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The Role of Iran Public Libraries in Development and Promoting of Tourism Services

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The Role of Iran Public Libraries in Development and Promoting of Tourism Services¹

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Abstract

People get to know and recognize the culture of nations with a help of tourism. At the same time, the revenue generated by the tourism industry is highly significant. Public libraries are knowledge-based organizations that could be effective in providing tourist attractions through their resources and services. This systematic review of tourism studies within the library sciences is an effort to identify the role of libraries in development of tourism services and identify the research gap for future studies. To this end, the related studies were searched and identified in 10 national and international databases (1999 to 2019), out of which nine most related studies were used. The results of our study indicate that libraries are capable of developing tourism services in field of cultural tourism and development of cultural identity and heritage, information literacy and tourism approach, collaboration and cooperation with other institutions, organizations and tourism approaches based on market orientation. We highlight the necessity to conduct more practical studies on libraries so that their final product could lead to promotion of quality tourism services and consequently, profit achievement and promotion of a nation's cultural identity.

Keywords: Tourism services, Public libraries, Iran, Systematic review

1. Introduction

Iran has been one of the best tourism destinations thanks to its historical buildings, art and cultural heritage from ancient times, which is evident in Herodotus and Eratosthenes works in pre-Islamic era and the works of Muslim, Arab and European travelers in post-Islamic era (Asadi, 2011). Tourism's functioning as an industry in Iran dates back to half past century. In contemporary era, the fundamental changes have caused socioeconomic revolutions which renewed the tourism industry, however with the movement toward development being rather slow-paced (Sadraa & Daii, 2015).

The existence of rich cultural heritage and traditions is an essential prerequisite, but not sufficient, for the development of tourism. Tourism is mainly taken to mean the scientific activity with complicated features. Tourism and travel information do not just deal with cultural heritage, museums and archaeological sites, they also cover means of travel, subsistence, accommodation, transportation means and conditions of residence at destination. Therefore, tourism development planners should consider cultural tourism forecasts as well as information needs of the tourists (Lawal Yazid, 2016). Public libraries, as a non-profit and

knowledge-based organizations, could serve the tourists. These conditions have aggregated the necessity for consideration of tourism by libraries and information centers.

Libraries can have a role in tourism development by providing appropriate resources. Different tourism attractions, cultures and traditions of the cities and counties where public libraries are located can be effective in attracting tourists. The closer the libraries are to these tourism attractions and historical monuments, the more successful they will be in benefiting from this situation. Moreover, in addition to introducing and advertising historical monuments and resources, they will be able to highlight their activities and services and attract many tourists (Tokic & Tokic, 2016). Libraries have significant role in tourism cities because of providing the tourists with the cultural information of that city or province in addition to information about historical places and monuments. The main issue is that the services of the libraries and the regulations adjusted by the managers and librarians should be equally and unlimitedly offered to local as well as foreign visitors (Tokic, 2014).

In addition to resources and materials provided by the libraries to tourists with the aim of introducing and advertising hotels, historical buildings, etc., a new service concerning the significance of libraries for tourism is provided by library hotels, which provide tourists with the possibility of reading books in a calming space. Amsterdam, New York, Portugal, Tokyo and Thailand are the countries offering this service to tourists. Moreover, Birmingham & British library in England are among the most popular libraries that present tourist attractions and related services to every tourist (Kitching, 2016).

Based on this, consideration of tourism and creation of information resources could be pursued as data collection and dissemination by knowledge-based organizations such as public libraries and information centers. Libraries, being public services institutions, play significant role in collection, organization and utilization of information and accessibility to information resources (Karuza, Krajnovic & Mikulandra Volic, 2017). Therefore, relying on new strategies and skills for survival and evolution in the world of information, the librarians should be able to expand and promote tourism services. Libraries could be associated with tourism through offering information, educational and consultative services, etc. (Ashrafi Rizi & Kazempour, 2012).

Few studies have focused on the role of libraries in tourism, especially at a national level (Sadraa & Daii, 2015; Ashrafi Rizi & Kazempour, 2012); however, concerning the significance of the tourism industry and its consequent development, it is worth to note that there are a few studies and theoretical papers related to this topic. Nevertheless, it is now urgent and necessary to pay more attention to this issue in an effort to provide materials and resources to tourists with the efforts of library researchers.

The review of theoretical principles and studies indicates the significant role of libraries in providing tourism services; however, no study has dealt with this issue to present an overview of the tourism-related services available through libraries. This gap necessitates conducting a systematic review of the status of such studies with the aim of developing

tourism services in libraries. In this regard, the researchers of librarianship and information sciences are expected to take some actions in enhancing knowledge in this area through scientific methodologies and frameworks. As far as tourism has been already accounted for in the previous researches, it is now crucial to systematically examine library. This study allows achieving a proper understanding of the studies conducted in the libraries and assess future research needs. The systematic review of tourism studies in the libraries considers the status of the tourism-related research in terms of key areas and the development of tourism services by public libraries. Therefore, the present study aims at identifying the main services provided by libraries through a systematic review of published studies and specify the research gap and demands for future studies in this area. Therefore, the present study will answer the question: what is the role of public libraries in development of tourism services?

