

Full Length Research Paper

Information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry

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Accepted 3 November, 2011

Iran tourism industry, despite the variety and quality of its products, its potential in meeting the different expectations and wills of tourists and finally its high capacity for concurrence with the best tourism destinations in the world; is not on its real position from tourist numbers and receipts point of view. The present paper aimed at studying the process of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry in both national and international levels, as one of the main reasons behind the failure of Iran tourism in achieving a steady pattern of well-known and developed tourism destination. This was the first attempt to study the double dimensions of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry within a systematic and professional structure. The method that the research enjoyed was based on library as well as, survey (descriptive and analytical statistics). The main finding of the study showed that there was a meaningful difference between the current situation of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry and the optimal standard at the moment. Based on the findings and the research literature, the structure of an efficient information provision and dissemination system along with its implementation strategies were devised and put forward to bridge the existing gap.

Key words: Information provision and dissemination, tourists information centers, Iran tourism houses, tourism data banks.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry in the Islamic Republic of Iran has a real natural, historical and cultural potential. The unique and special geographic location of the country, its four-season climate, historical sites and monuments, ancient civilization, variety of the traditions and customs, as well as, other social factors such as young educated population, high unemployment rate and oil dependent economy; have given an adequate place to the tourism industry in the recent upstream development plans of Iran. Despite all these potential, Iran tourism industry in the last few years had not been an era of constant and steady development as the result of some internal and external factors. To name just a few, one can refer to the imposed Iran-Iraq war for 8 years, the lack of well-defined strategies and advertising plans. It can be said that the Iran tourism industry is confronted to the serious challenges in provision and dissemination of information. These shortcomings can be observed in form of imbalance in tourists' distribution in the sites, "the absence

of a reliable, sufficiently region/country specific data time series (ITTO, 2001, 2)", inability of tourism industry in respect to research questions, lack of reliable information and statistics and dependence on overall data and in a number of cases lack of any information on Iran tourism in the reports and references of the specialized international organizations.

In this context the present research aims at studying the process of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism, as one of the main reasons behind its failure in achieving a steady pattern of developed tourism destination. The analysis of current situation determines the strengths and weakness points of this process in Iran tourism. Then, based on the findings and results of the research, the relevant suggestions will be put forward in order to define an optimal information provision and dissemination system. The implementation of an efficient information system provides the required strategic guidelines for further development of Iran tourism and

accelerating of the ongoing activities in this field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of the information services in the context of tourism planning falls often within the category of the destination management. "This component of the model focuses on the activities that implement the policy and planning framework on a daily, operational basis. These nine activities involve effective organization, marketing of the destination, ensuring a high-quality visitor experience, gathering and disseminating information, human resource development, obtaining adequate financing and venture capital, effective visitor management, ongoing resource stewardship, and being prepared to manage unexpected crises (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006, 438)." In the last few decades the question of information provision and dissemination has been studied extensively in the international level by a number of researchers¹. Among them, the followings are much more significant: Sheldon examined in 1993, the organizational structure of tourism information systems, and the typologies of information and data sources in Austria, Denmark, England, the Netherland and Switzerland, and arrived to elaborate an adequate model for designing a destination information system (Pauline, 1993: 633-649). Fesenmeier et al. in 1992: 32 to 36; Fodness and Murray in 1999: 220 to 230 highlighted the importance of thinking on the ways and the sources in which tourists can easily access to the needed information in different tourism destinations. Guy et al., 1987: 420 also emphasized the importance of easily accessible destination information to tourist satisfaction.

However, these studies did not provide much insight into the conditions prevailing in Iran tourism industry. The subject of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism has been, for the first time, studied in the framework of The National Tourism Master Plan and through a joint venture of Iran Travel and Tourism Organization, and the international bodies such as UNWTO and UNDP in 2010. The study had a glance on the existing situation of information services in Iran tourism industry, its strengths and weakness points in order to recommend practical policy lines for successful implementation of tourism development strategies. The importance of a tourism management information system has been underlined, for example, in chapter 6 of this Master Plan (ITTO, 2001: 5). The establishment of tourist information centers in appropriate places was known as essential, in chapter4, for the development of Iran tourism in short term, medium and long term (ITTO, 2001: 6). These recommendations were considered in designing the items of the present study questionnaire.

