

Sustainable Tourism Development in Chabahar: An Approach to Overcome Underdevelopment

Kiana Etemadi^a- Hamidreza Saremi^{b*}

^a Ph.D. Candidate of Urban & Regional Planning, Department of Urban Planning, Faculty of Arts, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

^b Associate Professor of Urban Planning, Faculty of Arts, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran (Corresponding Author).

Received 09 September 2021; Revised 04 April 2022; Accepted 15 July 2022; Available Online 20 March 2023

ABSTRACT

The tourism industry plays a significant role in the development of countries around the world. This industry is considered a suitable strategy for developing countries, especially in less-developed areas or in situations where the profits of other economic sectors are declining. In Chabahar, as the case study of the present study, tourism has not reached a favorable position and provided opportunities for local and regional development, despite the location of this region in a unique geographical area with many natural and domestic assets and values. The present study aims to apply the sustainable tourism development approach (which was formed due to the adverse consequences of the traditional tourism paradigm) in Chabahar. To this end, qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews are used. The present study is carried out in the following steps: the review of the theoretical foundations related to sustainable development tourism, recognition and analysis of the case study in terms of the structures of the natural and living environments, and the tourism status, the review of high-level documents, and interviewing with local managers, tourist, and those familiar with the region. Unlike other existing research that has mainly examined and analyzed tourism in Chabahar in the economic dimension, the present research considers natural, recreational, cultural, and rural tourism to take advantage of the sustainable tourism development approach, in addition to investigating the reasons for the failure of the tourism industry in Chabahar, and provides some suggestions and policies in different economic, cultural, recreational, and political dimensions.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism Development, Sustainable Tourism, Chabahar.

* E_mail: saremi@modares.ac.ir

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, tourism is considered one of the growing industries in the world, a tool for creating national, regional, and local revenues, and one of the concepts and pillars of sustainable development (Rattanasuwongchai 1998). In Iran, there are various regions with the potential for tourism, one of which is Chabahar, a coastal region. Although this region has significant potential in different dimensions to achieve development, it shouldn't be ignored that "in many countries, tourism is the main way and perhaps the only way of development" (Zargham Boroujeni and Sedaghat 2018, 27). For example, the free zone near Chabahar city, considered an important area with economic potential by the indigenous people living in the Sistan-Baluchistan province, has not yet been able to achieve its desired goals and improve the quality of life of the local community.

Previous studies and available high-level documents indicate that there is a possibility of development by the tourism industry in the Chabahar region due to the existence of valuable environmental and natural assets. Undoubtedly, it is helpful to identify tourism capabilities in this region and develop a plan for them to reach local and regional development.

Considering the ecological limitations in the case study of the present research and the adverse consequences of the tourism industry on different areas, the present study selected the sustainable tourism development approach, which is based on the principles of sustainability, to Chabahar and its influenced areas. Sustainable tourism development refers to a kind of development that is environmentally and economically sustainable, and morally and socially fair. This type of tourism takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, meeting the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities (UNWTO 2015).

Although the direction of global tourism strongly contradicts the policies and principles of sustainable tourism development advocated in the last two decades (Sharpley 2020), sustainable tourism is now almost accepted as a good approach to tourism development (Eckert and Pechlaner 2019). Sustainable tourism development has become more necessary as a result of the two trends of climate change and the massification of the global tourism industry (Yoopetch and Nimsai 2019).

With this introduction, the present study addresses sustainable tourism development in the Chabahar region. For this purpose, first, the case study is introduced in terms of the structures of the natural and living environments. Then, it is examined in terms of the tourism status according to the available high-level documents, and various actors are interviewed. Finally, some suggestions and solutions are presented considering the selected approach.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This section describes the advantages of the tourism industry for the development of regions and the necessity of applying sustainability principles in this industry. Then, the main research topic, i.e. sustainable tourism development, its background, and different definitions are discussed.

2.1. The Advantages of Tourism and the Necessity of Applying Sustainability Principles in the Tourism Industry

Nowadays, tourism is regarded as the biggest economic, social, and environmental power in the world and a tool to express the identity of the host communities (Hieu and Nwachukwu 2019; Ebrahimbai Salami 2014). The tourism industry, as the main platform for organizing and implementing activities in the six areas including attractions, transportation, accommodation, catering, shopping, and exclusive services, has become an important part of the economy of the host countries with six components, and it causes groups of guests to behave and spend in these areas (Ebrahimbai Salami 2014). Tourism is considered a proper strategy for the development of regions, especially when the profits of other economic sectors are declining (Mohsani 2008). In other words, in less-developed areas, tourism is considered a redeemer for economic development and poverty reduction (Hieu and Nwachukwu 2019). It is widely accepted around the world that tourism can make a significant contribution to urban and regional development, improving living conditions in a region. However, this phenomenon can also have adverse effects. Unsustainable tourism brings many problems and adverse results and can lead to the loss of natural resources and values (Yoopetch and Nimsai 2019). Other negative effects of unsustainable tourism include air pollution, improper water supply, uncontrolled waste, and destruction of tourist sites due to overcrowding and overuse. In some cases, unsustainable tourism leads to the extinction of plants and animals in different parts of the world (Yoopetch and Nimsai 2019). To overcome such challenges and reduce the negative effects of tourism, sustainable development has emerged as a widely accepted approach in different parts of the world (Eckert and Pechlaner 2019). Sustainability can be introduced as a key to resolving the contradictions between the tourism development policy and environmental protection and emerge in the form of sustainable tourism development (Sakellari and Skanavis 2013).

2.2. Sustainable Tourism Development

The traditional tourism paradigm was changed due to the adverse consequences of tourism (Tribe 2009). Sustainable tourism has attracted attention since the 1960s, due to the impact of tourism activities on the economy, environment, and culture of tourist

destinations (Choi and Sirakaya 2006). This trend continued with the emergence of a concept called "Green Tourism" in the 1970s, which was associated with the consideration of the value of natural capital and the estimation of possible damage to them, and finally emerged as a way to save tourism (Roknodin Eftakhari, Mahdavi, and Poortaheri 2010).

