

Achieving Sustainable Tourism through Eco-lodge Venture: Evidence from Eco-lodge Cases

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has contributed massively to the change in our climate and the pollution and degradation of our environments. It is highly of importance to seek a change which is more sustainable henceforth to achieve development, in worldwide tourism. In literature, an image of ecotourism is made with attention on the nature's environment, and to attain sustainability in terms of the environment, economically and socially. The more delimited ecolodges are found within ecotourism; aspiring to be sustainable in terms of social, economic and environmental conditions. Ten lodges for tourism were selected as tools in the measurement of ten cases studied, in order to point out what the practicality of ecolodge seems like and how a definition of it can be formulated. And from the literature, there are five indicators of sustainability of the environments and four for sustainability in socioeconomics. These indicators for the environment included elements like food, energy, waste, construction and water, which were portrayed in practical terms in the cases studied. The socioeconomic elements included the local community, staff, education, certification and education of tourists, in no particular order, with the literature placing emphasis on the theoretic ecolodge's sensitivity, in terms of the environment. The indicating elements which are socioeconomic showed more weakness during the cases studied, highlighting in theory, a suggestion for the official definition of the term – ecolodge, accompanied by principles on the sensitivity of the environment and the conservation of nature. So as to provide assistance to the continued propagation of enlightenment about ecolodges globally, this thesis makes a conclusion with the suggestion for an ecolodge which is official in terms of definition, consequently accompanied by principles bordering the sensitivity of the environment; the conservation of nature, as well as a close bond to

the community's locals and education meant to extensively prepare the staff, the locals and the visiting tourists.

Keywords: Sustainability, Ecotourism, Ecolodge, Conservation, Environment, Socioeconomic

ÖZ

Turizm geliřmekte olan bir lkeye gcl bir ekonomik destek saęlayabilir, ancak aynı zamanda iklim deęiřiklięinin yanı sıra evresel bozulma ve kirlilięe de nemli bir etkisi bulunmaktadır. Bu nedenle, kresel turizmin geliřimini daha srdrlebilir bir hale getirmek zorunludur. Ekoturizm, ilk olarak 1970'lerde anlatılan ve o zamandan beri geliřen bir turizm dalıdır. Bir literatr taraması, ekoturizmin doęal evreye odaklandıęını, evresel, sosyal ve ekonomik aıdan srdrlebilir olmayı amaladıęını belirtmektedir. literatre gre, Ekoturizmin kapsamında bulunan Ekolodge'lar (Eko konakları) yerel topluluęu ve evreyi destekleyen bir konaklama řekli ve eęitim faaliyetleri sunan nemli bir hizmet sektrdr. Bir ecolodge'un pratikte ne olduęunu ve bir ecolodge tanımının nasıl formle edilebileceęini bulmak iin, İnan'da 10 (On) turizm konaęı bu arařtırma iin seilmiřtir. Literatr taramasına dayanarak, evresel srdrlebilirlięin beř gstergesi ve sosyoekonomik srdrlebilirlięin drt gstergesi on vaka alıřmasını lmek iin ara olarak seilmiřtir. evresel gstergeler - inřaat, su, enerji, gıda ve atık - uygulamada daha ncelikli hale getirilmeye alıřılmıř, ayrıca literatrde teorik bir ecolodge'un evresel duyarlılıęı zerinde durulmuřtur. Sosyoekonomik gstergeler - personel, yerel toplum, turist eęitimi ve belgelendirme - vaka alıřmalarında daha zayıftı, bir ecolodge'un teori ve pratięe gre hem evresel hem de sosyoekonomik aıdan srdrlebilir olmasını saęladıęına iřaret ediyordu. Literatr taraması ve on vaka alıřmasına yapılan ziyaretler, srdrlebilirlięin setięi dokuz gstergenin doęa koruma ile birlikte ecolodge nlemleri olarak uygun olduęunu gstermiřtir. Bu tez, dnya apında ecolodge yayılımını ve farkındalıęını desteklemek, evresel duyarlılıęı ve doęayı korumak, yerel toplum ile yakın iliřkiler geliřtirmek, personel iin kapsamlı srdrlebilirlik eęitimi teřvik etmek, yerel halkı desteklemek

ve ziyaretçileri memnun etmek amacıyla, resmi bir ecolodge tanımı için bir öneri ile sona ermektedir. Bir turizm operasyonu meşru olarak bir ecolodge olarak adlandırılmak için hem tanım hem de ilkelere uymak zorunda kalacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sürdürülebilirlik, Ekoturizm, Ecolodge, Koruma, Çevre, Sosyoekonomik

DEDICATION

*To my parents and beloved sister,
Who always picked me up on time and encouraged me to go on
every adventure, especially this one.*

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Recently, tourism has turned into a much more attended industry all over the world. This is because of the significant role it has taken in provoking investments, encouraging trade, and upgrading communication. Tourism is closely linked with most main sectors of the world economy. Tourism is such a complicated term to define as it exists in economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects of life and is dependent upon different levels of service and production (Fennell, 2002). It is, however, commonly defined and assessed considering the activities that 'tourists' are engaged in. The definition most widely quoted is coined by the WTO and approved by the UN Statistical Committee in 1993, which defines it as referring to all the activities carried out by people who are staying in or travelling to places which are not the usual abode of such persons, for leisure, and for not longer than a consecutive year for business, leisure, and other reasons (UNWTO, 1994).

In terms of an industry, tourism includes many various sectors developed to satisfy needs, requirements and desires of travelers which generally create a meaningful and memorable experience for them.

These industries might not share much but they depend on travelers to different degrees for their feasibility. Therefore, tourism does not adhere to conventional definitions of an 'industry' in which companies can be "assumed to be alike in all economically

crucial dimensions besides for their size" (Porter, 1979, p. 214). In contrast, Medlik (1993) does not consider tourism to be a single industry and believes that 'tourism-related industries' is a more accurate term that can represent the variety of economic activities and different levels of dependency among the businesses that rely on tourism. Tourism is a global industry that has had an outstanding growth in popularizing air travel, employment, rising income and leisure time.

According to data collected from all over the world, the percentage of tourists arriving from abroad, globally, went from the 4% trend or higher since 2010, to around 7% in the year 2017, which had been consistent since 2017, hence indicating the most powerful outcomes in 7 years. Such growth is anticipated to be sustained at a 4-5% rate, in the year 2018 (UNWTO, 2018). Owing to destinations in the Mediterranean, the continent of Europe had outcomes that were outstanding for such an area of maturity and vastness, with international arrivals by 8% more, than in the year 2016. The continent of Africa continued its trend of 2016, with an 8% increment. Growth in Asia and the Pacific, the America, and the Middle East, was at a recorded 6%, 5% and 3% respectively (UNWTO, 2018).

WTTC's 2018 annual report, which is based on a research conducted in conjunction with Oxford Economics, indicates that Travel & Tourism's contribution to world GDP topped the global economy for the seventh year in a row in 2017. Yearly assessment of the global economic impact of Travel & Tourism shows that this sector's contribution to the world's GDP is US\$8.3 trillion, which is 10.4% of global GDP accounting for 313 million jobs, 9.9% of total employment. Visitor exports generated US\$1.5 trillion accounting for 6.5% of total exports in 2017. In addition, Travel &

Tourism investment was USD882 billion, or 4.5% of total investment in the same year (WTTC, 2018).

1.1 Problem statement

According to Osland & Mackoy (2004), the appearance of lodges in recent times with the prefix of 'eco' is as a result of the development of ecotourism successfully, but there is barely research on this line of businesses. Ecolodge as a concept is not established fully, probably as a result of the concept of ecotourism which is still largely debated, recent occurrences happening relatively, and the presence of an inadequacy in research, and so on. The connections of ecolodges and the prefix 'eco' to ecotourism is merely to portray an awareness in the environment and efforts in sustainability. Yet, for as long as the concept of the ecolodge is not defined and official, there is a risk of confusion running galore. Without an official definition, there will be no ways of making confirmation of the sustenance of the ecotourism efforts of businesses that will consider themselves ecolodges; which is then a concept that has no credibility, it is undermined to seek another one, to which you have a tourism lodge competition for, is very annoying.

1.2 Thesis purpose and objectives

This research aims to discover the meaning of an ecolodge, in literature and theory, simultaneously based on the observation of 10 Iranian case studies. Whether the sector of tourism will see an addition of sustainable environments by ecolodges, will be thoroughly accessed too and questioned. A concept for an ecolodge with principles suggested mainly on the premises of cases studied, will be made and observed. The desired intention that there will be further development and applicability worldwide, of ecolodges, at least in the climates of similarly situated lodges, just as in any of the visited climatic zones.

1.3 Methodology and data analysis

Methods of research carried out qualitatively, is applied in this study. The Purposive Sampling is the Sampling process applied, which falls within the non-probability sampling structure. Questions of semi-structured and open-ended formats are used on the interviewee, who are chosen and consequently interviewed. The questions for the interview stem from the obtainable literature in social, economic and environmental sustainability. The qualitative analysis of data is employed to analyze data.

1.4 Organization of the study

Chapter 1: Initially, it begins with short history of tourism, tourism economic impact, explained what are the problem statements and the purpose of this study and which methodology and what type of data is used for organizing and analyzing.

Chapter 2. Under title of tourism development consist of an overview of tourism, key perspectives based on positive and negative impacts, Main influences and effects in particular in tourism, Mass tourism which leads to Alternative tourism at the end.

Chapter 3. begins with introduction of sustainable tourism, meaning of sustainability and sustainable tourism with short history then ecotourism will be defined with principles of ecotourism and narrow down to history of ecolodge and guidelines, and general Outlook of credibility. Short information of national certification in Iran will be given. The analytical framework is based on literature review which describe the elements that indicate sustainability in terms of social conditions, the environment, and economics, and reason that they have been picked.

Chapter 4. Identified the case of Iran; with an overview the geography and religion, historical and cultural resources, and nature and environment.

Chapter 5. Allocated to the methodology, information for data collection by finally analysis and finding of author on how the comparison of theoretic representation of ecolodges and actual real life case studies, pan out.

Chapter 6. Finally, chapter 6 offers a discussion and conclusion, what are implications and contribution of this study, future research with suggestions for ecolodge principles.

Chapter 2

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Tourism: an overview

The context of tourism consists of environments that are human and natural. The human environment includes processes and factors which are social, economic, social and cultural, whereas the natural environment comprises of flora and fauna in their natural home. The distinguishing features between the human and the natural environments can be helpful when the impacts of tourism are analyzed. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that, in reality the human and the natural environments, respectively, form a nexus and activities of humans can both have an influence on and be influenced by natural environment. Tourism is a prevailing human activity and can have significant effects. Such effects can be observed in the destination location, where there is a direct interaction among the economy, local environment, society and culture. Hence, traditionally tourism's effects are categorized as economic, environmental impacts, and socio-cultural (Mason, 2008).

2.2 Key perspectives

Tourism can have both favorable and unfavorable impacts. Considering these impacts to be positive or negative is very much dependent upon how an observer judges such impacts and what is of value for them. An example can be used here to clarify this idea. In economic aspect, as an example take the construction of a hotel in a region which does not have much tourism activity and income. An observer can express that building a hotel can contribute to the employment of the area in terms of construction

of the hotel and also running the hotel afterwards, which can be considered a favorable impact by the observer. In contrast, another observer may claim that such jobs will not be full-time, and hence semi-skilled and poorly paid; they also lack a structure of career; people are taken away from conventional job types. Such observer considers the building of the hotel to have unfavorable impacts on the local economy. As per the environmental impacts, another example may be useful to appreciate the significance of behavior and positions of value in assessing tourism effects. An observer can claim that the construction of a footpath for tourists, through a national park is a way of organizing them and limiting the damage to the environment, which is a positive effect. Conversely, a different observer might express that the footpath will increase the number of tourists which in turn raises more environmental harm, which is a negative effect. Hence, any argument about the effects of tourism will require considering the value positions and observers' attitude in the wider context of tourism (Mason, 2008).

Nonetheless, conventionally researchers and policy makers consider both impacts of tourism, whether positive and negative. Positive economic impacts are often considered to be its contributions to the economy of the region and its employment. Positive social effects include the re-ignition of local handicraft activities or art influenced by the demands made by tourists. Positive environmental impacts of tourism can be said to be the financial resources generated through the tourist that visit natural attraction sights which are used for the restoration and maintenance of the site, and also tourists' positive attitude towards the essence of the natural environment, which leads to a higher amount of assistance for environmental protection measures. (Mason, 2008)

Unfavorable impacts of tourism are rises in the land price, house and food in tourist destinations. These effects are particularly more obvious in the tourist season. Unfavorable environmental impacts may be pollution from visitors' transportation vehicles, their littering, damage made to natural habitats and landscape features. Negative socio-cultural effects can be said to be cultural identity loss, especially in the cases where the tourists come from developed countries while the host countries which are developing. This is sometimes a constituent of a phenomenon called demonstration effect, which happens when the activities of tourists from countries that are developed, are copied by residents of a developing country. In the beginning, this could be considered rather harmless behavior like wearing designer brand clothing and use branded fast food and drink. However, it is possible that such behaviors lead to more unfavorable activities such as the consumption of drug and prostitution (Mason, 2008).

A big body of research in the latter part of the 1970s aimed to prove that undesirable effects overtake effects which are desirable (Jafari, 1990; Wall, 1996). Despite that, many of local inhabitants of destination areas still welcome tourists and want to see them even more often (Wall, 1996). They state this is due to the fact that tourists bring with themselves employment, increased incomes, rises in tax revenues and improved opportunities for their offspring (Wall, 1996). Therefore, local people may be ready to tolerate some undesirable impacts in favor of those desirable positive impacts. This is how the idea trade-offs is put forward in the area of tourism impacts.

As mentioned above, impacts in a uni-dimensional manner is usually more noticeable. In reality, however, these impacts are observed in a bigger context that not only include tourism factors but also factors related to the society as a whole. As mentioned by Wall (1997, p. 2), the condition is highly complicated, but the desired effects are very tough

to reach, and might need strategy formulations in a context of policy, and the acceptance of trade-offs to militate against effects which are undesirable.

These effects can and will probably change over time since the location of the destination develops (Butler, 1980). There are some major factors that is believed to affect the way the effect is. Such factors include the type of activities for tourism occurring, the home society features and how the hosting people interact with the visitors (Wall, 1997). In another study, Davidson (1997) mentioned various similar influences and stated that time and location are two important factors affecting tourism impacts.

To signify how important is 'location' and 'time' , Davidson (1997) states that such influences make tourism's effects different from the effects existing in other industrial sectors. With regard to the focus of tourism being on space, Davidson showed that tourism is not similar to most of other industrial activities in terms of production and consumption that occur in the same location. This implies that the tourist consumes the product of tourism in a place called the tourist destination. Thus, most effects of tourism have spatial focus in the destination of such tourism. In terms of the concentration of the impacts of tourism on time, he suggests tourism is very much dependent on seasons which signifies the importance of time. This seasonality is mostly because of two main elements: holiday periods and climate (Burton, 1991; Rob Davidson, 1997). The importance of climate comes from the fact that it is in control of essential touristic resources, like sunshine length or snow quantity happening at different times throughout the year. Since tourists can only pay visits to a tourist location at some specific times of the year is the major reason that makes it a seasonal activity.

Tourists can also be affected by tourism. Such impacts may be observed considering their behavior in destinations. They become more obvious at the time when the tourist has gone back home. For instance, what tourists go through during their visit may influence their choice about their future visit to the destination. Such experiences might be gained in the location itself, the influence on the experience and the impacts on future decisions of tourism, however, could occur somewhere else (Mason, 2008).

