



AENSI Journals

Journal of Applied Science and Agriculture

ISSN 1816-9112

Journal home page: www.aensiweb.com/jasa/index.html

Tourism and Shahr-e Soukhteh

¹Hamidreza Lashkari, ²Sirus Ghanbari, ³Ali Reza Teimouri

¹Pardis Motahari Zahedan of Farhangian University, Zahedan, Iran.

² Faculty of Geography, University of Sistan and Baluchestan, Zahedan, Iran.

³Zahedan University of Medical Sciences, Zahedan, Iran.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 17 November 2013

Received in revised form 19

February 2014

Accepted 26 February 2014

Available online 20 March 2014

Keywords:

Tourism Historical Cultural Heritage

Shahr-E Soukhteh

ABSTRACT

Background: Nowadays, the concept of stable development and the importance of nations' historical cultural heritage are principally discussed under the subject of tourism. Sistan in Iran, as a region with an ancient historical cultural background, is of considerable importance in developing tourism industry. Today, Sistan, as a forgotten pole, has drawn the attention of many archeologists and historians although in the past it was called "The archeology's Heaven" by those who had visited Shahr-e Soukhteh and its glorious archeological and historical heritage. The collection of Iranian-Sistani ancient buildings and mythological and epical works, of which Shahr-e Soukhteh is a unique example, can be employed as the leaven of regional tourism in performing numerous visionary artistic activities. From a historic, naturalistic, and humanistic viewpoint, this region is among those scarce intact regions which are loaded with billions of unknown cultural historical materials, and are carrying a lucid record of civilization, mythology, and a number of unique and marvelous natural phenomena. And despite all the cultural invasions, its people still abide by the traditions and customs of their ancestors, and value them as a precious heritage. **Objective:** This research aims to identify the potentials and strong and weak points of tourism in the region of Sistan, especially Shahr-e Soukhteh, and to investigate regional tourism in there. **Results:** This land is the origin of the first modern human civilizations. It is also the first place in the history where urban life came to existence in the form of societies. Hirmand River is the main cause of the existence of old civilization and urbanity in Sistan; and it has also played a vital role in the formation of various civilizations in different time intervals. Shahr-e Soukhteh is situated beside one of the oldest deltas of Hirmand River and considered one of the most important centers of admiralty metal in the east of Iran. The city was established in 3200 BC and destroyed in 2200 BC. The discovery of industrial facilities (with skilled industrials), agricultural facilities, residential buildings in different shapes (non-geometrical and trapezoid), pottery (which shows religious, ethical, and artistic life of that time), business, and eventually historical buildings of the ancient time in Shahr-e Soukhteh make us aware of the nourishment of urbanity and the reputation of inhabitants in ancient Sistan. In the present time, it is – beside other districts – one of the important tourism regions. Qualitative development in the region. **Conclusion:** especially in terms of tourism, and the identification of strong points and omitting weak points so as to use the potentials effectively, can define the goals and programs for its development

© 2014 AENSI Publisher All rights reserved.

To Cite This Article: Hamidreza Lashkari, Sirus Ghanbari, Ali Reza Teimouri., Tourism and Shahr-e Soukhteh. *J. Appl. Sci. & Agric.*, 9(2): 688-692, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Regarding various social, economic, historical, cultural, and technological dimensions of it, tourism – in the shape of journey and leisure, since years ago, and as a luxurious item among those who are financially rich – has become a comprehensive industry among many countries, especially industrialized countries, during the ongoing century; although, for the sake of economic benefits, competition for absorbing more tourists has become common among many countries. For different reasons, Iran has gained very little income, in recent years, on the part of tourism industry. The main factors of these weak points are the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Iran-Iraq war, and change of attitudes towards the functionalities. The Islamic Republic of Iran has paid partial attention to this issue in their plan of economic, social, cultural development; but at that time there was a lack of necessary infrastructures to initialize industrialization. This industry, however, drew some attention, and by this, developed provinces and poles became focal centers. As a result, all the points which had been neglected before were located outside the sight of designers once again. A lucid instance of this kind is the Province of Sistan-o

Corresponding Author: Hamidreza Lashkari, Pardis Motahari Zahedan of Farhangian University, Zahedan, Iran.

aBalouchestan especially the region of Sistan which owns historical structures such as Shahr-e Soukhteh, the city of Dahane-ye Gholaman, Parthian city of Khajeh Mountain, etc. and yet considered as a forgotten pole.

