

## **KISH ISLAND: DESTINATION GEOGRAPHY FOR TRAVEL AND TOURISM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Now days tourism become one of the most boost up and profitable industry as travelers demand is increasing. People enthusiasm of traveling provided the idea of getting better for government and entrepreneurs to ease mass infrastructures which satisfied and met customer needs. That's why this industry becomes the most magnificent phenomenon in the past three decades. In the present paper an attempt has been made to find out the image of Kish Island as very important tourism destination in Iran. There is lack of data about this beautiful tourism destination since very diminutive information merely can be finding in Persian website written by Persian language. The study is based on research data obtained from mounts research in Kish Island and previous published data. The aim of this paper is to argue about different aspects of tourism and specifically about tourism geography in KISH Island located in Iran.

**KEY WORDS:** KISH Island, Destination, tourism, geography, tourism activities, cultural tourism

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Many papers attempt to define and explain the tourist and geography tourism, however describing this term is not easy as it seems. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "the first appearance of the term 'tourist' in the English language was in the late eighteenth century, and it was used as a synonym for traveler" (Medlik, 2003). but based on technical definition of tourist which provided by "WTO" tourists are "the temporary visitors staying in a place outside their usual place of residence for a continuous period of at least 24 hours but less than one year for leisure, business or other purpose" (World Tourism Organization, 1993). The aim of this paper is to argue about different aspects of tourism and specifically about tourism geography.

### **TOURISM GEOGRAPHY**

Williams (1998, p.1) states "Tourism Geography reveals how geographic perspectives can inform and illuminate the study of tourism". Tourism geography is the study of travel and tourism. The term covers a range of attention including the environment impact of tourism, the geographies of tourism and leisure economics. Tourists choose their locations based on the area, so geography is a fundamental to the study of tourism.

### **TYPES OF TOURISM**

Based on the meaning of tourism there are different types of tourism activities but generally we can divide tourist in 2 vital categories, domestic and international. But within these two categories of tourism there are many kinds of divisions. To address all these categories a need of complete survey on definitions is Necessary which is not only the aim of this paper, but also is not suitable to discuss. However this paper explain the related types of tourism in summary where occurring on chosen geographical tourism area, KISH island.

KISH Island is located on the north-east of PERSIAN GOLF about 17km from the southern offshore of the main land Iran. The beautiful free trade island becomes the top ranked island in Iran to its unique and

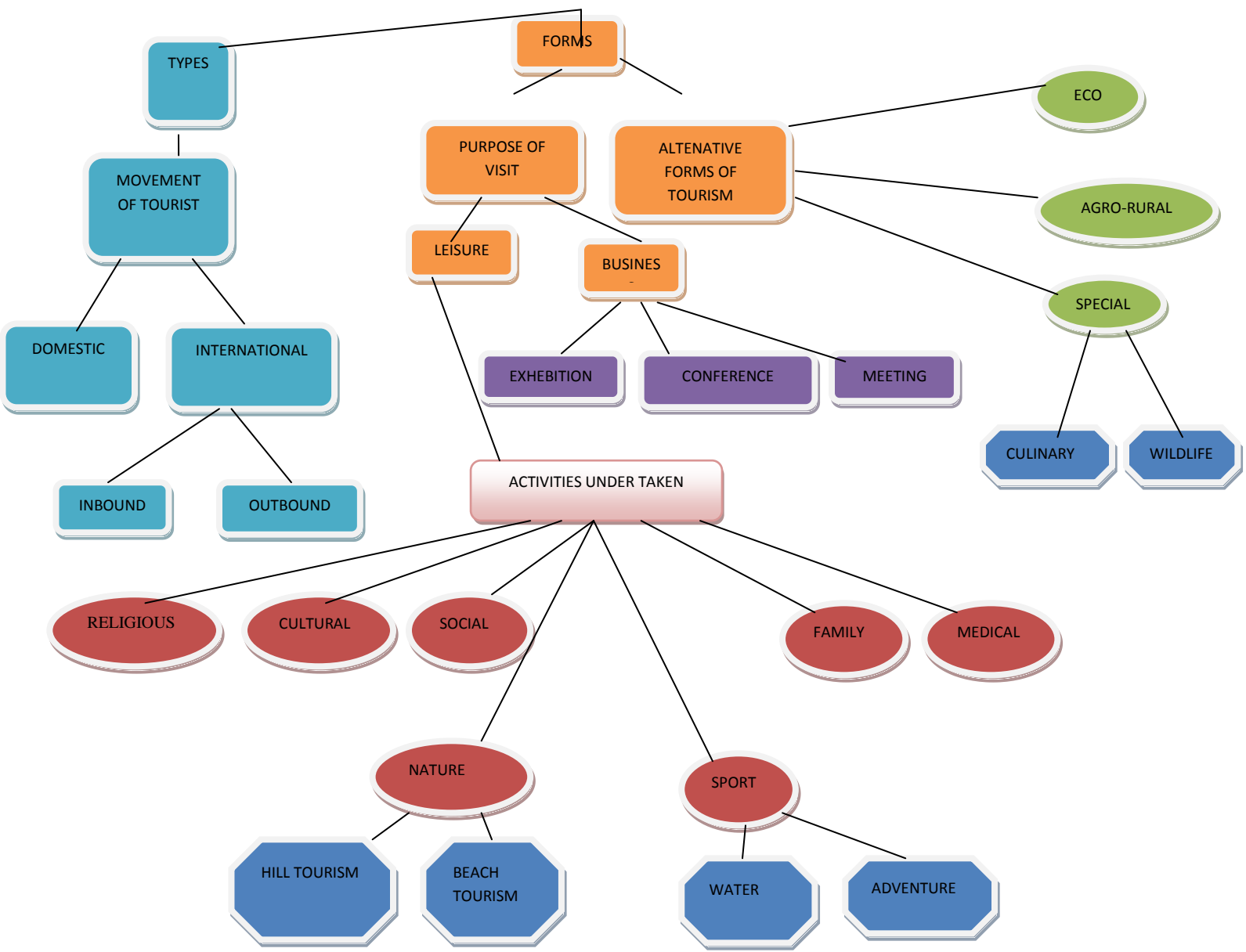
spectacular attractions. Tourist can find many recreation and activities through their journey (Daniel, n.d.). According to the report by Dress and Sommer Company (DSC) in 2007, Kish Island is the tourism centre of the Persian Islands in the Persian Gulf and has the longest history of tourism. The island is suit for leisure, sport, Ecotourism, luxury, heritage and cultural tourism. Based on figure 1 we can distinguish the different forms of tourism as below:

– Purpose of visit:

- leisure
- Business

– Alternative forms of tourism

**Types and forms of tourism**



## LEISURE TOURISM

Leisure travel is a travel which the aim for traveler is to take a vacation for running from their stressful life where they can relax and forget all the pressures that they suffered in daily life. Usually people do travel to experience change in climate and place to learn something new and feel something new. The term of leisure can take an action in very forms of activities such as social, cultural, religious and etc.

Kish contains all the main characteristics of small islands, including economic dependency on tourism and environmental characteristics (Shahandeh, 1999; Ghahreman, 2005; DSC, 2007).“Based on the findings by the DSC (2007), the marine water around Kish is in satisfactory condition. This is partly due to the geographically advantageous situation of Kish which is close to the mouth of the Persian Gulf and the flush of fresh seawater” (ErfanianSalim and MohdTahir, 2012)

## KISH, THE SPORT TOURISM

The idea behind the sportive refers to kind of travel with sport intention. Skiing, snorkeling, surfing, scuba diving are the main reasons why tourist want to do travel around the world especially when some countries has different winter or summer times. Kish Island provides play grounds and sports facilities for traveler and locals, Sports Complexes, cycling tracks, gilder flights, horseback riding club, scuba diving, and marine sport club and tennis court (Iran traveling center, 2010).

### – □ Sport complex

The Olympic complex is the largest in Kish. It is comprised of a football field, tennis courts, swimming pools, volleyball and basketball courts and facilities for many other sports. For easy access to sports facilities, 4 volleyball courts have also been built in different locations. Four additional small and standard size football fields are also available (Iran traveling center 2010).

### – □ Cycling Tracks

Kish Island has over 50 km cycling track, which stretches all around the island .Cycling is a popular sport in Kish and public cycling days are arranged by “Kish Free Zone Organization” or K.F.Z.O. in order to encourage people to cycle (DSC, 2007)

### – □ Gilder Flights

Kish Gliding School opened in 1996. It is one the branches of Civil Aviation Training Center (C.A.T.C) which is a member of International Civil Aviation Organization (I.C.A.O). It issues flying licenses and is located in Hormoz square (Iran traveling center 2010).

– □ **Horseback riding club**

Kish horseback riding club is located in the northern section of the island, in the Olympic village.

Horse-racing is a favorite sport in Kish & races are held throughout wintertime .Kish horseback riding club has a clinic (Iran traveling center 2010).