The term sustainable tourism was first proposed as a model for economic development to improve the quality of life of local communities, support tourism experiences in tourist destinations, and protect the environment by Bramwell and Lance (Yoopetch and Nimsai 2019). Sustainable tourism development emerged from the broad concept of public tourism development. In the next step, the concept of sustainability in tourism was modified to combine the social, economic, and environmental externalities of tourism development, and finally, sustainable tourism development is achieved (Fig. 1).

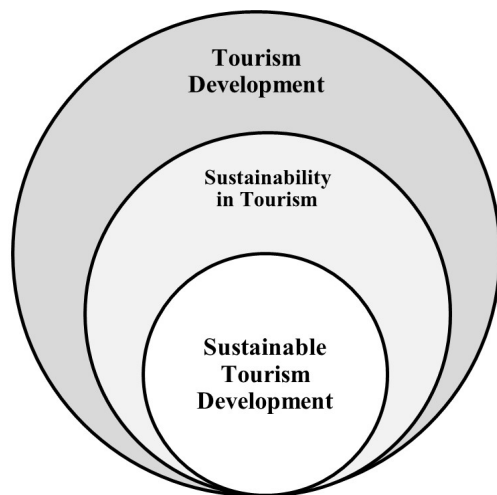


Fig. 1. Conceptualization of Sustainable Tourism Development
(Yoopetch and Nimsai 2019)

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) knows sustainable tourism as a comprehensive approach to the long-term growth of the tourism industry without harmful effects on natural ecosystems (Mohseni 2009). Therefore, the term sustainable tourism can be considered a type of tourism able to maintain its viability in an area for an unlimited period (Eckert and Pechlaner 2019). In fact, sustainable tourism development is a type of tourism development that takes account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impact considering the needs of visitors, host communities, the industry, and the environment (White et al. 2006). Sustainable tourism development enables the system to survive at a high level of quality (Ko 2005) and aims to compensate for the adverse consequences of collective tourism and create sustainable environmental, economic, social, and cultural

alternatives (Perchkani et al. 2016). Therefore, the goals of sustainable tourism development are including improving the quality of life of indigenous residents and host communities, gaining the satisfaction of visitors and tourists, and protecting ecological resources and natural blessings (Addison 2005).

Sustainable tourism development refers to "tourism development that uses existing resources in such a way that it can provide the integrity, cultural identity, environmental health, economic balance, and well-being of the local people while meeting the economic, social, cultural needs, observing legal regulations of society, and satisfying the expectations of tourists" (Mohseni 2009, 150). In the form of tourism development, humans can change certain aspects of the environment for favorable or unfavorable consequences (Mohseni 2009). Instead of distinguishing itself from the category of tourism, sustainable tourism is trying to make all types of tourism more sustainable (Kislali and Köse 2020).

Most of the literature on sustainable tourism and sustainable tourism development reflects three economic, socio-cultural, and ecological dimensions. According to some studies, political-institutional and technological dimensions can also be considered in sustainable tourism development (Choi and Sirakaya 2006; Hieu and Nwachukwu 2019; Asmelash and Kuma 2019).

2.3. Research Background

Many international and national studies have addressed the sustainable tourism development approach and its benefits. Yoopetch and Nimsai (2019) reviewed the articles published in the field of sustainable tourism development from 1990 to 2018 to identify the main journals and authors and highlight emerging issues. Their study provides guidelines for researchers for future research. Hieu and Nwachukwu (2019) investigated stakeholders' insights into sustainable tourism development on two islands in Vietnam using questionnaire analysis. The results indicated that the principles of sustainable tourism development are not fully adapted to the social and environmental aspects, and the stakeholders need to be educated about this issue. Eckert and Pechlaner (2019), in their study, identified complementary strategies towards sustainability in tourism, instead of developing completely new strategies, in the course of endogenous values and structures within a destination.

Mohseni's study (2008) is considered to be one of the first national references dealing with sustainable tourism. It introduced sustainable tourism and provided some suggestions to achieve this approach while addressing the negative consequences of traditional tourism. Parchekani et al. (2017), in their study, investigated the role of decisive factors in the sustainable branding of sustainable coastal tourism

destinations in the Chabahar region and concluded that the existing branding status in Chabahar coastal zone is undesirable.

According to the research reviewed in the background section, it is found that sustainable tourism development is a globally accepted approach to the long-term development of the tourism industry with no adverse effects on the environment. Each of the national research on the topic of tourism in Chabahar, as the case study of the present study, has shortcomings such as inattention to the dimension of sustainability in development. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill the existing gap on the topic of sustainable tourism to achieve development in the case study. The present study, unlike other national research, uses a qualitative method and takes advantage of the opinions of different groups of stakeholders, including local people, regional managers, and tourists.

3. METHOD

The present research is an applied qualitative study carried out using the interview tool and content analysis. Content analysis is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process

of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). To advance the main research goal, i.e. the application of the sustainable tourism development approach in the Chabahar region, firstly, relevant theoretical foundations to sustainable tourism were discussed. Then, in the case study section, the research scope was introduced and examined in terms of the structures of the natural and living environments, and the tourism status. Moreover, the position of this industry in the available and relevant high-level documents was discussed.

As a complementary tool for the conducted investigations, three semi-structured interview groups were also carried out on the topic of tourism in Chabahar. To conduct the interviews, the interview questions were predesigned for each group and new questions were also raised during the interview. In the present studies, the interviews were carried out to confirm the results of the previous sections using mentalities. The interviews continued until the answers largely became similar to each other and theoretical saturation occurred. After conducting the interviews, the answers of all interviewees were entered into the MaxQDA software and coded through content analysis.