According mostly on the work of Davidson (1997) and Wall (1997) some major factors can be extracted that influence tourism impacts. These factors are summarized and analyzed below. They are presented in question form, with some comments and/or examples for more clarification.

2.3 Main influences on the effects of tourism

- Where is the destination of such tourism? (For example, is it a location in a rural/urban area, a country which is developed/developing, or a location on the coast/inland?)
- What is the tourism's capacity or scale? (For instance, what is the amount of participating tourists?)
- Who are the participating tourists? (Where do they originate from? Are they visitors from home or abroad? Do they hail from countries that are developing or developed?)
- What are the types of activities that these participating tourists engage in? (For example, active or passive activities?)
- Do the tourists consume resources? (How high or low is their interaction level with the population of the host country?)

- What types of infrastructure are obtainable for tourism? (Sewage system? Roads? Supply of electricity?)
- How old is such tourism?
- What season is the tourism period? (Essence of rainy/dry seasons? What time of the year?)

McKercher (1993) states that despite the fact that these effects of tourism are documented extensively, the reasons why such impacts seems inevitable have not been studied enough if at all. He stated that there are several ‘structural realities’ or ‘fundamental truths’ that set out why these effects (negative effects in particular) of tourism exist for any type of tourism activity.

2.4 Mass tourism

After World War II, major social, political, economic, and technological changes led to Mass tourism. Mass tourism was influenced by the jet aircraft in 1958. Factors such as peace and successful economy after the war, paid holidays, charter flights and cheap oil improved tourism and made it prosperous. Novice tourists longing for the sun, along with the availability of affordable package tours to destinations which could provide sun and the emerging of ‘plastic’ cards increased the demands for mass tourism. In addition, technology contributed to mass tourism through realizing the management, standardization, and distribution of mass tourism services globally (Poon, 1993).

Mass tourism became very popular during the 1970s. Copying manufacturing sector, tourism production was developed in a similar way as assembly-line basics: holidays that are inflexible and standardized; produced in mass, identical holidays; using economy of scale as a motivating factor in production. Similarly, holidays were used

in mass with very identical manners not considering norms, customs, cultures and the environment of the host countries (Poon, 1993).

In only two decades, the tourism industry changed into an industry that was mass, standardized and inflexibly packaged. Companies provided limited number of rigid travel and holiday choices to a presumably similar group of mass tourists. By the 1970s and early 1980s, mass tourism turned into most logical, most productive and profitable strategy in tourism industry (Poon, 1993).

In western countries, various agencies popularized, promoted, and encourage large-scale tourism. In the States, international hotel chains, airline and automobiles, were the major drives of tourism industry. In Europe, charter flights, tour operators, and package tours to sunny tourist attractions such as the Mediterranean countries, were the most important contributors in the dramatic growth of mass tourism. Such growth caused much damage to the environment, the ecology, and endangered the local cultures, leading to the 'flesh trade', crime, new illnesses and many more things (Poon, 1993).

Many forces contributed to the popularization and of tourism that is massive, packaged rigidly, and standardized, which are summarized in Figure 1.

- The massive consumers are sun-lust, sex-starved and inexperienced.
- Technological items such as automobiles, jet aircraft, systems of accounting, computer reservations and credit cards.
- Production such as the involvement of cheap oil, package tours, charter flights, mass production, and hotel overbuilding.

- Management in terms of achieving economies of scale, promotional air fares, branding holidays and hotel, and extensive marketing.
- Frame conditions: peace and prosperity after wars, holidays that are paid, air transportation regulation, attractions that lure hotel chains to set-up business in many ‘sun’ destinations and the world over.

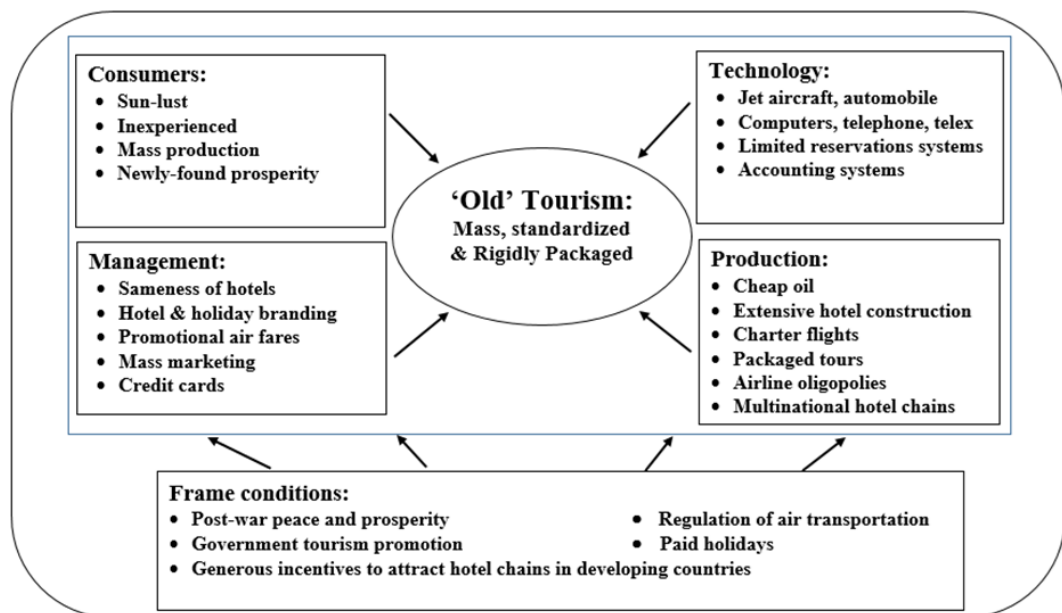


Figure 1: Old tourism (Poon, 1993)

One of the characteristics of mass production is that tourists are concentrated in one location similar to when tourists cause a heavy traffic congestion in the streets of touristic cities. When a location is saturated, it becomes degraded and therefore loses its attraction, which is one of the consequences of mass tourism. In concentrated territory, the proportion of the amount of tourists and comparing them to the density of the primitive population defines mass production (Theng, Qiong, & Tatar, 2015).

Mass tourism creates a total revenue that leads to economic growth. The great number of mass visitors leads to prosperous tourism entrepreneurship and provides income

opportunities in the host country. It also helps employment and provides small investors with numerous chances. These employment opportunities are related to tourism in different levels: direct (cafes, hotels, casinos ...), indirect (business in general) or induced (provided through the extra income that comes from tourism, which is used in the economy of the host country). This is to say that the local market is helped by "minor expenses" that occur in the region (Mitchell & Reid, 2001).

However, tourism economy does not always affect the economy of the host country positively. These impacts could be on value of land, which can be overvalued or speculated. Economy dictates avoiding less profitable uses such as agriculture and fishery. Tourism also caused weak local economies to collapse, increasing inflation and exclusion (Theng, Qiong, & Tatar, 2015).

There is also another problem called "leakage" which means money flow exists, but in the long run there is no quantified measure of the benefit that the local community can have. The emergence of the internationalized market economy paved the way for an informal economy which was necessary in order to stay alive in such social exclusion in which affluence which are private, goes hand in hand with the squalor of the public according to Galbraith (1964). Such phenomenon has changed the concept of production at subsistence level, revolutionizing the basis of traditional life, and the social relationships and connections, which had an inevitable impact on families and social communities.

According to Theng, Qiong, & Tatar (2015), there will be lesser revenue volumes but the direct economies of scale to the economies of the locals ought to be bettered.

2.5 Alternative tourism

The rise of mass tourism has caused a number of problems from which some have led to universal distress. There are concerns about the environment, social and cultural undermining, unfair distribution of extra wealth, the spread of authoritarian attitudes, and also emergence of new diseases. Such problems have provoked the need for the research on “new tourism” or “Alternative Tourism”. What this new tourism offers is that even if the packaging of tourism services is still on a large scale, it is no longer standardized, with affordable prices, suiting the demands of visitors and also the economic, social and environmental requirements of the tourism industry. Figure 2. indicates that new tourists and technologies are affecting the new tourism, whereas new managerial techniques and production methods smoothens the emergence of the new services, and new frame conditions affect the direction of tourism, and the pace at which the industry is altered. (Poon, 1993)

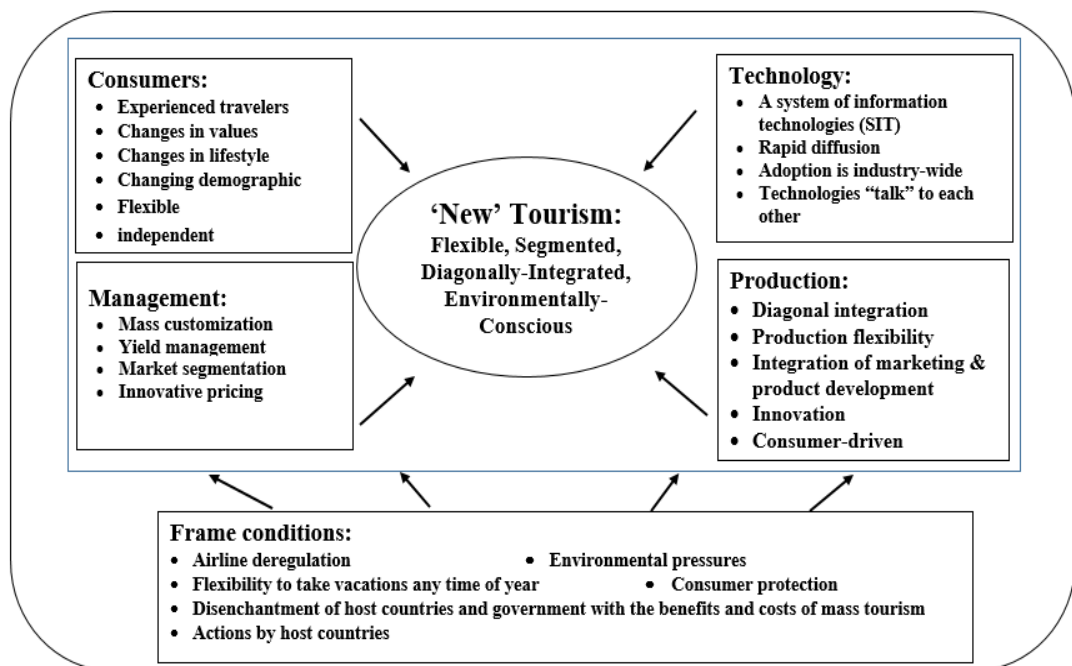


Figure 2: Driving forces of the new tourism (Poon, 1993)

The meaning of the term 'alternative' is not very clear. However, it signifies types of tourism that are distinctive from conventional tourism, which is massive and large-scale. Thus, the alternative to such tourism is petite in scale, not packaged and with few engaged people. This is also called 'good' tourism (Wood & House, 1991).

Alternative tourism includes various types with regard to what they are focused on: agro-tourism, eco-tourism, ethical tourism, community tourism, and so on. This provides many choices that help the industry get rid of the mass tourism. The concentration is not just the economic dimension, the social and cultural aspects, along with the environment, host communities involvement should equally be considered so as to have tourism with more sustainability, with more considerable advantages, economically, for the local community and the host country (Duterme, 2006).

There are some other references to Alternative Tourism such as sustainable tourism, green tourism, ecotourism and etc. Like any other group activities, these terms can have different meanings to different individuals, based on their role in that activity. Protagonists have a portrayal and perception of the activities which they engage in as being 'no-impact', 'sustainable', 'low-impact', 'responsible', 'environmentally friendly' 'green', or they rely on other terms deemed suitable to relay the message (Mowforth & Munt, 2003).

Krippendorf (1982) expresses that alternative tourism philosophy, which opposes mass tourism, was to make sure that tourism should not just focus on economy and structures and facilities, but try to concentrate more on protecting the environment and take into account the requirements of the host people. There is a 'softer' approach that prioritize the natural and cultural resources when making plans for development, not

just considering these factors afterwards. In addition, alternative forms have an intrinsic function of providing the host countries the ways through which they can remove external impacts and involve in project and contribute to their development. It basically means taking control of the critical issues and moving back the outside people and organizations (Fennell, 2002). Deroi (1981) presents 5 ways through which alternative tourism can be advantageous:

1. Families and individuals will be granted advantages: These benefits will be through renting out houses by which families can increase their revenue directly. In addition, families can learn skills used for managing their lives.
2. New tourism has a lot of benefits for the local community and will provide opportunities and revenues that can improve the local community's standards of housing and life in general, without them having to undergo a great amount of expenses for improving their infrastructure.
3. Alternative tourism will prevent the income generated to leave the country. It will also ease the social distress and problems and preserve the local culture.
4. In industrial countries, alternative tourism is perfect for those travelers who cost still matters to them and for the individuals who would like to be close to the local people.
5. Alternative tourism can enhance international and intercultural understanding leading to better international ties.

Weaver (1993) has been more specific and studied benefits that an alternative tourism design may have in terms of accommodation, economic impact, attraction, regulation and market (table 1). This approach to the development of tourism is more sensitive,

and aims to attain the satisfaction of the tourists' needs, local people's needs, as well as the base of resources in a manner which is complementary rather than competitive.

Table 1: Prospective advantages that could be derived from a strategizing of tourism, alternatively. (Weaver, 1993)

<p><i>Accommodation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not overwhelm the community. • Benefits (jobs, expenditures) are more evenly distributed. • Less competition with homes and businesses for the use of infrastructure. • A larger percentage of revenues accrue to local areas. • Greater opportunity for local entrepreneurs to participate in the tourism sector. <p><i>Attractions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity and uniqueness of community is promoted and enhanced. • Attractions are educational and promote self-fulfillment. • Locals can benefit from existence of the attractions even if tourists are not present. <p><i>Market</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourists do not overwhelm locals in numbers; stress is avoided. • 'Drought/deluge' cycles are avoided, and equilibrium is fostered. • A more desirable visitor type. • Less vulnerability to disruption within a single major market. <p><i>Economic impact</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic diversity is promoted to avoid single-sector dependence. • Sectors interact and reinforce each other. • Net revenues are proportionally higher; money circulates within the community. • More jobs and economic activity are generated. <p><i>Regulation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community makes the critical development/strategy decisions. • Planning to meet ecological, social, and economic carrying capacities. • Holistic approach stresses integrations and well-being of community interests. • Long-term approach takes into account the welfare of future generations. • Integrity of foundation assets is protected. • Possibility of irreversibility's is reduced.

Other researchers believe that alternative tourism cannot easily replace conventional mass tourism because it is a complicated and multi-sided concept (Cohen, 1987). Therefore, trying to focus on improving the weaknesses and the situation is more realistic than developing alternatives. Mass tourism has yet to be made redundant for two major reasons. The economic reason is that it provides countries with the

opportunities of foreign exchange (Butler, 1990). The socio-psychological is based on the idea that a lot of people tend to enjoy mass tourism, and hence not being responsible for their own travel plans, accommodation at their destination of arrival; ability to get services and goods without needing to learn new and foreign languages; have reasonable but yet comfortable stays, and be able to eat meals that are quite familiar, without having to spend an insane amount of resources (time and money), to reach these targets (Butler, 1990, p. 40).

Chapter 3

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical review of all the necessary concepts associated with sustainability, eco-resort and ecotourism, are addressed in this chapter. For the purpose of extensive comprehension of the topic, such concepts are essential and crucial in linking findings from interviews that are subsequently obtained and case studies. As emphasized earlier, the theories, concepts and definitions are based on studies from companies, and from experts and professors.

