

Participation and Relationship between Government, Nongovernmental organizations and Local communities in Rural Tourism Development in Tehran Province from Local People and the Authorities' Point of View

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Abstract

Local communities and nongovernmental organizations play a crucial role in rural development process. Community participation often means the involvement of people or community with their government or state. The participation of local community and nongovernmental organizations can be an important factor for tourism development. Tehran province has an urban population of about 12,500,000 and 1051 villages. The most of villages are located in mountainous areas with a very pleasant weather and many potential tourism attractions. Tehran province is regarded as one of the provinces that enjoy a suitable position to plan and create rural tourism for it. However, it still lacks a compiled and sustainable plan, especially participatory planning and also participatory implementation in this field. This research attempts to find the local people and the authorities' standpoint about the necessity of participation in rural tourism development in Tehran province. The study also tries to show their views in the case of existent participation between Government, Local people and Nongovernmental organizations in such development. Furthermore, it has found the kind of relationship among these three groups in order to attain to the rural tourism development. These findings absolutely are the first steps to future participatory planning and implementation in the field of rural development plans and also rural tourism plans.

Keywords: rural development, rural tourism, participation, local communities

1. Introduction

Nowadays, tourism is identified as one of inseparable elements in rural development strategy (Sharpley, 2002:234). Tourism has many potential benefits for rural areas (Frederick, 1992). Governments play a key role in rural developmental programs. The programs are guaranteed to be tremendously successful *once they are backed by the* participation of local people and each organization, which are working or able to work in villages.

Regarding various effects of tourism on different parts of a society, governments are obliged to intervene or participate in its activities in a wide-ranging level (Cooper, 2003). In fact, governments have a crucial role to play in tourism industry. This is true because what communities can do depends on some opportunities and abilities that can be shaped by government policies, regulation and taxes. Here, the opportunities and abilities are related to some things like incentives, access to skills, training, prices, and so on (CTSA). This is true enough that nongovernmental organizations¹ also can have different roles in tourism in general and rural tourism in particular. It means they can play a key role in the development plans for rural tourism; some plans like participating, implementing, investing, etc.

Although Iran ranks the tenth in the world concerning natural resources and tourism attractions, the statistics show that there has been a very slow trend regarding the number of tourists traveling to Iran that released over the past years by the World Tourism Organization. Accordingly, the bitter fact reveals how the tourism industry has the minor role in Iran's gross national income (Kargar, 2007). With regard to abundant natural, historical, cultural, agricultural, and handicraft potentials in the rural areas, rural tourism can play a prominent part in wide-ranging fields. These fields include; creation of jobs, enhancement of agricultural and handicraft products, formation of rural organizations, protection of natural resources, enrichment of cultural issues, and safeguarding of historical sites. Thus, it can persuade the rural development and also pave the way for a safe leisure time for a lot of people who live in metropolitan areas like the Capital City of Tehran.

2. Research literature

Participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them (World Bank, 1994). According to some experts' belief community participation is an essential part of community development and one of the factors in the community capacity building process, which allows involvement of people in different stages of decision-makings (Aref & Ma'rof, 2008b; Bozlul, 1994; Ghai, 1998; Macnaghten & Jacobs, 1997). Rural tourism has developed significantly worldwide and has acquired an important role for the development of each country's rural territories. (Reichel et al., 2000; Kneafsey, 2001; Thomson, 2004). Many studies showed effectiveness of participatory planning in rural development also rural tourism initiatives. Participants could include NGOs, volunteer service groups, municipal governments and their economic development departments, tourism associations, visitor bureaus, town business associations, regional representatives of provincial tourism development and any other party which might be involved in or affected by tourism. Community participation can be an important factor for community capacity building in tourism development and without community

¹ In this research nongovernmental organizations are predicated on each organization that works without the government's intervention and are not controlled by the state such as: NGOs, companies and private sector.

participation, there are obviously no partnerships, no development, and no program (*Miranda, 2007*). Telfer and Sharpley in 2008 propounded that local communities are increasingly being drawn into tourism not only from the demand side, as tourists actively seek out new destinations and communities to experience, but also from the supply side, as communities are becoming aware of the potential of the products they can offer to tourists and the economic gains that can be made (*Telfer & Sharpley, 2008:115*). According to UN, residents of a community must participate in the implementation of strategies and the operation of the tourism infrastructure, services and facilities (*U.N, 2003*).