In the recent years, the upstream development plans

have stressed the need for the introduction of the tourism potential and attractions of the country and there are even the good development proposals in this regard. The creation of an up-to-date information system, a geographic information system as well as a Tourism Satellite Account were known necessary for collecting, processing and distribution of information about Iran tourism (ICHTO Research Center, 2007: 18). The necessity of a complete tourist statistics system was been highlighted in the third Plan of Cultural, Economical and Social Development of the country OPM (Organization for the Planning and Management), 2005, 2000: 6). Meanwhile, these plans did not give a scientific and professional method for designing and implementing a systematic structure for the information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry.

The review of the existing literature and observing of the situation of information gathering and distribution in certain tourism destinations², makes it clear that accessible to reliable information on the tourism services and responding the various issues raised by the tourists during different steps of a journey; is possible only within a systematic structure and through précising the interconnected elements and factors. Data banks and archives, tourist information centers in home and target markets abroad, comprehensive and attractive tourism websites and portals, is a process center for controlling, classifying and coordinating and are among the major elements and components of such a structure. All these activities form a well-structured information system, "within which a set of coordinated and interrelated components work together for gathering and dissemination of tourism information. They supply the process of decision-making, planning, coordinating, controlling and analyzing in an organization" (Laudon and Loudon, 2002: 476)

The overall analysis of information provision and dissemination in the above-mentioned successful tourism destinations helps us to determine the different phases of this process as following:

1. The information requirement is defined and the appropriate questionnaires are prepared by a process center, managed by national and local authorities or private sectors. Data along with clearly set executive by-laws are distributed among tourism provincial representatives.
2. The questionnaires being prepared on either seasonal or annual basis will then be filled by the officials in charge

¹The scholars such as Laudon and Loudon, Archdal Gilbert, Cooper, Peter O'Connor, Buhalis, Snepenger, Horner... have worked in this field.

² In this regard, the information provision and dissemination process of UK (TIC of Canterbury), Republic of Korea (KTC), Finland (Finish TIC in Tokyo) as well as the general structure of information services in the tourism industry of Japan have been studied. The personal visit of the Researcher of these countries provided him with a documentary report, which is used as a basic reference to this study. The systematic structure of tourism information provision and dissemination, and the developed tourism industry on the basis of the local standards in these destinations were on the criteria for selecting these countries.

of the local offices, the extensive network of Tourism Information Centers (TIC), related organizations and other tourism services providers in the region. The completed questionnaires are assessed on the merit of information provision methods employed and its accuracy.

3. The tourism provincial offices provide the Process Center with the collected data either electronically or in the traditional manner. A copy is filed by the original office in provincial data bank.

4. The Process Center controls and classifies these data in form of National Tourism Data Bank. The data, being updated on regular basis, is both accessible and reliable.

5. The National Tourism Data Bank and structured network of TICs in home and in target markets abroad, in the framework of a closed interaction and benefiting the advantages of new information and communication technology, provide easily tourists and other users with the necessary information and data.

Therefore, similar process model, if being implemented in Iran tourism industry, can provide an optimal information provision and dissemination system "in order to fulfill the information needs of tourists at their origin, in route and in the destination (Frew et al., 2003: 477)" as well as, the needed information for decision- making and planning in the country. To analyze the different dimensions of ongoing process of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism and in order to suggest an optimal situation in this field, the researcher poses six following research questions:

1. How is the existing situation of data collection, processing and filing of information in Iran tourism industry?
2. How is the current situation of information dissemination in Iran tourism industry in the local level?
3. How is the current situation of information dissemination in Iran tourism industry in the international level?
4. How is the current situation of infrastructure, equipment and technology, related to information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry?
5. How is the existing structure of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry?
6. How are the existing views and culture on defining an optimal process for information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry?

