

The Impacts of Rural Area Development on Ecotourism: Evidence from Masouleh

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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism as an outstanding segment of tourism has influential impacts on the economy and environment of the destinations. All that countries especially the developing countries like Iran have been investing a lot on ecotourism in their natural sites such as rural areas. The ongoing developmental activities as well as expanding efforts which are being in rustic areas bring a number of impacts on the environment of the destinations that accordingly influence the ecotourism.

In this study the researcher aims to find the impacts of developmental operations on the ecotourism of Masoule, a rustic area which is a famous ecotourism destination in the north part of Iran.

In order to get the necessary data, qualitative research approach was applied in this study using in depth interviews.

The analysis of data revealed that ecotourism is the main economic source for the locals in Masoule. Due to the presence of the ecotourists and also the facilities provided for them the environmental face of the area has been completely changed during the recent years.

At first glance the expansion of the area and development in Masoule has resulted in upgrading the quality of social life and enhancing the life standards both for locals and ecotourists. On the other hand considering only the beneficial factors in such developmental activities have resulted in substantial damages to the environment and ecosystem of the area which also has degrading the natural beauty and scenery of

Masoule and might endanger the whole ecotouristic attractions of the area in near future.

The study showed that a series of sustainable developmental actions is a remedy for preservation of the environment and well being of the local individuals.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Developmental impacts, Rural areas, Local community, Masoule.

ÖZ

Turizmin önemli bir alanı olan ekoturizmin ekonomi ve destinasyon yerleri üzerinde etkileri vardır.

Tüm ülkelerin özellikle İran gibi gelişmekte olan ülkelerin doğal bölgelerinde kırsal alanları gibi, ekoturizm alanları üzerine bir çok yatırım yapılmıştır. Kırsal alanlarda devam eden geliştirme faaliyetlerinin hemde ilerleyen çabaların destinasyon yerlerine beraberinde getirdikler, ekoturizmi etkilemektedir.

Bu çalışmada araştırmacı, gelişimsel faaliyetlerin İranın kuzey kesiminde ekoturizmin ünlü bir destinasyonu olan kırsal bir alan üzerindeki etkilerini gözlemlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Gerekli verileri elde etmek için, nitel araştırma yaklaşımı ile derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmadaki verilerin analizinde, ekoturizmin, Masoule de halkın temel ekonomik kaynağı olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır.

Son yıllarda ekoturistlerin varlığı ve onlar için verilen hizmetler nedeniyle bu alanların çevresel yüzü tamamen değişmiştir.

İlk bakışta Masoulede bölgenin genişlemesi ve gelişmesi hem ekoturistin hemde halkın sosyal yaşam kalitesinin yükselmesiyle sonuçlanmıştır.

Öte yandan bu yararlı faktörleri takiben gelişimsel faaliyetler, çevre ve ekosistemde Masoulenin doğal güzelliği ve manzarasının önemli zararlar görmesiyle sonuçlanmış ve yakın gelecekte bölgenin ekoturistik cazibesinin tehlikeye atılması olasıdır.

Çalıřma gösteriyor ki çevre korumasını teminat altına alan sürdürülebilir gelişimsel yaklaşımlar yanında iyi yerel bireylerin olması, Masoule ve diğeri benzeri yerlerin konumu ve durumu için bir çözümdür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ekoturizm, gelişimsel etkiler, kırsal bölgeler, yerel toplum, Masoule.

To my Brother...

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First of all I would like to express my gratitude to my dear supervisor Professor Dr. Mehmet Altinay who helped me so much during my whole master program especially my thesis.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problems of Rural Area Development and Ecotourism

Tourism in general produces considerable economic profits to the local communities. There are varying types of tourism which the ecotourism is one of the most outstanding niches of this industry that has attracted so much attention recently, especially in third world countries.

One of the broadest definitions of the ecotourism has been evolved by Boyd and Butler (1996) as follows: the form of tourism which mostly focuses on the environmental issues and usually occurs in natural places. Accordingly the combination of the activities happening in relation to ecotourism in an area brings about a number of impacts to the environment and ecosystem. Among those activities the role of developmental operations and their impacts on the ecotourism in a region are so indispensable to be observed.

Area expansion as well as other reconstruction activities in rural areas have increased the environmental changes which have a direct contribution on the ecotourism in those places. Presence of ecotourists in a rustic area inserts the economic benefits to the region and on the other hand the pressure which those visitors impose on the ecosystem degrades the natural phases of the rural areas. On the other hand the stakeholders of the ecotourism phenomenon in a rural area regardless of the other factors mostly pursue their own benefits and increase the touristic facilities to the

tourists by different developmental activities such as: building new resorts, accommodation, transportation systems and so on which overall results in unexpected impacts on the rural area's ecosystem and simultaneously on the ecotourism itself in the destinations.

1.2 Statement of the Importance of the Research

The vital role of ecotourism in the lives of the habitants of Masoule is not ignorable. On the other hand this magnificent natural treasure is subjected to fast development. The developments regardless of their impacts on the environment of Masoule, mostly serves to the benefits of the stakeholders. Thus observing the impacts of such development in Masoule is so essential not only from the environmental standpoints but also from the economic importance of the issue in the region.

Moreover, up to now there has not been any academic research about researching the impacts of such development and expansion of the area on the ecotourism in case of Masoule. Thus it seems so important to understand such impacts and propose implications about the issue in order to adopt a sustainable and efficient approach.

1.3 Aim of the Study

This study aims to understand the impacts of area expansion and development, on the ecotourism. For this reason Masoule, a very famous destination for ecotourists in Iran, has been selected. The objective of this thesis is to qualitatively penetrate to the issue and discuss the aforementioned impacts on the ecotourism industry of Masoule. The final goal of this research is evolving precious implications by means of which not only Masoule but also the other similar cases in other regions may benefit from.

1.4 Method of the Study

In order to comprehensively understand the effects of rural area expansion in the case of Masoule, the qualitative research approach was utilized in this research since it enables the investigator to profoundly permeate in the experiences of the residents of Masoule on the discussed topic. Moreover in depth interviewing was selected as a study instrument for collecting data. 20 local individuals were purposefully chosen as the sample of the research in this study.

The selected samples all were from the indigenous residents of Masoule from different occupation since the researcher may acquire different types of viewpoints of the residents who closely have experienced the impacts of their hometown's development during their lifetime.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

The current thesis comprises of six separate chapters which have been organized based on the following order:

The first chapter generally discusses about the whole thesis which means it covers the introduction of the study, the aims and objectives of the thesis, the applied methodology and used instruments for the data collection as well as giving knowledge on the fieldwork of the study.

In the second chapter the author takes a look to Masoule city and also Iran, the country where it was located.

Within the next chapter the related literature has been discussed which includes a precise review of the formerly performed studies in relation to the title of the current research.

In the fourth chapter the researcher illustrates the method applied for the study and the reasons behind it.

In the fifth chapter the findings of the research are being discussed and the collected data are analyzed and decoded.

And finally the last chapter comprises of the conclusion and also implication as well as the limitation of the study and future researches illumination.

Chapter 2

UNDREstanding IRAN AND MASOULEH

2.1 Masouleh

Masouleh is a national preserved city located in Iran which is famous for its extraordinary architecture (Zamani and Musa, 2008). This town is situated in the northern section of Iran that is beside the Caspian Sea (ICHTO, 2004). Masouleh is about 1050m above the sea level and its history dates back to 1000 years ago (ICHTO, 2004). Three main characteristics of the city which attracts the visitors are: unique architecture, desirable climate and outstanding natural environment (Zamani and Musa, 2008). By the year 2003, Masoule was listed among the international project of the UNESCO for development of eco-tourism in Asia (ICHTO, 2004).

The specification of Masoule's architecture has been described as the following: stair-like design of the homes which roof of each home is considered as the yard of the other home both of which together serve as the pedestrian for the inhabitants and passengers of the town (ICHTO, 2004). Construction of houses in this village throughout the sloped foothills has created an eye-catching view of this village's architecture, such that the majority of paths and pavements are in fact the roofs of houses situated in the lower terraces and so on. In other words, when one covers a walkway and a road, he is actually walking on the rooftops of other houses. These paths are interlinked with stone-made steps, which portray a uniformed and beautiful village (www.wikipedia.com, 2013).

The population of the city in winter and fall seasons based on the scarcity of job opportunities are less than 1000 people which in the spring and summer time increases (Iran's Ministry of Health, 2006).

Due to the strong touristic potentials which Masoule poses, the national government has been making a number of efforts in order to develop the tourism in the region (Zamani and Musa, 2008).

The village of Masoule is considered to be a complementary element to the breathtaking beauty and ever-greened environment of the Gilian Province in the northern part of Iran where Masoule has been located (www.wikipedia.com, 2013). The moderate climate of the region in addition to the astonishing green mountains of the site and an extraordinary historical architecture of the village has created attractive scenery for the visitors (www.wikipedia.com, 2013).

Most of the visitors of Masoule are the domestic tourists but the international travelers also come to the region and altogether in high touristic seasons more than 10000 people visit the city per day (Zamani and Musa, 2008).



