fields, and some of them are internationally famous. By building newly equipped hospitals with high quality facilities according to international standards, Iran could become one of the most valuable and reliable health centres in the world. It is dramatic to have such a potential and still have a problem in satisfying the tourists’ medical needs at an acceptable level.

5. Conclusion

The urgency of tourism development in Iran is very strong. Iran needs to prioritise a tourism master plan and start on it as soon as possible. While the objectives are clear, Iran needs to make every effort possible in the marketing department to get tourism improving as soon as possible. The sooner tourism in the country is boosted, the faster the creation of jobs and economic benefits will be witnessed. In addition, the earlier Iran is able to kick-start its tourism industry, the better the chance if its international image being restored.

Using the experience of the successful countries who, despite their lack of advanced facilities are providing basics that can make a
safe and sound environment for tourists, and
give them the opportunity for site seeing,
should considered the first and basic step in
solving related problems.
A decrease in government interference to
the lowest possible level, and supporting the
private sector in developing tourism industry,
will not only make the minds and the ideas
behind the issue stronger, but also pave the
way for foreign investment to help in the ex­
pansion of the tourism industry. At the same
time, securing the cooperation of related or­
ganisations such as the Ministry of Foreign Af­
fairs, the Customs Office, Cultural Heritage,
Health Services, and Transport ministries will
be the second step in approaching the goal.
Given the potential interest of foreign tour­
ists in visiting Iran, widespread efforts have to
be launched by the national tourism organisa­
tion to provide further facilities. Greater atten­
tion has to be paid to building good but basic
hotels and guest houses, as well as providing
other facilities for the tourist. Based on the re­
search findings presented in the paper, the
main priorities for the enhancement of the
tourism sector are: improving the quality of
services, reviewing existing laws, encouraging
private sector involvement, and improvement
of the current tourism infrastructure. In this re­
spect, significant investment is required to de­
velop Iran’s tourist infrastructure to interna­
tional standards.

FOOTNOTES

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