METHODOLOGY

The method that the research enjoyed, in order to answer the above mentioned questions, was based on library as well as survey (descriptive and analytical statistics). The respondents consisted of 52 experts who were the available tourism industry professionals active in this field in Iran. They were the limited team of specialists who had an acceptable working background in the area of tourism industry. The needed data were collected first by library research, especially through analysis of information gathering and dissemination process in the countries under study (secondly data

gathering) and then through a researcher-administered questionnaire (primarily data collection). The facial and construct validity of the questionnaire was confirmed through selected relevant academicians' views. The reliability was calculated by Cronbach Alfa ($=0.88.4$).

Data analyses

The data analysis was done through descriptive statistics and the application of a single group T-test. The respondents of 52 persons consisted of 44 male (84.6%) and 8 female (15.4%). They were 11 PhD holders (21.2%), 34 Master's holders (75%), 2 BA holders (3.8%) among the respondents. 18 of the respondents majored in tourism (34.6%), 15 (28.8%) in geography, 7 (13.5%) in management, 7 (13.5%) in foreign languages, 2 (3.8%) in protection and restoration of historical monuments, 1 (1.9%) in sociology and finally 1(1.9%) in IT. The working background of the respondents in the area of tourism industry was 11.42 years on average. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test determined the normality of the data distribution. The statistical parametric tests, therefore, were: single-group T test, One-sample Test, α test, standard deviation and degree of freedom.

RESULTS

Question 1: How is the existing situation of data collection, processing and filing of information in Iran tourism industry?

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, the analysis of descriptive data and single-group T test, indicated with 99% confidence ($\alpha = 0/01$, $df:51$ and $T = -8/88$) that there is a meaningful difference between the research average (2.19) and theoretical average (3). This means that the data collection, processing and filing of information in Iran tourism is Weak.

Question 2: How is the current situation of information dissemination in Iran tourism industry in the local level?

Tables 3 and 4 indicated, with 99% confidence ($\alpha = 0/01$, $df: 51$ and $T = -12/06$) that there is a meaningful difference between the research average (2.06) and theoretical average (3). This means that the information dissemination in Iran tourism industry in the local level has been reported as Weak.

Question 3: How is the current situation of information dissemination in Iran tourism industry in the international level?

Tables 5 and 6 indicated, with 99% confidence ($\alpha = 0/01$, $df: 51$ and $T = -10/83$) that there is a meaningful difference between the research average (1.96) and theoretical average (3). This means that the information dissemination in Iran tourism industry in the international level has been reported as very weak.

Question 4: How is the current situation of infrastructure,

equipment and technology, related to information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry?

As shown in Tables 7 and 8, the analysis of descriptive data and single-group T test, indicated, with 99% confidence ($\alpha = 0/01$, $df:51$ and $T = -11/88$) that there is a meaningful difference between the research average (2.16) and theoretical average (3). This means that the infrastructure, equipment and technology, related to information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry is weak.

Question 5: How is the existing structure of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry?

The Tables 9 and 10 indicated, with 99% confidence ($\alpha = 0/01$, $df:51$ and $T = -11/9$) that there is a meaningful difference between the research average (1.84) and theoretical average (3). This means that the existing structure of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry has been evaluated as very weak.

Question 6: How are the existing views and culture on defining an optimal process for information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry?