2. Methodology

Quantitative systematic review has been the frequently used method in librarianship and information studies (Ullah & Ameen, 2018) while there are a few local studies using this method. The present study has utilized systematic review where the checklist presented in Xu, Kang & Song (2018) has been used based on the following steps for quantitative systematic review:

First step: Identification of related databases

In order to answer the main research question, Farsi databases including Civilica, Magiran, Noormags, Irandoc and Sid, as well as English databases, including GoogleScholar, ScienceDirect, Emerald, Lista, Taylorandfrancis and Scopus from March 1999 to April 2019 for foreign resources and June 2019 for local resources have been taken into account.

Second step: Research and retrieval of related resources

For retrieval using related studies, the bibliographic databases were searched using Boolean search.

Third step: Systematic literature review

The condition for identification and selection of related studies was the presence of Tourism in Libraries keyword in title, abstract, keyword and conclusion. Finally, 9 related studies on tourism in libraries were identified and studied.

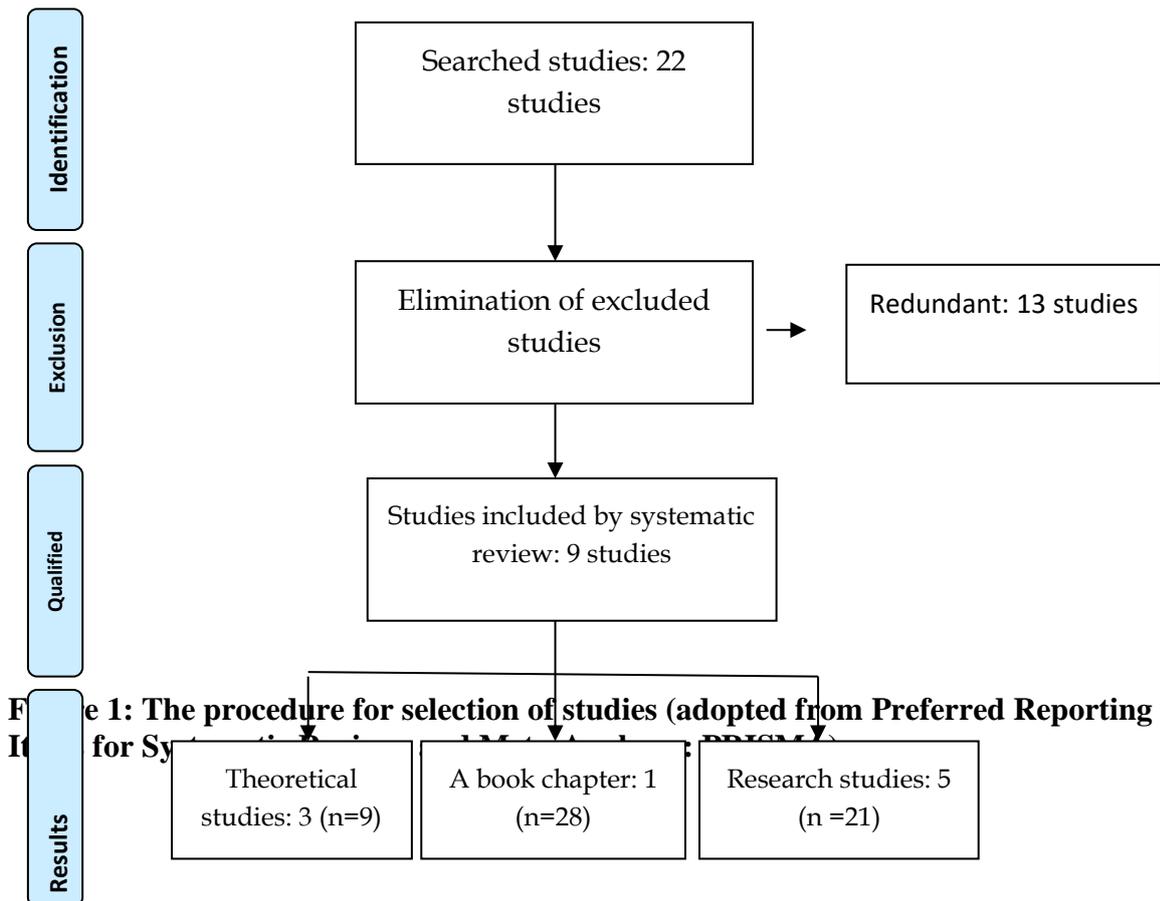
Table 1: Search keywords

Keywords
Tourism
And «Libraries»
And «public Library»
And «academic Library»
And «Library and

Table 2: Systematic review researches

Systematic review studies		
Row	English studies	Persian studies
1	Karuza, I., & [et al ...] (2017)	Sadar, Daei (2015)
2	Yankova, I. & Stoykova (2016)	
3	Tokic, K. & Tokic (2016)	
4	Tokic (2014)	
5	Smolcic Jurda, D. & Pintaric (2012)	
6	Tosic, V. & Lazarevic (2010)	
7	Bovero, E. (2009).	
8	King, K., & Scarrott (1999)	

The results presented in Table 2 showed that one study has been found at a national and eight studies at an international level, and in sum nine studies have been investigated through systematic review.