Figure 1.1: Masoule location on the map of Iran
Source: <http://www.googleimages.com.htm>

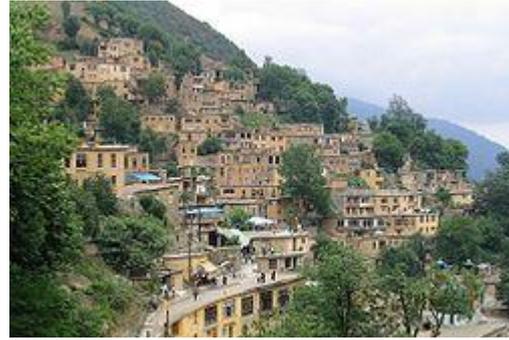


Figure 1.2: A view of Masoule in 2007
Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masule>

2.2 Iran

Iran (Persia) is a vast land located in the Middle East, Asia with 1,648,000 Km² mass which makes it the world's sixteenth largest country (Aminian, 2012). The special geographical characteristics of this country have gifted Iran a four-seasoned visage (Aminian, 2012). Almost every natural touristic attraction of the world has been gathered in this country comprising mountain ranges, deserts, coastlines, islands, historical monuments, spectacular sceneries and so on (Aminian, 2012).

This nation is the home to the world's most ancient civilization (Barrington, 2012). Cyrus the Great founded the largest ancient empire of the world called "Achaemenid Empire" (550-330 BC) in Iran (Wikipedia, 2013).

Based on the data presented in the Virtual Conference (2011), Iran listed in the UNESCO's seventh rank among the world's nations in tourist attracting sites, antiquity and archaeological properties.

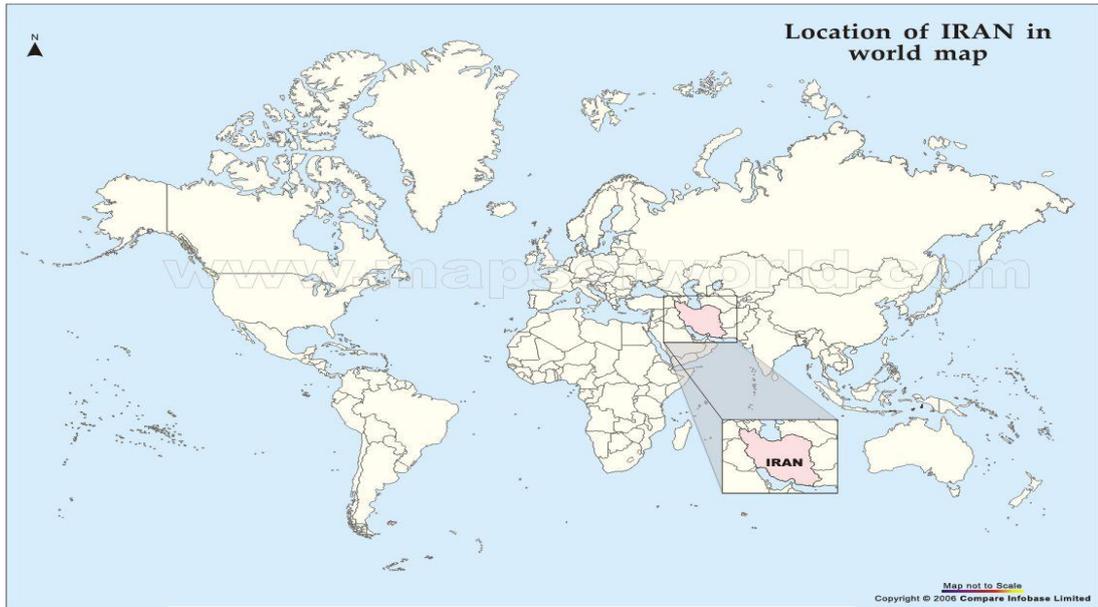


Figure 1.3: Location of IRAN in world map
Source: niche.edublogs.org

Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Ecotourism

The word “ecotourism” came to existence by the end of the 1980s decade as a result of global awareness about the sustainable ecological activities (Diamantis, 1999).

This sub-sector of tourism has an essential positive impact on the economy of the nations especially in third world countries since it generates considerable employment whereas requires a very small amount of investment (Wunder, 1999).

This phenomenon has gained a lot of attention throughout the world recently (Chaminuka et al., 2012) in such a pace that the International Ecotourism Society in 2008 announced the growing rate of ecotourism in comparison to the tourism industry as a whole is 3 times faster (IES, 2008). Weaver and Lawton (2007) stated that in the review of the ecotourism literature there have not been presented any common definition about the ecotourism and each definition differs from another. In fact it is believed that as the time goes on new definitions and ideas about the ecotourism emerge (Torquebiau and Taylor, 2009).

Boyd and Butler (1996, p. 558) defined the ecotourism as:”the form of tourism which fosters environmental principals, with an emphasis on visiting and observing natural areas”. In other words Ecotourism is a form of tourism which emphasizes the environmentally responsible regulations (Boyd and Butler, 1996). Wallace (1996)

stated that ecotourism is a word which was born to describe the phenomenon of nature based tourism.

In another research Ceballos (1996) stated the definition of the ecotourism as: visiting a natural area with the aim of enjoying, studying, admiring the beauty of the nature and its wildlife and the whole cultural heritages of the destination. And also Ziffer (1989) explains the ecotourism as a kind of tourism which brings direct benefits to the maintenance of the ecosystem as well as to the indigenous of that area.

It has been asserted that ecotourism has positive linkages toward biodiversity conservation and reducing the poverty as well as job creation capacity in different areas such as rural communities where the employment opportunities are scarce (Fennel, 2001). There are four main principles of ecotourism which were declared at the conference of ecotourism held in Quebec in 2002: 1) the relations between ecotourism and natural and cultural heritages. 2) The involvement of the indigenous in the benefits of the ecotourism, 3) familiarization of the tourists with the natural and cultural inheritance of the destination and finally 4) the facilitation of easier travelling in small sized groups to the aimed destinations (World Ecotourism Summit, 2002).

Based on the statistics more than US\$25 billion currencies annually exchanged in relation to the ecotourism in the 1990s (Whelan, 1991). Brooks et al (2006) in their research stated that most of the developing countries are the home of most ecotourism sites and by owning such features are trying to improve their economies.

Most of the scholars have consensus on this point that ecotourism not only has an attribution to environment preservation but also it has a direct influence on the local development (Diamantis, 1999) an important factor which will be discussed in the below.

Dowling (2003, cited in Belanger, 2006) stated four major characteristics of an appropriate sort of ecotourism which concerns the environmental wellbeing as the following: 1) it should own a good nature base, 2) it should help the conservation of the area, 3) it should own a sustainable form of management, and finally 4) it has to have an educational benefit about the environment both for the visitors and locals as well.

But in contrast there are debates on the negative impacts of ecotourism on the ecosystem of the destinations as well. Zhou et al, (2013) stated that Despite economic benefits, particularly in developing countries, ecotourism can have unintended negative consequences for wildlife conservation in protected areas.

3.2 Ecotourism and Rural Area Development:

During the recent decades, the rural areas have been influenced by a variety of changes and reconstructing (Bittner and Sofer, 2012). Coria and Calfucura (2011) asserted that in the recent decades the expansion of ecotourism has been so massive in the world.

Based on what Lewis et al (1998, cited in Ray et al., 2012) stated, the most important factor in rural area development is the use of tourism in those areas as a tool for development. Although ecotourism provides opportunities for nature preservation, it also brings serious dangers for the environment simultaneously (Raschke, 2005). It

has been proven that preservation of the nature most of the times is influenced by the contradictions between two main issues: the tourism development and the resource preservation (Zhang and Xiang and Li, 2012).

Tran and Walter (2014) believe that ecotourism is increasingly recognized as a form of sustainable development designed to promote local livelihood, environmental conservation and culture. However, like all development projects, participation and benefits accrued are complicated by contextual factors and social structures.

Rural development from the perspective of some scholars is an ambiguous term that has various kinds of meaning and definition according to the texture of its use (Hodge, 1986). Elands and Wiersum (2001) suggest that the process of enhancing the quality of life in rural areas means rural development while the attempts consider the protection of the environment of the area as well as the economic viability of that destination. In this regard Solberg and Miina (1997 cited in Kassioumis et al, 2000) relate the rural development to the overall welfare of the local indigenous community. Dimitrovski et al, (2012) through their research proposed that rural development not only enhance the well being of the local indigenous by creating new job opportunities and increasing the other aspects of the economic benefits for the locals but also such developments diminishes the social isolation of the rural destinations as well.

Kassioumis et al (2004), stated that nowadays the changing form of the traditional rural activities from the mere agricultural and forestry works to the more environmentally friendly activities, has influenced the meaning of the rural area development in comparison to the past. It is argued that agricultural activities alone

are not able to guarantee the viability of the rural communities like the past (Weber, 2000) so the involvement of the rural areas in the process of the ongoing development in order to flourish the economy of the indigenous is inevitable. But what's so crucial in such a process is a sustainable development which guarantees the welfare of the locals and the well being of the ecosystem as well (Kassioumis et al., 2004).

Woods (2005) declared that the rules and regulations of economy scale mostly persuaded the world of specialization to affect the rural areas to accept such diversifications. Moreover urbanization as a global trend follows to the rural territories and also local and governmental policies are being changed constantly that result in enormous changes in the nature of the rural areas (Bittner and Sofer, 2012). Another reason for such changes can be observed from the own rural dwellers. The new economic trends make it impossible for the rural not to adopt themselves to the new developments (Bittner and Sofer, 2012).

On the other hand, the increase of competition in rustic products among the rural forces a large number of them to look for new ways of earning (Ilbery, 1998).