As shown in Tables 11 and 12, the analysis of descriptive data and single-group T test, indicated, with 99% confidence ($\alpha = 0/01$, $df: 51$ and $T = -0/77$) that there is not a meaningful difference between the research average (2.92) and theoretical average (3). This means that the existing views and culture on defining an optimal process for information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry have been evaluated as moderate.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

First finding

The experts believe that the ongoing process of collection, controlling and filing of information in Iran tourism, is weak. Based on the related items used in the questionnaire, this fact indicates the lack of comprehensive and reliable data on the tourism potential and attractions of the country. It indicates also that the methods and techniques used for this process are not efficient, and finally the human resources are not well-trained. This finding was also confirmed by the study undertaken to prepare the National Tourism Development Master Plan in chapter 3 (ITTO, 2001: 25). The following recommendations are to address these shortcomings:

1. The formation of a technical task-force in the national level consisting of the representatives from both public and private sectors. This task- force is to undertake the responsibility of technical support, accessing the primary and secondary information resources, devising required standards and plans, as well as management and

coordination of the information gathering and archiving centers. Along with its management role, the task- force controls the activities of the Process Center. After considering the existing structure of Iran tourism Industry, it is suggested to establish this task- force within the framework of Marketing and Advertisement Bureau of Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHTO) in order to enable its members to have the needed authority. This can also reduce the costs as the implementation of executive by-laws would be facilitated and the expertise of human resources is utilized and enhanced at the same time.

2. Establishing the especial information centers in adequate places, for collection and processing of the tourism data nationwide. Due the extensive dimension of tourism activities, the great variety and dispersion of the Iran tourism resources as well as other management and administrative issues, these centers can be an integral part of the ICHTO representatives in all 33 provincial offices.

3. Establishing a network of tourism data banks and archives on different national, provincial and local levels. The data collected through information centers (established based on recommendation 2 above) and under supervision of task -force (mentioned at item one above), must be classified and filed within these data banks. The current data that is accessible through the provincial representatives of ICHTO is not comprehensive and reliable in most cases; moreover, there is no network in place to make it easier to retrieve the required information. "Despite the variety and richness of Iran tourism resources, and its capacity for further development, today there is not a comprehensive and up-to-date tourism data bank in the country. (ITTO, 2001: 16)". The final version of the processed data can be filed by Marketing and Advertising Bureau of ICHTO within a national tourism data bank. Considering the high advantages of the information banks in tourism industry, it is also recommended that similar banks and archives to be established in a smaller scale such as towns and even on the tourism sites.

The following measures are suggested to be undertaken in order to facilitate the implementation of above mentioned recommendations. They can motivate and coordinate all the staff involved in this important process of gathering, controlling and filing the tourism information within accessible banks and archives:

1. Workshops on practical and theoretical aspects of information gathering, controlling and filing for experts and heads of related sections in Marketing and Advertising Bureau of ICHTO provincial representatives through cooperation between academic and other national and international research centers.
2. Empowering experts in the field as the source of authority.
3. Selecting the right staff and guaranteeing their

Table 1. t-Test.

Variable	One-sample statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Data provision	52	2.1923	0.65607	0.09098

Table 2. One-sample test.

Variable	Test value = 3			95% confidence Interval of the difference		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Lower	Upper
Data provision	-8.878	51	0.000	-0.80769	-0.9903	-0.6250

Table 3. t-Test.

Variable	One-sample statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Information dissemination (local level)	52	2.0615	0.56087	0.07778

Table 4. One-sample test.

Variable	Test value = 3			95% confidence Interval of the difference		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Lower	Upper
Information dissemination (local level)	-12.066	51	0.000	-0.93846	-1.0946	-0.7823

Table 5. T-test.

Variable	One-sample statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Information dissemination (international level)	52	1.9615	0.69123	0.09586

Table 6. One-sample test.