3.2 What does sustainability and Sustainable Tourism mean?

According to Business Insider (2010), in recent times, pollution, population-explosion, human resource exploitation and issues concerning the environment, have become a focal point, with one of the biggest aims of the century, being to attain sustainable growth.

Saarinen (2006) states that considering the fact that the earliest studies of sustainability is from the 1980s, hence sustainability is a fairly new concept. It has the central aim of putting the well-being of future generations into consideration, and rather focuses on natural resources which are not replaceable, than meeting needs of the present. Sustainable development is defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987, p. 41), as a type of development which does not just cater for the needs of the present, but that of the future, without compromising it.

It is highly crucial to take into consideration, that sustainability is perceived as a concept which is long-term, and ‘needs’ are taken to be necessities that are basic.

Sustainability might be quite a contemporary concept, but it has garnered a number of studies and researches that are diversified and extremely broad; regarding this concept, there are fundamental pre-requisites that constitute its bases, which are social, economic and environmental. Gibson (2001) however, is of the view that depending on the school of thought, the concept of sustainability can be based on two pillars (socioeconomic and ecological), three pillars (social, ecological and economic), or five pillars which are social, ecological, economic, cultural and political.

Based on Beaumont et al. (and cited in Harris & Leiper, 2001), sustainability as a concept is in line with sustainable development, and contains three major definitions:

- i. Using non-renewable resources slower, to enable discovery of their renewable replacements
- ii. Using renewable resources less quickly than they can be refilled.
- iii. Releasing pollutants in such mannerisms that enable the biosphere time enough to process them, and render them harmless (Harris & Leiper, 2001, p. xix).

As cited in Kiper (2013), Hall asserts that the informed participatory inclusion of the necessary stakeholders, who have relevancy and solid leadership politically, to enable participation broadly, and the establishment of consensus, are requirements of Sustainable tourism. “Achieving it requires monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary” (Kiper, 2013, p. 781).

It is only via these essential actions that a destination can carry out accurate execution of sustainable models of business that are well-balanced, which has the ability of guaranteeing the environment's preservation, and the betterment of wellbeing, socially. In the absence of a structure such as this, social exploitation and abuse of territory, are few risks that is to potentially occur, especially in countries without a well-structured related laws and policies.

The figure below by Bhuiyan et al. (2012), as cited by Kiper (2013), portrays that it is not impossible to have a visual of the way patterns of sustainable tourism can be put into effect, via an ecotourism and regional development which is managed well. As can be seen, there are several criteria that ought to be concluded so as to trigger effectiveness and the efforts behind such progress are even better, if they are compared to normal destinations of tourism, since a higher level of involvement is required in initiatives, as well as the fact that stakeholders are more in number.

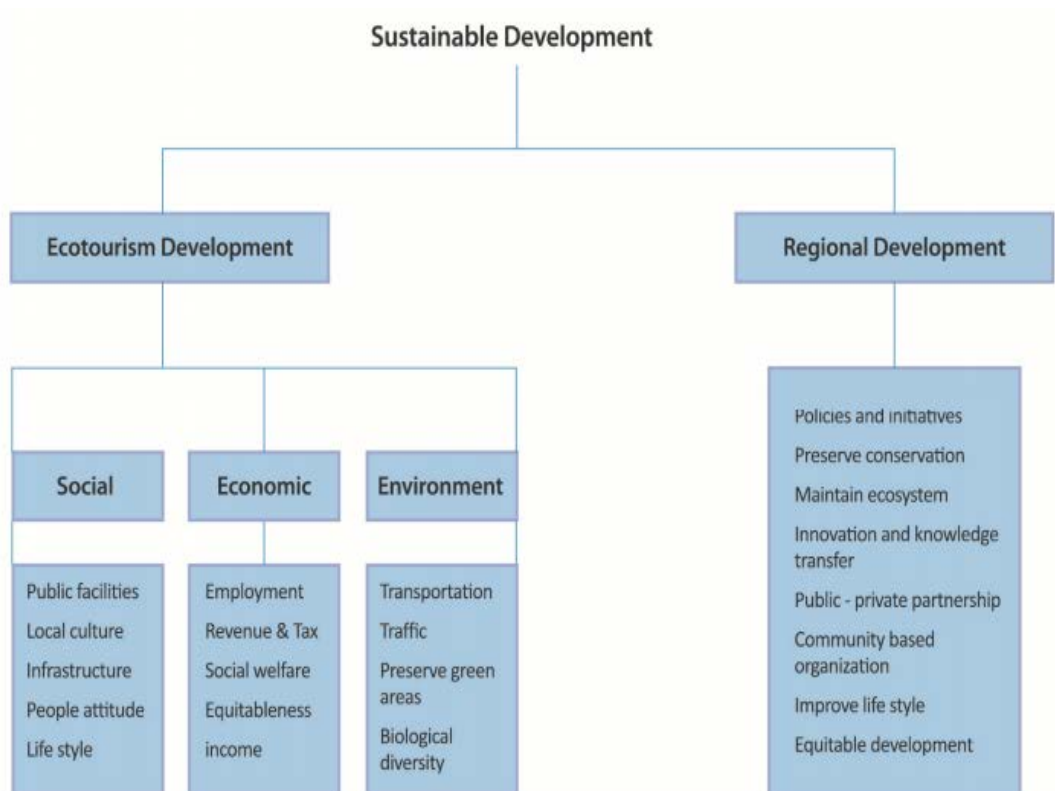


Figure 3: Sustainable development (Bhuiyan et al., 2012, cited in Kiper, 2013).

Sustainable development faces a great problem in the fact that sovereign states are seen as losing power in their territories, to the benefit of multinational corporations and businesses, and other international organizations, that frequently act according to interests, corroding the power of states (Mowforth & Munt, 2009).

3.3 Ecotourism Defined

Harris et al. (2002), state that cultures and environments are changing during the last decades, as a result of the continual and tremendous growth in tourism that should tailor the needs of the tourists. This is far worse, as a problem, for nations that are poor, and are of the danger of mostly being exploited by the multinationals, organizations and countries that are richer, and there is also the shortcoming of protection for the environment. Hence, such problems can be militated against through the use of a well-balanced ecotourism development.

Nonetheless, one of the most essential luxuries in recent times, as the idea of what luxury is about changes, is nature's interconnectedness in relation to areas of preservation and harmony with the natural environment. With the heightened importance of economic success, as a concept, which makes it considerable, it is crucial to note accompanying factors such as efficiency and energy-saving, well-being of the human and harmony with the preservation of nature (Harris, Griffin, & Williams, 2002).

In an article by Weaver and Lawton (2007), the focus was on the way ecotourism as a concept, has been diffused in the last two decades, and claims on how the evolution of ecotourism has occurred and spread vastly among universities, researchers and several institutions; but the distilled concept of ecotourism has developed in distinctive topics, sub-classes, and research fields.

Ecotourism can be seen as a sub-section of sustainable tourism because it dwells mainly on the preservation of nature, as well as the safeguard of culture, and social well-being. Another branch of sustainable development is the nature-based tourism, with more emphasis on natural experiences and assets, and adventure tourism, is mainly focused on adventurous occurrences in nature, whereas the wildlife tourism has to do with interactions with the existing wildlife (Kiper, 2013).

There are equally other forms of sustainable tourism, and a few of them, just like the pro-poor tourism, are mostly bordered on the helping and assistance of the local communities, particularly in countries that are developing (Harrison & Schipani, 2007).

In the figure below (4), as cited in Kiper (2013), and made by Hill and Gale (2009), different types of sustainable tourism are shown.

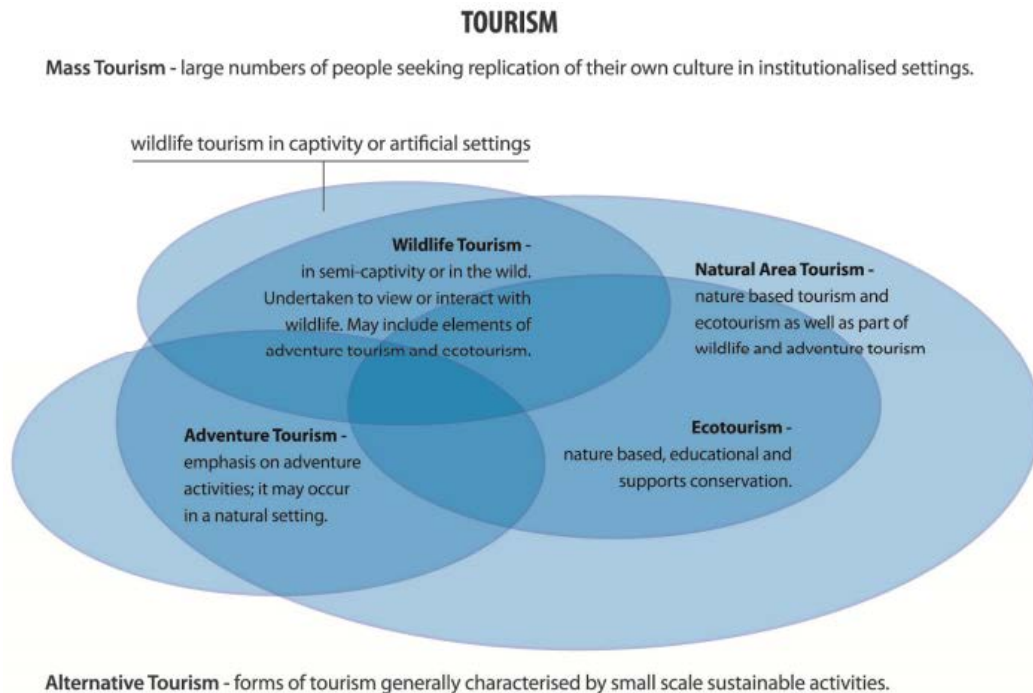


Figure 4: Substitute forms of tourism (Hill & Gale, 2009, cited in Kiper, 2013).

In Figure 4 types of sustainable tourism are differentiated, with greater focus on natural assets; however, as portrayed, the commitment of ecotourism is not solely on nature, wildlife and ecosystems, but it has its concentration on the local community – its protection and enhancement.

The National Ecotourism Strategy (NES) of the Australian Commonwealth Department of Tourism (1994) and Blamey (1997), echo that ecotourism is a nature-based tourism that encompasses education and the interpretation of the nature and environment, managed to be sustainable ecologically (Blamey, 1997, p.110). The NES is of the acknowledgment that sustainability involves the proper inclusion of local communities also.

According to Honey (2008), ecotourism is mostly linked with nature-based tourism, although it goes further than that, with focus on protecting the areas of nature, and the wellbeing of the locals too. It is considered to be an enormously growing sector of tourism. Nonetheless, the differences of wildlife, nature and adventure tourism, with ecotourism, are clarified by her. If the nature tourism involves visitation and enjoyment of natural areas with some activities, wildlife tourism inculcates local species, while the third one, aims to deliver adventurous experiences. They tend to all offer practices that are recreational, but ecotourism has an aim to inculcate advantages to the preservation of the environment and the local community's enhancement.

Over time, researchers do not seem to agree on the definite definition of ecotourism, which has its basis on other different concepts. In Weaver and Lawton (2007), as cited by Blamey, provisions of near-consensus definitions were made, defining ecotourism as a practice that is essential to attain these three criteria. One being that the attractions of destinations be mostly based on nature; secondly, the interactions by visitors with those interactions should be bordered on educating and learning about the culture of the local community and the natural environment, and thirdly, that the experiences felt, emulate practices and principles mostly centered on ecological, socio-cultural and sustainability, economically.

Yet another essential insight is given by the International Ecotourism Society (2015), where the definition of ecotourism is made to be the responsible travel to areas of nature that sustains and preserves the environment, as well as the well-being of the local community, and the inculcation of education and interpretation.

The main concepts of ecotourism, although inferable from the definitions provided above, are concentrated on the protection of nature, cultural and social welfare and sustainability economically, which can be seen as the pillars of this research field.

In retrospective, the major principles for a viable ecotourism as provided by the TIES (2015) include:

- i. Minimization of the impacts – physically, socially, behaviorally and psychologically.
- ii. Building of cultural respect and economic awareness.
- iii. Making experiences which are positive for both the hosts and visitors.
- iv. Setting aside direct benefits of finance for conservation.
- v. Obtaining funds and financial incentives for both the private industries and locals.
- vi. Providing interpretative experiences which become memorable to the tourists that enable them raise sensitivity to the environmental, social climates and political climates of the countries of the hosts.
- vii. Designing, building and operating facilities of low-impact.
- viii. Accepting the Indigenous people's spiritual beliefs and their rights in one's community and partnering with them to achieve empowerment (TIES, 2015).

Consequently, particularly in recent years, ecotourism as a concept has become more and more connected to the essentiality of a commitment to the environment and society, considering that tourists have an impact on both the local society and nature, which need preservation and assistance, whether directly or indirectly. Thus, ecotourism has the responsibility of supporting and adjusting for the better, the

community via a usage that is well-managed, and the preservation of the natural beauties available in the area of destination (Weaver & Lawton, 2007).

Yet another crucial part, stated by Acot et al. (1998), and essential to this research, concerns the differences between the deep and shallow ecotourism.

The latter is one that depends on normal relationships between humans and nature, where the nature is seen as something that can be easily replaced and exploited, so as to maximize their profits and benefits, economically. Here, decisions are made via methods that are anthropocentric, in close relations to the centric condition of humans in respecting the surrounding environment. On another hand, the deep ecotourism is primarily focused on ecology which is deep and ideals of ecocentrism, and so have basis mainly on the essential value of nature, identity of small-scale communities and participation, actively; refusing to accept the technologies that are large-scale, and to see business as a tool, for personal reasons. The development and innovation of bioethics and econcentrism are concepts that are concerned strictly to ecotourism (Acot, La Trobe, & Howard, 1998).

3.4 What is an ecolodge and how does it work?

This is a term which first emanated in 1994 during the pioneering TIES Ecolodge Forum in Maho Bay, defining ecolodge as an industry label for identifying a tourist lodge dependent on nature that meets the principles and philosophy of ecotourism (Hawkins, Woods, & Bittman, 1995).

Hector Ceballos-Lascurain (1997, p. 4) refined the definition and stated that:

The most important thing about an ecolodge is that the ecolodge is not the most important thing. It is the quality of the surrounding environment that counts most: the nearby natural and cultural attractions – and the way ecotourism circuits are set up, operated and marketed, and the way in which the local populations are actively involved in the process.

Furthermore, the design, food and activities are singled out by Russell et al., as the essential factors that distinguishes a conventional resort from an ecolodge. The natural environment should have some integrations into the design versus being nurtured as an enclave; ‘good-and-hearty versus gourmet’ should define the food, while the activities ought to be bordered on the indicating of knowledge via nature, a contrast to being ‘relaxation and utility based’. These all demonstrate the aim to educate the visitors and achieve a blending of the lodge and the local environment, rather than the other way around, to make the surroundings major attractions, not the lodge.

According to Wood (2002), the ecolodge’s value is said to have as much importance in its structural settings. It is necessary for ecolodges to have settings that are well-protected, without any plagues of over-development or problems of destruction of resources. An ecotourism’s property ebbs and flows with its capability to protect biodiversity that are essential, wildlife and landscapes that are flawless. Many ecolodges are able to directly manage their natural resources that they depend on for business, hence establishing their own private reserves.