Ecotourism is believed to have a distinctive advantage because of its impressive contribution to the rural development as a strong driver (Boo, 1990). According to Fennel (1990) ecotourism mostly takes place in developing countries thus the cost of area expansion in non-industrialized places where ecotourism usually occurs tends to be relatively low, which exacerbates the development opportunities of the region (Boo, 1990). On the other side the economic benefits of ecotourism persuade the nations to develop and expand their marginal areas which such expansions bring

about negative impacts to the environments of those areas (Boyd and Butler, 1996). The key remedy for such issues is hidden under the wisdom which the developments should be expanded only based on the ecotourism criteria which are inconsistent with the specific features of the area (Boyd and Butler, 1996).

On the other hand, Weaver and Lawton (2007) believe that the participation of the local community both in the process and benefits of the ecotourism in the region increases their sensitivity about the environment protection.

Spenceley(2006) claims that the borders of an ecotourism project's success are dependent on the ranges of the local indigenous participation in the process. But the low level of community awareness, lack of tourism knowledge and skills are the basic constraints that limit the ability of the local people to actively participate in the tourism planning and development (Abdul Razzaq et al., 2012).

In review of the ecotourism literature there have been presented a number of factors which comprise the development of an ecotoristic area. Accessibility to the region as the main and essential point as well as providing the necessary infrastructures for the tourists are two of the outstanding reasons for developing a touristy area (Boyd and Butler, 1996).

Accessibility includes the range of difficulty in approaching the area, the transportation systems available within the area and also the information channels provided for the locals to enhance the ecotourism in the region (Boyd and Butler, 1996). It is clear that different types of transportation systems such as cars, trains, airplanes, boats and so on can be provided based on the characteristics of the region.

Most of the scholars like Boyd and Butler (1996) believe that in order not to harm the environment, the most important element of the ecotourism, non-motorized transportation systems as well as environmental friendly fuelled engines motors should be utilized in the ecotouristic destinations. Ceballos and Luscurain (1996) asserted that the local community of the ecotouristic destinations should prevent their environment to be distracted and destroyed in the name of development.

Due to the characteristics of the ecotourism which is its enormous dependence of the nature, its required infrastructures also differs markedly from other types of tourism that often includes the entertainment and shopping facilities (Boyd and Butler, 1996). Suitable accommodation and other infrastructures that might meet the needs of the visitors such as sewage systems, water and power system and so on are the examples of the ecotourism required infrastructures in the destinations.

There are two important standpoints about the development and expansion of the ecotouristic destinations which stand against each other. One side believes that there should be a minimum of the simple types of infrastructure in the regions and mostly the rustic facilities should be provided for the ecotourist while in contrast the other prefers to be provided by the best types of hotels and other guest facilities (Boyd and Butler, 1996). What the ecotourism specialists emphasize is something in the middle of the above mentioned ideas, which means achieving the simple form of developments with a range of complexity inside that may satisfy both types of the visitors (Boyd and Butler, 1996). On the other side there is another point of view about the ecotourism and development which as Fernie (1993) indicates ecotourists who are oriented to the natural environment do not take much attention to the degree

of the area development in the destinations but the quality of their experiencing within the nature.

Butler (1993) declared that while developing an area each of the resources should be integrated in a way that complement the other and the aim should be prevented of the conflict and harming the nature and other resources. For instance mining an area to get the resources out, building new infrastructures or logging should not be done improperly.

Agrawal and Redford (2006) stated that although there are controlling rules and regulations in the nations for the preservation of the environment and land use, a common problem in most of the developing countries where are the home of ecotourism sites is that those rules are not enforced due to the lack of proper management, lack of suitable financial resources and lack of technological enhancement. On the other side Kassioumis et al (2004) believe the rural development as a political process. It means that choosing any option among the available possibilities within a process is dependent on the various negotiations and lobbies with different active sectors which may result in proper actions to the benefits of the environment or not.

Boyd and Butler (1996) mentioned that developing an area requires the presence of more people in that destination and such pressures in addition to the negative impacts of ecotourists in the destinations are inevitable. Thus the authors suggested that in developing an area there should be guidelines to measure the priority of ecotourism activities.

Coria and Calfucura (2011) mentioned through their study that the development of the local community of inhabitants of an area is paralleled with the ecotourism in that destination. Ke (2012) through his research in China explains the characteristics of a correct form of ecotourism development as following steps: 1) the participators of the ecotourism development not only should care about the environment protection but also should have the knowledge and ability of environment preservation. 2) The whole process of the development should be in consistent with a precise scientific study which follow the balance of ecological system otherwise it will damage the environment more or less. 3) The ecotourism package sellers should be accredited by the government just only after proving their willing toward environment protection. 4) Active supervision of the local and national government to the ecotourist sites and its stakeholders. 5) Providing tangible benefits to the local indigenus of the destination in order to encourage them to protect their environment.

Unfortunately based on the research conducted by Mokhtarshahi Sani and Mahasti (2011), most of the touristic development projects in Iran do not follow the proper and sustainable steps and just focus on building villas, apartments and other tourist resorts in order to gain instant profits instead of considering the deeper needs of the tourists, the local community and most importantly the preservation of the environment.

Canoves et al (2004) mentioned that rural area developments through ecotourism flourishes the economy of the areas and brings about some essential social benefits for the indigenus such as: establishing public services like schools and hospitals, enhancing the transportation system, prevention of the locals migration, increase of

the public contacts of the area with the outside world and most importantly increase of the women statuses within the society. Those social benefits plus the efforts for natural environment preservation and improvement gives the rural area development and expansion the characteristics which makes it inevitable for the rural areas not to demand.

On the opposite side such developments do not lack negative impacts to the destinations which affect the physical environment as well as the socio-cultural environment in destination areas (Canoves et al., 2004). Canoves et al (2004) stated that the environmental harms happening through the development process in rustic areas are so influential for the viability of the destinations. They believe that rural areas are so sensitive against the pressure which results from the presence of the visitors as well as the activities of the developers which may diminish the attractiveness of the rural areas completely (Canoves et al., 2004).

3.3 Rural Tourism

Based on the definition of the Economic Co-operation and development organization, rural tourism is that kind of tourism which occurs in rural areas (Reich et al., 2000). This type of tourism also includes ecotourism, nature holidays, hunting, adventure, ethnic tourism and heritage and art tourism (Reichel et al., 2000). Dimitrovski et al, (2012) declared that the term rural tourism can be used in contexts both as a geographical term and also a term which explains the social and cultural characteristics of the rustic areas.

Rural tourism is considered to be a dominant element in the rural economy of the most countries (Robinson, 1990). In fact in academic and political literature rural

tourism is frequently identified as a diversification strategy that may trigger local economic development in remote communities (Rid et al., 2014). Insufficient job opportunities beside the decline of the agricultural product's income generation caused it so regularly for the stakeholders to think about an alternative for their income sources that resulted in their more tendencies toward rural tourism (Swinerton, 1982). It has been asserted that rural tourism has a substantial contribution not only for the economy of the destination's indigenous but also for the economy of the entire region (Fleischer and Pizam, 1997). Fleischer and Pizam (1997) stated that the ecotourists not only spend money on eating and sleeping at the destinations but also they spend money on the other beneficial recreational activities for the locals such as shopping. Thus based on the above mentioned information the overall benefits of the tourism for the rural habitants are much more than the agricultural and other formal rustic activities.

Lane (1994) believes that rural tourism must be presented in those areas which are completely rustic in all of the aspects. Lane (1994) asserts that this sort of tourism has to involve small-sized companies which are being run by the local habitants of the destinations in order to make a relation between the provided services to the tourists with the local agricultural productions. Dimitrovski et al, (2012) stated that the specific features of the rural areas which include their ability in making the connection between the rural areas and the historical and cultural and geographical origins of the rural destinations attract a huge number of the visitors to the areas.

Oppermann (1996) discussed some of the rural tourism's benefits in his article which some of them are being listed below: this phenomenon works as a secondary source of income generation for the locals and prevents the out-migration of the indigenous,

it helps the exchanging of the cultures between the urban areas and the rural areas and most importantly increases the awareness of the outsiders about the problems of the locals. Oppermann (1996) also states that the majority of the rural area visitors is: the families with children, the individuals whose educational level are above the average, people from urban areas who looking for a different experience and also people who are not so wealthy.

Canoves et al (2004) divided the benefits of the rural tourism into three specific categories. Local community, environment and the visitors and emphasized that these categories altogether make a framework through which a long lasting development can be acquired for a rustic destination.

3.4 Theoretical Framework

Butler's (1980) lifecycle theory discusses that every tourist destination experiences a process based on which the resort's life starts and goes on. This theory mentions that at first stage the exploration of the resort begins with a limited numbers of tourists and the facilities for serving them are so few. The resort then experience the involvement of the local community members to facilitating the tourists and the resort gets more recognized. At the third stage severe investments from different types of stakeholders come to the area and the developmental efforts for providing facilities to tourists gets more and more and the destination marketing makes the area so much recognized. At next stage the consolidation occurs in the destination which is interpreted as the decreasing of the attraction growth rate of the destination and existence of some tensions between tourists and hosts. Finally the destination area experience stagnation stage in which the destination because of much pressure of tourists gets degraded and as result the number of tourists decline. At final stage if

the resort be rejuvenated it will be improved and attract the tourists again otherwise the number of tourists will be declined and lots of problems to the ecosystem of the destination and its local community and so on.

