

Planning for Sustainable Tourism Development using SWOT Analysis – Case Study: Pasargad Region – Fars, Iran

By Farzaneh Gerami* & Seyedeh Zohreh Hosseini[‡]

The tourism industry has high potential and nowadays it is being categorized as one of the fastest-growing industries in the world. Sustainable tourism is the concept of visiting some place as a visitor and trying to make a positive impact on the environment, society, and economy and tourism development must be based on sustainability principles. Understanding the potential of each region allows the researcher and planner to identify the development way in accordance with the current situation. This study is aimed at developing sustainable tourism in Pasargad region with planning and definition of strategies. Appropriately, to achieve this goal SWOT analysis is used for conducting a comprehensive assessment for development. Effective factors in sustainable development are evaluated. As a result, for sustainable tourism development, an offensive/competitive strategy (SO) should be the priority of these programs using internal strength to realize the external opportunity in Pasargad region.

Keywords: *sustainable tourism, SWOT analysis, sustainable development, Pasargadae, Pasargad region*

Introduction

Nowadays, tourism is a dynamic industry and unique characteristics include an important part of economic activities and products in the developed and developing countries (Mosapour Miandehi and Yahyapour 2013, Edgell 2016, Khoshnevis Yazdi 2012, Steck 1999, Dimoska 2008). Sustainable tourism is tourism in a form that can maintain its viability in an area for an indefinite period (Butler 1993). Tourism and associated infrastructures that operate within natural capacities for the regeneration and future productivity of natural resources, recognize the contribution that people and communities, customs and lifestyles, make to the tourism experience; accept that these people must have an equitable share in the economic benefits of local people and communities in the host areas, both now and in the future (Eber 1992).

Tourism development must be based on sustainability criteria (Juganaru and Juganaru 2008, Edgell 2016). Obviously, without the knowledge and recognition of actual potential in each region, there is no possibility of planning and forecasting. To make further tourism development in a sustainable way, an integrated strategy for tourism planning is necessary. In fact, understanding the potential of each region allows the researcher and planner to identify the development way in accordance with the current situation. Like other activities, tourism both yields and

*Head, Tourism Department, Pasargadae World Heritage Site, Iran.

[‡]PhD Student, Roma Tre University, Italy.

takes from communities and travelers. If it is not properly planned, tourism can negatively impact everything such as villages, cities, parks, and historical monuments, and severely affected local infrastructure, residential communities, and their resources. Properly planning and management of sustainable tourism can contribute to improving livelihoods, inclusion, cultural heritage, and natural resource protection, and promote international understanding (FIAS Development Partners 2017).

Pasargad is famous for its numerous historical attractions, that some of which are unique in the world, as well as the existence of some natural attractions such as "Tang-e Boulaghi", "Tang-e Pir Chooan", Chahbid Forest, unparalleled effects of ecotourism, and the enjoyable weather. The view of the rocky mountainous with a variety of caves in the background of the plain and the edge of the Sivand river with the green bar of willow trees along the access path from Shiraz to Pasargad adds to the beauty of the area (Gerami et al. 2019). Furthermore, the area is on the nomadic route, and the rural community living in this area has a profound agricultural background.

This study is aimed at developing sustainable tourism in Pasargad region with planning and definition of strategies. Clearly, tourism is a multi-faceted activity and many different stakeholders are potentially engaged in the sector or are affected by it, directly and indirectly (UNWTO 2013). While the focus of this paper is on developing sustainable tourism, it is important to acknowledge that what is the positive and negative role of these effective factors in developing sustainable tourism? And, which strategy could be more practical to achieve this goal? Appropriately, to achieve this goal SWOT analysis is used for conducting a comprehensive assessment for development.

Literature Review

In the 1980s, the concept of sustainable development in international tourism planning was introduced (Edgell 2016). Most researches in the tourism industry cite the 1987 Brundtland Report (Brundtland 1987) as a starting point for discussing sustainable tourism.