An ecolodge should meet certain key criteria, according to the International Ecolodge Guidelines (2002), and these include:

- I. Conservation of the natural and cultural surrounding of the environment
- II. Less impact on the surrounding of nature while construction occurs.

- III. The capability of being tailored into particular cultural and physical contexts via attentiveness to the usage of local architecture, the form, colour and landscaping.
- IV. It reduces the consumption of water, due to the usage of alternative sustainable means of acquiring water.
- V. Handling and disposal of sewage and water is made more carefully and efficiently.
- VI. Energy is consumed by it, through a design which is passive, and this creates a combination with the contemporary counterparts, to achieve massive sustainability.
- VII. Collaborative endeavors to work with the local community.
- VIII. Contribution to the attainment of local development that is sustainable, through programs of research.
- IX. Offering programs that are interpretative, for the aim of educating both tourists and employees on the natural and cultural surrounding of environments.

Mehta (2007) asserts that an accommodation facility must be able to check five of the aforementioned criteria, in order to be known as an ecolodge. Three of these criteria embody ecotourism's main principles, which are nature's protection, advantages to the locals, and the provision of programs of interpretation.

There could be negative consequences on biodiversity in the surrounding areas, if lodges fail to follow the sound practices and principles of ecotourism. There could also be lessened benefits to the community if lodges do not encourage participation amongst stakeholders, such as the employment and tutoring of locals, local ownership, food purchase, crafts, and other supplies that local vendors offer, or the chance and avenue for the locals to learn about and use their natural resources and facilities. In some situations, the inability to include the locals may result in confrontation and strife

within and amongst communities. If employment and practices of management is also poor, damages to the relations between communities and businesses, could be infringed on (International Finance Corporation, 2004). Hence, the ecolodge could fail ultimately, from losing its community support and selling point (Mehta, 2007).

Individual situations or locations might result to different principles being irrelevant, hence not all ecolodges will meet these principles. For instance, it would be totally unnecessary to spend money into technologies for harvesting water, if a facility for accommodation is located near a river of freshwater or in a rainforest. In the same vein, there may be the lack of local materials required and hence, it would be best to import friendly foreign materials for the environment (Mehta, 2007).

There could be extremely luxurious or rustic Ecolodge, where the accommodation in the ecotourism industry, generally, are within the mid-range price, and the types of accommodation ranges are enormous, such as tent-camps that are luxurious in Africa, to the tent for backpackers in Alaska (Wood, 2002).

Several lodges provide their own interpretation walks and guides, as visitors to such lodges are often travelers that are independent, and so do not have a guide travelling with them. Local farmers or indigenous people who have very deep knowledge about the local flora and fauna, are hired to become Ecolodge guides. Their motivation to perform this duty is often out of the thought of such unexpected chance that enables them to interpret their homes' natural features to strangers, after lifetimes of having to survive by poaching wildlife or contributing their labor to unsustainable logging, oil exploration or agriculture. Their understanding of the land supersede what most citizens of urban times have ever felt or experienced in their lives, and thus leaves

visitors with a genuine respect and accord for the places and people they have visited. The host's and visitor's interactions can result to an entire contemporary outlook for locals on the peculiar nature of where they live (Wood, 2002).

Coordinating an ecotourism with fulfilling itinerary, demands a working relationship with the locals, at an active level. Ecolodges require local guides and interactions with the owners of the resources of tourism, be it farms, canoes, or horses, that would ensure tours of interesting full-day or half-day tours for visitors (Wood, 2002).

The operation and management of mainstream hotels differ from that of an Ecolodge, due to several reasons. Based on findings by the International Ecolodge Guidelines (Mehta, Baez, & O'Loughlin, 2002), ecolodges are most likely found in areas of the Sahara or wilderness, which are often undeveloped, very remote in many regions; thus, they are the final places to often receive investments of health, electricity, education, roads, portable water and so on. This tends to be highly challenging to the owners or care-takers of ecolodges, because they have a mandate of achieving development, sustainably, by providing support to local communities in a development program which is long-term, and putting land-conservation programs in place with a limited external help. Education is one of the major avenues for the creation of ecotourism that are prosperous, and it hinges on the owners and caretakers of ecotourism to provide it (Wood, 2002).

The International Ecolodge Guidelines (2002), posit that the management of Ecolodge should portray the following characteristics:

- i. Provision of job training to the community members and locals, who become guides, during the job.

- ii. Utilization of a massive amount of local staff, and prevention of city-trained and expatriates, getting full key responsibilities.
- iii. Setting up after several hours of programs of second-language, to help the staff in speaking the language of the guests that are visiting, using local graduates of colleges with providing expertise in the training of language.
- iv. Contribution to the education of staff and development of the community in education or health, by the guests.
- v. Encouragement of members of the community to make their knowledge about the areas, while urging the local guides to socialize with the guests during hours meant for the community.
- vi. Support in the learning experiences of the guests via visits to the local farmers, reforestation projects, nurseries and farms for the promotion of sustainability in the area.
- vii. Promotion of the system for guests to make financial contributions to the natural areas' natural resource.
- viii. Insistence on the recycling of everything from scraps of the table, to metal and plastics and metals.
- ix. Usage of energy sources that can be available alternatives.
- x. Usage of detergents that are detergents and avoidance of the usage of toxics, whenever it applies.
- xi. Lack of caged or exotic animals on the premises.

3.4.1 Credibility

Regarding a general outlook towards engaging in activities of sustainability within the entire industry of tourism, Martha Honey in 2007, wrote that there was need for the codification and not just conceptualization of ecotourism, so as to enable the triggering

of its progressive effects. This can be true for ecolodges, as a lesser section of ecotourism. Businesses would appreciate the Ecolodge operations with certifications that are well-known in terms of demands on environment, economic, and social sustainability.

However, a great pool of various green initiatives, groups, societies and clubs, recommendations, including policies and so on, can create more confusion than guidance. There are no certification internationally, obtained officially, peculiarly for ecolodges or the management of the usage of the “eco” prefix, and so any accommodation/housing business for tourism that inculcates aspects of environmental friendliness or closeness to nature, could basically claim to be running an Ecolodge.

Over 140 green certification labels are invoke all over the world. Amongst them are approximately 50, which are active eco-labels that concentrate on the certification for green hotels (Green Hotel World, 2016). Moreover, there are only a number of international ones, while most cover a single country (Honey, 2007).

There are several reasons for retrieving a certification such as for evidence to show the distinction between an Ecolodge and other types of accommodations and businesses for tourists, to enable the genuineness and devotion of a lodge’s visitors, to proffer staff and management with the related goals and education for betterment, etcetera (Honey, 2007). However, if the attained certification is not credible, then money has been wasted since there is no visitor or competitor or management that can rely on the confirmation of its demands; its update and legitimacy.

There are nation-wide programs of certification that can quickly disperse amongst the countries, and become of great utility in helping staff and management, in the insurance of practices that are sustainably good. On another hand, there are not a lot of tourists that could learn about the project or understand what the expectations from operators with certification, are. Nation-wide programs might equally not be as reliable in countries that are plagued by heavy corruption, or tend to be quite expensive for locally-owned businesses in countries that are developing. Hence, ecolodges can be unaware of competition in the business since there are clients that have no knowledge of the criteria and credibility of the certification.

3.4.2 National Certification in Iran

Iran has the Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO), and this is the research and educational institution which is responsible for several museum complexes throughout the country. It is charged with the duty of publishing and overseeing the publication of several books and journals, and undertakes projects in collaboration with foreign museums and academia. Ecolodges in Iran have to make applications for a national certificate before accepting guests and visitors. It is categorized into three levels, namely one, two and three scales. The ratings are centered on points that are earned by the experts in the evaluations. ICHHTO aims to certify and categorize Ecolodge based on the severity of the compliance to principles of operations. Three primary aspects are observed:

1. 30% of total privileges; building, equipment and services
2. 30% of total privileges; manpower, safety and hygiene
3. 40% of total privileges; sustainability, environmental and cultural conservation

3.4.3 Analytical framework

We might ask or be asked: what is the uniqueness of ecolodges? As earlier described, ecolodges strive to attain sustainability through many ways such as promoting, adjusting to and preserving its natural environs and locals, and the economies; which a traditional business for accommodation does not have necessarily. Thus for an industry as such that is intense, the summative consequences of tourism sector fires climate change, as well as adding to the unsustainable usage of natural resources, losses in biodiversity, deforestation, pollution of water and air, degradation of land, etc. (Becken & Patterson, 2006; UNEP, 2010). By substituting traditional hotels, with a quantity of ecolodges that are sustainable, the industry of tourism can be curbed.

For an evaluation carried out comparatively of picked case studies, nine elements indicating the environmental, social and economic sustainability conditions were picked. The social and economic ones are explained at once, and should be referred to as indicators of socioeconomics onwards, since there is a close linkage. See also Figure 5.



Figure 5: Sustainable Eco-lodge indicators

Indicators for Environment in no particular order:

- Food
- Waste
- Construction
- Energy
- Water

Socioeconomic ones:

- Local community
- Tourist education
- Certification
- Staff

Choosing an environmental indicator is dependent on the Millennium Development Goal 7 (MDG7, 2000), and the overall perceptions via the definitions of Ecolodge and ecotourism above, that an Ecolodge ought to work in a manner sensitive to the environment (Osland & Mackoy, 2004; Blamey, 2001; Hawkins, Wood, & Bittman, 1995). The responsible usage of natural resources, and the indicators chosen to demonstrate the most used and of high potential impact to the environment: water, energy and waste, encompass this.

According to Osland & Mackoy (2004) and Russell et al. (1995, cited in Osland & Mackoy, 2004), the essence of designs which are fitting are pointed out, together with the potential hazard or material of long-distance, make construction an indicator of the environment which is brutal.

Food is the final indicator, as pointed out by Russell et al. (1995, cited in Osland & Mackoy, 2004), chosen in addition because of its relevancy to be essential to people's survival, consistent rate of consumption, and high impact on the environment.

The elements indicating socioeconomic which are chosen, are not involved glaringly in the aforementioned ecotourism and Ecolodge, yet they are extremely essential for a meaning of sustainability that is 'all-embracing'. These indicators bordered: *local community, staff, certification* and *tourist education*. They are seen as being the largest impacting, and deemed of vast essentiality.

Staff was picked to be an indicator particularly in line with the very first Millennium Development Goal (MDG1, 2000), of the goal of eradicating poverty and to offer decent work for people of both sexes. Fair employment, which is safe and long-term,

can enable the alleviation of local poverty and hence, foster health indirectly, and education for the locals, and underlines the essentiality of staff as an indicator of socioeconomics.

Local community as an indicator is linked directly to the conditions of the staff, and was chosen as an indicator as a result of the decisions that “host people”, “locals” and “visited communities” should be shown respect in, involved in, and benefit from the operation of tourism (Mohonk Agreement, 2000; Osland & Mackoy, 2004).

The essentiality of educating the tourists, is stated in a way by some of the definitions (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987 (cited in Blamey, 2001); Mohonk Agreement, 2000; Osland & Mackoy, 2004; Russel et al., 1995 (cited in Osland & Mackoy, 2004); Bottrill & Pearce (cited in Hawkins et al., 1995)).

Certification as a chosen decision, relies on sections about the reliability of ecolodges. It ought to be an extensive indicating element of sustainability in the environment, since there are many certifications that seem to focus on aspects of the environment. Nonetheless, as a result of the option of a certification retrieval for the credibility of an operation, its potential of competition and marketing, and for the Ecolodge, it was established as an indicator of the social and economic sustainability.

Chapter 4

IRAN'S COUNTRY PROFILE

4.1 Geography and religion

Iran is a country located in the southwest of Asia, with an area of 1.648.195 sq. km. It has borders with Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan, and the Caspian Sea to the north; to the east by Pakistan and Afghanistan, to the west by Iraq, to the northwest by Turkey, to the south by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. Iran, as a country, has very rich natural and cultural heritage, which are very unique to the world. The archeological and historical heritage of ancient Persia is very fascinating to most of the world, involving several religions such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrians, and even earlier religions.



Map of Iran. Source: www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/middle-east/iran/

4.2 Historical and cultural resources

A 10,000-year background of human history, includes rich ranges of cultural and historical provisions. The people of Persia have experienced a deep involvement in tourism. Historical facts which are recorded, show that there is glaring evidence of hostels that are dated far back as 2000BC. The hostel owners provided drink, food, accommodation, and sex for the customers (O’Gorman, McLellan, & Baum, 2007). The heritages of Iran, which are tangible today, include not only histories and cultures, but also influences of the civilizations that invaded it, such as the Arabs, Greeks, Mongols, and western countries, to name a few. Hence, it is drawn from several significant indigenous histories (O’ Gorman, McLellan & Baum, 2007).

There are 21 cultural sites inscribed on the World Heritage list of UNESCO, and applications for 56 locations have been submitted on the Tentative List (UNESCO, 2018).

Also, there are over 3200 sites that are listed by the Cultural and Heritage and Tourism Organization of Iran.

The unique characteristics of Iran, as a multi-ethnic country, has posed complications for tourism. There are many people, languages, cultures and religious groups in Iran. There are individuals that can be found in certain several regions, belonging to different tribes, who have different spoken languages. For instance, in the northwest of the country, its people are Azeri Turks and their language is Turkish in their homes. The Baluch people are in the southeast, and they speak Baluchi. There are small nomadic tribes scattered all over the country, and they live in tents and speak several languages. Seven minority tribes and societies can be found in Iran, and there are five

different languages (Kurdish, Turkmen, Azeri, Arabic, etc.). These have contributed to the diversity of the country's rich culture, and can be crucial to the development of tourism.

4.3 Nature and environment

There are five main biomes in Iran, to enable the Iranian habitats to support about 8,200 species of plants (a safe estimate), of which around 1,900 are endemic. Along the Persian Gulf coast, there are about 8,900 hectares of mangroves, and 12.4 million woodland hectares. According to studies in the field, there are around 500 species of birds and 160 species of mammals. Holding global significance, the wetlands of Iran is home to large populations of birds that migrate in the winter at these wetlands, or utilize them on their way to and from wintering in the sub-continent of India or in Africa. Due to its dimensions and ecosystem of variable qualities, the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the most crucial countries in the region of the Middle East and Western Asia for biological diversity's conservation.

The Protected Area and Reserve system of Iran gives room for core areas of the conservation of biodiversity. This system is not enough in itself for conservation for long-term, and ought to be harmonized with efforts of conservation in other land-uses and areas. Areas protected by the Department of Environment in Iran, cover 8.2 million hectares, which constitute about 5% of the area of national land. The goal of this Department, is to raise this proportion by a further 5%. Limited research and tourism happens in this areas, and the details of the four classifications of such protected area, as managed by the Department of Environment, are stipulated below.

Furthermore, the Forests and Rangelands Organization of the Ministry of Agriculture manages around 131 reserves with an area total of over 111, 000 hectares. 19 of these are National Forest Parks, Forest Reserves constitute 91 of these, and 21 are Natural Parks. Also, other ministries manage an amount of protected areas.

Nevertheless, in spite of the rich natural and cultural heritage of Iran, considered globally outstanding, around 2 million tourists visit per year, in comparison with Turkey's 26 million tourists or 13 million yearly tourists in 2008. This is a clear demonstration of Iran's lackluster capitalization of its natural, cultural and tourism heritage.

