Survey on the Function of Ecotourism and its Effects on Rural Regions using SWOT Analytical Method

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Received: 12/02/2011  Accepted: 14/06/2012

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Tourism is an ancient phenomenon which has existed in human societies for many years. With the development of humankind in different historical periods, tourism has gradually changed to a technical, economical and social subject. An important part of world tourism activities is based on a powerful tendency to use nature, known by “Ecotourism”. Ecotourism is an international concept that emphasizes on conservation of natural resources and wishes inexhaustible development. Job creation and local development are the results of ecotourism. Good Climate, geographical and topographical characteristics, exceptional ecological conditions, forest and ranch coverage, green regions, wild world and innumerable hunting grounds are among the greatest tourism attractions of Kurdistan province. Out of all the cities and villages in Kurdistan, “Awraman Takht” is one of the most important centers of tourism attraction and has got a very rich history which is regarded by all tourists. The main aspects of this village in this regard are as follow: unique natural attractions, special environment, historical sight, mountains and valleys, variety of the weather during the year and variety of plants. So, recognition and assessment of potential capabilities and development of infrastructures can facilitate the growth of tourism.

Methodology:

In this research, questionnaire and interview methods have been used to study ecotourism in “Awraman Takht”. The Statistical population consisted of families living in the village, tourists and employees of institutions related to tourism in the city of “Sarvabad”. The data obtained was analyzed with the SWOT method. SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. By definition, Strengths (S) and Weaknesses (W) are considered to be internal factors over which you have some measure of control. Also, by definition, Opportunities (O) and Threats (T) are considered to be external factors over which you have essentially no control. SWOT analysis is the most renowned tool for audit and analysis of the overall strategic position.

Results:

Analysis of the results is provided below:
- The main strength is the beautiful rural landscape with gardens and green spaces.
- The main weakness is lack of planning and public investment in this village.
- The main opportunity is greater attention to planning and investment.
- The main threat is lack of careful management to ecotourism issues.

Conclusion:

Based on what was said, rural tourism development strategies in “Awraman takht” are provided in the following:
1- Opportunity-Strength (OS) Strategies (Use strengths to take advantage of opportunities): a) Further development of ecotourism and natural tourism, b) Development of cultural tourism as a result of religious ceremonies in the village of “Awraman Takht”, and c) Increase the desire to travel to “Awraman takht” between urban areas and other provinces in order to create employment and income for rural residents.

2- Threat-Strength (TS) Strategies (Use strengths to avoid threats): a) Expanding advertising programs to introduce more natural, humanities and architectural attractions of the village of “Awraman takht” in the provincial centers, b) Preparation of manuals for tourists, and c) Determining the optimal population density in order to reduce pressure on pastures and vegetation cover.

3- Opportunity-Weakness (OW) Strategies (Overcome weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities): a) Better use of public participation, b) Development of institutions and organizations in village of “Awraman takht” to educate people and tourists, and c) Investments in order to improve and solve the water shortage problem in the village.

4- Threat-Weakness (TW) Strategies (Minimize weaknesses and avoid threats): a) Increase investments of institutions and relevant agencies in ecotourism in the village, b) Encouraging entrepreneurs and investors to set up residential and recreation complexes in “Awraman takht”, c) Educate and inform people about how to deal with tourists, and d) Encouraging people to participate in the development of tourist infrastructures and various facilities.

Keywords:

strategies, rural development, SWOT, ecotourism, Awraman takht
References