Private sector and other profit and nonprofit institutions can play important roles in rural development and rural tourism development.

Based on Rezvani's opinion these organizations can play different parts in tourism plans development such as: collaboration, coordination, management, control and guiding (*Rezvani, 2008*).

The private sector has and will continue to play a critically important role in the further development and promotion of tourism. The private sector bears the major risks of tourism investment as well as a large part of the responsibility for satisfying the visitor. The delivery of quality tourism services and providing the customer with value for money are largely private sector responsibilities. Furthermore, the private sector is in a position to promote the involvement of local communities in tourism ventures by, inter alia, establishing partnership tourism ventures with communities (*Government of South Africa, 1996*).

According to Clark's assessment, the planning of projects and policies can be strongly influenced by inviting NGO leaders to serve on government commissions or by holding public consultations in which grassroots organization are able to voice their concern and experience and they should be used in program implementation, involvement in policy-making (serving on committees, assisting with public consultations) and other subjects (*Clark, www.gdrc.org/ngo/state-ngo.html*). Based on Mogaladi's opinion, to achieve community development it is necessary for local government to create an environment that offers opportunities for effective engagement of people in local government development planning (*Mogaladi, 2007*).

It seems the participation of government, local communities and NGOs in rural tourism development is the essential step and their relation and the kind of relationship between them is so important.

3. Rural tourism in Tehran province

As the most densely-inhabited province in Iran, Tehran province enjoys a unique condition for a rural tourism planning. Indeed, its large urban population provides a suitable situation to form and develop the rural tourism. What is more, the variability of its climate makes it possible to develop the rural tourism in each season. In this case, Tehran with an urban population of about 12,500,000 and 1,552 villages, most of which are located in mountainous areas with a very pleasant weather and potential tourism attractions, is so attractive. These attractions can be shown in two categories. The first is the historical sites include; cisterns, ice places, bathroom houses, bridges, caravanserais, thrones, bas-relief inscriptions, prisons, cemeteries, etc. The second is natural attractions include; national parks, afforestation parks, springs, mineral water springs, waterfalls, natural caves, small lakes and other attractive places. Tehran province is regarded as one of the provinces that enjoy a suitable position to plan and create rural and eco- tourism.

Over recent years, only a few villages of Tehran province were selected as pilot tourism villages in a top-down planning initiative. It is based on their available potentialities rather than the basis of their actual and hidden potentialities in order to implement future tourism plans. However, it still lacks a compiled and sustainable plan in this field; only some well-weathered rural regions adjacent to Tehran are spontaneously arranged to be as the tourist sites. Nonetheless such actions have seriously damaged the local environment on account of the lack of planning and insufficient monitoring.

4. Research methodology

This research was conducted in a quantitative method. That is based on questionnaires and statistic analyses. We used the field research method based on questionnaire in presence of questioner (face to face) in this survey. There are two kinds of questionnaires for two groups of people that have been questioned in the study. For getting better results we interviewed with many members of these groups. We used Likert spectrum to rate questionnaire responses.

5. Information foundation:

5.1 Population: in this research the statistical society is classified within two categories:

- 1- The category of local people society including 122 people
This category consists of permanent and non-permanent rural residents in Tehran province. They are questioned in a random manner.
- 2- The category including 119 people of the authorities and managers that are divided into two subdivisions:
 - a- Governmental authorities and managers, most of whom assume top managerial levels concerning rural affairs management in governmental organizations;
 - b- Local authorities and managers consisting of officials and responsible managers in different parts of governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

5.2 Statistical methods and results analysis: The statistical methods of the study are based on two groups include; local people and the authorities that were delivered especial a face to face questionnaire to each one. After collecting, the researcher edit them in the excel format. Then for studying the descriptive and demographic results descriptive statistical tests are used by one sample compare Kolmogrov Smirnov test and for comparing the means, from non parametric T test and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test from spss statistic Microsoft version19.