Chapter 5

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Research approach of the study

In seeking certain answers to questions of research in this work, in ways that are consistent and already defined. The ability of researches that are qualitative, stems from its strength in making provisions of textual descriptions that are multiplex, of the way individuals have experience of an issue of research. It affords information concerning a human-side issue, consisting of the behaviors that contradict, the emotions, beliefs, and individuals' relationships (Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, & Guest, 2005, p. 1). In order to obtain outcomes that are not predetermined, some evidence will be collected. Techniques for garnering data will be done via very intensive interviews, in the case of qualitative methods of research.

The essence of qualitative research was demonstrated in a number of questions in an interview, which were open-ended and not highly structured, and applied in Iran to ten ecolodges, in a bunch of case studies to discover the way ecolodges work in practicality. Through interviews which were made by workers and administrators of ecolodges, observations of the guests and working duties, discoveries when put in analysis for similarities and differences were highlighted, in case studies and literature, with ideas for betterment suggested and worked on.

The steps of sampling is made on the network of sampling which is non-probable, on the premises of purposeful sampling. The style of sampling known as Purposive/Purposeful Sampling, is also referred to as judgement, or sampling based on subjective selection, is such method in which the researchers have to be dependent on their subjective judgement when picking participants in a study, from amongst individuals in a population. According to Black (2010), it happens in a non-probable method and takes place when selected elements of a sample are picked by the researcher's judgement.

Every interview which were given in respective ecolodges, otherwise noted, and in the course of the periods of May 2018 to July 2018, starred similar basic questions which were asked at the respective areas. However, distinct responses led to distinctive follow-up questions. The history of the lodge constituted parts of major focus, followed by the staff and economy of such lodge, connections to communities that are in proximity, potential education of tourist visitors and the needed certifications of the ecolodges, water, food, energy, waste and construction management. In the appendix A, the common questions for the respective lodges are portrayed.

The backbone of research conducted via qualitative means, is the capability to make provisions of descriptions of texts that are complex, concerning the way individuals experience a provided issue of research. The given information which is obtained, tells about the human aspect of a matter, which is often contradictory like opinions, emotions, relationships and behaviors of people. The principles of analyzing qualitatively, will determine the course that analysis of data takes, which takes off via word-to-word quotes, responses of participants paraphrased, documentation backed up, coding, categorization and transcription. Coding openly is administered in times

where the steps involve break downs, comparisons, examinations, categorization and data conceptualization. Bryman (2012) refers to this as a coding process which yields concepts that are classified and transformed later into categories. See also table 2.

5.2 Data collection

Researchers came in contact with the interviewed entities via phone and made interview arrangements, when the respondents were chosen on the topics' relevancy. 49 questions of the interview were picked ahead of time and asked to the respondents, at the time being. Translations from Persian to English were made available for respondents without comprehension of the English language. The case studies data were respectively obtained through the questioning of managers and the staff, as well as the visitors, at respective lodges and at times, via the homepage of the lodges. The respondents were assured of confidentiality and made to feel at ease, as it is crucial to research of this nature. An MP3 recorder was used to record the interviews, and then transcribed, categorized and typed. Before the analysis of the data, it is essential to sieve raw data away, and transcribe them on statements matching, and then interpreting lastly.

5.3 Data analysis and findings

Methods of research carried out qualitatively, is applied in this study. The Purposive Sampling is the Sampling process applied, which falls within the non-probability sampling structure. Questions of semi-structured and open-ended formats are used on the interviewee, who are chosen and consequently interviewed. The questions for the interview stem from the obtainable literature in social, economic and environmental

sustainability. The qualitative analysis of data is employed to analyze data. See also Figure 6.

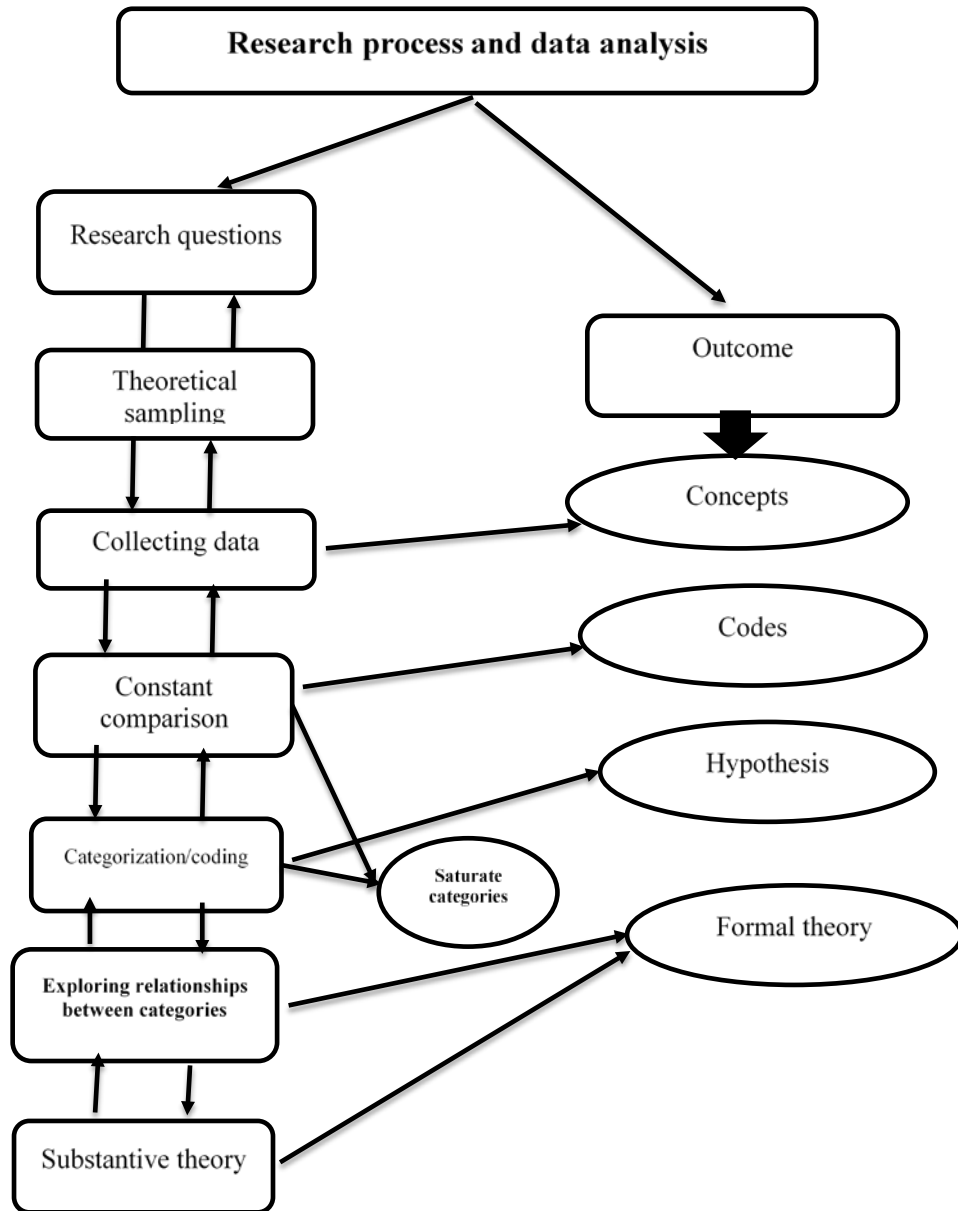


Figure 6: Research and data analysis model (Bryman & Cramer, 2012).

5.4 Description of case studies – history and operation

This part of the research provides a brief presentation of the ecolodges that have been studied, concerning the immediate surroundings, the reason for their commencement and what they are comprised of nowadays. In the information denoted below, shows the conducted interviews with managers of lodges, tourists and staff of the respective ecolodges, and on thorough observations, conducted personally, during the course of the visits. Refer to the Figure 7 for the estimated location of each lodge.

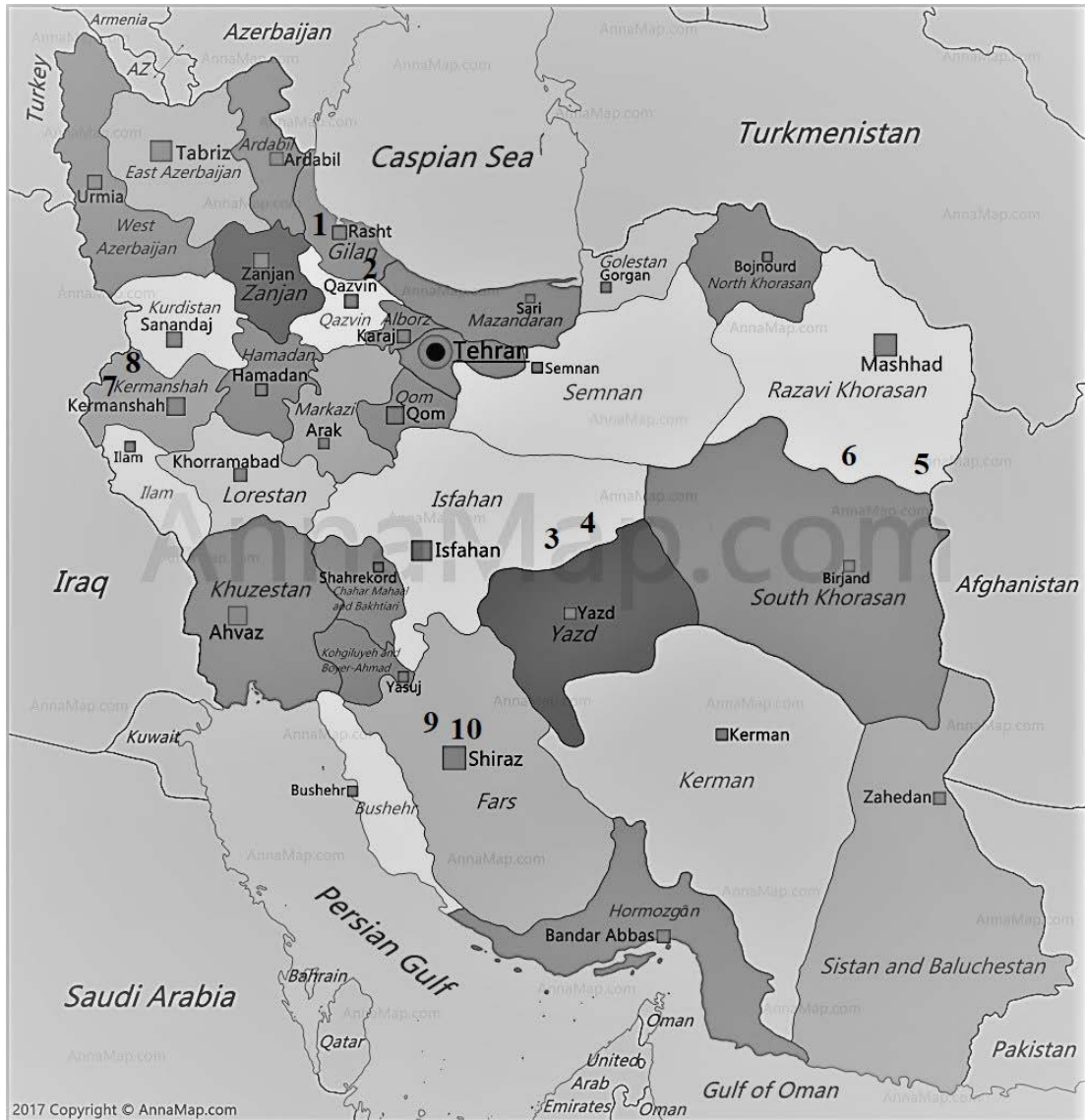


Figure 7: Map of Iran with visited ecolodges and their approximate spots: 1) Gilehboom, 2) Gilgamesh, 3) Ateshoooni, 4) Barandaz, 5) Pouryaghub, 6) Ghavamiyeh, 7) Sabat, 8) Satiar, 9) Koochboom, 10) Amoo Ghodrat. The author has summed up the digits and are to be considered as representative figures, and not exact figures. Source: <http://annamap.com/iran/>

5.4.1 Gilan province

Gilan province is the 10th largest province in the north part of this country and lies along the Caspian Sea. At the center of the province is the main city of Rasht and because of its heavy rainfalls, it is one of the most prosperous provinces in Iran. It has a lot of plant and animal species. Gilan is considered as one of the Iranian tourist hubs due to its rich nature and cultural heritage. 1130 Historical, natural and cultural works

of Gilan province have been registered in the National Heritage List. The two case studies in Gilan are Gilehboom and Gilgamesh.

Gilehboom (marked as 1 in figure 7) is an ecolodge, close to Gishar kuh forest and Samaamous; the highest peak of Gilan. It is also close to the Caspian Sea coast. It takes twenty minutes to get to Hyrcany forests. Gilehboom is 20kms far from Ramsar and 50kms far from Lahijan. The history of the lodge goes back to six years ago. Three students of Tehran Amir Kabir University had a trip to Iranshahr, located in Sistan and Baluchestan province, to meet one of the needleworkers in that region. This 55 year old woman received reward from Farah Diba (former Queen of Iran), but after Iran's revolution, she has been forgotten and therefore she lives in poverty. This visit made these 3 students think of helping the local community. An old house was selected in the village of Qasem Abad in the east of Gilan, after reconstruction, they established tea and handicraft producing workshop in order to help local society. Gilehboom lodge consists of a main building with five rooms, a cottage and a tree house and can host 17 guests in total. This ecolodge has 500 tourists annually, who 30% are foreigners. The average duration of stay is 2 nights.

Gilgamesh ecolodge (marked as 2 in figure 7) is located between Rasht and Rudbar in the village of Fararoud. It is located on the hillside of Dorfak pick and in the Hyrcany forest, therefore Gilgamesh has natural and spectacular view that brings unique peace and quiet for the guests.

Many years ago, Amir (the owner of residence) was a professional hiker and took his siblings along with himself in some of his easier adventure trips. When they camped at night near the fire in the forest, Amir talked about his dreams; setting up a lodge in

the woods. A few years later (2011), Amir left all of his affiliations in Tehran. He went In the middle of a village, in the heart of the forest, and away from all the urban technologies, he bought a land and began to build his dreamy lodge. The entire architecture was designed by Amir himself and the family supported him financially and spiritually. After 5 years, the lodge was completed. Amir's family moved there and they began to decorate the lodge. A few months later, the ecolodge opened officially.

Amir is the owner of the residence and family members are shareholders. Finding a new lifestyle and escaping from repetitive urban life were the main reasons of starting this business. They tried to show others that living in a village without technology is not difficult but even delightful. Creating jobs for the locals was the other reason. Local people say this ecolodge has enriched their business. The lodge is 500 square meters and consists of a central part including a living room, a restaurant, a reception and a kitchen, as well as 12 rooms for guests and can host 50 guests in total. The lodge has around 2,000 guests per year. The average duration of stay is 2 nights.

5.4.2 Isfahan province

Isfahan province is a province in the middle of Iran. The center of this province is Isfahan. It is the sixth largest province and the third most populated province in Iran. Isfahan has temperate and dry climate because it is located in the center of Iran's plateau. Of course, the weather varies in different regions of the province according to their location, but spring is surely a suitable season for traveling to this province. Isfahan is one of the largest centers of producing various kinds of handicrafts in Iran. In this province, 1850 sits have been recorded in The Cultural Heritage of Iran. The two case studies in Gilan are Ateshooni and Barandaz Tabatabaei.

