

## **Investigating the Impacts of River Tourism on the Quality of Life of Citizens (Case study: Gohar rood River of Rasht City, Iran)**

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### ***Abstract***

*The development of river tourism depends on river quality, physical characteristics and river landscape, river marginal landscape, safety and financial safety of tourists, creating roads and facilitating tourists to spend leisure time and providing opportunities for walking on the beach. river tourism is one of the most important subdivisions of the nature tourism as a source for value added and special income for river cities. In this regard, the purpose of this study was to assess the impacts of river tourism on the life quality of citizens of Rasht. For this purpose, 200 questionnaires were distributed among citizens using random sampling method. Data was evaluated using SPSS software. The results showed that the quality of life of Rasht tourist city is moderate so that there is a significant correlation between the development of the tourism by creating new job opportunities and increasing the income of residents, as well as the prosperity of buying and selling real estate to 99%.*

***Keywords: River Tourism, Quality of life, Citizens, Gohar rood River, Rasht city.***

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### **Introduction and statement of the problem**

The tourism industry is so important in the socio-economic development of countries that the economy has called it invisible exports (Mohseni, 2009: 45) that as a source of income and employment at the national and regional levels can be an approach to the economic development in the national realm. The tourism, in particular, when the profits of other economic activities are decreasing, is a good alternative for them and a strategy for the development. Based on this, the main reason for the development of the tourism is to overcome the low level of income and provide new employment opportunities and social transformations in society, and can provide hope for poverty reduction, especially in regions that have somehow suffered from a recession (Papeli Yazdi and Saqaei, 2007: 16). Cities are regarded as one of the most visible destinations in the world, attracting millions of tourists every year. Urban tourism has now become an important activity creating the flow of work, social action and spatial changes, especially in European countries (Kazu Francoise, 2003: 94). Today, the tourism has become a dynamic economic approach with distinctive features and one of the largest and most profitable industries in the world economy (UNWTO, 2013: 2). One of the most important social developments taking place in contemporary societies is the fact that leisure time is regarded as one of the basic needs in technology-driven life. In the context of such a development, the tourism is also regarded as one of the leisure activities and has a significant impact on the human environment, economics and livelihoods of communities. It is for many years that the scope of the tourism has changed from the enclosed area of ancient places to the natural environment, and the role of beaches as one of the most important tourist destinations has become increasingly important. According to World Tourism Organization Figures, the largest number of travelers in the world relate to the river tourism sector (Nornha, 2002: 42). Cities and tourism have complementary

ties, because all kinds of the tourism need some kind of urban centers and services. Therefore, any planning for the development of the tourism should pay attention to the ability of cities to provide direct and indirect services (Lotfi, 2007: 160). The tourism impacts of cities are easily visible. Today, various categories of the tourism are seen that one of the most commonly is considered in four economic, social, cultural, physical and environmental dimensions (Najafi Kani, 2009: 3). The most important effect of this industry development is the creation of employment and income (Kazemi, 2008: 97). The river tourism has been considered one of the most important subdivisions of the nature tourism as a source for value added and special income for the river cities (Saraei, 2008: 75).

The concept of the life quality is largely regarded as satisfying life, happiness and prosperity, well-being and comfort, and reflects the level of the realization of human needs (Zielinska et al, 2011: 1). The concept of the life quality in the city includes layers of meanings and concepts, the general concept of which consists mainly of two aspects: objective and subjective aspects (Dajian, 2010: 34). The basic assumption is that there are many approaches to planning and design that points may be designed to improve the life quality of the people. Many people expect to live in cities and urban areas. Therefore, it is important to study the relationship between the characteristics of these places and residents' perception of the life quality (Marans, 2012: 10). Meanwhile, the role of beaches as one of the most important tourist destinations has become increasingly important. According to the World Tourism Organization Figures, the largest number of travelers in the world relate to the river tourism sector. The ever-popular beaches and the widespread demand for it, along with the fragile structure of these environments, have made planners more aware of sustainable development in these areas, and in order to achieve sustainable tourism with the aim of preserving the economic benefits, the promotion of the tourism and preservation of environmental resources. river stripes are the spaces that often have unbreakable links with surrounding areas and town centers. These areas are the center of the accumulation of most human activities, including trade, commerce, energy, fishing, housing, and tourism (Noronha, 2002: 42). The tourism has improved the life quality of the citizens. The growth

and development of the tourism activities can lead to profound changes in many objective and subjective indicators, macroeconomic, social, cultural, and environmental characteristics of the target communities (Mohammadpour Jabbari, 2014: 38). Kim (2002) believes that there is a relationship between the effects of the tourism and satisfaction from the different realms of the life and increases the life quality of local residents with the increase in the level of tourism development (Kim, 2002).