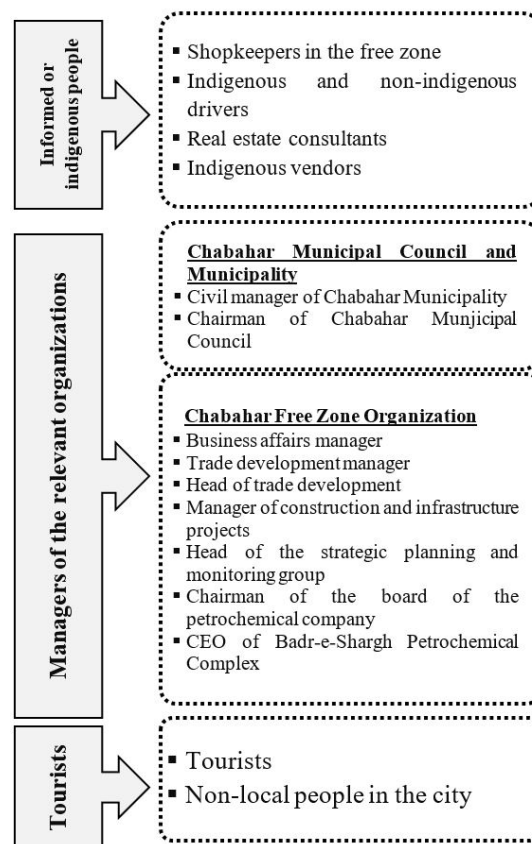


Fig. 2. Classification of the Interviews

Finally, some suggestions and policies were presented to apply the sustainable tourism approach in the

Chabahar region using the information obtained from different sections of the research, including the review

of high-level documents, interviews on the subject of tourism and sustainable tourism development, and the observation of the region.

4. CASE STUDY AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

In the present study, the case study is Chabahar city

in Sistan and Baluchistan province, in the vicinity of the Oman Sea, which is at the closest distance to the high seas, i.e. the Indian Ocean. Chabahar is considered the transit hub of eastern Iran (Web Portal of Chabahar Free Zone). Figure 3 shows the location of Chabahar city, which is called Chabahar region in this article, in Sistan and Baluchistan province, along with its administrative divisions.

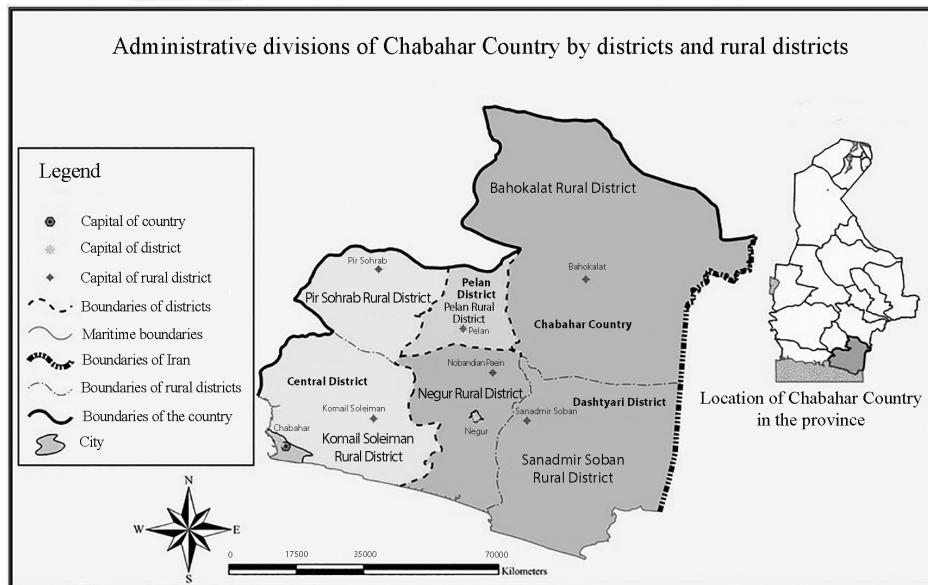


Fig. 3. The Location of the Chabahr Region (County) in the Province and its Administrative Divisions (Sistan and Baluchistan Province Governorate 2012)

One of the distinctive features of Chabahar city is the existence of the Chabahar Free Zone, which has been established in the vicinity of Chabahar city for more than two decades in line with the national economic goals. The main function of this zone is commercial and industrial, ten hectares of its area are assigned to industrial projects, and the rest are considered for tourism and commercial industries (Web Portal of the Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones).

Although the Chabahar Free Zone is considered to be an essential point of support for the people and a main source for economic, social, and political living in the region and the province (Web Portal of Chabahar Free Zone), previous research indicates that this free zone has not been able to achieve its desired goals (Mehrabi and Amiri 2013; Office of Economic

Studies of the Deputy of Economic Research 2016, quoted by Etemadi, Sarrafi, and Nedaei Tousi 2020).

4.1. Recognition and Analysis of the Case Study in Terms of the Structures of the Natural and Living Environments

Chabahar has many natural and local assets and values, due to its geographical location (Etemadi, Sarrafi, and Nedaei Tousi 2020). In this section, to recognize the case study in line with the research goal, the structures of the natural and living environments in the Chabahar region and specifically, the capabilities of this region in tourism are discussed (Tables 1 and 2). These tables include information obtained from the review of available high-level documents and field stud of the region.

Table 1. Desirable Features of the Structures of Natural and Living Environments in the Chabahar Region

Dimension	Desirable Features
Environmental	The ability of the region to produce off-season and tropical products (due to the fertile soil in the Minab Plain)
	Access to the water resources of the Oman Sea and the Indian Ocean with rich biological resources and capabilities for recreational and economic development
	Establishment of valuable ecological areas such as Gando protected area, mangrove forests including Kouh-e Pozak protected area, Hara-e Gabrik and Jask protected area, Hara-e Rudgaz protected area, Hara-e Tiab and Minab Protected Area.