The literature on sustainable tourism in Pasargad region is very scanty. Most of the literature on sustainable tourism in the world emphasized the economic aspect of tourism. Angelevska-Najdeska and Rakicevik (2012) concluded that sustainable development can only work successfully when four of its constituent elements, economic, social, cultural, and environmental components have approximately equal importance and strength and conditioning and interconnection without the domination of any part of these elements. Simpson (2001) described the evaluation of theory related to three specific issues and argued that the value of these propositions may exist more strongly in theory than in practice. After discussing several factors, he proposes a quantitative instrument by which a specific tourism development planning process can be assessed for its conformity with desirable principles of sustainability in tourism development. Bahaire and Elliott-White (1999) indicated that Geographical Information Systems (GIS) can

be regarded as providing a toolbox of techniques and technologies of wide applicability to the achievement of sustainable tourism development. They examine the progress tourism, related organizations are making towards the utilization of GIS and its integration with the principles of sustainable development in the UK.

In the field of using SWOT analysis for sustainable tourism development, numerous studies have been done and various strategies and guidelines have been presented to develop tourism (Akca 2006, Collins-Kreiner and Wall 2007, Ghanbari et al. 2012, Goranczewski and Puciato 2010, Hadiani et al. 2012, Khayyati and Nourani 2015, Mosapour Miandehi and Yahyapour 2013, Nasehi et al. 2017, Noori and Zand 2013, Rahmani et al. 2013, Reihanian et al. 2012, Shams et al. 2018, Subramoniam et al. 2010, Zhang 2012, Sabokkhiz and Sabokkhiz 2010).

Several studies for tourism planning have used SWOT with a system approach to show the traditional SWOT analysis does not seem enough. The reason can be expressed in some cases, such as the multi-field nature of tourism studies, diversity of tourism services, the multiplicity of involved organizations in tourism, and paying attention to inside and outside the tourism system simultaneously. Hadian and his colleagues used SWOT matrix for data analysis and presentation of tourism development strategies in the Shiraz city based on descriptive-analytical methods and with assessment capabilities and opportunities of Shiraz tourism, indicate that tourism planning strategies acceptable in this city, conservative strategies would be planned in first priority and second priority planning aggressive strategies. In Ardabil, survey-descriptive and analytical method with selecting two groups of tourist and authorities by using Cochran sampling was used. The results of experimental analyses indicate that the studied area has high variability of potentials and tourist attractions. Therefore, revising the existing policies to address the limitations and to use the relative advantages is inevitable. However, the survey in Bandar-e Anzali was done on three groups includes village household, the managers of the organizations related to villages and the tourists to identify and examine the effects of expansion of tourism on sustainable development of the rural areas in terms of economy, society, culture and environment and finally, some recommendations are provided for the development of tourism.

Moreover, some researchers mentioned that to sustainable development we should respect certain principles. Managing sustainable tourism depends on good strategic planning. To evaluate capabilities and tourism feasibility, each of the five elements resulting from tourism including attractions, accessibility, infrastructural facilities, hospitality services, and organizational and institutional elements must be studied and used in portraying the overall tourism products (Goranczewski and Puciato 2010, Collins-Kreiner and Wall 2007, Mustika and Aditya 2018, Laitamaki et al. 2016, Stephen 2019). Indeed, sustainable development has become an important criterion in attracting tourists and its sustainability in tourism can only be achieved if all the stakeholders apply the concept and practices of sustainability (Jaini et al. 2012).

Methodology

In this section, we explain the selected method for sustainable tourism development in a region to get a better result. Therefore, by determining cultural and natural attractions, a historical region is selected for planning. In this stage, we obtain the right choice of tourism planning by using an interview with locals and tourists at a specific time of year. Locals were invited to a sustainable tourism workshop organized by Pasargadae world heritage site (see Figure 1) to collect the positive and negative features of the tourism industry in the region. The next stage is for developing true planning by providing the tables of SWOT analysis.