### **Theoretical bases**

The river tourism involves traveling from a place of residence and focusing on marine environments (Ormas, 1999: 72). The concept of the river tourism encompasses a full range of tourism, leisure and recreational activities occurring in coastal areas and near coastal waters (Khani et al., 2009: 51). The river tourism is one of the most popular types of the tourism that attracts millions of the tourists around the world to the banks of the lakes, seas and oceans, so that this kind of the tourism is the result of extreme construction in the coastal areas and an important part of these beaches (Lowton & Weaver, 2000). Today, the river tourism is one of the most important tourist activities in the world that has become a multi-purpose development with its accelerated growth, so that the development of the tourism and recreation is one of the effective factors in creating the development of the river areas and providing direct and indirect economic, social, cultural benefits and many environments for the host. The river tourism is one of the oldest types of the tourism that calls for major investment in infrastructure and the creation of the facilities and planning for the sustainable tourism development (Taheri Bajegan et al., 2014: 106). The coastal- river tourism development depends on: river quality, physical characteristics and coastal landscape, coastal marginal landscape, safety and financial safety of the tourists, road safety and accessibility for the tourists to spend their leisure time and provide opportunities for walking along the coast. (Hall and Stephan, 2002: 293). Research has shown that neglect and lack of planning about the social impacts of the tourists on the tourism area can lead to inappropriate reactions against the tourists by the hosts (people of the region) (Margaret et al., 2012: 64-73).

Another issue that is very important in planning for the coastal areas is the promotion of the quality of the tourism within the framework of sustainable development goals. The results of empirical studies have shown that the tourism, having regard to the principles of the sustainable tourism, will have a positive effect on the environment (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2008: 11). In the Bali's sustainable development project, the tourism is a part of the sustainable development, and sustainable development criteria; the sustainability of natural resources; development as a process to increase people's quality of life and the sustainability of culture (Butler et al., 2000). The realization of the sustainable tourism development in the coastal areas of the Caspian Sea depends on the consideration of all three-sided, all-round, futuristic and egalitarian approach. The first view believes that the development is sustainable when it is viewed in the political, economic and ecological context. In the second approach, estimating the current needs of the tourists, the host society and, in parallel, it protects and saves the environment and maintains equal opportunities for the future. In the third approach, inequalities between the generations and over-generations are in the use of the facilities, data and resources desired (Tollahi, 2007). Improving the life quality of the host society is an observance of equality between generations and within a generation, preserving the quality of the environment through preserving the environmental system, maintaining social and cultural cohesion among communities, and creating facilities and opportunities so that visitors can experience valuable experiences. The commission for sustainable development regards sustainable development as a development which, while meeting current needs, does not hurt the resources of future generations, and sustainable tourism development depends on the implementation of plans that, in their implementation, will restore long-term environmental conditions. Natural and human resources can be realized in tourism activities (Alvani and Pirouzbakht, 2006). In general, tourism functions associated with the life quality of the local community can be associated with desirable and undesirable outcomes, and this will greatly affect the attitude of the host community. The importance of this is because of the fact that in the tourism literature, the role of the local community as one of the pillars

of the success of tourism development has always been emphasized (Hall, 2002).

### **Background of research**

Research on the quality of life, travel and tourism shows that the travel has many positive direct and indirect benefits, such as higher levels of happiness, health promotion, increased life expectancy, increased self-esteem, raising satisfaction levels in different aspects of life and in general, life satisfaction is highlighted and affects the topics related to tourism's ability to promote and reduce the quality of the life of host communities (Neal et al 2007: 154).

Ebrahimzadeh and Aqasizadeh (2009) addressed in an attempt to analyze the factors affecting the development of the tourism in the coastal area of Chabahar and the results showed that despite the fact that the city, while having the capacity to become a tourism sample area, the multiplicity of decision makers and managerial issues has the lack of infrastructure and the weakness of advertising as a major obstacle to achieving this goal. Qodami et al. (2010), studied the role of the tourism in changing the quality of the life of the destination in Tonekabon. The results showed that the tourism in the target destination is of great importance in the economy and livelihood of the local community and as an important factor in the dimensions of different quality of the life, as well as employment and income and quality of housing, have a positive effect on health and environmental and health quality. Ajzashokouhi et al. (2014) discussed on tourism effects on the quality of the life of the citizens of Bandar Torkaman in a research study. Pourmohammadi Jabbari (2014), in a study entitled "analysis of the role of the tourism on the quality of the life of the citizens with an emphasis on the mental indicators of the case: Qeshm city (Shemiranat city)", examined the effects of the tourism on improving the quality of the life of the citizens. The results of this study indicate that the development of the tourism in the city of Qeshm can play an effective role in improving the quality of the citizens, which is not the same in different areas of the quality of the life and there is a significant difference between them. Das (2008) suggested that the quality of the life of the city is measured by the relationship between the environment and quality of the life. Popescu and Corbos (2011) explored the strategies for the urban tourism

development in the Brasso region of Romania. In this research, the improvement of infrastructures and the level of advertising, the construction of a brand of the urban tourism, the identification of target markets and increasing investment is one of the factors affecting the tourism in the city of Brasso.