Ateshooni lodge (marked as 3 in figure 7) is located in the village of Garmeh in Khur and Biabanak County in the heart of desert and in the vicinity of the palm tree, which attracts a large number of tourists each year. In Garmeh, the imaginative image of Paradise with colorful flowers and lush trees is broken in your mind, instead you can imagine paradise of the desert, Mesr Desert Paradise. Ateshooni is the name of a 400 year old house in Garmeh which dates back to the Sassanid period. Maziar, the owner of this lodge, left Tehran to his paternal village (Garmeh, Khur and Biabanak) 19 years ago and reconstructed a house there. Then he and his friend began to inform tourists about this residence. The house is owned by the Endowment Office, which Maziar rented on the condition of restoration. One of Maziar's goals was to prevent young people from migration. Very soon, Ateshooni was registered at Lonely Planet, the International Tourism Book, and Maziar became one of the tourist poles in Mesr desert and also in the village of Garmeh. Today there are fewer tourists travelling to the desert and didn't visit Ateshooni ecolodge. Camel ridding, setting the fire at nights, playing unparalleled Iranian music and visiting attractions such as salt lake, Abbasid Flat, bridal Flat and sand dunes are the attractions that tourists, who travelling to Mesr, visit them. Ateshooni currently has two buildings which consist of 14 rooms and can host 40 guests in total. Almost between three and four thousand tourists visit the village of Garmeh and stay in Ateshooni each year; about 70 percent are foreigners and 30 percent are Iranian. The average duration of stay is two nights.

Barandaz Tabatabaei ecolodge (marked as 4 in figure 7) is located in Farahzad village, Isfahan province. This village is the last northeast point of Isfahan and lies along the central desert of Iran.

The Barandaz Tabatabaei which is located in the village of Farahzad, located in Khur and Biabanak county is the grandfather's house of the family for several decades. The house was turned into an ecolodge in 2006 after repairing by Seyed Hashem Tabatabaei and named "Barandaz1". Shortly thereafter, the "Barandaz 2" was lunched in Farahzad. At first Tabatabaei family didn't want to run a business. They just wanted to revive their paternal house and introduce Farahzad. And also there were so many tourists in the area because of camel riding or Safari tours but there wasn't any facility or even an accommodation. The architecture is benefited from the intriguing features of the desert villages and made up of mud and straw. In Barandaz 1, there are 5 rooms and in Barandaz 2, there are 8 rooms. The capacity of the rooms varies from 5 to 12 people. The lodge can host 40 guests in total. Both Barandaz includes the alcove, the garden, Iranian and foreigner bathrooms. There is also a traditional tea made with coal for guests to make tea on their own in both Barandaz. This ecolodge attracts around 2,000 guests a year, the average duration of stay is 2 nights. Most of the guests are Iranian, then Europeans and Chinese.

5.4.3 Khorasan Razavi Province

Khorasan Razavi province is located in northeastern Iran. Mashhad is the center of the province. It is the second most populated province and the fifth largest province in Iran. climatic variation in Khorasan ; hot and dry in south parts and temperate in north parts, attracted many various tribes during different eras from ancient times. Over 1600 sites of historical significant have been recorded in The Cultural Heritage of Iran. Two case studies in Khorasan Razavi are Poryyaghub lodge and Ghavamiyeh house.

Poryyaghub (marked as 5 in figure 7) is located in the Khaf County, in Khorasan Razavi Province and in front of the Nashtifan windmills. The existence of these

historical windmills refers to the Safavid era, which has enriched tourism industry in the region. Poryyaghub paternal house was built about 100 years ago and was used till 2016. After a little mending and restoration in early 2016, it became an ecolodge with the purpose of introducing the region. In fact, the Khaf County is located in the east of Iran, and the East of Iran is still much unknown, despite its valuable attractions. Poryyaghub is located just in front of the famous Nashtifan windmills, and is built in a garden with an area of 1,600 square meters and a substructure of 280 square meters. The architecture and decoration of the building looks like old architecture of the area. The lodge has a main building consisting of five rooms which can host 30 guests in total. This lodge hosts about 400 people annually; 300 Iranian tourists and 60 foreigner .the average duration of stay is two nights.

Ghavamiyeh ecolodge (marked as 6 in figure 7) is near the city of Gonabad, in the province of Khorasan, there is a historic village called Riab, a beautiful and historical village. The entrance of the village is in the form of a vault. The alleys are paved with clay which fascinate you at the time of your arrival. This ecolodge is Alipoor's paternal house which belongs to Qajar era .It's architecture is compatible with a special desert environment. It has been registered in The National Heritage in 2005 and mended in 2010. Then it launched as the first ecolodge in Khorasan Razavi with the aim of creating jobs in the village.

Due to its warm and dry location, it is a desert house with vestibules, windmill, porch and cellar and, of course, dome and vaulted ceilings, which shows the authentic Iranian architecture. The lodge consists of two buildings which has 6 rooms and a maximum capacity of 45 people. The lodge hosts almost 2000 guests. The average duration of stay is two nights.

5.4.4 Kermanshah province

Kermanshah province is the 17th largest province of Iran and the 9th most populated province in the west of Iran .Kermanshah is the center of this province. Kermanshah province is a mountainous region that lies between the Iranian plateau and Mesopotamia plain .There are lots of peaks and heights of the Zagros all over the province .In fact, there is a set of parallel mountains which mountain plains are formed between them. In Kermanshah province, 3,000 monuments have been estimated, of which 716 have been recorded in The National Heritage. Two case studies in Kermanshah are Sabat and Satiar.

Sabat lodge (marked as 7 in figure 7) is located 7 km of the historical city of 5,000 years old in the city of Ravansar, Kermanshah Province, in the beautiful village of Kani Kechkineh and it is located 60 km from Kermanshah city. The owner of the ecolodge was born in the village, but he lived for about 20 years in Ravansar city near the village. Five years ago he returned to his paternal village to escape from the pressures of urban life. About a third of the village's lands belonged to his father, so the choice of the place for ecolodge was not very difficult. A rural and suitable house was selected and purchased. After reconstruction, the house changed into an ecolodge. The locals themselves cooperated in the project to notice the positive changes in the village. . People in the modern life are always looking for a way to escape from urban life and experience peace and quiet rural life just a few days, but there were not any ecolodge in this area, so it motivates him to set up an ecolodge. There are a lot of springs and gardens in the village. All of the equipment used is old and exactly the same as the people of the village used in the old days, and the cooking method is also traditionally preserved. In this lodge, local animals are particularly important. The

ecolodge consists of three 100-meter buildings. There are 2 bedrooms in each building. There is a central kitchen which is completely traditional. Totally, this lodge accommodate up to 70 guests per night. Almost 1000 people have been hosted since the establishment. The average duration of stay is 1 night.

Satiar lodge (marked as 8 in figure 7) is located in a village called Satiari, located in the city of Paveh. Satiari is a beautiful village in the heart of the Zagros Mountains and has 200 homes. This beautiful village is located in a mountainous region called Hawraman which is known actually as the paradise of Iran. The lodge owner has B.M and M.A in tourism education. He has been a consultant of tourism companies in Tehran for about 6 years. Now he has set up an ecolodge in the village for two years. This lodge is his paternal house. His previous career and studying about tourism destinations in villages leaded him to recognize the attractions exist in his ancestral village therefore he launched an ecolodge in purpose of creating jobs and preserving the environment. The building has two floors but one of has not yet been set up and only 4 rooms is ready. It can host 32 guests in total. They accommodate 1000 to 1500 guests annually. The average duration of stay is 1 night.

5.4.5 Fars province

Fars province is one of the provinces located in south of Iran. Historically it was the developing capital of Persian civilization. Valuable historical sites such as Pasargadae, Persepolis, Bishapur, Gore city, Ardeshir Babakan's Palace in Firoozabad and etc. represent the historical culture and civilization of Iran. Fars is the fourth largest and the fourth most populated province in Iran. In Fars province 2954 Historical, natural and cultural sits have been registered in The National Heritage.

One of the most important nomadic regions of Iran is Fars province. The Qashqai are made up of five major tribes: the Amale (Qashqai) / Amaleh (Persian), the Dere-Shorlu / Darreh-Shuri, the Kashkollu / Kashkuli, the Shishbeyli / Sheshboluki, and the Eymur / Farsimadan. Apart from this, Ilah Khamseh (Arab, Inaloo, Baharloo, Nasr and Baseri) and Ilam Mamasani (Beckhsin, Javid, Zamani Zvary and Rostam) and smaller tribes like Kohmara and ... have kept their nomadic and unique culture and lifestyle which constitute part of the cultural heritage of Iran attract many tourists in Fars. Two case studies in Fars are Koochboom and Amoo Ghodrat.

Koochboom (marked as 9 in figure 7); Nomads always wake up with the rooster's crowing and other domestic animals before the dawn. Men take sheep to the high mountains to graze and women start to do their endless daily duties. These people work from dawn to dusk uninterruptedly. Winter or summer doesn't make any difference for them. Some family members don't get any money; however they wouldn't get tired. they even work at night, taking care of sheep .In fact , their working hours can set a records in The Guinness Book ,however, there is no need , they are free people in Zagros's intact nature . They don't get paid, but they are the richest in the world .They have something that the world's great billionaires are dreaming for, they have quite and peace, they are the Qashqai tribes in the Zagros.

History of this lodge starts with Bahman. He grew up in the tribes of this area, has done many different things after military service, but finally he start to work with his family. Looking for treasure in the mountains, he got acquainted with some tourists and rescue them, then he became interested in serving tourists as a local guide .he passed tour guide courses and started to make an ecolodge for tourists with his family. The guests stay in special tents, woven from goat's hair. There are 2 tents with total

capacity of 25 guests. There are no exact figures about the number of the guests in 1 year, however, it's said to be about 500 people a year. The average duration of stay is two nights.

Amoo Ghodrat lodge (marked as 10 in figure 7), set up alongside the tents of Baseri tribe and in Fars Province, has originally been a winter accommodation for Baseri tribe in which tourists can experience an interesting tribe lifestyle. The ecolodge is built in Chah Bid forest and is managed by a clan. Team working is always dominant in tribes and that's how they set up this lodge in purpose of creating jobs as well as earning money.

One day, the family was washing several sheep for a traditional ceremony while a tour leader, accompanied several foreign tourists, arrived there and visited their lifestyle. After some time, that tour leader sent them some tourists. Then it was a spark to start this business. The father of the family is the owner, however, all family members are shareholders. This ecolodge consists of a main tent (woven of goat's hair) and four small tents (woven of cotton yarn). This ecolodge has totally 30 people capacity. There are about 600 guests annually. The average duration of stay is two nights.

5.6 Description of case studies – Environmental sustainability

In section 3.4.3, as highlighted previously, the indicators which are selected based on the environmental sustainability of an ecolodge, include energy, water, food, waste and construction which are catered for. The consequent part of this research is a description of the case studies pertaining to one of the mentioned indicators, one by one. The similarity and non-similarity of these case studies have resolved complications that are similar, same as on how they are solved, alongside the differing

shortcomings that come with the local environment. Unless informed otherwise, the information that follows are based on the conducted with staffs and managers at each studied case, and on observations made personally, during the visitations. The appendix A contains early open-ended questions from interviews that are semi-structured.

5.6.1 Construction

The sustainability of the environment in terms of construction is bordered mainly on two elements which are design and material. Selecting materials that are more suited and proper can result to the decline of the effect of the environment, as well as the buildings' design, which can enable the decline of energy usage by adaptation to the local climate, providing the education to the visiting tourists in designs that are sustainable, and offer experiences culturally that are very unique if local designs are traditionally used. According to Mehta et al. (2002), constructions that are planned cautiously and executed in the same vein, can be viewed as the cornerstone of instituting sustainable development successfully.

The material most used at the Isfahan province case studies of Ateshooni Lodge and Barandaz Tabatabaei and also Ghavamiyeh lodge and Pouryaghub lodge in Khorasan Razavi province is mud and straw. All the case are located in warm and dry climate and are historic houses and age between 300 and 100 years old. Houses have same situation, they have been repaired and decorated with native pottery and crafts. Material used for repairing houses are made in traditional way next to them and no material came out of the village.

Mud and straw is the perfect eco-friendly substance. It's sustainable, cheap, and you get raw material from the garden. It's easy to work with. If you build a wall and want a larger window, you saw the cob. If you want a smaller window, you add cob. It's that flexible. Hossein Tabatabaei, owner of Barandaz says.

Gilehboom and Gilgamesh in Gilan province along Caspian Sea, mostly used wood and mixture of mud and rice straw because of its heavy rainfalls. Using wood in North part of Iran is very common, only for the pillars the buildings stand on. Wood can control changes in humidity even if the ventilation rate is relatively high. Rice straw is almost free in the area because economic of the North part of Iran comes from growing rice. "Rice straw is a waterproof participle that is fungus resistant, making it a good alternative to the earthen bricks and turning it into a useful building product instead of burning it keeps carbon dioxide out of the air". Parisa, owner of Gilgamesh says.

Gilehboom is an old village house consist of a cottage, a tree house and main building. However, Gilgamesh is the only lodge in the cases that has been built from the scratch. The wood was bought and transported from Rudbar.

Satiar lodge and Sabat ecolodge in Kermanshah province are located in Zagros Mountains region, and have hot summers, cold winters and there are usually rainfalls in fall and spring. Earthquake in the province is common as well. Satiar lodge was a paternal house before oldest son of the family decided to set up and ecolodge in the village. Owner of Sabat ecolodge was purchased the house which is a rural and suitable house to turn it to an ecolodge. Using wood and especially stone as a construction material in both houses is because stone is very thick and can keep the house warm in winter and cold in summer. Stone is a highly durable (in terms of earthquake), low

maintenance building material which blends well with the natural landscape, and can easily be recycled for other building purposes.

Koochboom and Amoo Ghodrat in Fars province are built from goat hair, wood and stone. They are actually tents not buildings. Using goat hair has several reasons; First of all, goat's hair is waterproof and suitable in rain. Second, goat's hair is available and affordable. Each family usually has 20 to 50 of goats that use goat hair to prepare a tent. And the third, it is lighter and easier than ewe and sheep hair, and is also easier to be carried. Using Wood and stone is only for the pillars the tents stand on. Weaving tents is the responsibility of women, and men supply the stones and woods. On the basis of the information stated above, the ecolodges have utilized designs traditionally which is tuned to the specific region's climate.

5.6.2 Water

In the case of water, on the condition of the location, water can be very devastating as in floods, or a devastating scarcity as in droughts.

In spite of all, it stays the most essential element to living things. For an ecolodge to function, it requires water, for sanitary purposes, cooling and heating, consumption personally, machinery and so on. Mehta et al. (2002) states that in the third chapter of the 'International Ecolodge Guidelines', four major aspects of managing good water are mentioned, which are its conservation, harvest, treatment and reuse. These places with the source for water, water that is portable, surveilling the whole water journey through an ecolodge; water source and quality, means of reducing consumption, and how to administer treatment when there is need for discarding. The major source of water for 3/10 ecolodges hail from springs that are of nature. The only lodges that obtain its water from the system of the municipalities is Satiar and Pouryaghub.

Ateshooni also gets its water from municipal system but uses natural spring for drinking. Barandaz uses Qanat water and drinking water is transported through the tanker to the village. Ghavamiyeh uses only Qanat water but for drinking there is filter to purify the water. Koochboom and Amoo Ghodrat are the only lodges that uses natural resources such as river and springs.

Pertaining to water which is *potable*, there are no lodges that can purchase water bottles that are purified. They only provide potable water on request because they believe that the water provided by nature such as springs has no harmful bacteria.

