

Presenting a model of ecotourism and sustainable tourism development with an emphasis on foreign exchange and economic development of Qeshm Island

Naser Rajabi¹ , Vahid Reza Mirabi² , Khosro Moradi Shahdadi³ 

1- PhD student, Department of Business Administration, Qeshm International Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran

2- Department of Management, Faculty of Management, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

3- Assistant Professor, Department of Financial Management, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran

Receive:

20 October 2023

Revise:

05 December 2023

Accept:

05 February 2024


Keywords:

ecotourism,
tourism,
sustainable
development,
foreign exchange
production,
economic
development.

Abstract

The purpose of the current research is to provide a model of ecotourism and sustainable tourism development with an emphasis on foreign exchange and economic development of Qeshm Island. The research method is applicable in terms of purpose, and mixed (qualitative-quantitative) in terms of its implementation. The statistical population in the qualitative section includes 19 experts, including managers and experts in the field of tourism, hoteliers, travel agencies, tours and ecotours; by means of the snowball sampling method, and in the quantitative section, it includes 244 employees of the Cultural Heritage Organization, handicrafts and tourism of Qeshm Free Zone. Data collection in the qualitative part was done using semi-structured interviews of the members of the statistical community, and data collection in the quantitative part was done through a questionnaire. In the data analysis of the qualitative part, the coding process in the MAXQDA 2018 software was used, and in the quantitative part, SPSS 16 and AMOS software were used; and the data was analyzed using the factor analysis method. The results in the qualitative section showed that 207 interview codes, 68 subcategories, and 14 categories were extracted. Causal factors include cultural and social factors, the potential of Qeshm Island for tourism and economic and political factors, background features including geographical location, capacity and potential facilities of Qeshm and geosites, intervening conditions including lack of strategy and proper planning and infrastructural problems as well as strategies and interactions include goal-setting and strategy determination to achieve the goal, education and culture building, and providing suitable infrastructure for tourism. The results of quantitative analysis show the significance of measurement models and structural equations at the confidence level of 95%.

Please cite this article as (APA): Rajabi, N., Mirabi, V. R., & Moradi Shahdadi, K. (2024). Presenting a model of ecotourism and sustainable tourism development with an emphasis on foreign exchange and economic development of Qeshm Island. *Journal of value creating in Business Management*, 4(3), 27-51.

 <https://doi.org/10.22034/jvcbm.2023.409161.1154>

Publisher: Research Centre of Resources
Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business

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Corresponding Author: Vahid Reza Mirabi

Email: vrmirabi@yahoo.com

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Ecotourism generally refers to tourism activities that are environmentally accountable and whose purpose is to protect the environment, improve people's knowledge about the environment, and local economic development. (Buckley, 2009) Ecotourism is usually related to natural areas and wild environments, and protects natural resources and wild species, and promotes the local economy (De Grosbois & Fennell, 2021). Ecotourism has become an integral part of tourism to increase awareness about environmental protection and reduce the negative effects of tourism while using sustainable natural and cultural tourism attractions (Darda & Bhuiyan, 2022). Sustainable development is a new concept that was formed after the industrial revolution and the problems created in connection with the industrialization of cities and the technological development of cities and the economic, cultural, political and social connection and special attention to ecological considerations (Masrouri Jannett & Falahat, 2016). Sustainable tourism is a sustainable method in the tourism industry and looks at all the effects of tourism, either positive or negative, with the aim of maximizing positive effects and minimizing negative effects (Mohammed, 2022). Ecotourism is a sustainable alternative to degraded livelihoods around protected areas in developing countries, and its contribution to poverty reduction is evident in terms of employment and income generation. As a result, studies of ecotourism partnerships evaluating have traditionally focused on the accumulation and distribution of economic benefits (Agyeman et al, 2019). Based on the said material, the researcher is trying to answer the question: How are ecotourism and sustainable tourism development with an emphasis on foreign exchange and economic development of Qeshm Island?

Theoretical framework

Tourism and ecotourism

Tourism is an economic and social activity that includes the travel and stay of people in places and areas outside of their residence. This activity includes observing tourist attractions, culture and entertainment in different destinations. Tourism can help the economic and cultural development of different regions and play an important role in creating jobs and increasing local income (Camilleri, 2018). Ecotourism is considered as a branch of tourism that focuses on environmental protection, sustainable development and promotion of local economy. Ecotourism pays attention to natural areas and pristine environments and tries to preserve them. This type of tourism emphasizes social and environmental responsibility and emphasizes the direct relationship with local communities and the protection of natural resources (Fennell, 2014).