Variable	Test value = 3			95% confidence Interval of the difference		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Lower	Upper
Information dissemination (local level)	-10.834	51	0.000	-1.03846	-1.2309	-0.8460

long-stay in the field of information provision

Second finding

The current situation of information dissemination in Iran tourism industry in the local level has been reported as Weak. The findings of the National Tourism Development Master Plan in the chapter 5 (ITTO, 2001: 6) confirm this fact. Based on the related items of the questionnaire, this indicates certain inconvenience such as the improper distribution of trips in the country, lack of the information

on the major part of the tourism attractions even among the domestic tourists, the insufficient number of the Tourists Information Centers (TIC) ... in the country. The following recommendations intend to address these issues:

The tourism authorities of the country have always insisted on establishing Iran Tourism Houses (ITH) in appropriate locations. This has not been followed with a concrete practice during the recent years. It is suggested that, this project be taken seriously on the consideration and us to be implemented with following modifications:

Table 7. t-Test.

Variable	One-sample statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Technology, infrastructure....	52	2.1635	0.50756	0.07039

Table 8. One-sample test.

Variable	Test value = 3			95% confidence interval of the difference		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Lower	Upper
Technology, infrastructure....	-11.885	51	0.000	-0.83654	-0.9778	-0.6952

Table 9. T-test.

	One-sample statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Structure	52	1.8462	0.69866	0.09689

Table 10. One-sample test.

Variable	Test value = 3			95% Confidence interval of the difference		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Lower	Upper
Structure	-11.909	51	0.000	-1.15385	-1.3484	-0.9593

Table 11. T-test.

	One-sample statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Awareness and culture	52	2.9231	0.71493	0.09914

Table 12. One-sample test.

Variable	Test value = 3			95% Confidence interval of the difference		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Lower	Upper
Awareness and culture	-0.776	51	0.441	-0.07692	-0.2760	0.1221

1. Finding the right locations so that to create them at all major arrival points of the tourists, at the major cities of the provinces, local destinations and at the other most frequented places by the tourists.

2. Providing the executive by-laws and guidelines for these centers

3. Revising and modification of the existing Iran Tourism Houses (ITHs) from location, equipments and human resources point of view and corresponding to the guidelines of A and B.

4. Establishing a close working-cooperation and interaction among the Iran Tourism Houses. The supervision

and control of their activities through the technical task- force to be created on the basis of the first finding of this study in the Marketing and Advertising Bureau of ICHTO.

5. Utilizing the available potentials and capacities of other public organizations, forecasted within the up-stream development programs and policies of the country. To name just one, Article 3 of the Iran Tourism and Touring Development by-laws and rules, approved by the Cabinet on 1994, could be a suitable example (Nategh, 1999: 164).

6. Considering the current situation of Iran tourism

industry, it is suggested that Iran Tourism Houses to be established by the public sector. In the long-term the responsibility of running these centers can be handed over to the private sectors, when the tourist arrivals and the tourism receipts of these centers are sufficient and considerable.

7. Utilizing the resources of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) as a public and national promoter of tourism industry, being itself a public and national industry, by getting into mutual contracts.

8. Using further, the new information and communication technology in both local and international levels.

9. Revision and modification of the production and distribution process of tourism promotional materials, with the aim of introducing all potential of the country corresponding to the professional and scientific methods and standards. "At present the existing tourism guide books and other promotional items, given to the tourists, is limited to the description of main tourism attractions or an especial region. There isn't useful and practical information about available itineraries, price and quality of transport, accommodation, food and other components of a tourism package as well as other services such as exchange rates, security and...in this guide books (ITTO, 2001: 18)." Therefore, such a variety of concerns should be taken on consideration in the preparation of new advertising and information items.

Third finding

The experts, based on the related items of the questionnaire such as the existing situation of Iran tourism information centers in international markets, ongoing activities and policies of the public and private sectors at international level, existing human resources and promotional materials in this field, have evaluated the current situation of information dissemination of Iran tourism in the international level as Very Weak. The facts such as the insufficient familiarity of the international tourists with Iran tourism resources especially with Iran today's society, their unreal and even negative view of the country; all confirm the result of our finding in this regard. To tackle with these concerns it is recommended:

1. The Iran Tourism Houses (ITHs) to be established based on the extensive market researches, in the major international tourism target markets that, beside their marketing role, will undertake the responsibility of Iran tourism information dissemination in these countries. The ITHs need to work in close relation with both public and private sectors of tourism industry in Iran in form of gathering the most reliable set of information about these destinations and providing the potential tourists of these countries with related information on Iran tourism industry. The attempts to establish ITHs have not yielded any tangible results in the last few years and it seems

that there had been certain shortcomings in this respect. There are several areas that need to be modified and studied before any further planning; these are the location, equipment and subdivisions, human resources, their authorities and job descriptions.