Dimension	Desirable Features
Environmental	Enjoyment of tourism potential and unique natural attractions (beautiful seashores, Martian (Miniature) Mountains, the national natural attraction of the Gelfeshan Tong mud volcano, beautiful valleys and groves of Christ's Thorn Jujube and Prosopis persica)
	The diversity and pristineness of natural environments, climate diversity, natural landscapes, and the flora and fauna (due to its diverse topography and the presence of the altitude difference of above 2000 meters in the region)
Tourism	The existence of valuable historical and cultural villages and ports with tourism potential, such as Tis, Ramin, Beris, Goiter, Kuhestak, and Tang
	The presence of a wide and diverse range of historical and cultural attractions such as castles, religious centers, and historical sites and cemeteries
	The presence of natural aquatic attractions such as the shorelines of the Oman Sea, bays, estuaries, and natural wetlands, rivers, highlands, and foothills and desert landscapes with the ability of natural tourism.
	The presence of natural geological attractions such as Baan mesiti and Sanderman caves and Tang and Shoor-Ein mud volcanoes with natural and health tourism capabilities.
	The possibility of enhancing tourism and productivity of natural and historical attractions by providing regional access
	The presence of high potential demand for eco-tourism inside and outside the country due to the uniqueness of the natural attractions in the region
	Enjoyment of tax and visa exemption laws due to the existence of Chabahar Free Zone

Table 2. Undesirable Features of the Structures of Natural and Living Environments in the Chabahar Region

Dimension	Undesirable Features
Environmental	The flood regime of most rivers in the region
	Water scarcity and the limited potential of the region in providing fresh and potable water
	The frequency of destructive natural phenomena such as floods, droughts, and microdust
	Existence of various pollution (urban, rural, agricultural, industrial, solid waste, urban sewage, urban runoff)
	The poor physical and ecological capacities of the region
Tourism	Unknown historical and cultural attractions in the region and little exploitation of them
	Lack of facilities in the limited area of transregionally and nationally important tourist attractions
	Non-application of the opportunities provided by the existence of functions such as the free zone and maritime trade across the region for the development of tourism tours
	Lack of human resources especially experienced experts in the field of tourism and marketing
	Failure to provide sufficient funds to identify tourism through advertising
	The existence of the coast of the Caspian Sea and the Kish and Qeshm islands as the most important competitors of the region in coastal tourism
	People's negative mentality toward southeastern Iran due to issues such as drugs and tourism security

4.1.1. Examining the Chabahar Region in the Tourism Status

The Chabahar region, due to the enjoyment of unique geographical features and numerous historical and tourist attractions, has many assets and values which can bring the development of the tourism industry and provide many economic values for this region (Etemadi, Sarrafi, and Nedaei Tousi 2020). On the other hand, according to high-level documents, tourism in the Chabahar region has not been able

to achieve a favorable position due to the lack of welfare facilities, poor beach management, weak infrastructure, and insufficient attention to this industry (Kavosh Memari Consulting Engineering Co. 2009).

Following the recognition of the natural and living environments in the Chabahar region, this section examines this region in tourism status. For this purpose, first, the tourist attractions of the region are introduced in the four sections of natural sites,

recreation centers, historical monuments, and tourism projects under construction (Table 3). Then,

the existing spatial organization of tourism in the Chabahar region is examined (Fig. 4).

Table 3. Tourist Attractions in the Chabahar Region

Natural Sites	Recreation Centers	Ancient Sites and Historical Monuments	Tourism Projects under Construction
Mud volcanoes; Miniature mountains; Lipar (Pink) Wetland; Margove forests; Bris Pier; Ficus religiosa tree	Tis Plage; Lipar Plage; Darya-ye Bozorg Recreation Complex; Darya-ye Koochak Coast	Old Post Office (British Telegraph Office); Portuguese Fort; Baan Mesiti Caves and Temple; Historical cemetery and Great mosque of Tis village; The local museum and anthropology of Chabahar; Seyyed Gholam Rasool Mausoleum	Royal Sadaf tourism city in the Chabahar region; Kamalan cultural center in the free zone

(Field study and web portal of Chabahar Free Zone)

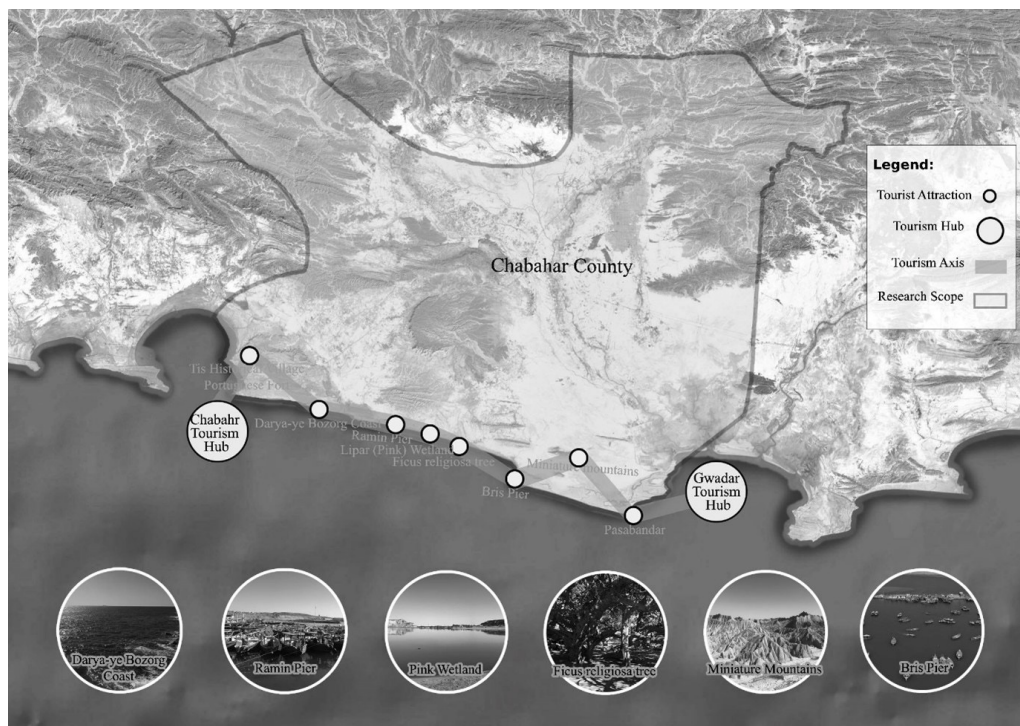


Fig. 4. The Current Spatial Organization of Tourism in the Chabahar Region

4.1.1.1. Investigating Foreign and Domestic Rivals to the Chabahar Region for Tourism

Table 3 presents the challenges and limitations the Chabahar region faces in the field of tourism. Among these limitations, one can mention the lack of required facilities in the transregionally and nationally important tourism attractions, the lack of human resources in the field of tourism and marketing in the region, and the existence of numerous domestic and foreign rivals. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the characteristics of each of the rivals and their strengths and weaknesses to use the opportunities of the region when planning the

development of tourism in the region.