Identifying Problem:

Tourism industry, nowadays, is one of the important sources of income as well as one of the effective items for cultural interchange among countries. It is also considered as the most widespread industry in the whole world providing services. This is the reason why many countries in the world compete closely in increasing their interests and benefits from these international activities. Iran, among these numerous countries, can actively take part in such competitions, regarding its numerous rich sources of attraction in terms of tourism; however, achieving pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits is possible by understanding the phenomenon of tourism and knowing correct management of facilities, institutes, and administrating centers. Sistan-o Balouchestan has special conditions in tourist attraction for several reasons of which can be mentioned natural aspects such as pleasant climate of Oman Sea in autumn and winter, mineral warm and cold water bodies, natural active mud volcanoes, a history like Shahr-e Soukhteh, the city of Dahane-ye Gholaman, the city of Khajeh Mountain, Ghal'e-ye (Castle of) Chehel Dokhtaran, Ghal'e-ye (Castle of) Rostam, carpal wind mills, etc. Sistan, too, with a civil and mythological background is an intact place having billions of cultural materials which have not been discovered yet. It was the origin of the first civilizations and the appearance of urbanity through history. It had surrounded the modern lifestyles as well as traditional ones. The first most modern physician surgeries in the world were conducted in this region, as long as traditional customs were preserved, too

Research Objectives:

This research aims to identify the potentials and strong and weak points of tourism in the region of Sistan, especially Shahr-e Soukhteh, and to investigate regional tourism in there. We can say that Sistan has the essential capacities and potentials for expanding tourism industry along the margin of desert, regarding that it is one of the tourism poles in a natural and historical-cultural fashion, and is also an ancient civilization aging 4000 years BC (the dynasties of Achaemenian, Arsenide, Sassanid, and Aryans with archaeological campuses of Shahr-e Soukhteh, Dahane-ye Gholaman, etc.). Regarding the recent statistics received from the Organization of Cultural Heritage, Industries, and Tourism of Sistan-o Balouchestan and by exploring the data of tourism industry during the past recent years, tourism industry in Sistan has not been able to find a decent position in the modern world

Methodology:

There are two methods employed in these researches which are discussed below:

1. Based on history and documentation: which is done by use of valid and authentic documentaries; although the researcher will face some problems since s/he is not present in the scene.
2. Explanatory Research and Content Analysis: in which the researcher is willing to analyze and describe the data. The author has tried, firstly, to introduce the potentials and tourism possibilities of Sistan, especially Shahr-e Soukhteh, and then to analyze strong and weak points, threats, and tourism opportunities by SWOT method.

Characteristics of the Studying Area:

Hirmand River was the basic cause of the existence of old civilization and urbanity in Sistan. It has also had a vital role in the formation of civilizations in the area in different time intervals. Shahr-e Soukhteh is located by one of the oldest deltas of Hirmand River and is considered as one the most important centers of admiralty metal in Iran (Afshar Sistani; 1990: 485). The city was founded in 3200 BC, and about 2200 BC it was abruptly destroyed. It aged around 900 years. During these years, the south-eastern Asia had gone through prosperity. It was from 3200 BC to 2200 BC that Sumerian civilization reached the peak of its prosperity (Khammar; 2003: 16). Superficial measurements in Shahr-e Soukhteh show that the mensuration of the land is 151 acres of which 21 acres is cemetery and the rest were allocated to residential buildings, streets, and industrial facilities as well as agricultural activities done in Nimrouz (Khammar; 2003: 17). Based on the bones belonged to various species of animals found in Shahr-e Soukhteh, we can claim that haunting was commonplace in the area; and that animal keepers were absolutely on a relationship with farmers. In general, some people used to hunt birds in the eastern margin and some to farm in the side areas; consequently, it is not far from the truth if we say the economy of Shahr-r Soukhteh was a localized and self-centered economy. Numerous events indicate that Shahr-e Soukhteh was a vast region during the third millennium BC and it became a city or even a large city with its population growing and probably took the control of a state. Aerial photos show three distinct parts which implies the existence of land use and urban planning in 5000 years ago:

1. Residential sectors which are full of non-geometrical houses located in no special order. Street as wide as 2.5 meters pass along these houses. The houses are approximately 120 square meters and each has 8 or 9 rooms

in its square schematics. We can guess from the platforms and shelves and the form of the buildings that people lived a wealthy life there. The vastness of the area reaches 50 acres.