Ecological Modernization Theory was first developed in the early 1980s primarily in a small group of western European countries, notably Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom which is a new, and in many ways improved, synonym for sustainable development. At the same time ecological modernization is more useful than sustainable development as a macro or overarching framework for thinking about the environmental problems of metropolitan transformative industry in the North. As much as any of these factors, ecological modernization has become attractive as a concept because it provides alternatives to the pessimistic connotations of frameworks such as the treadmill of production and the growth machine modernization expresses hope, and makes it more readily possible to identify and appreciate the significance of environmental success stories (Buttel, 2000).

It can be argued that the way forward for ecological modernization is not to emphasize empirical debates over the potentials and limits of environmental engineering and industrial ecology, but rather to deepen the links to political sociological literatures which will suggest new research problems and hypotheses. The ecological modernization theory has identified two options for strategies to overcome the deficiencies of the traditional bureaucratic state in environmental policymaking. First, a transformation of state environmental policy is necessary: from curative and reactive to preventive, from exclusive to participatory policymaking, from centralized to decentralize wherever possible, and from domineering,

over-regulated environmental policy to a policy which creates favourable conditions and contexts for environmentally sound practices and behaviour on the part of producers and consumers. The state will have to widen the competence of civil law in environmental policy, focus more on steering via economic mechanisms and change in its management strategy by introducing collective self-obligations for economic sectors via discursive interest mediation. The second, related, option includes a transfer of responsibilities, incentives, and tasks from the state to the market Mol (1997).

3.5 Contribution

This study provides two contributions in rural tourism development. Firstly, this is the first that assess trend of tourism development in Masouleh, where is a unique tourist resource in international scale and has been listed in the UNESCO's world natural heritage list.

Secondly this research utilized two theories in tourism development of rural area which are Butler's (1980) lifecycle theory and 1980s ecological modernization theory. Despite the high significance of Masoule as an international heritage, there are a limited numbers of studies in this regard. Therefore this study will fill the existed gap of the researches.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Purpose of the Study

The target of the current study is to observe impacts of rural area development and expansion on the ecotourism in the framework of Masouleh in Iran. To get the directions of the experiment the below listed objectives were followed regularly:

- Examination of potential influences of rural area development on ecotourism in Masoule.
- Understanding of positive influences of the trend on Masoule indigenous.
- Realizing negative influences of the development in the area on the Masoule indigenous.
- Finding out the probable impacts of the development of the area on the environment.
- Proposing number of pragmatic implication to the participators of ecotourism industry in the examined case.

4.2 Method of the Study

4.2.1 Theorizing of Method

Inductive method gets to the more general theories by applying the specific settings (Trochin, 2006). Burney (2008) told that inductive reasoning always holds a burden of uncertainty. By inductive reasoning the researcher presents hypothesizes in order to prove the actual cases in the real life (Lancaster, 2005). Lancaster (2005) also said

that one of the characteristics of the inductive reasoning is the power which it gives to the researcher to use all forms of information resources to develop the theories. As discussed above inductive approach is the basis of the current thesis that aims at searching the goals of research in order to generalize the idea without relying on any hypothesis.

4.2.2 Research Approach

An important characteristic of qualitative research method is the authority and power it gives to the researcher in order to enter into the depth of the participant's thoughts and experiences that enables the observer to find out how the meanings are being constructed in different cultures (Corbin and Strauss, 2002).

Golafshani (2003) mentioned qualitative study applies natural based method of observing cases. The required data for qualitative research approach is too difficult to be quantified (Ghosh and Chopra, 2003). On the other hand Hoepfl (1997) mentioned interviewing is a preferred form of collecting data in qualitative studies. On the other side, the quantitative method enables the researcher to develop hypotheses and test their accuracy through the research (Golafshani, 2003). Maykut and Morehouse (1994) declared that statistical analysis of the data seems to be the main feature of the quantitative research approach.

Skinner (2009) believes that open ended questionnaires and interviews are two broadly used formats of data collecting in qualitative research method and so any research which uses statistical or quantification in its approaches to findings cannot be considered a qualitative method (Potter, 1996).

Golafshani (2003) asserted that regardless of the types of research methods the researcher ought to demonstrate and examine the credibility of the research.

In order to achieve the goals of this research, qualitative research method was applied as there was no formerly developed hypothesis which is one of the characteristics of the quantitative approach (Golafshani, 2003). On the other hand the needed data which collected through interviews were not numerical to be quantified. As the Skinner (2009) stated understanding the impacts of a social phenomenon, needs the empowerment which qualitative research method by its data collecting format (interview) gives to the researcher to deeply penetrate the experiences, thoughts, feelings and perceptions of the participators in an area.

As the main objective of this thesis was observing the impacts of area development in a rural on the ecotourism, the essential role of the indigenious of that rural area was more outstanding than other stakeholders in demonstrating and explaining the evolved impacts during the times. So the qualitative research method helps the researcher to feel such impacts in the quality of this social issue in the case of Masouleh.

4.3 Research Tools:

4.3.1 In Depth Interviewing

It is a method of obtaining information from the interviewers through direct contacts. The characteristics of in-depth interviews enable the interviewer to deeply observe the standpoints of the respondents and explore the issues which normally the respondents do not have a desire to share them easily. To attract the respondent's trust the interviewer should prepare a guideline which ensures the respondents that their conversations will not make them any trouble.

The interviews should be done in a comfortable and calm situation where there is no pressure on the respondents.

4.3.2 Convenience Sampling

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher

In the current study, the observer chose her participators according to these criteria: respondents have to be from Masoule indigenous who more or less experienced the changes occurred around the city during the times. Thus almost all of the local individuals can be put into this category especially those who are more aged. But the researcher in order to achieve more accurate information chose different types of occupations who seem closer to experiencing such developments and the variety of ages to may use a comprehensive prospective of the society. Below the demographic characteristics of the interviewees have been presented.

Table 1: Demographic Variables of the Interviewees

INT. NO	Age	Sex	Occupation
1	35	M	High school Teacher
2	34	M	Confectioner
3	61	M	Taxi Driver
4	50	F	Housewife
5	28	M	University Student
6	40	F	Restaurant Chef
7	38	M	Academician
8	50	M	Supermarket Owner
9	22	F	Student
10	51	M	Physician
11	45	M	Restaurant Owner
12	39	M	Hotel Staff
13	50	M	Civil Engineer
14	31	F	School Teacher
15	42	F	Travel Agency Clerk
16	45	F	Shopping Center Accountant
17	51	M	Municipality Clerk
18	39	F	Academician
19	48	F	Housewife
20	53	M	Herder

4.4 Data Collection

4.4.1 Participants of the Research

The current thesis consists of 20 interviews which have been carefully recorded and transcribed individually. The total number of 11 men and 9 women were interviewed during this research who were from locals of Masoule. In order to create a comfortable climate for the respondents all of the interviews were done in place where the interviewees desired. A couple of days prior to the interview appointments were made with the respondents in a way that they completely felt free and relaxed.

The respondents belonged to a variety types of jobs like: teachers, farmers, students, clerks and housewives.

4.4.2 Data Collection

Because of the cultural patterns of Iran and especially Masoule, accessing the respondents was not difficult but attracting their interest for participation in the research was difficult. Especially for the housewives who naturally were not that much educated and were not used to have an active social role in the society. The aforementioned reasons made it difficult for the researcher to explain the issue to the respondents one by one. In some cases respondents forgot their appointments with the researcher and consequently the researcher should have found another appropriate time with that respondent which such issues made the process of data collecting so time requiring.

4.4.3 Study Place

The needed information gathered during May till August 2013 in Masoule, located in north of Iran. Participants interviewed directly by investigator face to face and conversations were recorded by a Sony recorder. Before starting to recording participators were informed and accepted this action.

All conversations were in Persian language which is the official language of Iranian. After the interviews completed data were translated into English and transcribed by means of Microsoft Word and finally the procedure of coding and analyzing the data began precisely.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

By means of the applied research method (qualitative) for this study and its instrument (in depth- interviews), the data were gathered. After collecting the information by interviews the researcher transcribed the whole conversation in word formatting and then started to analyze the hard copy of the data very carefully. Based on the extent to which the data is relevant to the research the researcher highlighted the conversations by different colors in a way that the most relevant data separated by green, the relevant data by yellow and the irrelevant data was left colorless on the printed paper.

Studying the highlighted data over and over gave the researcher useful insights about the discussed issue in Masoule and assisted her to categorize the findings in different sections which will enable the researcher to precisely feel the research and give appropriate conclusion and implication in the final chapter.

The findings are presented section by section based on what the local indigenous of Masoule considered them as the most important factors which have influenced their surroundings as a result of their area expansion and development. The important parts of the interviews have been attached within each section of the findings.

5.2 Economic Impacts

Undoubtedly the economic impacts of the ecotourism for the indigenous people of Masoule is the most significant and at the same time too vital element in their lives. All of the participants clearly pointed out this fact and emphasized on its crucial role in their community. In the past the economy of Masouele was based on the occupations which nowadays in the modern world have no demand and therefore they have been replaced by new jobs created by ecotourism. Unlike the other cities of Guilan province which are so fertile for agricultural activities, the habitants of Masoule were not used to work in farms. Traditional forms of trading with other cities were the main source of the economic source for the Masoule people in the past which is not being pursued any more now. For this reasons Masoule is totally dependent on the ecotourism. One 50 year old respondent who has a supermarket for more than 20 years said that:

“Despite the people’s believes we like our ancestors did not have a tendency toward farming in Masoule. In old days locals used to trade their handicrafts and other staffs in Masoule bazaar which was located in the middle of the Zanzan and Khalkhal and Guilan conjunction. As the time went on and new roads were built and the demand for older merchandises reduced and on the other side Masoule got popular as a tourist destination Masoule indigenous’s lives got tightly engaged with the tourists”.