Although there are numerous tourist destinations in Iran and other parts of the world, each of which can be considered a rival to the Chabahar region for attracting domestic and foreign tourists, this research addresses those tourist destinations that have something in common with the Chabahar region and it is possible to benefit from their experiences to improve the tourism status in the Chabahar region. One of the common characteristics of the rivals for tourist attraction is the existence of a free zone or a special economic zone as an economic incentive. Table 4 shows the domestic and foreign rivals to the Chabahar region for tourism.

Table 4. Examination of Domestic and Foreign Rivals to the Chabahar Region for Tourism

	Tourist Destinations	Unique Features of the Tourist Destination	Advantages of the Chabahar Region Compared to its Rivals
Domestic Rivals	Rajaei Port (Bandar Abbas)	- As the largest port in Iran, Rajaei Port is the main rival to Chabahar Port for economic exchanges; But it doesn't have the potential as that of Chabahar Port in tourism. - Allowing Nowruz tourists to visit different parts of the port and be familiar with the way of unloading and loading cargo, has led to the attraction of tourists to this port for several years.	
	Kish Island	Availability of water sports; The existence of numerous recreational facilities; Existence of modern shopping centers; The presence of historical and cultural attractions; Holding summer festivals	- Pristine and almost untouched ecological factors
	Qeshm Island	The presence of natural landscapes including mangrove forests, mountainous areas, and sandy beaches; the existence of commercial markets. Existence of historical attractions	- The temperate climate in all seasons - Relatively more suitable costs for tourism facilities
Foreign Rivals	Jebel Ali (the United Arab Emirates)	The presence of water and recreational sports; the presence of modern hotels	
	Salalah (Oman)	Existence of beautiful landscapes; Holding autumn festivals; The existence of traditional Arabic and modern shopping centers	
	Gwadar (Pakistan)	Gwadar and Chabahar ports are becoming new areas of strategic competition. Although this competition is mostly in the fields of communication and economy, according to the visions defined for Gwadar, the Gwadar port can be considered a serious rival to the Chabahar Port in the field of tourism in the future.	

4.1.1.2. Examining the Position of Tourism in the Chabahar Region in High-Level Documents

Since the present study mainly aims to apply the sustainable tourism development approach in the

Chabahar region, it is necessary to examine the high-level documents of the region as the factors guiding planning in the region and the position of tourism, especially the sustainable tourism approach, in each of them (Table 5).

Table 5. The Position of Regional Tourism in High-Level Documents

Scale	Document (year)	Planner	The Position of Tourism in the Document
National	Iran's National Tourism Development Plan	World Tourism Organization, UNESCO Regional Office	- Introducing the Chabahar region as an emerging tourism region - Considering Chabahar City as a venue for gatherings and events
	East Corridor Development (1988)	Planning and Budget Organization	- Very beautiful beaches in the south of the province, the wide desert in the center, and the presence of historical monuments and natural attractions provide a suitable opportunity for the development of tourism, the attraction of tourists, and the development of related activities. If this opportunity is used and combined with handicraft talents, the ground for employment and income generation, and cultural convergence at the national level will be provided.
	Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) (2008)	Ports and Maritime Organization (Directorate General of Coastal and Port Engineering)	- In this document, two tourism areas in Sistan-Balochistan province are defined, including the eastern region of Baho-kalat and Goiter due to the presence of natural monuments and landscapes, and the peripheral areas of Chabahar and Konarak cities due to the presence of cultural and historical monuments. - In this plan, some goals, strategies, and policies have been determined for the Makran area and the coastal line of the Oman Sea has been introduced as a sensitive environmental area.

Scale	Document (year)	Planner	The Position of Tourism in the Document
Regional and sub-Regional	National Sistan and Baluchistan Province Development Document (2005)	Sistan and Baluchistan's Planning and Budget Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In this document, the suitable climate of the province on the shores of the Oman Sea was mentioned for the development of tourism activities and it is mentioned that considering the existing strengths and weaknesses, the central and priorities development activities in the province will be based on different economic sectors, including tourism. - The development of the tourism industry capacities and exploitation of historical attractions of the province are among the most important long-term development goals of the province.
	Makran Coast Strategic Plan (2017)	Shahid Beheshti University, Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, Ministry of Petroleum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing and equipping integrated natural tourism (ecotourism) networks - Sea-centered natural tourism - Event tourism
	Chabahar Urban Region Plan (1994)	Shahr-va-Khaneh consulting engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Considering Haft-e Tir wharf in Chabahar city for globe-trotting and tourism affairs - Creating recreation camps in the west of the new town
	Master physical plan of Chabahar Free Zone	Shahr-va-Khaneh consulting engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constructing hotels per international standards in terms of facilities, installations, service quality, and management. - One of the secondary functions of the free zone is tourism.
	Makran Coast Strategic Plan (2016)	Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, Maab Consulting Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One of the main directions of development in the first wave of the development of the Makran region is the development of natural, coastal, and commercial tourism based on the attraction of the employed. - Defining the roles of tourism, along with the main objectives, in the spatial organization influenced by the future developments of the Makran region.