Figure 1. Sustainable Tourism Workshop by PWHS¹



Source: Image Archive of Pasargadae World Heritage Site (PWHS), Authors 2019.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis or SWOT Matrix was developed in the middle of the 1960s for large organizations to identify the main factors to achieve the goal. In fact, it is a method for decision-making and selecting a strategy to determine the short-term or long-term strategy about various problems and issues and order in various affairs. This model can be designed for an organization or cooperation or a certain geographical region. It is composed of two matrices of internal and external factors. Internal factors are related to weaknesses (W) and strengths (S) of a set, a region or subject, and external factors are related to opportunities (O) and threats (T) of a region or system (Khayyati and Nourani 2015, Zhang 2012) (see Figure 2). The scale of this analysis research is in a region.

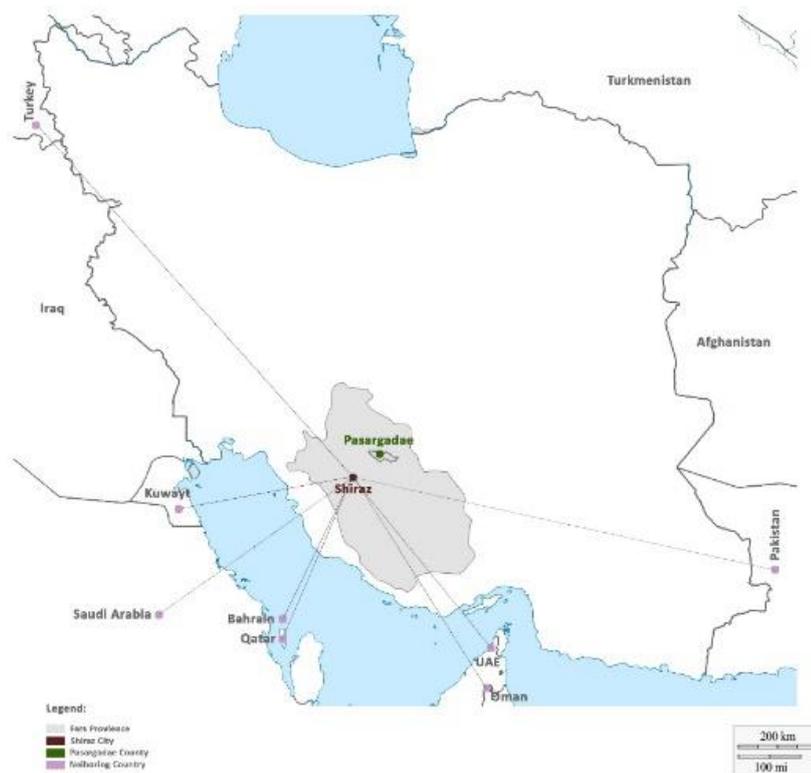
¹Pasargadae World Heritage Site.

Figure 2. SWOT Matrix

	Internal		
Positive	S Strengths	W Weaknesses	Negative
	O Opportunities	T Threats	
	External		

Source: <https://www.wikipedia.org>.

Study Area

Figure 3. A Sketch Map of Iran, the Location of Shiraz and Pasargad, Fars Province, and its Relation with Nearby Countries

Source: Authors 2019.

Pasargad is a district in Pasargad county that is situated within 130 kilometers of northeastern of Shiraz. Located in the fertile plain known as the Dasht-i Murghab. This city is a 708 square kilometer area and is located between 30°21.267 north latitude and 53°20.465 east longitude (see Figure 3). This city

consists of five rural centers with 6,532 inhabitants and villages named: Madar Soleyman with 1,605 inhabitants, Korshul with 850 inhabitants, Mobarakabad with 1,288 inhabitants, Abolvardi with 2,641 inhabitants, and Dehno with 148 inhabitants (see Figure 4).