(Respondent No 8, age 50, Male)

Another respondent who was a 34 year old confectioner added:

“If we deduct a few numbers of the Masoule working population who are working in governmental organization in nearby cities, almost rest of the local people earn their living directly indirectly from tourists. Most of my customers are the visiting people from outside of Masoule”.

(Respondent No 2, age 34, Male)

A 38 year old academician explained the issue in this way:

“In fact not only the inhabitants of Masoule totally rely on ecotourists presence but also they need the ecotourists. There are a lot of people around here who have changed their lives based on the demands of the ecotourists such as those families who freed one of their home’s rooms in order to rent for the tourists while they live in one other room of that home”.

(Respondent No 7, age 38, Male)

5.2.1 Creation of Job Opportunities

The acquired data indicated that ecotourism has brought a variety of new job opportunities to Masoule indigenous which most of them is related to serving the ecotourists. Working as hoteliers and hotel apartment’s staff and establishing new restaurants and other service providing occupations are some of them.

A 35 year old high school teacher stated that:

“A lot of new jobs are available just for the sake of the travelers from which I can mention selling handicrafts. Some of my students after school most of the time involve in selling the handmade trays and pots made by their parents”

(Respondent No 1, age 35, Male)

In this regard a restaurant owner said:

“In our restaurant not only there are customers during the day but also even late in the night there are so many travelers who order foods. We are really thankful to God. Most of my relatives and friends are working in jobs related to tourists. When our customers are many our raw material ordering also increase and meat providers also favor from this. Now I work here in restaurants with 5 people and my son works as a truck driver who delivers materials for the restaurants and gains good money. Women at homes prepare salads and other staffs for restaurant and earn money also”.

(Respondent No, 11, age 45, Male)

5.2.2 Increase of local governmental revenues

The findings gave the wisdom to this fact that the municipality is gaining huge amounts of benefits from the flow of ecotourists to Masoule. These revenues are obtained from different sources such as getting money from travelers for using a number of public facilities. Parking lots, entrance fee for entertaining places, and

also getting taxes from many shops and hotel-apartments and bazaars established for ecotourists.

A 51 year old municipality clerk mentioned that:

“The number of licenses-demand for establishing new buildings and new occupations relevant to tourist’s purposes has been increased so much in recent years and the increased amount of fees for getting such licenses has not influenced this growing rate. It is obvious that such increased demands in addition to other social and governmental affairs have increased the revenues of the municipality by which we are able to provide better social services”.

(Respondent No 17, age 51, Male)

A 39 year old academician stated that:

“Local government has bought some of the old historical houses and changed their functionality to restaurants, museums, guesthouses and so on by means of which allocate a huge amount of money. The fact is that unfortunately a slight share of this money comes back to the sustainable development of the area. The result in the near future will be a disaster to the area and the people who are the real owner of such places”.

(Respondent No 18, age 39, Female)

5.3 Social Impact

Based on the declaration of the inhabitants of Masoule the overall social impacts of the ecotourists in this area have been so enormous and include both positive sides and negative aspects. In the following these aspects are discussed separately with relevant references as well:

5.3.1 Increase of Social Services

There was a consensus among the majority of the respondents about the enhancement of the social services in Masoule due to the presence of ecotourists. But there were discrepancies in the nature of their perceptions about the benefits of these developments to all of the indigenous. In this regard one of the interviewees stated that:

“To answer the demands of the tourists and also gaining money of course, new services came to Masoule. Internet cafes, different restaurants, new mosques and even public toilets were established here which I believe is directly related to travelling of thousands of tourists. We also utilize these services. One thing more I should add; these facilities make us proud about our town”.

(Respondent No 14, age 31, female)

Another respondent stated that:

“Nowadays we can find every kind of products in markets which if it was not for the sake of newcomers here we would never find them available here. Suppose variety types of fast foods or different sorts of foreign brands of supermarket stuffs”.

(Respondent No 4, age 50, female)

Here is one other interviewee’s speech:

“Masoule was not used to be as activated as it seems nowadays especially at nights. But now till midnights there are lots of travelers almost during the whole year. This gives Masoule a warm and live sense which also transfers to the locals as well”.

(Respondent No 9, age 22, female)

5.3.2 Decrease of Social Security

The majority of the respondents agreed on the fact that social security in Masoule has been decreased a lot because of different factors especially travelling of strangers to the city. They mentioned that like the past they cannot leave the door’s of their homes open while going to neighborhood or other close distances. Another point they emphasized was the feeling of emotional unsecure in their territory not because of the threats from travelers but because of the constant curious looks to their private environment.

In this regard one interviewee told:

“Everyday tens of new faces are watching our homes and even most of them asking us to enter inside and take photographs from our private lives. This is something that during these years we used to experience and somehow adopted. But you know sometimes we do not want to be observed with some

kind of strangers who seems not to be good people. We get stressed because this is our home and we live in. Insisting of some of the visitors to come inside the house is something that is not always acceptable and when we reject the visitors complain and get upset and in some cases believe me they want to hurt us!”.

(Respondent No 19, age 48, female)

One other person stated:

“Before the time Masoule got popular like it is now, all of the locals were treating each other like relatives. They were no stranger around. I am not complaining about the situation now because coming of these tourists gave us economic power, that is something which we never hide. But the point is that these visitors do not follow any regulations, there has been any training neither to the locals nor to the tourists about how to react. That’s why we always feel insecure in our own society. You can see even in midnights so many people are around our houses and our children cannot feel so good”.

(Respondent No 1, age 31, male)

Another man added:

“Beside the visitors I witnessed that a lot of non local people came Maoule as sellers, landowners, and workers. The local people of Masoule since past was very trustworthy people but nowadays most of the business owners in Masoule are strangers whom the experience has revealed that are not so much honest and we have to communicate and be in touch with them unfortunately”.

(Respondent No 5, age 28, male)

5.3.3 Increase of Social Awareness

The gathered data by means of in depth interviews enlightened very interesting facts about the ecotourism impacts in Masoule. One of them is the increase of the indigenous awareness about the outside sphere of Masoule. Locals indicated that coming different types of ecoourists to this area and their relationships with the locals enabled the locals to have a general knowledge about different parts of Iran and even some of the foreign nations. The locals perceived this issue very positive since in some cases they confronted some people who they could keep friendship for

long times. Parts of their conversations in relation to this social impact of ecotourists are being placed below:

“When you go outside of your door you always see outsiders everywhere who say hi to you. Some of them come closer and start conversations with you and begin to ask about good food around or the best souvenir they could take with themselves. And during these conversations some you find very nice who you like. It happened for me during the last 2 years. I invited a nice and warm “Tehrani family” to my home and with very simple local food welcomed them. When they wanted to leave they gave their home address and phone number and asked our numbers. You cannot believe they call me very regularly once in a month and always say thanks for your hospitality and invite us every time to their home again and again. Last autumn I traveled with my wife to Tehran for some works. When I called them and they found out we are here they came to us and like a real relatives they treated us and took us their home. They are really good people”.

(Respondent No 20, age 53, M)

Another interviewee stated:

“I have any kind of customers from everywhere! They come to my restaurant and during their eating time I can see their relationships, their different accents and their treatment with me and each other. Most of the times they start conversation with me and ask for something or another obviously during these interactions I get familiar with different cultures, languages and eating desires of different cities of my country as well”.

(Respondent No 11, age 45, M)

Another respondent added:

“Since Masoule is a small place in the past our young generations were not able to get enough experience in social relations like those youth of big cities. Nowadays Masoule locals from early ages get familiar with different kinds of people from different cultures. This makes them very experienced and knowledged and prepares them to enter other societies outside Masoule. In fact by such experiences they find out that there are new places and new opportunities they can go and discover”.

(Respondent No 7, age 38, M)

5.3.4 Variation in Social and Cultural Traits of the Locals

The respondents all confessed in one way or another that their overall positive feelings have decreased whether in relation to each other or in relation to outsiders. They believed that their long term relation with outsiders is the main reason for such variations. They mentioned that in the past there was a sense of respect in their treatments with each other but nowadays these relations and treatments not only lack the sense of respect and trust but are mixed with a sense of deception. They asserted that pursuing the benefits which one can get from the ecotourists has exacerbated such undesirable feelings.

One of the interviews told:

“In the past it was the humanity which people were competing with each other to get but today it is money! When I think deeply I cannot believe what happened to us. What happened to those warm relationships? Nowadays everybody just thinks about his own benefits. Yes just benefits!”

(Respondent No 4, age 50, female)

Other interviewee added:

“I remember those days when we respected our old people and considered them as the angels of our lives. Nowadays even children do not respect their own grandparents and even their own parents. Everything has changed but nobody thinks about such things anymore. Everybody just rushes around and follows the material issues”.

(Respondent No 3, age 61, M)

Another respondent's view is:

“Since most of the visitors of Masoule are same day ecotourists they do not take care of the feelings of the indigenous. They just want to have fun and go away. These kinds of people unconsciously during the years have affected the locals by their way of treatment which is sourced from their commodity-look to people. They have changed the locals' behaviors unintentionally the same as their own treatment and behaviors”.