Sustainable Development

Development and sustainability is one of the relatively new concepts in the world development literature, and was first used in the United Nations Summit under the title of Human Environment in Stockholm in 1372. Sustainability is an effort to achieve the best results in human and natural environment programs that are carried out for the present and unlimitedly for the future. Sustainability is a local, sensible, cooperative, and balanced process; performed in a balanced ecological environment, without export its problems to the surrounding areas or leave them on the shoulders of future generations (Asadiyan, 2023).

Currency exchange production and economic development

Currency production means less import and more export of goods and services. Economic development means increasing production, employment, welfare and economic growth. These two concepts are directly related to each other (Cypher, 2014).

Ruzbeh et al, (2023) investigated the presentation of the green governance model with a sustainable development approach in the health system (the case study of hospitals in Kerman city). The research findings showed that the causal factors include: balanced and integrated management, service provision, and financial resources; background factors Include: legal environment, political environment, cultural and social environment, and technology; intervention factors include: government policies; management of change strategies include: green governance affairs, contractual affairs, and partnership affairs; consequences include: creating alignment between policy goals and structure and culture in the health sector, promotion of administrative and environmental health, dynamism and adapting to changes and developments in the health system.

Nikfar (2023) investigated the evaluation and analysis of the role of ecotourism in urban development (case study: Zone 1 of Tehran). The results of the research showed that Tehran region 1 has the capabilities and potential of many natural attractions to attract ecotourism, and economic, institutional, social and cultural factors are considered to be the most important obstacles and challenges for the development of ecotourism in Tehran region 1, and ecotourism in Tehran region 1 can also play an effective role in the goals of urban development of Tehran city.

Research methodology

The research method is applicable in terms of purpose, and mixed (qualitative-quantitative) in terms of its implementation. The statistical population in the qualitative section includes 19 experts, including managers and experts in the field of tourism, hoteliers, travel agencies, tours and ecotours; by means of the snowball sampling method, and in the quantitative section, it includes 244 employees of the Cultural Heritage Organization, handicrafts and tourism of Qeshm Free Zone. Data collection in the qualitative part was done using semi-structured interviews of the members of the statistical community, and data collection in the quantitative part was done through a questionnaire.

Research findings

In the data analysis of the qualitative part, the coding process in the MAXQDA 2018 software was used, and in the quantitative part, SPSS 16 and AMOS software were used; and the data was analyzed using the factor analysis method. The results in the qualitative section showed that 207 interview codes, 68 subcategories, and 14 categories were extracted. Causal factors include cultural and social factors, the potential of Qeshm Island for tourism and economic and political factors, background features including geographical location, capacity and potential facilities of Qeshm and geosites, intervening conditions including lack of strategy and proper planning and infrastructural problems as well as strategies and interactions include goal-setting and strategy determination to achieve the goal, education and culture building, and providing suitable infrastructure for tourism. The results of quantitative analysis show the significance of measurement models and structural equations at the confidence level of 95%.

Conclusion

The current research was conducted with the aim of providing a model of ecotourism and sustainable tourism development with an emphasis on foreign exchange and economic development of Qeshm Island. The results of this research are in agreement with the results of

Ruzbeh et al, (2023), Nikfar (2023), Mobasheri et al, (2023), Ghasemlu et al, (2022), Salman et al, (2022), Darda & Bhuiyan (2022), Hashemi Asl (2020), and Agyeman et al, (2019). Nikfar (2023) showed that the city of Tehran has many capabilities and potentials of natural attractions to attract ecotourism, and economic, institutional, social and cultural factors are considered to be the most important obstacles and challenges for the development of ecotourism in the 1st region of Tehran, and ecotourism in Tehran region 1 can also play an effective role in the goals of urban development of Tehran city.

According to the results of this research, it is suggested that the development of sustainable tourism in Qeshm Island requires extensive and coordinated measures. Among the important actions, we can point out the examples of the experiences of successful countries and cities, protecting tourist places by establishing laws, promoting ecotourism and encouraging ecotourism activities. Also, the development of suitable infrastructure for tourism, the use of renewable energy sources, and the support of local communities and economies are also of great importance. These measures, if implemented correctly, can help develop sustainable tourism and preserve the environment and local culture in Qeshm Island.