5.3 Tools of data collection: Data are collected with questionnaires, interview method and recording square data. We used Likert spectrum to rate questionnaire responses

6. The local people's standpoint about the necessity of participation (or favorite situation) in rural tourism development in Tehran province

Based on the table No.1, local people were asked about six participatory factors that can impact on rural tourism development. The first three priorities in agreement range of local people's belief include:

- 1- People should participate in the implementation of tourism plans
- 2- People should participate with council in tourism programs
- 3- The tourism budget should be provided by government, local people and nongovernmental organizations (investing in rural tourism)

Table No.1- The local people’s opinion about the necessity of participation (or favorite situation) in rural tourism development in Tehran province

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Government and nongovernmental organizations should consult with local people	122	4.2951	.75721	3.033	.000
People should participate in tourism plans implementation	122	4.3770	.55040	3.794	.000
The tourism budget should be provided by government, local people and nongovernmental organizations (investing in rural tourism)	122	3.8361	1.13808	3.620	.000
Rural tourism local management should be done by government, local people and nongovernmental organizations	122	3.6721	1.03207	3.187	.000
Local people should participate in making rural tourism plans	122	4.2049	.72657	3.210	.000
People should participate with council in rural tourism programs	122	4.2131	.89285	3.757	.000

In all of the six factors in table No.1 the local people’s agreement is in the high range. It shows, local people believe that these factors should be done in favorite situation and they are ready and want to participate in rural tourism programs from the first step, planning, to upper stages. In many rural areas the local indigenous populations are regarded as an essential part of the rural tourism product and as such, national, regional and community tourism planners are increasingly aware of the importance of local participation in the development of tourism. While there have been calls for more balanced public participation in tourism development, in practice this has proved difficult to achieve. Despite (or perhaps because of) the increasing economic, political and cultural impact of globalization, the literature on tourism planning and development is steadfast in its advocacy of local community involvement as a prerequisite to tourism development (*Feighery,2002:2*).

7. The local people’s point of view about Participation in rural tourism development in Tehran province in existing situation

In this section respondents were asked the set of questions about seven participatory factors that can impact on rural tourism development that is going on in Tehran province. In the agreement range of local people’s viewpoint, based on the table No.2, the first three priorities are noticeable as follow:

- 1- People give their land for tourism (in their village)
- 2-People have mutual relationship with their village council
- 3-Village council gets people’s participation

Table No.2- The local people’s opinion about Participation in rural tourism development in Tehran province in existing situation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Government consult with people in making tourism plans	122	2.7295	1.16447	3.224	.000
Government, local people and nongovernmental organizations do local tourism management	122	2.9754	1.03223	2.533	.000
Village council gets people’s participation	122	2.7951	1.20562	3.252	.000
Village council makes participatory meetings	122	2.8852	1.13689	3.023	.000
People give their land for tourism	120	2.8000	1.06590	3.635	.000
People participate in making tourism plans	122	2.9836	1.06005	2.937	.000
People have mutual relationship with their village	122	3.5820	1.01916	3.297	.000

council					
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As the results of the table, although there is participation in rural tourism development in Tehran province, that is not in the high agreement range of local people's point of view.

Based on table No.1 local people believe that their participation in the field of rural tourism is very important, especially, in rural tourism plans implementation, investing in rural tourism, making rural tourism plans and rural tourism local management. But in existing situation (based on table No.2) their participation in this field is not strong, especially in making rural tourism plans and rural tourism local management.

8. The necessity for participation in rural tourism development in Tehran province (or favorite situation) from the authorities' opinion

In this stage the authorities were asked about seven related subjects on the necessity of participation in rural tourism development. According to the results in table No.3 the first three priorities of the authorities' beliefs are:

- 1- For implementing tourism plans, local people, government and nongovernmental organizations should have mutual relations.
- 2- Local and nongovernmental organizations should participate in tourism plans implementation.
- 3- Participation between government, people and nongovernmental organizations in making plans is absolutely necessary.