(Respondent No 1, age 35, M)

5.3.5 Increase of Social Inelegances

The collected data indicated that the local indigenous population of Masoule was offended by the social inelegance occurring in their area. They asserted that the crime rate in comparison the past has increased so much. They pointed out that in our small village in past everybody was living in peace and comfort and nobody was annoying others but unfortunately nowadays plenty of crimes are being committed by locals and outsiders as well. They mostly criticized the migration of workers and new settlers as the main reason of such things. Some of crimes which they all had consensus about their increased rate in recent years included: robbery, social cruelty and offensive actions in general. In the following a parts of their related conversations about the issue is located:

“It is shameful but I cannot ignore that fact which I witnessed how many stealing happened in my shop. When the shop is crowded some travelers unfortunately try to take something without permission. They are not just the travelers but some of the locals as well do so. These kinds of actions made me to use security cameras in my shop but believe me even now such robberies happen again. You know the people have changed.”

(Respondent No 8, age 50, M)

Another participant stated:

“When the people understand that they can earn money from travelers in Masoule lots of people even from farthest places of country came here. Some of them even do not have any shelter and at nights stay in the ruined and empty houses of others without permission. These kinds of people brought here drugs. They smoke drugs and sell it to others also. What a pity! Our young generation can be infected by such drugs and unfortunately some of locals have been addicted to such things.”

(Respondent No 17, age 51, M)

Another participant told:

“Travelers are not the reason of such crimes. Those people who came to find some benefits and do not care about humanity are the main source of crimes. Most of the locals surely have experienced this scenery that some strange people stand beside the crowded places and call: “alcoholic drinks! Alcoholic drinks, sexual movies! high low jack!” I cannot believe such

things happening in Masoule! Our local never let themselves involve in such stuffs but the strangers we can see that easily do so”.

(Respondent No 12, age 39, M)

5.4 Environmental Impacts

The most outstanding characteristics of Masoule are its amazing natural beauty and its essence of historical and noble environment. Therefore speaking about the problems and issues related to this aspect of Masoule was in the main attention of the local population who involved in sampling group of this study. In general all of the respondents believed that the environment of Masoule is the major reason of why travelers come to this area. There was a consensus in their conversation about the fact that the environment of Masoule is in real danger. Therefore their concerns about the future of this area and as the result about their future of economy were understandable. They believed that no positive actions are performed by the municipality and other related organizations for protection of the environment in Masoule. They also mentioned that travelers do not treat the ecosystem properly and it is usual to see garbage and other waste spread throughout the green lands and within the paths leading to the natural attractions as well. They also were concerned about their historical houses which are being destroyed and no constructive actions performing about. They also pointed out that in recent years some of the inhabitants have been defrauded to sell their lands to private sectors that completely destroyed the green lands and built constructions to make money such as hotels and shopping places. In following some of their speech related to the environmental impacts of development of the ecotourism in Masoule is put in separate parts based on their significance.

5.4.1 Decrease of Green Space

One of the main points that the respondents, especially those who were older, were emphasizing about Masoule was the severe decrease of green space in their surroundings. They mentioned different reasons for this issue like the unlimited use of lands for grazing by locals and different kinds of constructing projects developed by the local government and private sectors too.

One of the participant said:

“Masoule was like a green ruby. They stole it. Everywhere is a building growing up. It’s unbelievable. Nobody can stop them because the locals have no power. The rich people give money and buy land and construct and we can just regret about what is happening to Masoule”.

(Respondent No 4, age 50, F)

Another participant stated:

“Cutting trees and selling them to factories is a dark trade around here. Although it is illegal but I they do it. They pay money to some of the locals to help them. But it is a big mistake, it is a sin I believe. Some of these trees are more than hundred years old. Local government should prevent these smugglers”.

(Respondent No 5, age 28, M)

The other respondent said:

“Masoule from the north part is completely changed into a land without tree and plant, that’s why when it is rainy plenty of soil, comes to south parts and creates floods. During recent years it happened tens of times. Everybody knows what the problem is but nobody does anything”.

(Respondent No 13, age 50, M)

5.4.2 Increase of Water Pollution

Different developmental efforts for Masoule had both positive and negative sides which the pollution of natural source of waters is one of them. The respondents indicated that during the recent years their quality of water has decreased and even

the local health organization of the region has warned the locals not to drink waters from wells near specific areas due to their high amount of poisonous elements. The locals blamed municipality which does not exterminate the garbage properly and just pile them around without caring about their hazards for the local's health. On the other hand they believed that private sectors and some illegal factories have cut down the trees which were acting like a filter against the fluids and now with a severe raining all of the garbage on their path coming into the wells and make them polluted.

One respondent in this regard told that:

“There are lots of streams in Masoule which give the area a very beautiful sense of freshness; unfortunately nowadays every time I go to any of them there are plenty of litters, plastic bottles and other stuff around them. Most of the locals know them as the best quality of water which also has good effect on the human health but with such ugly situations nowadays we are afraid of drinking water from them. What a shame to us which couldn't protect our resources”.

(Respondent No 10, age 51, M)

The other interviewee added:

“We are satisfied from seeing the tourists. They are essential for the economy of Masoule, but the problem is that there is no management. You can see the results of this lack of management around you. The color of the river and wells water in most of the days is dark. It's because of different factors which their stem is weak management”.

(Respondent No 13, age 50, M)

5.4.3 Decrease of Natural Beauty of the Area

Majority of the respondents stated that in comparison to the past Masoule has lost its beauty and uniqueness. They related this issue to the factors such as building so many new constructions, lack of preservation from historical homes of Masoule, cutting a huge number of the trees within the area, increase of natural disasters and

other factors. Here are some key speeches of the participators about the decrease of natural beauty of area.

One of them declared:

“Now we are witnessing piles of building materials in different parts of Masoule, unstructured infrastructures, and different types of building tools around here. These are the inseparable parts of developing instruments which of course are not attractive for the indigenous people who are not used to see such things in Masoule since past time and consider them as unpleasant scenery here”.

(Respondent No 7, age 38, M)

Another respondent indicated:

“The more Masoule got modern the more its nature decreased. I am one of the most nature lovers. That’s why I didn’t leave Masoule although there were so many good positions for me in big cities. But unfortunately what I see in Masoule makes my so sad. The natural beauty of Masoule is replacing by a fistful of irony buildings which is not something that travelers as well as us want to see in Masoule”.

(Respondent No 10, age 51, M)

5.4.4 Increase of Environmental Harms

According to the respondents during the recent years a lots of undesirable events occurred in Masoule against the environment health. They mentioned some cases which landowners in order to get related constructing license from the local government which does not issue normally any in jungle area, intestinally fired their trees to get rid of the green space and be able to build constructions on them. On the other side they also were unsatisfied for the garbage that can be found all over the environment. In sum they believed that the ecosystem in Masoule is not in a suitable situation and needs a strict preservation programs.

In this relation one of the participators said:

“People who come from outside of Masoule just look for gaining money. It is not important for them to take care of environment. They intentionally burn the trees to get rid of them, they do whatever they want and take no

responsibility. It's the guilt of indigenous who sells their lands to them. Maybe".

(Respondent No 5, age 28, M)

Another respondent answered:

"Different events altogether is going to completely ruin Masoule. Earthquakes, floods, fires and lack of management are a number of these elements. Masoule need a strict conservation but the responsible organizations do not do any tangible actions in this regard".

(Respondent No 1, age 35, M)

5.4.5 Increase of the Historical Texture Destruction of Masoule

Masoule is listed in second place after Veins city in Italy as the world's most unrivaled historical cities according UNESCO reports. Therefore it is not considered just as a place where there is small amount of historical site. Thus the historical texture of Masoule is its identity which unfortunately is going to be diminished completely because of different factors. One of them is the lack of appropriate protection programs from any governmental organizations. The other is the pressure streaming from mass tourism in all over the year, and the other is the new constructions which are growing beside these historical sites and have the least harmony with the historical environment of Masoule. As a result of such treatments the uniqueness of the area is degrading and one can easily feel such destructive process which the historical Masoule is experiencing and in near future surely it will be ruined completely.

One of the respondents stated that:

"Municipality just considers the benefit acquiring from travelers and that's it! Most of the historical houses are not in a good situation but any organization takes the responsibility of their preservation. If there is also a repair it is not a professional types and from faraway one can realize this construction dose not suit the historical texture of the site. We have written

so many complaint letters to the municipality but no answer no action they do in this regard”.

(Respondent No 13, age 50, M)

Another interviewee said:

“Let me tell you a fact. Last year half of the historical bazaar of Masoule completely burnt. That’s it. The bazaar which was at least 500 year old burnt out just because of the carelessness of the related organizations. There was even no firefighting capsules in such a historical place that people at least fight with the fire. This is the situation of our historical Masoule. It is obvious what will happen in the future for Masoule.

(Respondent No 14, age 31, F)

5.4.6 Increase of Waste Producing and Triggering to the Environment

According to the collected data from the respondents the most dominant problem in Masoule which there is no need for one to observe in order to understand it is the unhealthy and inappropriate ways of waste management. From the entrance of Masoule till kilometers away around it there are tons of garbage compiled together and made hills. This problem is not just related to travelers or locals, although they are also responsible in such ugly views but the major responsible organization for managing the city and its waste is municipality. In fact it is the municipality which does not use better ways for eliminating waste and garbage. While the municipality does such harmful action to the environment the expectation of preservation of the environment is an unreachable wish.