Reviewing available relevant documents developed on different scales and time frames shows that the topic of tourism has always been considered an important issue in the Chabahar region. Although the role of tourism has not been specifically defined for this region from the beginning, the enjoyment of valuable natural assets and tourist attractions has caused the role of tourism to be seen in all relevant documents over time.

4.2. Analysis of Interviews and Coding them

In this section, the descriptive data obtained from the interviews are entered into the MaxQDA software, and the statements of each interview are coded through content analysis. Finally, the interviews are divided into four codes, as presented in figures 5 to 8 along with their sub-codes and secondary sub-codes.

Code System	Tourists	Informed managers and experts	Informed and indigenous people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Tourism capabilities and features of the region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ The favorable climate in all seasons ☐ The presence of historical attractions ☐ The presence of valuable environmental and natural assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ The presence of other unique natural attractions ☐ The pristine nature of the beaches in the region 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Fig. 5. Coding of the Interviews related to the Code "Tourism-Related Capabilities and Characteristics of the Region"

Code System	Tourists	Informed experts and managers	Informed and indigenous people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Consequences of tourism in the region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Adverse effects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ The possible increase in living expenses ☐ Ecological deterioration of natural attractions ☐ Adverse effects caused by the conflict between tourists and the local people ☐ Favorable effects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ The improved sociocultural status of the city and surrounding villages ☐ The possibility of attracting investors to the free zone ☐ Employment for local people 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Fig. 6. Coding of the Interviews related to the Code "Consequences of Tourism in the Region"

Code System	Tourists	Informed experts and managers	Informed and indigenous people
✓ The reasons for the region's failure in tourism			
✓ Lack of tourism facilities			
Low variety of accommodation options	■		
Lack of required facilities in tourist areas	■		■
People's negative mentality toward the region and the province		■	
The existence of domestic and foreign rivals	■	■	
Inadequate advertising and lack of proper marketing to attract tourists	■	■	
✓ Poor transportation infrastructure			
Lack of safety on the roads of the province		■	
Air travel as the only common option for intra-provincial travel	■	■	
Lack of rail transport		■	■
Lack of highways in the province		■	■
Unfavorable condition of Konarak airport and lack of construction of chabahar's international airport	■	■	
The problems of land travel due to the lack of sufficient gas station	■	■	■
✓ High travel costs for tourists			
High taxi fare			■
The high cost of accommodation and residence			■
Lack of cheap public transportation	■	■	■
High costs of foods			■

Fig. 7. Coding of the Interviews related to the Code "Reasons for the Failure of the Region in the Field of Tourism"

Code System	Tourists	Informed experts and managers	Informed and indigenous people
✓ Requirements for the sustainable tourism approach			
Requiring the industries to improve the environmental quality of the region by planting trees		■	
Using green and clean energy in the industries established in the free zone		■	
Preparing social attachment for proposed projects		■	
Preparing environmental attachment for tourism projects		■	
✓ Making suggestions to improve the tourism status in the region			
Reliance on pre-execution planning		■	
Extensive domestic and foreign advertising		■	
Using the economic capacities of the free zone to improve tourism			
✓ Removing transportation deficiencies			
Constructing railways as a new transport mode		■	
Solving the fuel supply problem in the province		■	
Constructing an international airport in chabahar		■	
✓ Taking advantage of local forces in the tourism sector			
Teaching tourism expertise to local forces		■	
Employing local youth in the tourism sector		■	
✓ Taking advantage of female employment capacity			
Introducing the indigenous handicrafts in national and international events		■	
Taking advantage of the arts of women		■	
Taking advantage of the tourism and historical capacity of villages			

Fig. 8. Coding of Interviews related to the Code "Requirements for the Sustainable Tourism Approach"

The coding of the interview data indicates interviews with the managers of the organizations (54 descriptive data), indigenous and informed people (19 descriptive data), and tourists (10 descriptive data). It can also be concluded that the two codes "reasons for the failure of the region in the field of tourism" and "requirements for the sustainable tourism approach" are most described by the respondents, respectively. The set of subcodes extracted from the interviews is used in the research suggestions section.

4.3. Sustainable Tourism Development in the Chabahar Region

According to the case study section, including the natural and environmental features of the region, as well as the review of available high-level documents related to the region, it can be concluded that the Chabahar region has the capabilities of promoting

tourism in line with local and economic development. On the other hand, the preservation of the local and environmental values of a region in the tourism industry development is one of the basic pillars in this industry, which has received more attention today. It itself can lead to the promotion of tourism and the production of economic values for the region (Etemadi, Sarrafi, and Nedaei Tousi 2019). In this regard, the sustainable tourism development approach is considered the selected approach to improve the tourism status in the Chabahar region in this research. As mentioned in the "theoretical foundations" section, sustainable tourism development seeks to compensate for the adverse consequences of tourism and create sustainable alternatives. It pursues goals such as improving the quality of life of local residents and protecting ecological resources.

Finally, this research considers natural, recreational,

cultural, and rural tourism for the Chabahar region according to the review of its high-level documents, in such a way that it operates according to the ecological capacity of the region to obtain the goals of sustainable tourism development. In the following, using the results of different sections of the research,

including the coding of the interviews and the roles defined for the region in the high-level documents, some suggestions are presented in line with the application of sustainable tourism development in the Chabahar region considering the status quo and capabilities of the region (Table 6).