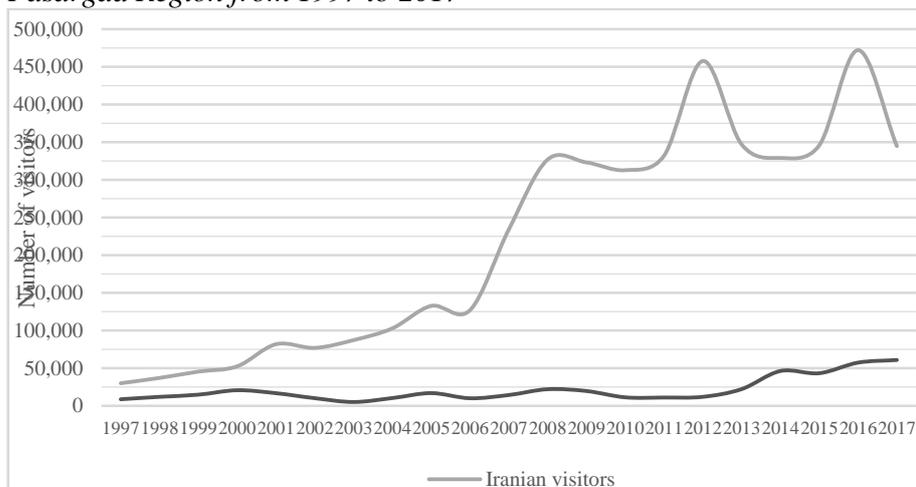
The number of annual visits to Pasargadae world heritage site by Iranian and overseas residents is presented in Figure 5. In 2017, more than 50,000 foreign tourists visited Pasargadae world heritage site that reaches a peak from 1997 and can be known as a consequence of the political position of Iran in the middle east and the world. This data shows the high potential of this region to increase the number of tourists by introducing other attractions such as natural and health opportunities.

Figure 4. An Aerial Photo of Pasargad Region



Source: Authors 2019.

Figure 5. The Line Chart of Iranian and Foreign Visitors who Entered into Pasargad Region from 1997 to 2017



Source: Gerami 2018.

The Pasargad region has the potential to substantially benefit from cultural tourism (Mozaffari 2014). Pasargadae World Heritage Site (PWHS) was the first dynastic capital of the Achaemenid Empire, founded by Cyrus II the Great, in Pars, the homeland of the Persians, in the 6th century BC. Cultural and heritage tourism is a vast field within which rural heritage and culture play a strong role.

Results

Table 1. Internal Environment

	Strength	Weakness
Internal Environment	<p>S1. One of the popular and well-known tourist place in Iran because of Pasargadae World Heritage Site (PWHS) and the value of PWHS for local communities</p> <p>S2. Smooth area, the ability to visit for all age groups and even patients and people with movement restrictions</p> <p>S3. Low cost of tourism services and facilities in the region</p> <p>S4. Diversity and plurality of natural, cultural, and tourist attractions to be developed</p> <p>S5. The hospitable and friendly behavior of the people in this region</p> <p>S6. Suitable tourism infrastructure in the region</p> <p>S7. Suitable tourism infrastructure to develop health tourism in the region</p> <p>S8. Suitable tourism infrastructure to develop eco-tourism in the region</p> <p>S9. Appropriate geographical position as a tourist attraction center</p> <p>S10. The presence of unique vegetation and animals</p> <p>S11. Enough security in the area</p> <p>S12. High motivation to travel to the region</p> <p>S13. High ability and potential to expand tourism</p> <p>S14. Employment of indigenous residents in tourism activities</p> <p>S15. Beautiful and unique natural landscapes with Mountainous environment and jungle in the background</p> <p>S16. Diversity in native dishes</p> <p>S17. Diversity in native handicrafts</p> <p>S18. Suitable tourism infrastructure to develop rural tourism in the region</p> <p>S19. Suitable tourism infrastructure to develop cultural tourism in the region</p> <p>S20. Presence of a quiet environment without noise</p> <p>S21. Is adjacent to international borders (Shiraz – Isfahan Road)</p>	<p>W1. Lack of attention by aware people to the tourism industry</p> <p>W2. Local People's unfamiliar with tourism and lack of training</p> <p>W3. Lack of trained experienced workforce</p> <p>W4. Lack of tourist facilities including residential and green space</p> <p>W5. poor advertising and activity of travel agencies</p> <p>W6. Lack of planning and management talents to use sustainable resources</p> <p>W7. Climate constraints in the region</p> <p>W8. Lack of progress in implementing executive plans</p> <p>W9. Improper environment and swage structures</p> <p>W10. No willingness to invest in the area</p> <p>W11. lack of proper parking</p> <p>W12. The lack of participation of elders in the development of tourism</p> <p>W13. Lack of adequate water resources</p> <p>W14. Unsuitable accommodation and recreation facilities due to the government's lack of planning and investment in this region</p> <p>W15. Inappropriate infrastructure such as the Internet for tourists, especially foreign tourists</p> <p>W16. Low-quality tourism products</p> <p>W17. Unsuitable hygienic and service facilities</p> <p>W18. The inability of people to speak in an international language such as English or French</p>