2. The trapezoid sector with a sundried-brick wall surrounding the city covers the whole north-west angle and is about 25 acres. This part is called the industrial sector, for it contains numerous significant things.

3. The cemetery which is a land of nearly 21 acres and is located in the south-west of the city. Its height is about 4 meters lower than the main surface of the city. It is covered by a thick layer of cement, so it is still untouched. This cemetery, according to investigations, holds 25000-35000 graves. As a matter of fact, it is the biggest and the most untouched cemetery in the world since history can recall. Considering 2 to 4 bodies in each grave, it is estimated a hundred thousand corpses are buried in the ground. This is one of the most precious treasures hidden in the heart of Shahr-e Soukhteh (Touzi; 1999: 109).

Some big holes are the barrier between cemetery and the city. These holes were used to lead water. The hypothesis of the existence of water leading network is verified by the big ceramic pipes made by a special material called Sarouj, an interesting plan for water leading, and a separate sewer (Khammar: 19). This city, in spite of its vastness, does not have a defensive wall, an entering gate, or a public building (Forouhar; 1983: 94). The skill of the people of Shahr-e Soukhteh in making earthenware is extraordinary. They made the best kind of crockery by their hands or by use of special machines; and they reflected the qualities of their lives, their religion, their ethics, and their art in their handmade products. We can understand the continuity of civilizations by considering these earthenware. The existence of full-time expert industrial workers, industrial companies like pottery, metalworking, straw-plaiting, carpentry, the density of residential and industrial buildings, cemetery, and farming fields and pastures for animal husbandry as well as the existence of foreign ties and business collaborations, and their dependency in agriculture and animal husbandry to some villages in the vicinity indicate that all these jobs were done with previous thoughts and by use of a previously-planned program (Afshar-e Sistani; 1990: 517). The existence of full-time expert industrials, industrial companies like pottery, metalworking, straw-plaiting, carpentry, the density of residential and industrial buildings, cemetery, and farming fields and pastures for animal husbandry as well as the existence of foreign ties and business collaborations, and their dependency in agriculture and animal husbandry to some villages in the vicinity indicate that all these jobs were done with previous thoughts and by use of a previously—planned program (Kiani; 1986: 68). Shahr-e Soukhteh had business and cultural relations with other regions like Mondigak, Mesopotamia, and Khorasan. Mesopotamia was one of the biggest consumers of lapis lazuli and agate during the third millennium BC. The city of Shahr-e Soukhteh, in this routine, was one of the delivery and export centers to Mesopotamia (Khammar; 2003: 20). Lapis lazuli, in fact, was the most precious stone before Christ which was exploited in Afghanistan and carried all the way to Shahr-e Soukhteh, where they worked on it and change it into a number of different shapes. There are still some places in Shahr-e Soukhteh covered with thousands of pieces of this stone; moreover, some workshops were found in which they used to work with lapis lazuli. Working on the stone of marble from Chaghay Mountain in Pakistan is another powerful influential phenomenon (Touzi; 1999: 119). Dealing with Mesopotamia led to constructing cultural relations between the two lands. But the relations were not direct and the people of the two lands were not even aware of the existence of each other. These indirect relations were done through other stations whose job was interchanging. Shahr-e Soukhteh, during the third millennium, became the land where regional civilizations of the south of western Asia gathered. Its vastness, its buildings, and the things found there suggest Shahr-e Soukhteh was a real city. A city with two main factors: population and production (Sajjadi: 278). Shahr-e Soukhteh, in 4 periods of its civilizations, had a changing population between 2500 to 5200 people, and considering migration and death rate, it is one of the most populated cities in Asia in the age of admiralty metal with 5000 people (Afshar-e Sistani; 1990: 563); although according to some sources its population even reached 20000 people (Ruth White House; 1990: 175). The discovery of things such as sealing wax made of lead and mud, old inscription in Islamic writing, sample of earthen sculpture of a human face, bronze sculpture a human, marble sculpture of a bird weighing 25 kilograms, painted crockery, and thousands of other discovered objects all imply success in Shahr-e Soukhteh. The finding of hundreds of earthen animal bodies, animal bones, and the discovered objects and documentations dealing with different industries all imply vast and peaceful community tried to produce new things. Despite many ancient regions, scientists have found warfare in Shahr-e Soukhteh. In fact, regardless the muddy bullets of sling whose use is still not clear, we could not find anything else indicating that Shahr-e Soukhteh was a warlike community (Sajjadi: 281). Although the city burned twice (once in 1800 BC, then in 2700 BC), there is no strong evident indicating Shahr-e Soukhteh was evacuated because of civil war or foreigner invasions. Of the reasons of evacuation of Shahr-e Soukhteh is draught of one of the deltas of Hirmand River which forced people to abandon their homeland and migrate to other places seeking water and food (Sajjadi: 282). In the beginning of the second millennium BC, the civilization centers vanished almost all over the east of Iran. An old hypothesis believes that the entrance of Aryan tribes is the cause these happenings. However, this hypothesis is not much valid today because some scientists have suggested coarse shift in weather changing (Ebrahim-zadeh; 2000: 33). The draught in the delta of Hirmand River has greatly influenced Shahr-e Soukhteh; eventually after the alteration of Hirmand basin, Shahr-e