– □ **Scuba Diving**

Diving is an ideal sport in Kish Island because of the exquisite coral reefs and rare fish species. The Kish Diving School offers also Padi courses with certificate for divers. Interested tourists can experience the world of underwater and its wonders (Iran traveling center 2010).

– □ **Marine Sports Club**

This club is located in the north-eastern side of the Island. The modern facilities and marine sports equipment of Kish Marina club include: Jet Ski, water ski, parachute, yachts & sailboat, scuba diving and windsurfing, etc.

– □ **Tennis courts and Sports Facilities**

Sports facilities in Kish are highly revered. Kish Sports Complex has six tennis courts and an international tennis stadium, which is located in the Olympic village at the northern part of the Island (Iran traveling center 2010).

## **KISH, THE HERITAGE AND CULTURAL ISLAND**

-In Kish Island tourists can find cultural, ethnic, historic, heritage, architectural and religious sites which some are recreated and renovated recently. For instance tourists can find their interested area as there is mysterious underground town of CARIZ which is more than 2500 years old, with depth of 16 meters below the surface within 10,000 square miles (Kish Island, 2003). Handicraft stalls, restaurants and traditional teahouses, amphitheaters, conference centers, and Art galleries are located in this site for tourist convenience.

-Ancient town of HARIREH rise and shine as one of the spectacular places to visit too. Visiting this ancient town is an opportunity to get familiar with the island's history while having a nice time at the Green Tree Recreational Complex, situated near the ancient city.

-Furthermore a grounded Greek ship in seashore is another pleasant scene which becomes another major tourist attraction. This ship was stuck in the mud for an unknown reason. By standing beside the ship and watching sunset you may experience a captivating and delightful moment as tourist.

## **KISH, THE NATURAL ISLAND**

Nature tourism is based on natural attraction of an area. The most two important types of area are Hill tourism or camping tourism and Beach tourism which the aim of this type is totally different from water sport tourism. These specific types of tourism are tourist where they are interested in experiencing the joy of adventure. They loved to put themselves in inexperienced situations to feel the excitement.

The national park of Kish is become the most interested one, for adventure seekers where you can have your own safari ride in Island at night for picturing the beauties of wild nature(Kish Eram hotel 2013) .

## **KISH, BUSINESS TOURISM**

According to DSC (2007) “A large conference and congress centre with 1,200 participants’ capacity is currently being built on Kish Island”. There is a necessary and urgent need in building new conference and meeting convenience for both governmental and international meeting aspects (DSC, 2007). By considering this fact that Kish Island needs to upgrade and build new convenience structure for international meeting we can say that in parallel, expansion of the hotel rooms capacity is Unavoidably as a result Kish will add another value to Island as a strong supplier for the MEETINGS AND EVENTS ISLAND (MICE) market (Erfanian Salim and Mohd Tahir,2012). For instance there is an international aerospace exhibition every year in KISH Island, where tourists gathered and watch the march of the air forces from Iran and other countries.

## **KISH, THE ENERTAINMENT TOURSIM**

### **– □ KISH, THE SHOPPING**

One of the fast growing businesses in Kish Island is shopping thanks to Free-Zone attribute. There are more than fifteen shopping mall in Kish with new and modern building and environmental which shows that this area is capable of being on top rated shopping area for national and international tourist with fair and reasonable price in comparison with other parts of Iran.

### **– □ KISH, FACILITIES AND CONSTUCTION**

By growing the number of tourists there is growing in building facilities and rooms for accommodating and lodging passengers. Government provides for foreign investors to come and invest their money on building and constructing project with lowest taxation and charges. Based on this issue number of investors raised in \the mid 2000s but unfortunately because of some political issues this progress stopped.

– □ KISH THE FAMILIES ENTERTAINMENT

Kish is offering limited items for families and children. Activities offers by Kish is just educational, sport and shopping which is include the majority of tourism motivation for this specific and potential target market. Facilities provider now building theater, kids club, Entertainment Park and etc.

– □ DolphinPARK

“The Dolphin Park is 10,000 square meters large and is surrounded by over 12,000 palm trees.

The park includes a Dolphinarium, Butterfly Garden, Silkworm Compound, Exotic Bird Garden, Artificial Rain Forest, Volcanic Mountain, The World of Orchids and Cactus Garden” (Padash et.all , 2011).

– □ Mysteries of the World Zoo

The small zoo with different kinds of animal provides an authentic experience for traveler in the Island. Children could have a chance to see the wild animals from very close and can study and earn about their diversity and normal life.