Source: Authors 2019.

According to analyzed the current status and identified the actual potential of this region, SWOT analysis, has been used in the proper investigation and rational assessment of available capacities. The internal and external factors of the region are presented in Tables 1 and 2, according to the studies carried out.

Table 2. External Environment

	Opportunities	Threat
External Environment	O8. Increasing the incentive of the private company and sponsors in the region to invest, such as the prosperity of tourism in the region O9. Establishing a market for animal products (wool and sheep) and dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, and so on) O10. Create an indigenous handicraft market O11. The possibility of attracting international participation to introduce and develop the tourist attractions of the region O12. improve training local workforces O13. Informing local people in accepting tourists O14. Possibility to utilize natural plants with a nutritional and medicinal value O15. Developing the route to facilitate the tourists O16. Possibility to export native products and handicraft O17. Prevent migration from rural to urban areas with the prosperity of tourism in the region and support rural and nomadic productions and employment O18. Established tourist agencies in the villages O.19. Cultural Activities and Beautifying the Environment of Villages O.20. Village and environment tour	T1. forgetting cultural events or customs in the region T2. Pollution and damage to natural and historical attractions and reducing the economic power of the region due to the lack of attention by tourists and lack of planning to prevent the exploitation of the capacity of bearing areas in some seasons due to lack of planning for space management and Once upon a time tourists, as well as the lack of funds for their reconstruction, aim at the prosperity of the tourism economy, especially with the lack of alternative industries with equal competitive power. T3. The lack of tourism growth and the reduction in the length of stay of tourists due to the lack of infrastructure funding, accommodation facilities, welfare, recreation and promotion, as well as the lack of transparency of rules and regulations regarding the involvement of the private company and sponsor in the region and beyond T4. Destruction of the authenticity of the handicraft of the region due to the combination with the tradition of tourists T5. Cultural Problems Due to a Combination of Native Culture with Tourism T6. Unwillingness to live in the countryside after economic progress T7. Unwillingness to produce handicrafts after economic progress T8. Inappropriate behavior and providing non-correct tips to tourists due to lack of local expert T9. Functional weaknesses of governmental and nongovernmental training organization T10. Inadequate introduction of Pasargadae Tourist attraction at the international level

Source: Authors 2019.

This stage aims to evaluate the internal environment of the historical village of Pasargad for the identification of the strengths, weaknesses, and look for the effects of the external environment to recognizing opportunities and threats. As is shown in the table1, in this study area there are 21 internal strengths points and 18 weakness points while there are 20 external opportunities and 10 external threats. Totally, there are 41 strengths and opportunities as advantages and 28 weaknesses and threats as disadvantages and constraints for the sustainable development of Pasargad region. Generally, the advantages for the development of sustainable

tourism are quantitatively superior to the limitations. The analysis shows that with coherent and targeted planning and with a focus on strengths and taking advantage of existing opportunities to remove weaknesses and avoidance of threats, an effective step can be taken to turn the region into a sustainable tourist destination.