One of the participant stated about this issue as:

“The first picture one can see entering Masoule is the spread of litters, garbage, plastic bottles and other stuff on the ground. The travelers have major share in such scenery but the municipality also is responsible because there are not enough trash cans everywhere and also there are not enough protective efforts like guards or signs”.

(Respondents No 15, age 42, F)

Other respondent added:

“Municipality collects the litters from Masoule and moves them and piles them in the environment itself. Since the amount of the garbage is so much they return to the other places. They should rethink about this type of eradicating garbage otherwise whole Masoule will change into a big trashcan soon”.

(Respondent No 20, age 53, M)

5.4.7 Increase of the Soil Pollution

The pollution problem in Masoule is not just limited to the water pollution and the pollution of the soil has been so critical in recent years. The indigenous of Masoule indicated that the soil of the area is polluted by different types of garbage. They stated that: travelers drop different kinds of unrecyclable waste to the environment and on the other hand the municipality pours the garbage on the open environment and such garbage with different types of elements like wind, rain and flood spread all over the area. They mentioned that some of the locals in order to get rid of these litters bury them in soil. The participators said that these dangerous materials in the near future will infect their agricultural crops and even worse by grazing of flock of sheep different sort of diseases may infect to the indigenous and threaten their health and well being.

One of the respondents said:

“It has become a common action that everybody collects litter from his land and drops it to the local areas such as valleys. Unfortunately the land owners think that outside of their own lands because is not theirs they have no responsibility toward it”.

(Respondent No 8, age 50, M)

Another interviewee stated:

“I know some of the locals who have been tired of litters issue dig a hole and bury them in soil. The plastics and bottles will take hundreds of years to

be disintegrated. These kinds of operations have made the soil sick and poisonous”.

(Respondent No 1, age 35, M)

5.4.8 Increase of Local Awareness about the Environment

The findings of this research based on what the participators declared showed that the developmental activities in Masoule although had variety kinds of negative impacts on the area’s environment it had at least on positive influence. The positive influence resulted from these negative aspects was the increase of public awareness about the importance of the environment. They mentioned that when the other organizations did not accept the responsibility of the conservation of their area, we found out that at least we should protect our homelands otherwise we will lose it in near future.

Here are some parts of their statements about this issue:

“Hopefully the new generation of Masoule population is become very sensitive about the environmental issues. In the university we do our best to inform students about the importance of the ecosystem and really the students themselves are so eager about this and periodically they involve in voluntarily litter collecting activities conducted by university”.

(Respondent No 7, age 38, M)

Another interviewee said:

“All of the indigenious of Masoule are more or less concern about their environment especially now. Since they see that their environment is ruining and nobody from outside come to do something about it they got more sensitive and more conscious about this issue”.

(Respondent No 4, age 50, F)

5.5 Alterations in the Quality and Quantity of the Ecotourists

Due to the recent developments in Masoule that brought about a series of positive and negative aspects to this region, the conversions in the number of ecotourists who visit this area have been increased based on what the findings of this study indicated. Different new buildings in Masoule for the purpose of accommodation and also other tourist's facilities such as restaurants were constructed in recent years which have provided better comfort for those ecotourists who desire so. On the other side establishing of more travel agencies in Masoule has helped the increase of travelers to this area. Based on what the respondents stated new communicational facilities also have been a reason for such increase in the number of ecotourists. The respondent indicated that in recent years the majority of the tourists were family members while in the past the youth were in majority. They believe that the increase of facilities and most importantly suitable accommodations had been a reason for such changing in the category of the ecotourists to this area.

One of the respondents in this relation believed that:

“The number of travelers has increased so much in recent years. My customers in comparison to 2 or 3 years ago have increased a lot. This is good for the economy of the whole Masoule”.

(Respondent No 11, age 45, M)

Another interviewee stated:

“Families are the major customers of this hotel. They reserve the rooms before coming here and stay about 3 nights here. Young couples as well as old parents come here most of the times”.

(Respondent No 12, age 39, M)

One other respondent answered:

“Masoule got more crowded in comparison to the past years and in any ages they are visitors around here but family members comprise the majority. I think it’s because of the increase of the facilities provided for the travelers”.

(Respondent No 3, age 61, M)

Table 2: Findings' Table

	Economic Impacts		Social Impact					Environmental Impacts								Alterations	
	5.2.1	5.2.2	5.3.1	5.3.2	5.3.3	5.3.4	5.3.5	5.4.1	5.4.2	5.4.3	5.4.4	5.4.5	5.4.6	5.4.7	5.4.8	5.5 *	5.5**
1	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
2	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
3	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
4	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+
5	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+
6	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
7	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
8	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
9	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
10	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
11	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
12	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
13	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
14	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
15	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
16	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+
17	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
18	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
19	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
20	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+

Note: 5.5*: refers to the alterations in quality & 5.5**: refers to alterations in quantity of visitors.

Table 2 represents the overall twenty respondents' comments on the specified issues discussed in the findings section. This table contains four main columns entitling:

Economics impacts, social impacts, environmental impacts and alternations. Under each of these four main titles there are the related subtitles which have been categorized by numbers as the following:

5.2.1: Creation of job Opportunities

5.2.2: Increase of local governmental revenues

5.3.1: Increase of social services

5.3.2: Decrease of social security

5.3.3: Increase of social Awareness

5.3.4: Variation in social and cultural Traits of the Locals

5.3.5: Increase of social Inelegances

5.4.1: Decrease of Green Space

5.4.2: Increase of Water Pollution

5.4.3: Decrease of Natural Beauty of the Area

5.4.4: Increase of Environmental Harms

5.4.5: Increase of the Historical Texture of Masoule

5.4.6: Increase of Waste Producing and Triggering to the Environment

5.4.7: Increase of the Soil Pollution

5.4.8: Increase of Local awareness about the environment

5.5: Conversion in the quality and quantity of the ecotourists

As it can be seen the findings section have been developed based on the majority of the respondents' ideas and comments. The interpretation of each column has been discussed in finding section and related references have been written.

5.6 Validity and Reliability

It is believed that the validity in qualitative research method refers to the extent which a research can represent the social phenomenon which it refers and more importantly the integrity of the conclusion with the body of which it has come out of (Bryman, 2008). In this study the authors did her best to deeply observe Masouleh a magnificent touristic place which is environmentally under danger. The interviews by the local community individuals not only emphasized the accuracy of the study but gave accreditation to the study to be trustworthy and valid. On the other side the conclusion of the current study is steadily integrated with the whole study contents which also indicate its validity.

According to Neuman (2003) reliability in a qualitative research method is to what extent it is consistent. In this study the researcher in order to have a consistent and reliable data used recording technique. Every conversation was recorded completely and then transcribed precisely. Therefore there is no concern about this issue in this study.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Discussion

The current research tried to focus on very controversial but neglected issue related to a famous ecotouristic destination in Iran, Masoule. Observing the impacts of area development in the case of Masoule led to understanding the positive and negative impacts of this trend in such an amazing historical monument.

Analysis of the findings indicated that a range of different sorts of developmental efforts have been performed in Masoule in recent years. These developments mostly showed themselves in physical environmental aspects such as construction of new buildings in this area. Other instances of developments in Masoule are the entrance of modern sorts of entertaining facilities such 3D cinema or observing from communicational aspects the presence of modern internet cafes and also activity of different mobile operators. New restaurants with different sorts of fast foods, new accommodations with modern comforting systems as well as establishing of different cultural stations for trading books are just a number of developments examples of this area. These findings asserted that rural areas more or less are in the process of development and expansion and experience different kinds of changes. These findings are inconsistent with findings of Bittner and Sofer (2012) which pointed out rural areas are changing along with the global changing.

The initial and at the same time the most significance provoking factor that accelerated the pace of development in Masoule and attracted lots of attention both

from governmental sector and private sector for investing in this area, is the essence of Masoule which is known as a top tourist destination. This feature of Masoule not only absorbs travelers to this area but also absorb a tangible amount of finance to the area by which different developmental projects can be implemented. Lewis et al (1998) mentioned that flowing of travelers to a destination is a tool by means of which the development also flows to that area which is consistent with the findings of this study.

The findings of this study revealed that although the developments in this area could have a positive appearance but it has created a serious harms and disadvantages to the area as well which are paralleled with the findings of Raschke (2005). The majority of the respondents of this study had consensus on this issue that the environment of Masoule is in a real danger and if there be no preservative strategies implemented from local government In near future there will be a disaster in this area. The findings reported that new constructions in Masoule are not in any harmony with the historical and unique format of its texture. The materials being used in the buildings and the colors of the constructions and most importantly the functionality of some buildings in this area such as the 3D cinema is a big question mark in the memory of each visitor who came to Masoule in order to escape from the ugly and messy buildings which sees in his/her daily life. These findings also were relevant to the studies of Zhang and Xiang and Li, (2012) who stated that there is also a conflict between two phenomena which are the developmental activities in an area and the damages which that area can be affected by.

Elands and Wiersum (2001) argued that development in area has two tangible measures which comprise of enhancing the quality of life of the indigenous and at

the other side preserving the environment and ecosystem. The findings of this research as discussed above indicated that the quality of lives of the indigenous population in terms of achieving more economic opportunities by increase in the number of travelers to this area because of the recent developments has increased. But the arguable point which does not show the other measure of development as proposed by Elands and Wiersum (2001) is the degradation of the environment of Masoule. Thus based on the abovementioned definition, these developmental activities lack a major complementary element which is environment preservation in the case of Masoule.