Table No.3- The necessity of participation in rural tourism development from authorities' opinion

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Participation between government, people and nongovernmental organizations in making plans is absolutely necessary	119	4.5546	.56294	3.986	.000
Major developmental tourism planning should be done by government, people and nongovernmental organizations	119	4.4034	.65509	3.157	.000
Rural people should participate in tourism plans implementation	119	4.2437	.91101	2.929	.000
Local and nongovernmental organizations should participate in tourism plans implementation	119	4.5546	.65996	4.149	.000
Local management of Tourism plans should be done by government, local people and nongovernmental organizations	118	4.2288	.60498	3.810	.000
The tourism plans' budget should be provided by government, local people and nongovernmental organizations (investing in rural tourism)	117	4.0513	.69290	3.702	.000
For implementing tourism plans, local people, government and nongovernmental organizations should have mutual relationships	119	4.6387	.53252	4.437	.000

The results in table No.3 shows that fortunately all of factors are in the high agreement range of the authorities' opinion such as participatory planning, participatory implementing and participatory managing the rural tourism plans. It shows nearly all of the authorities believe to local people and nongovernmental organizations' participation in planning, implementing and managing the rural tourism plans.

Social-economy organizations can be used in the management, ownership, and operation of publicly owned tourism attractions and resources. Often, a tourism resource can be owned by a

provincial, regional, or city government but operated by a volunteer, membership-based, or not-for-profit association. (Johnson, 2009: 150-159)

9. Comparison between the necessity of participation in tourism development in Tehran province (in favorite situation) from the authorities' opinion and existing situation from local people's point of view

In this step five items were compared in the field of the necessity of participation in rural tourism development from the authorities' opinion and existing situation from local people's point of view. According to table No.4 all of the items have "Significant difference".

Table No.4- comparison between the necessity of participation in tourism development from the authorities' opinion and existing situation from local people's point of view.

Compared item	(Local people) Mean	(The authorities) Mean	z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	interpretation
Government, local people and nongovernmental organizations manage (should manage) local tourism plans with participating together	2.9754	4.2288	-7.825	.000	Significant difference
Nongovernmental organizations are active (should be active) in tourism projects implementation	2.7951	4.5546	-8.558	.000	Significant difference
Government consult (should consult) with people in making plans	2.7295	4.5546	-8.645	.000	Significant difference
People give (should give) the land for tourism	2.8000	3.7647	-6.955	.000	Significant difference
People participate (should participate) in providing tourism plans	2.9836	4.4118	-8.003	.000	Significant difference

10. Participatory factors in the field of investment, supervision and evaluation from local people's point of view

In this section local people were asked about five items in the field of investment, supervision and evaluation of the rural tourism programs by government and local people. Based on results the first three priorities of their beliefs are:

- 1- Government's supervision & evaluation of the rural tourism programs
- 2- People's supervision over tourism plans
- 3- Government's investment in rural tourism programs

Table No.5 - Participatory factors in the field of investment, supervision and evaluation from local people's point of view

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Government's supervision & evaluation of the rural tourism programs	122	4.0574	.86530	3.601	.000
Government's investment in rural tourism programs	122	4.3770	.62095	3.236	.000
People's investment in rural tourism programs	122	3.3443	1.13378	2.957	.000
People's supervision over tourism plans	122	3.7787	1.07958	3.251	.000
People's evaluation of tourism plans	122	3.5164	1.10770	2.951	.000

According to table No.5 with respect to means and Kolmogorov – Smirnov Z numbers, all items are in the agreement range of their belief and they believe that these items should be done by government and local people but government’s supervision & evaluation of the rural tourism programs is in the first priority. They believe that people’s supervision over tourism plans is so important but people’s evaluation of tourism plans is not in a very important degree of their agreement.

11. Participatory factors in the field of investment, supervision and evaluation from the authorities’ point of view

Based on table No.6, a five ranked questionnaire used to identify authorities attitude to participatory actions. Their answers show three priorities in attitude as:

- 1- Government’s supervision & evaluation of the rural tourism programs
- 2- People’s evaluation of tourism plans
- 3- People’s supervision over tourism plans

Table No.6 - Participatory factors in the field of investment, supervision and evaluation from the authorities’ point of view

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Government’s supervision & evaluation of the rural tourism programs	119	4.2353	.57793	3.970	.000
Government’s investment in rural tourism programs	118	4.3136	.72441	2.830	.000
People’s investment in rural tourism programs	119	3.8151	.92943	2.464	.000
People’s supervision over tourism plans	117	3.8632	.99919	3.501	.000
People’s evaluation of tourism plans	119	3.9664	.86292	3.790	.000

Based on table No.6, means and Kolmogorov – Smirnov Z numbers show that all items are in the agreement range of the authorities’ beliefs and they believe that these items should be done by government and local people. According their belief, government’s supervision & evaluation of rural tourism programs is in the first priority. Both authorities and local people have a common attitude about this item and it is the first priority of their beliefs. Based on their opinion local people's evaluation of tourism plans is more important than their supervision and there is difference between local people’s point of view and the authorities’ in this item.

