Spatial Analysis of Tourists’ Sense of Security and its Impact on Tourism Development (Case Study: The City of Sari)

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Given the expanding tourism market and economic crisis affecting conventional industries, tourism has increasingly been considered as a remedy for urban economy. There are numerous key factors in sustainable development of tourism which should be taken into account. In addition to factors such as the dynamic growth of management, climate change, poverty reduction and protection support for tourists and residents, security is of substantial significance. The success or failure of a tourism destination depends, more than any other economic activity, on its ability to offer a safe and insured environment for the visitors. Positive and satisfactory experience of visitors is a proper index for tourists’ willingness to visit the tourism destination a second time in the future.

2. Theoretical Framework

Security is synonymous with being safe, safety, peace and comfort whereas it is the complete opposite of fears, phobias and panics. As a result, security or sense of security is one of the important needs of anyone in their social life so as to achieve peace, assurance and quality of life. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is one of the theories explaining security; Maslow (1960) classifies humans’ needs into five categories including physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. In this hierarchy, he has placed safety immediately after the basic physiological needs and believes that unless the individuals’ needs at the lower levels are met, it would be less possible to tend to those needs at higher levels. By asserting social relationships in social systems, the school of functionalism considers the presence of safety in light of structural coordination, integrity and social solidarity. The tourism sustainable development approach is a shift from conventional approaches of neoclassic economy in the area of tourism development.

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to a general systemic approach. The systemic approach regards tourism destination management as a purposeful system consisting of various, related elements in which a set of functions and activities work together for the system’s purpose. As one of the functions of tourism system, successful safety and security provides a seamless systemic approach. The success and sustainable growth of tourism depends on the proper, coordinated performance of numerous interconnected factors and elements; “security of tourists and tourism destination” is one of these important factors.

3. Methodology

In terms of purpose and method, the present inquiry is an applied study conducted using the descriptive approach, survey and correlations. The population of the study included all tourists who had traveled to Sari in 2016. Given the fluctuations in the number of tourists at different time periods, the individual estimation method was used to estimate the sample population (100 individuals were selected in each urban region) through the available sampling method. For data collection, library and field studies were employed. The independent variable of sense of security was assessed through 23 items in three dimensions including social and mental, economic and financial, and physical and environmental; the independent variable of tourism development was assessed using 4 items. As for the analysis of data, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation), inferential statistics (K-means cluster analysis model, Pearson correlation coefficient, multi-variable linear regression and grey TOPSIS technique using SPSS and Arc GIS softwares) were used.

4. Results and Discussion

1. In this study, four criteria including recommending the trip to family and friends, positive mental image of the city, increased time of residents and willingness for a second visit in the future were identified based on theoretical studies in order to prioritize the three districts of Sari city in terms of tourism development index, followed by an analysis using the grey TOPSIS technique. The results showed that district 1 is at the highest rank in terms of tourism development while district 3 and 2 are respectively at the lowest and middle levels.

2. To indicate the sense of security level in three districts of Sari, K-means cluster analysis was used. According to this model, it was shown that in general, sense of security in districts 1 and 2 is at the highest level whereas it is at the lowest across district 3. The results of regression analysis shows that the sense of social-mental and economic-financial security have been effective at a significance level of 0.01.

3. To obtain the relation between the threefold sense of security and tourism development across the districts of Sari, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. The results of regression analysis shows that the sense of social-mental and economic-financial security have been effective at a significance level of 0.01.
5. Conclusion and Suggestions

According to the results of study, moving from the north, west, east and city center (districts 2 and 1) towards south (district 3), the physical and environmental texture of the city becomes more heterogeneous and the population increases compared to district 1, while the household dimension increases relative to both districts. On the one hand, the highest number of immigrations to Sari, which has been rising since the 1990s, consists of residents in the rural settlements inside this province (almost 60%), the majority of whom have settled in district 3 and the surrounding areas; this has led to heterogeneity of the physical construction of the city as well as weakening the level of social bonds between the original residents of the city and immigrant which is a threat against urban security. It also confirms Jacobs’ theory who, in explaining urban security, asserts and emphasizes the interaction between physical space and social processes forming the environment. It also confirms the school of functionalism which regards the presence of security in light of structural coordination, integrity and social solidarity. Consequently, the urban sense of security is one of the basic needs of any cities which, unfortunately, has been missing from the chain of management and tourism development plans; the significance of this problem becomes more apparent through more investigations. As a result, the following recommendations are listed in order to enhance the sense of security level across Sari:

- Timely and immediate investigation of tourists’ complaints by security and law enforcement agencies, using closed-circuit cameras in tourism environments,
- Monitoring the proportionality of prices with the quality of products offered to tourists,
- Coordination between urban and tourism managers in line with organizing abandoned lands scattered across the city,
- Organizing inappropriate applications in the vicinity of tourism attractions,
- Proper lighting for tourism environments,
- Improving the quality of passages toward tourism centers,
- Developing green areas in the city.

Keywords: Security, Sense of security, Tourism development, Grey TOPSIS Technique

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