2. Introducing Iran tourism in the international level through precise short, medium and long term information and marketing strategies; cooperating the activities to this end. The ongoing information distribution activities of Iran tourism such as attending international tourism Expos, advertising through Mass-Medias and etc, despite their variety and high costs, had not yielded the expected ends and objectives because they are not well structured and result oriented.

3. To design and distribute the information and guiding materials with more attention to the quality and aim of addressing potential clients of Iran tourism, cooperating with marketing and information consultants living in the country origin of potential tourists is vital.

4. Expanding international and regional cooperation in the field of information dissemination, utilizing ICT, mainly electronic reservation and distribution systems (CRS, GDS...) to reduce costs and overcome the possible restrictions of certain international markets.

5. To make the best use of existent facilities and resources of the international specialized organizations such as UNWTO, OIC, UNESCO, ECO, UNESCAP,...in which the country is member and pays the considerable amount of membership fee annually, in the field of information dissemination.

6. To support the international cooperation in the field of information dissemination in the framework of Friendship Associations, International NGOs, Iranians residing abroad through active involvement of the Islamic Republic of Iran cultural missions in the tourism target countries.

Fourth finding

The experts have evaluated as Weak the current situation of infrastructure, equipment and technology related to information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry. This is to say that, the Iran tourism industry, at the present, can not properly benefit of the advantages of ICT because the needed infrastructure and equipment have not been provided. In this respect, beside the development of general infrastructures that facilitate the visits and improve the image of the destination, there is a need, especially to focus on designing and developing information provision and dissemination technical systems such as strategic information systems, information analyzing and collecting systems, decision support systems. The revising and updating of official Portal of ICHTO as a technical website should be taken at priority. The current website at www.ichto.ir is en-faced with considerable shortages which should be

regarded in this process of revising. The lack of comprehensive and up-to-date information on all tourism resources and attractions of the country, unavailability of the website for international tourists who can't use the Persian language, the non-alliance of the experts in public and private sectors on introducing it as a formal tourism portal; are among its major deficiencies. It is, therefore, suggested to take on consideration a basic revision of the contents and information, improvement of English, Arabic translations and even to extend its translation into other important international languages, to keep it up-to-date and to make the necessary arrangements to be introduced as official website of Iran tourism industry in the national and international levels. "The website should have the needed capacity, facilities and resources to attract and encourage, the potential tourist worldwide, to visit Iran. It should assume the interfaced relationship of tourists with the tourism professionals and ICHTO. The feedback of those who have used the website must be utilized in finding the target markets and in addressing the expectations of the tourists via providing the best possible customer service. Other aspects of ICT such as Multimedia, Electronic Brochures, Virtual Tours and particularly Reservation and Distribution Systems, need to be designed and developed in Iran tourism industry in other stages (Hashemi et al., 2004: 15)."

Fifth finding

The existing structure of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry has been evaluated as Very Weak. The tourism information services are not provided within a well-organized, highly structured system. Some of the essential factors and components of such a system do not exist at all. Some others, being very elementary, are not efficient. Certain suggestions have been made above (through previous findings) for establishing or improvement of the major components of this system such as data banks, Iran Tourism Houses, Process Center. To finalize this process and to give it a systematic structure:

There must be an organizational relation between all the components and factors involved in the process, while the management of information provision and dissemination must be undertaken by the task-force that is already mentioned through previous findings. This task-force would be responsible for the activities done in local, national and international levels through preparation of the needed rules and by-laws. The task-force must ensure that these activities are linked together in a chained process.