**Research method**

Two types of library and field studies have been used to collect the data needed to conduct this research. The field method has been used to collect data using questionnaire and observation techniques. 200 forms of the questionnaires were distributed among citizens of Rasht. The data were analyzed by statistical software to investigate the research hypotheses. SPSS software was used to design the graphs and analyze the data and interpret the obtained data in this design.

$$n = \frac{\frac{t^2 pq}{(d)^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{N} \left( \frac{t^2 pq}{(d)^2} - 1 \right)} = 200$$

**Findings of the research**

**Descriptive findings**

**- Gender**

The information in Table 1 shows that out of a total of 200 sample population in this study, 132 subjects (49.4%) are male and 68 (50.6%) are female.

**Table 1: Gender distribution of sample population**

Gender	F	%	Percentage of cumulative frequency
Male	132	49.4	49.4
Female	68	50.6	100
Total	200	100	

Source: Research findings, 2017

**- Education level**

The level of education as a prominent feature plays a decisive role in the quality of the life of individuals. This study examines the level of education of the sample society and its distribution. Figure 1 shows the sample size of the population in this research. According to the information provided in this table, the largest group of undergraduate students with 75 students (equivalent to 36.7%) and a diploma with 50 students (equivalent to 31.8%) and the lowest respondents with PhD degrees with only 1 person (0.4 percent). The distribution in other groups is shown in the chart below.

### Analytical findings

The analysis of the indices to explain the effects of river tourism on improving the quality of the life of Rasht citizens and in the statistical population of the study, based on a one-sample t-test, showed that the river tourism has no effect on the dimensions of income gap and income disparity among citizens, the diversity of job resources, the diversity of income sources (Table 2).

**Table 2: Impact of river tourism on the quality of life of the study based on the difference between the optimal one based on the t single-sample test**

Component	T test stats	Degrees of freedom	Significance
Reduction of gaps and income differences	-22.641	199	0.000
Reduction of unemployment	11.341	199	0.000
Variety of job resources	-2.444	199	0.016
The safety of women and children in public places	-28.769	199	0.000
Reduction of unemployment	14.159	199	0.000
Waste separation	-1.490	199	NS 0.071
Being calm in urban neighborhoods	5.697	199	0.000

Source: Research findings, 2017, NS, Insignificance

The arrival of the tourists and the development of the tourism will lead to the purchase and sale of properties by the host society and will naturally lead to a stock exchange of land, but if this sale is under the supervision of the unions and the monitoring of the effective organizations in the city administration, it will not only lead to a stock market but an economic boom and there will be an increase in residents' income. Therefore, the result of Kendall's correlation test indicates that the tourism activity in Rasht has boosted real estate sales and increased revenues of real estate companies in the city and, accordingly, it can be admitted that there is a significant relationship between the development of the tourism and the sale of the property driven of this city to 99% (Table 3).

**Table 3. Relationship between tourism development and real estate sales boom using Kendal's correlation analysis**

Row	Component	The correlation coefficient	N	Sig	Result	
					Confirmed	Rejected
1	Real estate sales boom	0.780	200	0.002	**	

Source: Research findings, 2017 \*\* Significance at 99% level



Given that the development of the tourism in cities will increase job creation and job diversification and also create jobs that are highly dependent on the tourism. Spearman's correlation test reflects the fact that the prevalence of the tourism and the prosperity of service occupations affect the income of residents of this region and there is a significant correlation between the development of the tourism by creating new employment opportunities and increasing residents' income to 99% level (Table 4).

**Table 4: The relationship between tourism development and the increase in people's income using Spearman's correlation analysis**

Row	Component	The correlation coefficient	N	Sig	Result	
					Confirmed	Rejected
1	The increase in resident's income	0.408	200	0.000	**	

Source: Research findings, 2017 \*\* Significance at 99% level

### **Conclusion**

Today, the quality of life as a multidimensional and important concept in the life of societies has influenced many scientific disciplines, including tourism. Therefore, it seems necessary to investigate and recognize these effects in order to develop the tourism with an emphasis on its species and promote the quality of the life in river cities where this activity is prevalent. The arrival of the tourist has both positive effects and negative effects on the quality of the cities. According to the results of this study, the positive effects of the presence of the tourists in the tourist city of Rasht are the high quality of residential environment, quality of health and quality of leisure, as well as the negative effects of tourism in this city can be the lack of social participation. In terms of the quality of employment and income, the presence of the tourist has not affected it. Therefore, this research is intended to improve the quality of urban life as well as the living environment in the city of Rasht, and given the fact that the goals and objectives of the sustainable development and the desirable quality of the life, generally, are two on a coin, and the goals of all-encompassing planning are in the field of the sustainable development to improve the quality of the life. In this regard, the purpose of this study was to assess the impact of river tourism on the quality of the life of the citizens of Rasht. For this purpose, 200 questionnaires were distributed among the citizens using random sampling method. Data was evaluated using SPSS software. The results showed that the

quality of the life of Rasht tourist city is moderate. Therefore, there is a significant correlation between the development of the tourism by creating new employment opportunities and increasing residents' income, as well as the prosperity of real estate sales to 99%.

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