### **KISH, EDUCATION TOURISM**

According to DSC (2007), there are both governmental and private universities in the Island. The University offers BS and MS degrees in Language, Management, Social Sciences, Electronics, Computer Engineering and Physical Oceanography. Further more cooperation between two governmental universities (SHARIF & TEHRAN UNIVERSITIES) and two international (Monarch- Australia and MMU-Malaysia universities) gives the opportunity for both Iranian and international students to complete their further education in this Island.

### **KISH, ECOTOURISM ISLAND**

Eco tourism is a division of tourism with strong respect in ‘Green movement’. This idea is growing among the youth nation. Its intention is low impact to untouched and virgin environments. There are very strict rules for traveler about not harming the nature and wild life. Any kind of breaking these rules could consider as a crime with serious consequences. According to Iran daily news agency (2011) the K.F.T.Z. provides a program for Nature protective groups to observe and study the green turtles that come to the seashores for finding foods and laying their eggs.

### **SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM**

Tourism is important key in transforming and developing in any county. It is a part of development where government start to defining new forms of economic revolution based on tourism industry.

Tourism industry gains distributes through the layers of society .the outcome directly count as local residence and government interest and this will continue and stay for next generations. When the tourist comes into a country for journey socioeconomic exchange will commence. Government has to build and improve infrastructures on tourism attraction. This leads the society appearance standing on high standard and makes the country developed.

Transportation, construction will increase job opportunity for citizens. This leads the society to the lowest unemployment rate which government is grateful of it. Tourism industry needs a proper hospitality industry, as most of the related jobs to hospitality industry needs simple workers especially for F&B, this money outcome would give better perspective of future for family .it gives them hope and enthusiasm of further education for their families. Another aspect of socioeconomic impact is highlighting the role of women in society. Statistics shown women employees in hospitality industry are more than other industries. This will give them more self-confidence and a chance to buck up their place in society. (Kish Eram hotel 2013; Hellokish 2013)

Furthermore cultural values exchange is another important aspect. This significant influence is nothing that we can regardless about. By arriving in country, a tourist can easily teach local citizen to socialization. This phenomenon had its impression on undeveloped countries (especially south-east of Asia). For every plus there is minus. This fact that by increasing the number of tourist's society will suffer higher conflict with different cultures is true. Many sociologists are unanimous about the idea that tourism development is leading to destinations losing their cultural identity. They strongly believe in that the cultural consequences will be more harmful in future. As we can see these days that most of Asian youth (particularly south-east) are affecting by the foreigners culture.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF TOURISM**

Another pros and cons that are arguable among proponents and opponents are environmental impacts. Resorts, hotels, restaurants, theme parks and etc, are major hospitality facilities that need to upgrade every while. Land becomes the important issue when construction is crucial (Mbaiwa,J 2003). One of the crucial issues that governments are facing with is transforming and building the areas in to the new and modern facilities. By this idea many farmers and land lords forced to sell their land and farms in order to building. Transforming the nature in to the building is the last thing that 'Green movement 'defenders want. This group is the most well-known opposition against illegal and harmful constructing. Facilities such as golf resorts need thousands of liters of water for maintenance. This would speed up the loosing water resources as we can see this major problem is now out of control for countries such as Thailand and Costa Rica. Research shows that Tourist is harmful to nature whereby they can litter the nature by their waste and spoiling materials. At last negative impacts from tourist occur when the level of visitors use is greater than environment capacity to cope with it. Carrying capacity management should offer and expand useful plans to prevent from more damages to environment (Mbaiwa,J 2003).

## **KISH, PULL AND PUSH FACTORS**

There are some pull and push factors that have influence to attract tourist to travel to KISH island.

### **PULL FACTORS**

By considering the importance of potential visitors market for destination country, we can understand the value of recognizing the aspects of tourist persuasion. The aim of target marketing is to understand and analyze the tourist's Motivations. during these three decades the term "motivation" has been studied by many researchers from different points of view but all of them unanimously have been accepted that pull and push factor is the one and only important factor that need to consider.

The concept behind this idea is that travelers choose their destination based on their own interests (push factor) and based on the destination attributes and situations (pull factor).Recent research has found that there are four major items for push items in Kish Island (Padash, et al., 2011).

– □ Relaxing and getting away from stressful life (escape).

Living in now day's society is a problem that everyone is involved with. Running away from pollution, stress, and traffic is a must for people. Domestic travelers chose Kish Island for their destination because they want to experience both excitement and joy of peaceful life.

– □ Shopping

The majority of youth generation is interested in shopping especially in free-zone areas. Kish Island is a free-zone area and it is suits for shopping without duty and taxation.