The aim of all these activities must be to change both quality and quantity of the efficient components involved in the process of information provision and dissemination

in Iran tourism industry by filling up the existing gaps in the structure. The costs of establishing such a systematic structure need to be provided by the public sector at the early stages of its formation but in the long-run through expansion of the scope of activities, the private sector would assume the administration of this very important process of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry. To this end it is needed to encourage and support the creation of local, regional and national tourism associations, private societies and companies in the field of information provision and dissemination. The development of cooperation with major regional and international distribution systems should be put at the agenda.

Sixth finding

The existing views and culture on defining an optimal process for information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry have been evaluated as Moderate. The respondent experts and tourism professionals believe in such an optimal process and stress its exigency in Iran tourism. There is a moderate cooperation and understanding culture among the related executive organizations, an acceptable view and regard within up-stream development plans on creation of a systematic process for information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism. The following facts confirm this finding among the Iran authorities and tourism professionals:

1. The introduction of natural, cultural and historical resources and attractions with the aim of presenting a real image of Iran had an adequate place in different economic, cultural and social development up-stream plans such as I.R. of Iran Development Perspective in 2025(The Office of the Leader, 2005, 2), the fifth Plan of Cultural, Economical and Social Development of I.R. of Iran (The Strategy and Supervision Department of the Presidency, 2010, Article 8), during the recent decades.
2. The different technical, executive, legal and control bodies and organizations of public sector are involved in designing and preparation of up-stream development plans. The important place allocated to the subject of tourism information provision and dissemination within these plans, confirm well the existing believe, coordination and cooperation among the responsible authorities on improvement of the information gathering and distribution process in Iran tourism industry.
3. The enforcement of coordination between public and private sectors, local, provincial and national authorities in the field of introducing the tourism resources of the country during the recent years at the efficient information distribution activities shows also this positive view and culture on defining an optimal process for information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry. In this context the required legal, financial, and executive

guidelines for defining an optimal systematic information provision and dissemination process are in place and it is to utilize these potentials. A high degree of cooperation among authorities and tourism professionals of various levels facilitates this process. The importance of this positive view and culture should not be neglected and it is to be encouraged and improved more than ever. The Iran tourism decision makers need, so, to avoid the tendency to devise disparate strategies and activities to the expense of implementing a systematic and well-structured information provision and dissemination process.

Conclusion

The present paper studies, for the first time the double dimensions of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry within a systematic and professional structure. An information service in tourism is basically of the great importance. It is more important when we consider the natural, cultural, social, economical and even political exigencies of Iran tourism industry.

The findings of the study indicate that there is a considerable gap between the current and optimal situations of information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry. In order to set the things right, it is needed, first, to revise and amend the existing components of tourism information services both in local and international levels. The necessary suggestions are given then, for establishment of some other major components which are not existed yet. Finally we needed another element to guarantee the managing responsibility of this set of components. To this end, it is recommended to create within the Marketing and Advertising Bureau of Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHTO), a technical task-force being in charge of coordinating the interacted activities of the different components within a systematic network.

Besides setting a professional and systematic structure for information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism, the paper sets forward a number of practical strategies to optimize the current situation: The implementation of goal-oriented strategies in the ongoing activities of ICHTO, Enhancing the utilization of the existing potentials of the country in the field of the new information and communication technology, Avoiding repetitious plans and disparate activities, Increasing the level of cooperation among the decision-makers are among the most important issues to be considered.

Even though, this study has focused on information provision and dissemination in Iran tourism industry, many of the issues, including the defining a systematic

structure to the information process, are relevant to the other countries, especially to the countries in which the tourism industry are dominated with the presence of public management. The study shall also sensitize the researchers to the importance and the exigency of working in this field, while helping the development of interdisciplinary studies, involving tourism and the new information and communication technologies that cross traditional boundaries of the knowledge.

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