In the field of investment in rural tourism programs both local people and the authorities believe that it should be done by government and local people.

12. Conclusion

Based on results found from the authorities and local people’s point of view, participation of government, local people and nongovernmental organizations in rural tourism development is very important. They believe that participation and mutual relationships are necessary for rural tourism development from the first step to other stages such as: planning, implementing, management, supervision and evaluation. Beside these, they believe that in investing and providing the tourism budget all of these three groups should participate.

13. Suggestion

Based on research findings it seems participation of local people, government and nongovernmental organizations is the most important factor in rural tourism development in Tehran province. In this regard, the researcher believes that the manner of this participation is too important. In order to get an efficient participation, researcher offers a Conceptual and Functional Model.

In this model all of three groups should have a mutual two way relationship with each other and with rural tourism development as follows:

-Government and its relationship with local people and nongovernmental organizations

Since governments are indisputably viewed as the focal points in sustainable development plans, their active contribution is seen crucially vital in many areas including; infrastructural construction and maintenance, , doing education in the field of developmental plans and financial support as well as tourism process and development control. Taking the prevailing governmental structure into account, most important state organizations involved in rural as well as rural tourism development include Jihad- e - Agriculture Ministry, Road and Transportation Ministry, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Environment Protection Organization, Iran Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO), and State Welfare Organization. In this regard, the Government (i.e. the relevant above-cited authorities) has to establish a two-way relationship with local communities as well as non-governmental officials involved in rural and tourism development. Such inter-connection may include as follows:

a- Government-Local Communities Inter-connection

The Government and local communities should set up a two-sided and fully participatory inter-relationship so that they might pave the way for participatory planning and decision-makings concerning rural tourism.

Firstly, the Government is responsible to develop human resources in villages; training programs should be arranged to empower all walks of life in rural societies including women and the youth. Such trainings may cover the following fields:

- ❖ Social and individual empowering trainings (communications, participation, self-confidence, etc.),
- ❖ Skillfulness trainings (skills on tourism development, agriculture, handicrafts, etc.),
- ❖ Environmental protection trainings (mechanisms to protect and revive the environment),
- ❖ Health trainings (individual, social, job health, etc.),
- ❖ Marketing trainings (improving the quality of products, food processing and packaging, etc.)

Secondly, the Government may shoulder the following tasks:

- ❖ Setting up and maintaining infrastructures,
- ❖ Financing rural entrepreneurs in a bid to create tourism-related rural employment opportunities in a variety of fields including agriculture, handicrafts and tourist services,
- ❖ Supporting farmers in an effort to establish tourism farms, and

❖ Backing the formation of rural tourist resorts.

b- Government-Nongovernmental organizations inter-connection

Non-governmental organizations involved in tourism activities may include all private companies and institutes, community based organizations and non-profit organizations, as well as service and cooperative companies. These companies and institutions can be considered as an arm for the Government to achieve rural development goals in general, and rural tourism development, in particular. Thus, the Government should commence a dynamic and reciprocal interaction with these companies and organizations in order that long-term and short-term planning for tourism are arranged and accomplished in the best way possible. The most important task the Government bears in this regard is defined in the concerned region at the very outset. That is, the Government shall continue her political and financial support until they can find a suitable standpoint in their activities throughout the region.