Table 6. Suggestions provided in the Present Study to Apply Sustainable Tourism Development in the Chabahar Region Considering its Status Quo

Dimension	The Status Quo of the Region	Suggestions
Cultural	Existence of unique handicrafts including needlework in the Chabahar region and surrounding villages	To hold annual exhibitions and to invite domestic (and foreign) clothing manufacturers to brand local clothing in the region in cooperation with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization. To hold seasonal events to introduce local handicrafts and foods
	The existence of valuable historical and cultural villages and ports with the potential for tourism	To use the capacity of traditional architecture and to build eco-tourism accommodations To use the historical tourism capacity of the villages, including Tis, etc.
	Domestic and foreign investors visit the Chabahar region due to the existence of the free zone, and the possibility of using the capabilities of eco-tourism and indigenous handicrafts in special events.	Apply the event tourism approach in the Chabahar region
Economic	The ability of the region to produce off-season and tropical products, domestic and foreign investors visit the Chabahar region due to the existence of the free zone, and enjoyment of tax exemption laws due to the existence of the free zone.	To establish shops for the sale of indigenous tropical fruits to introduce them and their products to the domestic and foreign markets.
	Access to Chabahar port and its piers	To make it possible for tourists to visit the port and its equipment in some tourist seasons
Recreational	Access to aquatic resources, the establishment of ecologically valuable areas, enjoyment of natural attractions, and tax exemption laws in line with trade	To construct recreational and commercial complexes (seafood restaurants, shops for purchasing aquatic products, handicrafts, accommodations, aquariums, etc.)
	The existence of natural aquatic attractions such as beaches, estuaries, and natural wetlands, access to the Oman Sea and the Indian Ocean	To hold water sports festivals
		To use the capacity of beach and water sports

It is required to adopt management and planning policies to realize the suggestions presented. In the present study, the proposed policies to develop tourism in the region based on the principles of sustainability are as follows:

- To establish more coordination between different organizations such as the free zone, port administration, municipality, and cultural heritage.
- To use tools such as digital marketing to attract more tourists and introduce the region at the national and international levels.
- To provide transportation infrastructure (various water, land, air, and rail modes) to make access

easy for tourists through the cooperation of various organizations and the installation of fuel stations in the region.

- To hold tourism improvement training courses for indigenous people.
- To prioritize the use of the region's natural capabilities and local human resources, including youth and women.
- To take advantage of cooperative competitiveness policies between the Chabahar region and domestic (Bander Abbas, Qeshm, and Kish) and foreign (Gwadar, Salalah, and Sohar) rivals.
- To facilitate investment rules and regulations for

foreign and domestic companies.

- To prepare social and environmental attachments for tourism projects.
- To pay attention to traditional elements in the region, to apply local culture in tourism projects, and not imitate other tourist destinations without considering the identity of the region.

5. CONCLUSION

Despite its positive effects, tourism has adverse effects and consequences on destination communities. On the other hand, nowadays, sustainability is accepted as a new approach to the development of regions in all its dimensions, including tourism. Since the research scope has limitations and problems related to its natural characteristics on the one hand, and various environmental and natural potentials and capabilities, on the other hand, the comprehensive sustainable tourism development approach was suggested for it in line with regional development.

The existence of special values of various plant and animal species in the Chabahar region, the preservation of biodiversity, and the presence of limited natural resources in this area make it necessary to establish ecological balance in the processes related to tourism development. To apply sustainable tourism development in the Chabahar region, it is required to consider the right of nature in the definition and implementation of tourism projects, in addition to the environment and native culture of the region, to avoid

the possible adverse consequences of tourism.

Although some studies have addressed the importance of the tourism industry in Chabahar city and its influenced area and the role of tourism in the development of the Makran region and Sistan and Baluchistan province, none of them have discussed the sustainable tourism development and most of them have investigated the economic aspect of the tourism industry in this region. Therefore, to achieve the research goal, this present study considers natural, recreational-coastal, cultural, and rural tourism suitable for the Chabahar region and provides some suggestions in cultural, economic, recreational, and political-management dimensions, as presented in the findings section.

In the end, it is concluded that considering the existence of valuable environmental and natural assets in the Chabahar region, as well as the emphasis of the high-level documents on the role of tourism in this region, the future status of the region in terms of tourism would be favorable if policies are adopted based on the principles of sustainability. Of course, it is necessary to consider the factors (Table 8) causing the region's failure in the field of tourism and planning for them. The factors are including the lack of tourism facilities, people's negative mentality toward the region and the province, the existence of domestic and foreign rivals, the lack of advertising and proper marketing to attract tourists, poor transportation infrastructure, and the high cost of travel for tourists.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to acknowledge and give our thanks to Dr. Mozafar Sarrafi and Dr. Sahar Nedaei Tousi for their valuable guidance to better conduct the interviews, as well as to the directors of Bandar Chabahar Municipality, Chabahar Municipal Council, Chabahar Free Zone Organization, and the residents of Chabahar City who participated in the present study to conduct the interviews in this research.