– □ Water sport

Thanks to the great location of the Island, Kish has the clearest water among of all Gulf shores. Scuba diving and other water sports are popular in Kish.

– □ Experiencing and learning something new

Underwater life cycle, historical places, natural activities and wild park nature is become new excitement for tourist in past years.

### **PUSH FACTORS**

According to Padash,et. all (2011) there are four pushing for traveler who choose Kish Island.

– □ Air condition(Seasonality)



Good weather condition on Jan-May makes the island as a tremendous Place to visit where other parts of Iran are experiencing Snow and rain. During this time it is a good opportunity for travelers to feel the joy of sunshine.

– □ Summer Festival

Despite of hot and humidity whether in summer still travelers choose Kish Island for their destination because of shopping festivals with considerable promotions and sales.

– □ Beaches

During recent years, government spent on infrastructure for developing Island beaches (The DSC, 2007).clean beaches with different forms of sports and equipment become one of the most important area of interest for tourists.

– □ Good service quality

At present, 44 hotels and 11 thousand beds in the island for travelers staying there and another 17 hotels under construction are 4 or 5 Stars (The DSC, 2007). Many of them are in good conditions and hosting tourist with high service quality, but still there is a necessity of upgrading in acknowledgment and training for staffs. Dariush Grand Hotel is the pioneer of this industry in Kish Island. This hotel by its historical architecture is hosting many foreign and domestic guests and made them to comment in a good way about the service.

## **SUGGESTION TO PROMOTE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

In tourism industry the competition is one of the main issues. Market of tourism includes comparison of tourist demand and supply, which this happens through activities of management of travel agencies and other authorities related to this industry. The issue of management and coordination's for improvement of the quality of demand & supply create very tough competition in this industry. Therefore for being in this competition we should clearly know rules & regulations of the industry.

Among all commercial free zones in Persian Gulf, Kish Island due to its own unique geographical situation & it's beautiful nature has got the possibility of attraction of tourism more than any other places in this region. Therefore the necessity of appropriate management & planning for this island force us to link & do more deeply to solve the problems of this island.

To be able to create a very attractive and pleasant atmosphere for attraction of tourists by which the island can increase the foreign exchange income for the economy of the country, First of all there is a need to find the way to make the transportation easier for tourists & travelers and revision on Barriers and make them less.

At the Kish Island there is one international airport, but unfortunately based on findings on Kish international airport website all the flights are from Iran provinces, except one flight which is

from Dubai twice a day. This fact shows that, we have to develop the airport capacity that can accept much more flight specially international from different part of the worlds, by doing some necessary measures for obtaining flight permits from European countries, adding that by launching promotional activities in some airline companies in European countries, the number of visitors will be increased in the near future. However they can also travel and come to Kish Island by boat and cruise ships cause for foreign travelers no need visa and they can come and stay at Kish within 14 days without visa, this can be attractive and can motivate much more tourist.

The second Idea and suggestion for promote more tourist to Kish Island is about accommodations and hotels. Hotel industry is one of the most substantial factors for Tourism Industry. It could provide the necessary substructures for Tourism. Therefore the growth in Tourism industry depends on growth in Hotel industry. Hotel industry had a major growth in recent years in Iran.

Presently, most of our tourists are from South East Asian countries, few European countries & mostly from Iran & neighboring littoral states then the island have to provide and construct more hotels that can develop and increase capacity of hotels and accommodation, also have a suitable condition to provide and build some motel and resorts beside the sea and even go further and get idea and concept from Palm in Dubai and jabal-ali to build the house and apartments on the sea.

The other idea for motivate and attract more tourists and make this industry sustainable in Kish Island is in the Iranian New Year which starting on March 20. Referring to the increase in the number of Norouz (Iranian new year) vacationers to Kish Island, regarding this matter it will be good idea to to provide some special events and organizing exhibition and fairs to show the travelers and tourist the culture and civilization with festival and carnivals that they can try the different traditional foods in the different atmosphere in the island.

Developers should provide situation for Deficits passengers who don't feel easy to travel into the hot place in summer, summer festivals that holding near end of June until 70 days, on this seventy days the shops and brands all give the customers good promotion and they are on sale, Actually the main reason of this festival after bringing more tourist to island is shopping and still keep the economy and income in high level even in the low season, cause mostly the high season for Kish Island is December until end of February but near 160,000 visitors entered via Kish airport and port during March 25 to April 6. Also by reformation in some aggressive religious rules and politic issues for foreigners in Kish Island the island can service and accept considerable number of travelers, as the Kish Island is free zone (Kish Free Zone).

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