Soukhteh, one of the most glorious cultural centers with the largest urbanity in the south of Middle East and also a great station for business dealings between east and west, was completely destroyed around the first decades of the second millennium BC.

Results:

SWOT analysis of Shahr-e Soukhteh tourist potentials:

It is obvious that Shahr-e Soukhteh in Sistan has both strong and weak points which are influential in the process of tourist attraction. In the following, strong and weak points, threats, and opportunities – in order to develop tourism industry – are briefly discussed according to descriptive model of SWOT.

Table 1: Weak and strong points, and opportunities, threats, based on SWOT model

Weak Points	
✓	Lack of facilities (e.g. Hotels, restaurants, etc.)
✓	Lack of transportation
✓	Inability to provide security specially on borders which leads in decreasing tourist attraction
✓	Lack of information stations for tourism
✓	Long distance to Zabol
✓	120-Day Storms in Sistan which are sometimes filled with dust
✓	Lack of service centers (e.g. gas stations, garages for car fixing, etc.)
✓	Lack of trained human sources for guiding tourists
✓	Inability in plan designing by authorities to spread the culture of tourism
✓	etc.
Strong Points	
✓	Having an ancient historical background
✓	Acquaintance of people especially the educated with innovative and creative people in industry domain, etc.
✓	Having natural historical-cultural attractions
✓	120-Day Storms for power production and effective use of it
Opportunities	
✓	Geographical co-ordinance in terms of neighborhood with Afghanistan and Pakistan, and effective use in this field
✓	Paying attention to Sistan and its ancient historical places like Shahr-e Soukhteh, Dahaneh-ye Gholaman, Khajeh Mountain, etc. in plan makings in both governmental and private sectors as ancient historical regions in tourist attraction
✓	Building a small historical city and changing it to epical and ancient tragedies
✓	Earning foreign exchange income through entrance of tourists
✓	Creating job opportunities by use of facilities like hotels, restaurants, transportation systems, etc. near these historical places
✓	Building an ancient historical museum in the region and protecting the precious heritage of these hardworking people
✓	etc.
Threats	
✓	Security problems because of smuggling routes and narcotics through international paths which consequently leads in decreasing tourists, domestic and foreigner
✓	Being on the same border with Afghanistan and Pakistan and the commuting of the riot in this region which leads to intra-regional chaos specially in Sistan in which Shahr-e Soukhteh is located
✓	120-Day Storms in Sistan which carry a large amount of dust leading to commuting troubles and finally decreasing the number of tourists, domestic and foreign

Discussion:

The significance of Sistan is clear for everyone. Here is the origin of the descent of Zarathustra, Rostam-e Dastan and his family, the place where Keykhosro and Afrasiyab met, where ancient Iranian stories were created, where the first Islamic writings were found in the east of Kerman and Loot Desert, the place of ancient Zarandj and Zarang before Islam. So we can design plans and programs to draw the attention of these politicians.