REFERENCES

- Addison, Tony. 2005. *Development*. In Peter Burnell and Vicky Randall. *Politics in the Developing World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/the-sage-handbook-of-tourism-studies/book229423>
- Asmelash, Atspha Gebreegziabher, and Kuma Satinder. 2019. Assessing progress of tourism sustainability: Developing and validating sustainability indicators. *Tourism Management* 71: 67-83. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0261517718302346>
- Choi, H. S., and E. Sirakaya. 2006. Sustainability Indicators for Managing Community Tourism. *Tourism Management* 27(6): 1274-1289. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0261517705000737>
- Department of Spatial Development of Iran, Shahid Beheshti University, Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, Ministry of Petroleum. 2017. Makran Coast Strategic Plan. [in Persian]
- Ebrahimibai Salami, Gholam Heider. 2014. Development of tourism based on the Iranian-Islamic progress model. *The First International Scientific-Strategic Conference on Tourism Development in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Challenges and perspectives*. <https://civilica.com/doc/338044>. [in Persian]
- Ebrahimzadeh, Isa, and Abdullah Aghas Yazadeh. 2011. "The effect of Chabahar Free Zone on tourism development of its under influence area by using the regression model and T-test." *Geography and Development* (21): 5-26. https://gdij.usb.ac.ir/article_578.html?lang=fa. [in Persian]
- Eckert, Christian, and Harald Pechlaner. 2019. Alternative Product Development as Strategy Towards Sustainability in Tourism: The Case of Lanzarote. *Sustainability* 11(13): 2-18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11133588>
- Etemadi, Kiana, Mozafar Sarrafi, and Sahar Nedaei Tousi. 2019. The role of Iran's free zones in regional development (case study: Chabahar free trade zone). Master's thesis. Shahid Beheshti University. [in Persian]
- Etemadi, Kiana, Mozafar Sarrafi, and Sahar Nedaei Tousi. 2020. Development of Makran coastal region in the light of Chabahar free trade zone. *Quarterly Journal of Urban and Regional Development Planning* 4(8): 1- 34. https://urdp.atu.ac.ir/article_12262.html [in Persian]
- Hieu, Vu Minh, and Chijioke Nwachukwu. 2019. Perception of Sustainable Tourism Development: Insights from Stakeholders in PHU QUOC Island, Vietnam. *International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology (IJMET)* 10(2): 1776-1788. <https://paper.researchbib.com/view/paper/212538>
- Hsieh, Hsiu-Fang, and Sarah E. Shannon. 2005. Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *QUALITATIVE HEALTHRESEARCH* 15(9): 1277-1288. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.11771049732305276687/>
- Kavosh Memari Consulting Engineers. 2009. Empowerment and Organization Plan of Informal Settlements in Chabahar city. [in Persian]
- Kislali, Hidayet, and Köse Mustafa Köse. 2020. Recreational Second Homes and Sustainable Tourism. In *HOSPITALITY & TOURISM Managerial perspectives & Practices*, 251-268
- Ko, Tae. Gyou. 2005. Development of a Tourism Sustainability Assessment Procedure: A Conceptual Approach. *Tourism management* 26(3): 431-445. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S026151770400041X>
- Mohseni, Reza Ali. 2009. Sustainable tourism in Iran: functions, challenges, and solutions. *Geographic Space* (9)28: 149-171. <https://www.sid.ir/paper/91381/fa>. [in Persian]
- Parchekani, Parvaneh, Seyyed Saeid Hashemi, Abdolreza Roknodin Eftekhari, and Mohammad Hossein Imani Khoshkhoo. 2017. The impact of decisive factors in sustainable branding of coastal tourism destinations (case study: Chabahar coastal zone). *Spatial Planning* 21(4): 35-58. <https://hsmmp.modares.ac.ir/article-21-16193-fa.html>. [in Persian]
- Partovi, Molouk. 2006. Obstacles and limitations of the development of Chabahar port as a free zone. *Economic Journal* 6(63 and 64): 2-17. <https://ejip.ir/article-1358--fa.html>. [in Persian]
- Rattanasuwongchai, Nuchnard. 1998. Rural Tourism - the Impact on Rural Communities II. *Food & Fertilizer Technology Center* 458: 4-16. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Rural-tourism-the-impact-on-rural-communities.-II.-Rattanasuwongchai/23286106a313c9e5c844f475c2389ca72943337d>
- Roknodin Eftekhari, Abdolreza, Davood Mahdavi, and Mehdi Poortahari. 2011. Localization process of sustainable development indicators of rural tourism in Iran. *Rural Research* 1(4): 1-41. https://jrur.ut.ac.ir/article_22685.html?lang=fa [in Persian]
- Sakellari, Maria, and Constantina Skanavis. 2013. Sustainable tourism development: environmental education as a tool to fill the gap between theory and practice. *International Journal of Environment and Sustainable Development* 12(4):313-323. <https://www.inderscienceonline.com/doi/abs/10.1504/IJESD.2013.056316>
- Shaddel, Amene. 2007. "Features and performance of trade free zones of Iran." *Commercial Surveys* 4(23): 16-27. [in Persian]
- Shahr-va-Khaneh consulting engineers. Master Physical Plan of Chabahar Free Zone.
- Shahr-va-Khaneh consulting engineers. 1994. Chabahar urban area plan. [in Persian]

- Sharpley, Richard. 2020. Tourism, sustainable development and the theoretical divide: 20 years on. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 28(2): 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1779732/>
- Sistan and Baluchistan Province Governorate. Map and GIS Department, Statistics and Information Office, Planning Deputy. 2012. [in Persian]
- Studies and preparation of (master) development plans and programs of Chabahar city. [in Persian]
- Tribe, John. 2009. *Philosophical Issues In Tourism*. Channel View Publications.
- UNWTO. United Nations Environment Programme– UNEP & World Tourism Organization. 2015.
- Walpole, Matthew J., and Harold J. Goodwin. 2000. Local Economic Impacts of Daragon in Indonesia. *Journal of Annals of Tourism Research* 27(3): 559-576. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0160738399000882>
- Web Portal of Chabahar Free Zone. <https://www.cfzo.ir> [in Persian]
- Web Portal of the Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones. <https://www.freezones.ir> [in Persian]
- White, V., G. McCrum, K. Blackstock, and A. Scott. 2006. *Indicators and Sustainable Tourism: Literature Review*. The Macaulay Institute. <https://macaulay.webarchive.hutton.ac.uk/ruralsustainability/LiteratureReview.pdf>
- Yooetch, Chanin, and Suthep Nimsai. 2019. Science Mapping the Knowledge Base on Sustainable Tourism Development. *Sustainability*: 1990–2018. <https://www.mdpi.com/20713631/13/11/1050->
- Zargham Boroujeni, Hamid, and Maryam Sedaghat. 2018. A Process Model for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Islamic Republic of Iran (A Grounded Theory Model Based on Five-Year Economic, Social and Cultural Plans of Iran). *Tourism and Development* 3(7): 25-73. http://www.itsairanj.ir/article_81139.html. [in Persian]

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Etemadi, Kiana, and Hamidreza Saremi. 2023. Sustainable Tourism Development in Chabahar: An Approach to Overcome Underdevelopment. *Armanshahr Architecture & Urban Development Journal* 15(41): 197-210.

DOI: 10.22034/AAUD.2022.303876.2545

URL: http://www.armanshahrjournal.com/article_168911.html



COPYRIGHTS

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with publication rights granted to the Armanshahr Architecture & Urban Development Journal. This is an open- access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