The key discussion of this study is the issue which Boyd and Butler (1996) pointed out it comprehensively in a research. They stated that the positive economic outcome of the ecotourism in a destination encourage the stakeholders to invest in that area which such developmental operations will lead to environmental challenges. Then they suggested that just in one condition such damages to the ecosystem may be decreased and it is the time when the developments in that area consider the specific characteristics of that area. This is what has not been happened in the case of Masoule. The facilities to the tourists increased in Masoule without considering the specific identities of that area which are: its magnificent green environment, its magical waterfall, its hundred year old trees, and overall its natural beauty beside its noble historical architecture of houses. The protection of such an unbeatable environment has failed in Masoule. Without preserving the environment in near future the coming generations surely will blame their ancestors and then what will really happen to their rights to benefit from the environment of Masoule? Almost all of the participators were telling that the risks against the area increases year after

year. Tons of garbage around Masoule which not only block the environment to exhibit its beauty to the world but also create different types of hazards to the health of flora and fauna.

Weaver and Lawton (2007) in their research stated that if the local community be participated in the ecotouristic projects they will be more sensitive about their environment but the findings of this research showed that there is no organized program to participate the locals in ecotouristic projects but the indigenous themselves after witnessing the real dangers which threaten their ecosystem automatically have been sensitive toward their environment's issues.

Spenceley(2006) claims that when we can call a developmental process in an area a successful one that its local population participate at high level in that activities then consequently the findings of this thesis revealed that this process in the case of Masoule has not been successful at all.

According to the respondents of this research all of the participants believed that the lack of proper protective efforts from governmental organization is the main reason of the environmental damages to the area. They stated that the economic benefits of the ecotourists seem more important for the stakeholders than the ecosystem and environment. Therefore the municipality and other sectors by different developmental activities give a minor attention to the preservation while there are very suitable rules and regulation in the constitution about preservation and protection of the environment and natural resources. These findings of this study were consistent with findings of Agrawal and Redford (2006) who declared that in developing countries the lack of proper management and enough financial resources

as well as technological equipments prevents the controlling rules and regulations to be implemented properly.

Ke (2012) presented the characteristics of the proper developmental actions in an area which emphasizes that the projects first should deeply be studied by the experts and their impacts on the environment should be predicted and the governmental organizations should just issue the related permission for construction just after delivery of strong proofs which assert the suitability of those projects with the environment. Unfortunately the findings of this research indicated that in some cases recently constructing licenses issued without any research and prediction of the consequences of the projects.

The findings of this research asserted the findings of Mokhtarshahi Sani and Mahasti (2011) who stated that most of the touristic development projects in Iran do not follow the proper and sustainable steps and just focus on building villas, apartments and other tourist resorts in order to gain instant profits instead of considering the deeper needs of the tourists, the local community and most importantly the preservation of the environment.

This study also find an inconsistency with Canoves et al (2004) who declared developments in rural areas prevent the locals to migrate to other places. The study showed that the number of those families who permanently were living in Masoule have decreased during the recent years for different reasons such as over crowdedness of Maoule resulted by ecotourists, lack of enhancement opportunities for their children and so on.

Conclusion

In this study the impacts of rural area development in case of Masoule which is a famous ecotourism destination in Iran were deeply observed. The results of the study showed that the combination of the activities which is contributed to the development in Masoule has lead into the increase of facilities to the ecotourists which is considered to be a positive element. In contrast these operations have not been well studied and well designed in relation to the ecosystem of the region which is considered as environmentally unfriendly efforts which has resulted in degradation of the region and consequently will cause decrease of the travelers in near future. The results of the study indicated that the indigenious of this region is not satisfied with the protective programs of the responsible organizations and perceive them as ineffective ones and expect the local government to do more in this relation since Masoule not only is a national treasure but also is one of the internationally recognized **destinations for tourists**.

Implications

The major problem in Masoule is inconsistency of the project with the texture of the area. Therefore it is suggested to the municipality as well as other related organizations not to issue construction licenses without getting structured advise from the planning and environment experts.

The study showed that large amounts of trees in Masoule region have being cut without any legal permission. The author of this study suggests the organization of natural preservation to train the local indigenious to be in touch with that organization and inform them about such incidents. At next level they can employ some of the interested locals as a nature guards. At last level they can put id numbers on the old

trees of the region to have an accurate statistics about them and by establishing security cameras at specific points have a 24 hourly access to the whole area.

Historical houses of Masoule need to be repaired and protected. Using of professional architectures instead of unprofessional is so required since the past repaired houses are not in a well situation.

The lack of informative facilities around the region seems tangible. Because most of the travelers to this region are the same day visitors in order to inform and train them there should be proper informative and at the same time attractive signposts in different locations.

Limitation of the research and Future studies

The most significant limitation of this study was that the sampling and participators were just including the local community of Masoule. Hence it is suggested that in the future studies other stakeholders such national government, local government, NGOs and visitors to be interviewed. In this case a comprehensive understanding of developmental influences in Masoule can be at hand.

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APPENDIX

Appendix: Interview Questions

1. Please describe the attractions of Masoule. Why most of the people tend to come here? What is Masoule popular for?
2. In comparison to the past which changes have happened in the natural environment of Masoule?
3. How did Masoule look like in the past and how does it look like now? Make a comparison regarding the area expansion and ecotourism.
4. How do you see the future of tourism in Masoule considering the current damages to the environment? What do you think about it?
5. Are the benefits of the tourism equally distributing in the society? Does everybody get benefits?
6. What are the impacts of the tourism in Masoule in your own life?
7. Explain the problems and disadvantages of the ecotourism in Masoule? Explain the benefits and opportunities of tourism here?
8. What are your concerns about the nature and environment of Masoule regarding the development of ecotourism here?
9. What does the government do for the protection of the environment in here?

10. Do the visitors treat the ecosystem friendly or destroy it? Explain your own experiences?
11. What actions do you think is needed to be done in expanding of Masoule which not only increase the advantages but also decrease the disadvantages to the environment and to the local community?
12. Did anybody in your family or relatives or neighborhood sell his garden or farm to the others with the purpose of building a touristy place? What happened to those natural places?
13. In recent years which developments and expansions in Masoule have happened?
14. Is the local community satisfied with the development of ecotourism in Masoule?

Sample of interviews

Interviewee Number 1, age 35, Male, High school Teacher:

In Iran people usually choose North parts of the country as their vacations because of its pleasant climate and natural beauty. Masoule as one of the North cities of Iran has one more feature that attracts visitors. That's the historical buildings which are very special. Stair like houses which are so amazing.

In the past the number of these historical houses was more but the lack of proper preservation ruined some of them. Moreover natural disasters like flood increased the speed of these historical houses destruction.

Although Masoule is considered as a tourist site indigenous people live in here. That means the government should save the benefits of locals. Nowadays there are two organizations which struggling with each other on owning the benefits of operating Masoule, the Municipality and the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization whereas none of them does their best to protect the city heritages.

Anyway tourists for Masoule bring economic benefits and we are so delightful from this point of view. If I want to state..... lots of new jobs are available just for the sake of the travelers from which I can mention selling handicrafts. Some of my students after school most of the time involve in selling the handmade trays and pots made by their parents. These economic opportunities for a small place like Masoule are a gift, I can say. But from another viewpoint if we look in the past, 15, 20 years ago before the time Masoule got popular like it is now, all of the locals were treating each other like relatives. They were no stranger around. I am not complaining about

the situation now because coming of these tourists gave us economic power, that is something which we never hide. But the point is that these visitors do not follow any regulations, there has been any training neither to the locals nor to the tourists about how to react. That's why we always feel insecure in our own society. You can see even in midnights so many people are around our houses and our children cannot feel so good. Therefore you see the benefits are available and the costs also are available. Of course it is natural, it is like a trade. But I think the negative effects can be reduced if the government has good plans for it.

New buildings like hotel apartments in these years are constructed. The tourists need them of course. But believe me the way of constructing, the place of construction, the materials of construction are very important. Who cares about these? Nobody!

For me the preservation of ecosystem is the most important factor. Because I live in here, I do not desire to see my childhood memories of beautiful Masoule get destroyed. Unfortunately I should say that different events altogether are going to completely ruin Masoule. Earthquakes, floods, fires and lack of management are a number of these elements. Masoule need a strict conservation but the responsible organizations do not do any tangible actions in this regard. It is a disaster. Masoule is our home. Who can understand this?.....

Most of the visitors just want to enjoy therefore they do not consider anything. Since most of the visitors of Masoule are same day ecotourists they do not take care of the feelings of the indigenous. They just want to have fun and go away. These kinds of people unconsciously during the years have affected the locals by their way of treatment which is sourcing from their commodity-look to people. They have

changed the locals' behaviors unintentionally the same as their own treatment and behaviors.

Some of the locals of course I see treat the environment badly I should tell the truth. For example I know some of the locals who have been tired of litters issue dig a hole and bury them in soil. The plastics and bottles will take hundreds of years to be disintegrated. These kinds of operations have made the soil sick and poisonous It is not just related to the visitors. But some other locals really are unsatisfied about the protecting actions toward environment. The point is that what can they do without the governmental helps?

Whatever the reason is the result is destruction of Masoule. First of all the governmental organization should do something for preserving the environment. They should also train the locals and by different cultural programs encourage the visitors to take much more attention to the environment.

Inshaalah they will do, actually I appreciate the researchers like you, because the beginning of an appropriate program for saving Masoule should come from academic organizations.