c- Nongovernmental organizations -People Inter-connection

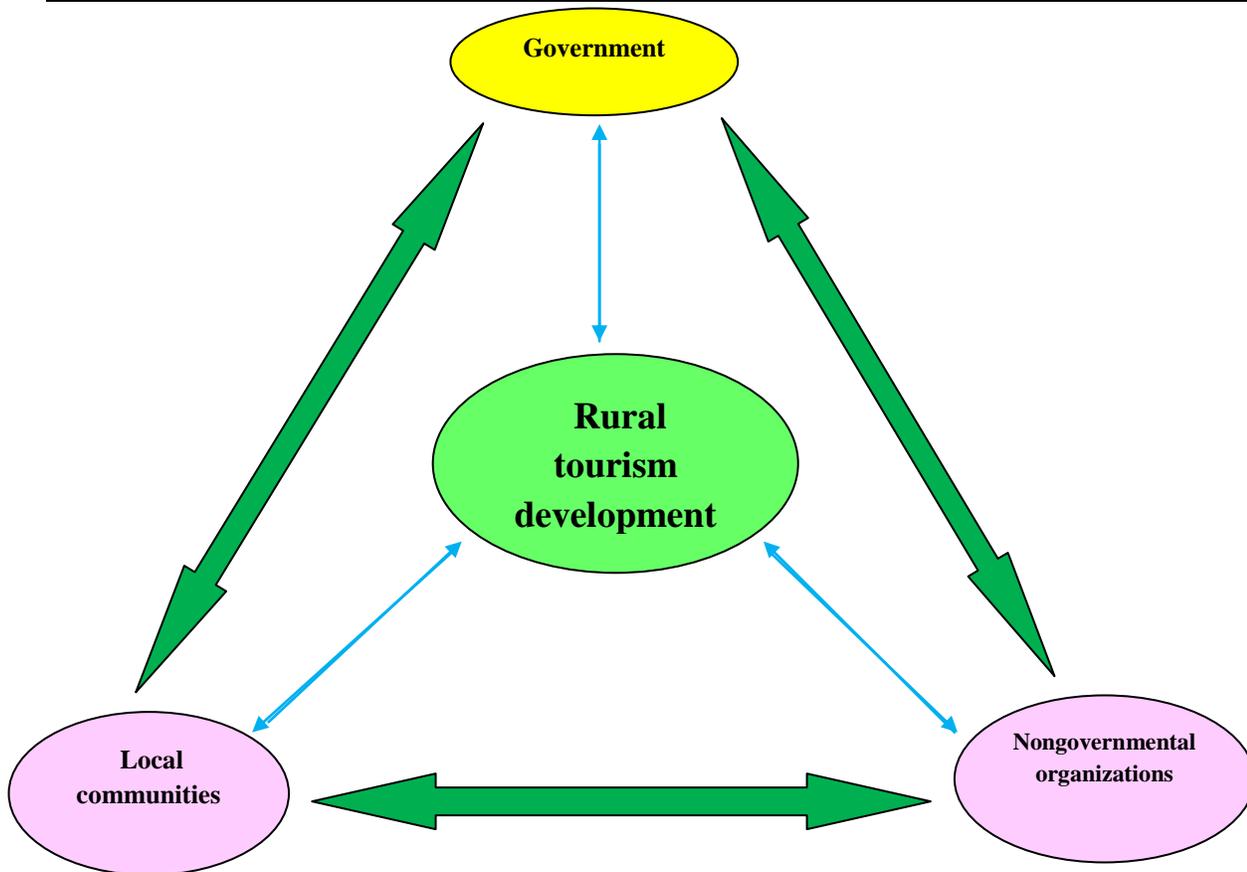
Non-governmental organizations have to initially establish a suitable relationship with the local people if they wish to find a lofty position. Such relationship may involve the followings:

- ✓ To begin participatory activities with local people,
- ✓ To supply the needed manpower from among the local people,
- ✓ To carry out activities to create employment,
- ✓ To involve the local people in investing in projects, and
- ✓ To share the profit with the local people.

d- Inter-connection between Rural Tourism, Local people, Government and Nongovernmental organizations

If suitable relationships are established between the local people - government and nongovernmental organizations, rural tourism will be developed in the region. As these groups affect on rural tourism development process also the rural tourism process will affect on each these three groups. These effects can be revealed in different fields such: improving or changing the programs, remaking decisions, enriching the rural tourism development goals, and other subjects.

Also these changes can impact on rural tourism development process again. These two - way effects can improve the rural tourism development process on one side, and on the other, influence on three groups' attitudes, abilities, requests and etc.



Conceptual and Functional Model for Rural Tourism development in I. R. IRAN with regard to two way relationship

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