The *conservation of Water* consists of the choice of processes and appliances which are low in consumption, and neglecting features that gulp lots of water like the golf courses and pools for swimming.

There is no private bathrooms in any ecolodge except for one room in Barandaz which has a capacity of 10 people. “Taking shower is difficult when you don’t have a private bathroom so guests will not take a shower twice a day or every day and it will avoid wasting water” owner of Gilgamesh says.

Every ecolodge had at least one project to reduce water. Except the cases in Fars province, all the lodges uses bubble making tool in valves to reduce water consumption. Barandaz and Pouryaghub both uses a technique which doesn’t cost them anything and at the same time it reduces water consumption. They put a few rocks in a plastic bottle and then fill it with water and put it in toilet tank. They save almost 10 gallons of water every day.

In Koochboom, its sources of water have become very famous over river, harvesting of rain and springs that are natural. Hence, if there is a failure of a source of water, supply still takes place. Out of 10 lodges, 7 of them garner water from the municipals. In all case studies, water has been conserved to reduce consumption, but the studies do not portray conservation as a very main issue. The trees and plants in the lodge of Pouryaghub are watered with the drip irrigation system.

Water consumption is a positive way of keeping up to date on the quantity of water utilized and taking notes of the efficiency employed in reaching potential efforts of conservation. Except two case studies in Fars province the rest of the case studies doesn't monitor their water consumption.

Everyone in nomadic life has to use specific amount of water in a month, actually it is a rule or better to say lifestyle in nomadic life and if it finishes sooner, they cannot purchase water. Therefore, everyone is careful about the optimal use of water.

Reuse of water is an alternative means of reducing the net water consumption of the lodge. Gilehboom water system is semi-filter for agriculture purposes. Barandaz lodge reuse water which used in the kitchen to irrigate the garden plants. Amoo Ghodrat reuse only water that doesn't have any chemicals for farm animals.

The very first priority in the highest should be the *treatment of wastewater*. When waste water unleashed, and it is not treated, it leads to ecological disruptions that are eutrophic, leads to the multiplication of algae and in the dispensation of toxins and diseases. Through the execution of water consumption and the utilization of products for washing that are biodegradable. Through this, wastage of water is decreased,

making the treatment seem easier and makes the chances of any substance which is dangerous and lowered as it is passed on. The only lodge that has been done something to treat waste water is Gilgamesh. Before emission to the surrounding soil, with the usage of filter for organics in wastewater, treatment is made.

5.6.3 Energy

There is an infinite necessity for energy by operators of tourist lodge, and potentially not existent. Energy of electricity can be utilized for heating, ventilation, lighting, cooling and heating, pumping of water and appliances for cooking, while fuel combustion or burning can be exploited for the production of heat, like gas, coal and wood. By picking a source of energy renewal, putting the conservation of energy into practicality and the inspection of the consumptions by the lodges, the lowering of the use of resources by this by the ecolodge and the impact of the environment.

In terms of sources of energy, only 8 of the cases studied use gas majorly (three use gas cylinders) for warming up tap water and shower, a few woods for the heating of the rooms, except 2 case studies in Fars province which they use wood for heating shower, and 8 of them connected to a common power grid for lighting and appliances and again except 2 case studies in Fars province which they use only solar panels. In heating up the water, the utilized gas for heating is propane and methane. It is bought in a container of 25 or 30kgs, and is attached to a burner that is lit automatically as soon as the tap for warm water is used. Two case studies in Fars province have no gas and no electricity. They use wood for heating and cooking and really small solar panels for only charging cell phones. “There is no need for electricity because the daily life begins and ends with sunrise and sunset” Bahman owner of Koochboom says.

The reason that most of the lodges doesn't have solar panels is due to the high expense of installation.

Energy conservation can become a possibility if for instance, the designs which are passive, are given natural cooling/heating, ventilations and lighting and all maximized. A lot of building designs make suggestions that can be found in the book 'International Ecolodge Guidelines' (Mehta et al., 2002). Yet again, as promised, the key to conservation can be made via saving electricity on these appliances that are meant for it. The case studies used all saving bulbs which are studies of cashes. Lanterns are used for lighting only in the case of Amoo Ghodrat.

There are no lodges that offer washing services, but they have washing machines that are striving daily with other pieces of laundry belonging to the lodge, and linens, and are not run unless they are full. However, such conditions are not for foreigners, but they apply for ecotourists from Iran.

In Gilehboom wide leaves are also used to cover the building in order to keep it cool. In Gilgamesh also because the weather is too warm and humid during summer, however there are no air conditioner in the building, either because they use less energy or they do not use the technology to keep the traditional state of the region. They also have wide windows in order to use natural sun light to bright the building.

As is with the case for water, the *monitoring* of the lodge and its energy is a great way of staying on top of things in the case of fluctuations in the usage and success of the efforts of conservation.

The usage of electricity at the lodges are not calculated, but the quantity is made public on the electricity bill which is monthly, and hence a concern for them. Depending on occupancy and activities the electricity use is different in each lodge. For example Barandaz and Ateshooni are only working 9 month and 3 month during summer they are close due to its desert climate. However, five lodges out of ten have notes in each room, reminding guests to turn off appliances that work with power before leaving the room. Pouryaghub is the only lodge who hasn't done anything except LED lights yet to reduce power consumption. Owner of Sabat believes that they consume power much more than they expect each month and it's because they have no monitoring on every building and this is one of the main plans in future to install solar panels and have a systematic monitoring every month.

5.6.4 Food

Again, food is a matter which could have lots of effects on the environment. They could range from groceries, the production, transportation and potential waste products from practice. Possible waste from the packaging of food that are not wasteful and edible, all have effects on the environment.

In all the cases, dishes are local and specified for the region and prepared by local women and is served in pottery and handmade dishes beside local drinks. Two case studies in Fars province are the only cases that produces 90% of the ingredients; such as dairy products, meat, vegetables. The rest of the cases purchase ingredients from local people or market in village. However, some cases such as Pouryaghub and Ghavamiyeh produce so many variety of fruits and vegetables in the lodge. Sabat has 3000 meter garden and all the fruits and vegetables comes from the garden and the rest of the groceries are bought in local market or local people. Ateshooni and Barandaz

due to its desert climate and poor soil cannot grow anything. Gilgamesh has permaculture due its benefits such as less waste, saves on water and its cost efficient.

In every region traditional food is different in Iran. In Gilan province red meat is rarely used and due to its nature most of the meals made of vegetables. In Khorasan Razavi province local cuisine are often vegetarian; however red meat is also used if guests request. In Kermanshah province red meat is used extensively and surely one meal every day includes red meat because their most indigenous foods contains red meat. In the spring, when there are variety of indigenous plants and vegetables, most foods are become vegetarian. In Fars province they rarely use red meat and most dishes are vegetarian. But two cases in Isfahan province have different situation. Barandaz due to its high reservations from Iranians uses red meat in most of its meals and only on request makes vegetarian meal. However in Ateshooni due to its high reservations from foreigners, they only use red meat on request.

5.6.5 Waste

There were different kinds of wastes that were formed which is a bit difficult to excuse for a business in operation, overall. It is very crucial to attempt to reduce the level of waste production, separate wastes that could be recycled and reused in accordance, survey the production of wastes and create separations to enable the tracking of trends and fluctuations, and have due information of trends, and routines for the municipality's management of waste on a national level. A strategy planned for the reduction of waste to a minimum, was not expressed by any of the cases studied. For instance, at the lodge of the Barandaz, they attempted to purchase from shops that utilize reduced packaging.

The *separation* of Waste, was done via a few forms in most of the studied cases with passive need for separation. At Gilehboom, Gilgamesh, Barandaz, Koochboom and Amoo Ghodrat, there are five waste bins; for food waste, paper, metal, glass and plastic. Other cases trying to separate their waste but they are only separating food waste. Food waste is given to their farm animals in all the cases. The cases that separate their waste sending them to recycling factory, even though in some regions there is not even a municipality. In Gilgamesh according to the lodge's law, guests should separate their waste.

Gilehboom is only lodge which compost food waste by worms to uses for its organic garden. Worm composting is using worms to recycle food scraps and other organic material into a valuable soil amendment called vermicomposting, or worm compost. Worms eat food scraps, which become compost as they pass through the worm's body. Compost exits the worm through its' tail end.

In most of the regions there is no municipality; however municipality doesn't have any waste management in these regions. Mostly they collect all the waste if it's not separated and burn them. Barandaz separate all the waste except some such as tissue and because there is no municipality they have to burn them. Pouryaghub and Ghavamiyeh are in a region that has municipality and comes twice a week but because municipality doesn't have any waste management they burn the wastes. Satiar only separate paper and plastic and sell them to third party.

One of the positive actions that has been done about waste has happened in Gilgamesh. There is no municipality in the region therefore native people were taught in the lodge

to separate their waste , and now the entire village is separating their waste and sending them to the recycling factory.

Koochboom and Amoo Ghodrat have incredibly low waste. However, they sell their waste to recycling factories because nomadic culture believes money is not the only answer but it makes a difference.

5.7 Description of case studies – Socioeconomic sustainability

In this part of the research, a brief presentation of the investigated cases and the indicators of sustainability socioeconomically, these are the local community, staff, education for tourists and certification. Unless informed otherwise, the consequent information is on the basis of observations conducted personally and the interviewing of the managers of the lodge, visitors and staff in each respective studied case. Appendix A is attached for the first questions from the interviews of the semi structured.

5.7.1 Staff

From the communities that are the closest, inhabitants of such communities are local, and constitute a strong majority of the kind of employees in every studied cases. They had to help in the designation of inputs and the actual construction and building of hall. In addition, all the hired local farmers, traders, are requested to meet in the demands of the lodge for feeding, carpenters, guides and so on. However the exceptions Gilehboom and Gilgamesh are from Tehran (Capital). They are owners but they are not locals, just as in the remainder of the cases, the bread is being generous anyways. The original owners have made an up-to-date decision to help locals that are willing, so that they can be bestowed. For instance, to become a local man who has tried to become trainers of the age name, could name the path there and not to harm yourself.

The owners of these two lodges are not local, in rest of the cases locals owns these lodges. The locals that are up to the challenge if receiving education, will get so by the willing owners to enable the eligibility of the locals for employment rather; for instance, training has been undertaken by a local man to become a tour guide and on occasion, has work on the lodge.

The staff that are permanent, at the respective lodges is made up of local tribesmen of lodges of permanent staff at all the lodges, which can be seen as a constitute of the entirety of local tribesmen, with an exception for the Ateshooni and Barandaz, who have a night tour of the afro astronomers, in the desert. Guides that appear to be multilingual operate as guides in the nature to accompany the tourists, since they are not hired by the lodge, but by the operators of tours. Hence these guides often have levels of education which is higher and the wages are low for the series that we sat and spoke to him. But the local guides were very interested, with these actors that portrayed in interviews that were studying to practice multilingual guides of nature.

All the cases hire only locals or people from nearest town such as Local guides and kitchen and maintenance staff, housekeeping staff and etc. all administrative staff at the lodges are owners and even though 8 cases runs by locals but some of them are highly educated and have Master's degree in tourism. Except Pouryaghub, Ghavamiyeh and Sabat the rest of cases, owners are fluent in English. Only Satiar, Koochboom and Amoo Ghodrat staff are entirely family members but in case they need staff in high season they only employ locals.

It was not quite easy to meet the *Salaries* whose duties are too official to retrieve some information on, which could be as a result of conditions that are social or cultural.

There was no reveal of any worker who felt displeased with the salary, or that were having any physical difficulties providing for their relatives and families, but the likelihood of this being connected to culture and the financial relative solution in the country. The studied cases visited appeared to proffer salaries in fairness, which is very vital as an indicator of the sustainability, socioeconomically. The best payment lounge was Barandaz, with staff working 9 months, but there is a system of work for 10 months way. ...During the course of the interviews, it was not revealed in the outcomes, individuals who were displeased with their wages or faced difficulties catering for their families, however this can likely be correlated with culture and connected to the country's financial situation. The visited cases studied appeared to provide wages that were fair, portraying a crucial indicator of sustainability, socioeconomically. The only lodge who has best method of payment is Barandaz. Staff working for 9 month but get paid 10 month.

Working conditions and staff housing at the studied cases portray practices and conditions that are variant. Koochboom and Amoo Ghodrat can't be analyzed in this section because all staff are family members and they live there and because of their lifestyle they work from dawn to dusk even if they don't have any guests. Satiar has also same situation but family members working hours depends on number of guests.

Other cases are in different conditions, for example, staff at Gilehboom, Gilgamesh and Ghavamiyeh working daily and get paid hourly so they actually don't have any off day. Working hours depends on number of guests. And they don't need a place to sleep because they are local. This method of payment (hourly) is not very secure for staff because everything depends on number of guests and they can have any plan for their salary.

Pouryaghub, Barandaz and Ateshooni have full time staff who are also sleep in the lodge. Food is also is in charge of the lodge. As we mentioned before, Barandaz and Ateshooni are located in desert and they are close 3 month during summer. But in 9 month of operation there is no off day and before they employ anyone they mention this condition. Pouryaghub staff, working 7 days a week, there is no exact off day but they can have hourly off during the day.

Regarding gender equality, Gilehboom, Ateshooni, Ghavamiyeh and Satiar are the only cases that has less male workers than females.

In Gilehboom six people work. Three of them are owners who also work with staff. Five women and a man in total. Locals who works for them are three women. Ateshooni has total of eight employees consist of five woman and three men. Two of them are the owners who are husband and wife. Ghavamiyeh has total number of four staff plus four owners, who are three men and five woman. Satiar has only family members as their staff who are five people, three woman and three men. But as we said earlier, if they need more staff in high season they only hire local woman.

Three case study has exact gender equality. Which are Pouryaghub with four staff, Koochboom with six staff and Amoo Ghodrat also with six staff.

Only three case studies does not have that gender equality. Gilgamesh with nine staff who consist of three women and four men. Barandaz with ten staff who consist of four woman and six men and Sabat with eight staff who consist of three woman and five men. Cases shows that still in some aspects gender inequality is not extreme because only three cases have more men than woman.

Although women have the liberty to help out in any chores, they mainly work in housekeeping or as cooks in the kitchen, and it was believed that they preferred leaving the heavy physically engaging tasks to the males. There is a visible division of labor at every studied case, with the exception of the kitchen where both might work collaboratively. Usually, women often cater for the cleaning and cooking, and the middle man was guiding and maintenance.

5.7.2 Local community

In the studied cases, involving the local community, these have been done in different project types. The sales of handicrafts by the female locals in the community is facilitated to the tourists that are visiting, but lots of educational projects for several people of the locals are provided. Gilgamesh has a great role in educating the locals to preserve their environment; separating the waste was one of the projects. Satiar also has done some activities in terms of wildlife protection with educating local hunters about importance of wildlife and teaching them how to be a wildlife tour guide with their information about local animals.

Barandaz has a project involving the manufacturing and crafting of jewelry that are traditional, by the local women, from materials obtained from Viber and seeds of plants, with the tourists patronizing them. Payment of revenue is made for new materials and income for the participating women. Gilgamesh is located in the heart of the forest, there are many fruit trees around the ecolodge, and so they taught native women that they can earn money by picking up these fruits and making jam, or drying some indigenous vegetables which is also organic and they can sell them in the lodge.