Table 3. SWOT Strategies

SWOT strategies	Strength	Weakness
Opportunities	<p>SO1. Improving tourism infrastructure and facilities for travelers and tourists</p> <p>SO2. Identification and use of the other attraction or the region such as natural attraction, handicrafts, and so on</p> <p>SO3. Hiring educated people to train the locals to better welcome the tourists</p> <p>SO4. Inviting the private sector investors for investment in tourism to develop it in this region</p> <p>SO5. Establishing Temporary residence by the Government in Certain seasons</p> <p>SO6. Encourage local people to participate in developing tourism infrastructure and facilities in the region</p> <p>SO7. Interaction and co-operation between the local community, governmental and non-governmental organizations related to tourism to promote the tourism industry</p>	<p>WO1. Planning for the establishment of residential and recreational facilities because of the high potential of the region to increase the number of tourists</p> <p>WO2. Increasing Tourism efficient ads at national and international level</p> <p>WO3. Promote tourism education through various meetings with people in the region</p> <p>WO4. Developing and constructing a green and appropriate place for tourists</p>
Threats	<p>ST1. Attracting popular contributions to the production, promotion, and protection of indigenous quality handicrafts</p> <p>ST2. Planning to protect the natural resources and use the necessary strategies for this purpose</p> <p>ST3. Informing local people about the positive impacts of tourism on local life through the formulation of educational programs and cultural development and implementation among local people</p>	<p>WT1. Avoid bad weather conditions by creating hot spots (quiet places and restaurants) for winter tourists use as well as cool resorts to stay in during summer trips.</p> <p>WT2. Develop tourism by taking advantage of the researches done in this field</p> <p>WT3. Revitalizing the religious and cultural events in the region to attract tourists and increase the length of stay of tourists</p> <p>WT4. Holding seminars on investment and tourism industry by the members of the city council and governor's office and inviting the investors to provide the tourists with such facilities as traditional resorts in villages and nature.</p> <p>WT5. Establishing close cooperation between the village councils and people and Local authorities to develop the tourism industry</p>

Source: Authors 2019.

External and Internal factors add to the SWOT matrix and four different categories of strategies can be considered (see Table 3): (a) Offensive-Competitive

strategies (SO); internal strength can be used to realize the external opportunity, (b) Diversification strategies (ST); that devoted to internal strengths and external threats which means internal strength is used to minimize external threats, (c) Overview strategies (WO); that can be used to reduce internal weakness, and (d) defensive strategies (WT); which reduce the internal weakness to avoid external threats. Finally, by adjusting the strategic planning and internal and external factors that are the base in the strategies planning, the SWOT matrix was extracted, and accordingly, quantitative strategic planning, appropriate strategies, and priorities matrices of tourism development are identified.

Conclusions

In planning the sustainable tourism development in each tourist area, recognizing attractions, introducing them to the tourism community, investigating the existing facilities in that area, considering the current opportunities and capabilities, and finally analyzing the various aspects of tourism influences on the host community and environment are essential.

In this research, tried to understand that recognizing the potential and limitations of the region can have a valuable impact on the planning of tourism development, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats have been analyzed using the SWOT analysis. Ultimately, appropriate strategies are needed to exploit the strengths and opportunities and eliminate the weaknesses and threats to develop tourism in the Pasargad region. In a concise and simple analysis, it is clear that the threshold of the vulnerability in this region is increasing and, in case of attention to the strengths and using opportunities of the region, the good conditions for overcoming the weaknesses and threats and thus the development of tourism industry in this region is available.

The analysis of tourism in Pasargad region using the SWOT analysis suggests that the region with its strengths and opportunities has a favorable context for planning sustainable tourism development and overcoming the threats faced by tourism. To achieve this goal Offensive/competitive strategies (SO) should be the priority of tourism development programs in this region. Most importantly, co-operation between the local community, governmental, and non-governmental organizations could help the improvement of the tourism infrastructure and facilities. Inviting private investors and the support of the local people or investors by the government by providing tourism loans to set up accommodation and tourist service centers could improve the economy and develop the tourism industry in Pasargad region. Training local people to better identify the tradition and culture, and other attractions such as natural and handicrafts paying attention to the quality of services, and to better welcome, the tourists will increase not only the satisfaction of tourism, also the locals with high income.

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