1. If tourism be considered as an industry earning income and exchanging cultures, effective use of historical ancient attraction and potentials of each region is highly prioritized, for we can overcome the obstacles for achieving development.

2. Building a small ancient city in the region and changing it to epics and old national tragedies in order to recognize the historical, epical, and national situation of Sistan as a symbol of civilization and urbanity (e.g. Shahr-e Soukhteh, the city of Dahane-ye Gholaman, etc.) and the national identity of ancient Iran. For this, we can construct art faculty with related fields (e.g. acting, theater, statuary, painting, etc.) and trained human sources so that they can produce movies, animations, plays, and programs in order to provide a decent atmosphere for the tourists to spend their free time as well as meeting some of cultural needs of the society. Therefore people of this region will be familiar with national and ancient epics and the role of the great men.

3. Building a historical museum of ancient Iran near Shahr-e Soukhteh, regarding numerous treasures in the region

4. Making use of 120-Day Storms in order to make wind mills work and produce electricity as it was in Shahr-e Soukhteh and its vicinity in 3200 BC.

The Analysis Topic	The Spatial Structure of Tourism	The Analysis Topic	The Spatial Structure of Ecotourism
Improving Strong Points	• Making use of civilizational and historical background to attract tourists through international advertisements • Making use of natural attraction potentials, planning environmental tours, nature tourism, iatrical tourism, and desert tourism • Specifying some regions as the most outstanding regions in tourism	Making Use of Opportunities Making Use of Opportunities	• Considering the border as a privilege to increase tourist attraction through creating facilities • Designing cultural historical plans for tourism • Using traditional handmade objects and artistic packages for tourists • Developing related university fields of study in scientific centers in the province and registering students from inside the country and outside • Using wind power and solar energy to provide the essential energy for industrials and tourist facilities • Constructing natural eco-parks in tourist outstanding regions
Decreasing or controlling Weak Points	• Solving problems related to facilities in historical ancient places like Shahr-e Soukhteh by building hotels, restaurants, arranging transportation, etc. • Providing security by government around the borders • Supporting tourism information centers • Solving problems related to services by building gas stations, garages for car fixing, etc. • Training skillful human sources and managers familiar with tourism culture	Avoiding the threats	• Increasing security on the border by reinforcement of laws and presenting financial motives to borderers • Preventing narcotic substances from being transmitted into the country by reinforcing security forces • Solving problems related to tribes and races in the province especially in Sistan which hinders, or even makes it impossible, the process of tourist entrance by

Therefore, Shahr-e Soukhteh is a rich collection of historical works and buildings, ancient campuses, which owns economical function and essential capabilities for the extension and development of tourism industry. This quality of Shahr-e Soukhteh, regarding all the restrictions, has drawn the attention of designers and national and regional politicians in order to recover and enhance tourism industry which consequently causes economic and social activities in the region

Khammar, G-A., and M. Mirlatifi, 2003. *Sistan: the Center of Civilization and Ancient Urbanity*. The publications of public relations: University of Zabol.

Touzi, 1999. *Beyond the Crockery in Shahr-e Soukhteh (Matikan in Sistan)*. Tan'iem Publication: Tehran.

Forouhar, 1983. *Cultural Letter from Iran*.

Afshar-e Sistani, I., 1990. *Sistran-nameh*. The publication of Morgh-e Amin: Tehran

Kiyani, M-Y., 1986. *A Brief Exploration in Iran's Urbanity*. The publication of Islamic Culture Organization: Tehran.

Sajjadi, M., *A Look on Unknown Cultures in Eastern Iran*.

White House, R., 1990. *The First Cities*. Translated by Sahabi M. Faza Publications; Tehran.