In 2007, Maziar (owner of Ateshooni) became a member of the Islamic Council of the village with a maximum vote, and also tried to preserve and revive the cultural

heritage, natural environment, handicrafts and tourism. At present, economic prosperity is almost seen in people's life and they benefited directly and indirectly from tourism. With the help of Ghavamiyeh lodge, three handicraft stores and three groceries have been opened since the launching of lodge in order to create more jobs in the village. Holding various festivals is one of the most interesting programs in Sabat. For example, in the fall, they hold a two-day Pomegranate Festival. All pomegranate products as well as native foods and handicrafts are sold during this festival.

5.7.3 Tourist education

Education of tourists by an ecolodge, could be fostered on the understanding and gratitude in the awareness of the culture and environment of the culture. On the issue of awareness for the environment and cultural appreciation, it was quite obtainable or basic within all the studied courses done by the tourists, have guided along the trails in the fauna and flora, and shown the indigenous knowledge, names and uses for the plants, adjusted to the interests of the group. Upon the request of the tourists, guided tours were given.

Local tour guides were appointed for all cases with the exception of two guides that are astronomers for desert tours at night. Treating the arrivals or tourists to dishes that are traditional is a path to learn about the life and traditional cultures. Through highlighting things that can be locally grown, expressing the traits and components of the agricultural traditional products, and exhibiting the potential difficulties that might occur as a result of changes to the climate and its effects, providing both education environmentally and socioeconomically.

Gilehboom's lodge have been designed in the purpose of preserving native culture, art and sustainable development of the region. there are lots of interesting programs such as picking up oranges tour, environmental cleanup program, visiting from handicraft workshops and tea factories, farming tour, walking in the forest ,training program such as pottery and sculpture , weaving special local tents , Roofing, fishing , and finally music acquaintance specially Ghasem Abadi's songs. Short films have been produced about handicraft workshops, wildlife and vegetation in this ecolodge. These videos are distributed among the guests in order to make them more familiar with the area.

Cooperating in cooking local food and baking bread can be an enjoyable experiences for every guest at Pouryaghub lodge. Sabat has plenty of antique items in the lodge. Next to each antique ,there is a paper on which some information about related antique was written .Guests can freely visit all parts of the building ,even the kitchen and ask questions about the recipes. At Amoo Ghodrat, the guests are taught how to feed sheep and produce dairy products. Playing native musical instruments such as Ney and put on costumes in order to be deeply acquainted with nomadic culture and life style. Cooking food on the fire in front of tourists or sheep grazing are some interesting programs done here.

5.7.4 Certification

Due to political issues and sanctions in Iran, economic activists in this country face difficulties. In addition, in most cases there is no possibility of issuing international certificates for ecolodges. Apart from this, more than a decade of the activities of ecolodges, Iran Cultural Heritage, Handcraft and Tourism Organization not only failed to effectively and significantly monitor and issue certificates, even didn't recognize

the ecolodges in the past few years. Issuing certificates in different provinces of Iran is now being carried out in a different procedures and there is no supervision.

Table 2: This is a table for an overview which is facilitated of the studied case regarding the environmental indicators and sustainable socioeconomics described in the sections above. The number 0 stands for lackadaisical and weak efforts of sustainability. The figure of 1 is used to denote some, and 2 for strong, while 3 is used to demonstrate efforts of sustainability that are exceptional. Points represent the general impressions of each elements of indicator and are on the basis of the data and experiences gotten during the visitations to the studies' case.

Indicator	Case study										Total
	Gilehboom	Gilgamesh	Ateshooni	Barandaz	Pouryaghub	Ghavamiyeh	Sabat	Satiar	Koochboom	Amoo Ghodrat	
Construction	1	1	1	2	1	2	0	0	3	3	14
Water	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	12
Energy	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	9
Food	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	20
Waste	3	3	1	3	0	0	0	1	2	2	15
Subtotal	9	9	3	9	4	5	3	2	13	13	70
Staff	1	0	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	12
Local community	2	2	2	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	11
Tourist education	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	23
Certification	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	6	4	5	7	3	3	7	4	3	4	46
Total	15	13	8	16	7	8	10	6	16	17	

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Discussion and conclusion

In the review of the literature, it can be seen that there are just a few amounts of articles, relatively, on ecolodges. There have been trials at trying to make definitions of ecolodges as a concept, but there has yet to be commonly used or official definitions that surfaced. An overall emphasis on the essence of sustaining the environment and adapting to the current states were observed. No extensive descriptions of socioeconomic sustainability was found, but aspects of it appeared in literature.

As described in the third chapter, based on the literature obtainable, business in ecotourism with the shape of accommodation establishments which are delimited, can be used to describe ecotourism. In the available definitions, ecolodge is seen as having connections with ecotourism through the element of a natural area or proximity. In addition to each other, but not in oneness, all the definitions explain that the operation of an ecolodge occurs in sustainable terms via different ways environmentally, economically and socially, specifically through the conservation of nature, the cooperation from the community's locals and education of the tourists. A perception or view of how an ecolodge is, has grown exponentially clear, following the visitation of the ten Iranian cases studies.

The studied cases had in common the zeal to attain sustainability but to some respective lengths. They were seen as being conscious of the problems of sustainability in the tourism of today's society, and portrayed a distaste to following the same path, through actual trials towards being sustainable varying visibly. Even though there was no studied case that had the 'eco'-lodge name, there was a proud sense connected with it, no matter how undefined and abstract the concept appeared.

As made visual in the table 5.1 in the fifth chapter, efforts in terms of the environment have been performed by Amoo Ghodrat and Koochboom, in exceptional lengths. In spite of this, they have proven to have accomplished lesser efforts in the aspects of indicators that are socioeconomic. There were case studies that ended up with higher scores for these indicators than that of the environment. This is the case studies of Ateshooni, Sabat and Satiar. For Amoo Ghodrat's, his scores came out highest more in the environmental indicators which were three times stronger than the other. In the situation of Satiar's case study, the lowest score was achieved in both indicator aspects.

To conclude, the cases studied place a lot of emphasis on the sustainability of the environment in more practical terms, than on the socioeconomic, which seemed to be the focus of the theories of literature.

Hence, to attain a true ecolodge, there ought to be evidence of theory and practice, which includes the broadened efforts for socioeconomic sustainability in practice and a very staunch sustainability of the environment and strong efforts of conservation, based on the literature. There was proven legitimacy for the nine selected environmental and socioeconomic sustainability indicators, altogether, via the studied cases.

These indicators in addition to the conservation of nature appeared legit. However, there are several parts within each indicator. For instance, water was explored for its sources, conservation, monitoring, reuse, harvesting, potable water and treatment of waste water. This is an indication that just a little amount of principles following a definition of an ecolodge, cannot provide criteria that is adequate to determine the operation which portrays a sustainable ecolodge or vice versa. For each principle, being clear of the criteria could be a consequence which is welcomed in this thesis.

It is highly difficult to determine what is perfectly sustainable, since it is difficult to decide and no one has an idea of what the needs of the future are, or the patterns of consumption that will occur in the consequent generations. Still, sustainability's terms has to be ascertained in order to be able to ascertain and access any kind of sustainability in the future at all.

In the Mohonk agreement (2000), ecotourism is defined in an all-embracing manner, which could be a candidate for a definition of ecolodge. With some modifications and impacts from other available definitions in literature, an official definition of ecolodge could be as follows:

Economic, social and environmental sustainability are sought after by an ecolodge via tourism in places of near proximity, which provides a long term support to the local environment and communities, socially and economically, and propagates active understanding of the culture and environment, and appreciation and enlightenment amongst the visiting tourists, as well as the staff and locals.

Based on this definition above, the case studies in Fars, the other two in Gilan, Barandaz in Isfahan, are qualified for the title of ecolodges, while the other two studied

cases in Khorasan Razavi, Ateshooni in Isfahan, and two also in Kermanshah, all appear to be outside the concept.

There is always room for betterment, certainly and Amoo Ghodrat could be a good instance for the expansion of efforts for staff and the community's locals.

If a concept of ecolodge can be monitored highly well, and a standardized levels can be made in official basis, ecolodges can include sustainability to the expansive sector of tourism. Whatever is considered to be sustainable changes with time, considering the average lengths of the exploitation of Earth by mankind, which makes it highly uneasy to ascertain whether ecolodges are sustainable or not.

There are average operations of tourism that are more sustainable and can propel the efforts made averagely in terms of sustainability to take tourism a tad higher, if the concept of ecotourism is propagated worldwide and with vigor, and hence influencing an average tourist's choices.

To ensure the international sustenance of the concept of ecolodge for more trustworthy operations, and for the avoidance of a name misusage, an official definition of ecolodge with criteria and principles are a necessity. To achieve this, suggestions have been provided above, and the bordering principles of this research's thesis follow suit below. The criteria for the respective principles ought to be included for an image that is more clear and detailed, based on what a true ecolodge resembles.

6.2 Implications and contribution

There was an idea or suggestion for locating an ecolodge which is perfect, at the beginning of the work done on this thesis. But this is a title that can be attained by a few or maybe just one lodge globally, which makes it very essential to place a criteria minimally for acquiring the certification of an ecolodge, rather than seeking perfection. By so doing, a lot more ecolodges can affect and reach a broad number of people, and with constant betterment as a criteria, there is a certainty that the chosen businesses will just improve more and more only.

Below, there are suggestions proffered for the principles that an operation in tourism ought to have to attain a righteous title of ecolodge, besides satisfying the definition of ecolodge suggested above in the section 5.1.3. An anticipation is that a certification for ecolodge could survive eventually, and that there will be an added criteria relevant for each principles.

An ecolodge...

There are few generic principles of ecolodges:

1. ... a consistent effort towards being sustainable environmentally, economically and socially, for as much as possible all through the operation, and urge everyone and competitors involved in the ecolodge to emulate this.
2. ...an exchange of experiences and knowledge in cooperation with other ecolodges, and efforts to be a contributive part of a network of ecolodges globally, that encourages joint sustainability and causes of tourism in levels that are worldwide and international.

3. ...adapts a perspective which is eco-centric in its operations and provides responses to ecotourism's philosophy by making a better life quality a priority over high standards of materialism.

4. ...is not solely managed on the premises of profits for economic motives nor for indefinite expansions.

5. ...is of close proximity to areas of nature and not relatively touched, but also not located in places that are obsolete or secluded.

6. ...stays up to date on the findings of research and news, as well as the alterations in policies at national levels, to enable an adaptation of the surroundings, and efforts to conserve on the basis of facts and knowledge that are proven.

Environmental principles:

7. ... encourages and promotes actively the conservation of the species that are endemic of the environment and nature, the sustainability and sustenance of the resources of nature, and implements a system of management that is sustainable.

8. ...utilizes food, energy and water, from numerous sources of sustainability to heighten the resilience and put the negative effects on the environment, in decline.

9. ...conserves water through reusing extensively and practices of saving water, and saves energy through practices of energy conservation, by also picking products that are not electrical and can save energy.

10. ...monitors water and energy usage, as well as waste production, so as to stay updated on issues of current concern, to track the effects of the efforts of conservation, and to keep down the effects of the environment.

11. ...applies a perspective of the circle of life on every commodity purchased or material selected.

12. ...applies an adaptive building design which is suitable for natural conditions of local sense, aesthetically and physically; thus facilitating the recycling and a tear-down at the stage where life ends; and also basis upon sources that are locally obtained and materials that are reused.

13. ...takes up the accountability for waste that is produced and attempts to minimize wastewater through the limit on production and instead via the use of recycling, proper treatment and reuse of wastewater and waste that manufactured still.

Socioeconomic principles:

14. ...fails to condone values which are discriminatory on the basis of religion, nationality, gender, sexual orientation or sexuality of neither the locals, nor the workers and the tourists.

15. ...betters life quality for its workers and their families by according them appropriate robust salaries, and providing work conditions that are fair and safe for everyone, accommodation for staff if requested by them, and their freedom to join a union for workers.

16. ...employs the locals very often to encourage the economy of the local communities, and to engage them in the operation. If there is a lack of knowledge in performing a duty, the locals can do so physically, and people from far areas can be employed while the local inhabitants gain training and education for the job, via the arrangements of ecolodges.

17. ...contributes actively and passionately to the development of the local communities, in a sustainable fashion, through the promotion and support of healthcare, poverty alleviation, education and safety for the local area, and through the promotion of local businesses like the cooperatives for handicrafts, producers of agriculture, and service providers, to the visiting tourists.

18. ...provides consistent education for locals, staff and tourists, as well as training, on sustainability economically and environmentally, as well as socioeconomically; hoe ecolodges, tourism and the people are intertwined with sustainability; and offers encouragement to everyone that plays an active role in attaining sustainability.

6.3 Limitations and direction for the future

As a result of a limited budget and time, only ten lodges were visited and only in one country, Iran. The gathered data are insufficient for conclusions statistically, however, it provides an overall idea of the operations of ecolodges, on the basis of perspectives and instances from the visits to these ten visited lodges. The reader ought to bear in mind that the case studies have modest figures.

The chosen elements that are indicative of ecolodges' social, environmental and economic sustainability, that were nine in number, and of qualitative and quantitative nature, were the main point of focus, like the effects on the ability to adapt to the

natural surroundings and the local communities. These chosen indicators are taken to be the main elements affecting sustainability, although there are more than nine indicators that encompass sustainability. For instance, Becken and Patterson (2006), stress that the accommodation and recreational activities, as well as the services of transportation for both goods and people, should be considered alongside the impacts of the environment on tourism. For an assessment that is more accurate, on the sustainability of an ecolodge, the effects of the environment and emissions of the transportation of the visiting tourists to and from their lodges should be considered, particularly in flights that are international, but the budget and time resources for this research did not avail time for such in-depth analysis.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Opening interview questions

History:

- What is the history of this lodge?
- Who started it?
- Why was it started?
- Who owns it?

Operation:

- What constitutes the operation?
- How many guests visit per year?
- What is the average duration of stay?

Construction:

- How many buildings does the lodge consist of?
- Which building materials have been used?
- Who planned for the design?
- Why was it built this way?

Water:

- Which are your sources of water?
- Where do you get your potable water from?
- Is there a policy for water conservation?
- Is the water consumption or production of wastewater monitored?
- Is rainwater harvested?
- Is any water reused?
- How is wastewater treated?

Energy:

- Which are the sources of energy and electricity?
- Is there a policy for energy conservation?
- Is the energy and electricity use monitored?
- To what extent are energy saving light bulbs used?

Food:

- Where does most of the lodge's food come from?
- Is any food produced onsite?
- How often is red meat served?
- How often is vegetarian food served?

Waste:

- Is there any policy for waste minimization?
- Do you separate any waste and if so, into which fractions?
- Is the production and separation of waste monitored?
- What is done with the different waste fractions after separation?
- What is the municipal waste management like?
- How much of the waste is handed over to third party?

Staff:

- Where do most of the staff members come from?
- What are their salaries?
- For how many consecutive days are staff members on duty?
- Do staff members have access to necessary safety equipment?
- Can staff members sleep on the lodge premises?
- What kind of education do staff members have?
- How many of the staff are women?
- Are staff members offered education and training to be eligible for different positions at the lodge?

Local community:

- What is the lodge's connection to the local community?
- Does the lodge support the local community?
- Does the lodge promote local businesses to their visitors?

Tourist education:

- What efforts are taken to provide the visitors with information on the local environmental and social circumstances and challenges?
- Is it practice to give an informational speech at any point during each visitor's stay?
- What kind of education do the guides have?

Certification:

- Does the lodge hold a certification?
- If so, what does it involve and when was it acquired?
- Has the certification been of any help to the lodge in its operation?