Fourth step: Inclusion and validation criteria

For this systematic review, papers with methodology and results, theoretical studies that were carried out and published as a book or a book chapter (as a critique and analysis and library study) were used. For validation of research procedures, two experts other than the research team were consulted on identification, search and retrieval of resources related to tourism and the inclusion criteria, their proposed items were applied. It is noteworthy that the search

procedures were performed by the research team individually without awareness of the result that other people on the team, so that its validity would be control before investigation by expert. Moreover, the list of retrieved papers was studied and no new source was added to resources in this step. For classification and extraction of categories, 20% of the resources were extracted and classified by other expert that was consistent with the result of present study.

3. Findings

Libraries are crucial in the development and promotion of tourism services, in the following areas:

Development of cultural tourism, identity and heritage

Nowadays culture and cultural issues are considered to be critical components of contemporary tourism. Without the diversity of cultural heritage, tourists' interest in travelling and visiting new places would be dramatically reduced. Libraries are the crucial institutions with a goal to develop and advance cultural tourism. In recent years, their role in these areas has rapidly increased, as tourists seek to collect information about their destination before deciding to visit it (Sadraa & Daii, 2015). Libraries have many tools at their disposal to attract tourists. Public libraries could familiarize tourists with cultural and historical heritage of a region by presenting various resources such as maps, posters, musical instruments, etc., which in itself would lead to promotion of cultural and historical identity of a nation. Moreover, they could expose tourists to the information about their cities by presenting short introductory videos with background information about the place and an overview of tourist attractions. Educated and experienced librarians and those with strong ability in public relations are the real asset of libraries in cultural tourism development.

The Great Library of Alexandria in Egypt is an example of an institution playing a significant role in cultural tourism development. This library provides a complete version of the tourism guide book to tourists that outlines all attractions, the culture traditions, historical monuments, etc. Moreover, the guides are available in three languages: Arabic, English and French. Moreover, the librarians are trained in guiding tourists. The information desks are available with professional guides in Arabic, English, French, Italian and Spanish languages. The tourists familiarize themselves with historical, ancient and cultural background of Egypt (Tosic & Lazarevic, 2010).

Ardebil Library in Iran serves as example similar to the Great Library of Alexandria. Ardebil, situated in Northwest Iran, attracts many tourists every year thanks to its good weather and the presence of a beautiful lake (Jalilpur, 2015). Moreover, Bam-e-Yazd, a complex where the books and audiovisual resources on culture, art, architecture and civilization of Iran are presented to the tourists in different languages has been reconstructed, becoming a unique source of activities in Yazd, (Fallah, 2018).

Advancing tourism information literacy

Tourism is a multidisciplinary phenomenon that includes a wide range of activities, services and industries that ultimately provide the tourism experience. Tourism success is mainly the result of scientific studies that provide the necessary information. Libraries could contribute through organizing the information support and providing the required ground crucial for advancing tourism.

Information literacy could be defined as a set of skills that should be available for achievement of information and therefore survival in society (Drotner, 2005).

Libraries are the main public institutes that guarantee access to information despite other organizations, based on which they are supported by information community. Libraries intervene in tourism services and training information literacy in different ways. For example, libraries have some informing role whereby they support the information needs of certain groups such as tourists. This role of libraries in tourism industry is considered as the basis for economic growth and indicates the significance of tourists. Furthermore, the training role of a library is achieved by presenting the knowledge of native and local users to tourists and visitors; the trainings that are not only required in official training systems but also in professional life. The cultural performance of libraries in field of tourism refers to the fact that libraries are the intermediary between local culture of individuals and tourists. That indicates the increase of accessibility and dissemination of the cultural heritage. Moreover, the local community is along with international cultural achievements (Tokic, 2014).

Participation and cooperation of libraries with associated institutions and organizations

Some organizations, such as libraries and museums, are not usually established and constructed with the aim of attracting tourists. Nevertheless, they could cooperate with other tourism organizations. Cooperation and communication of public libraries with other organizations in attracting tourists is very effective. The achievement of results and profit due to these cooperation leads to mutual satisfaction and profits. Libraries might be considered as tourism attraction or destination. In cooperation with other organizations, such as the culture and tourism delegation, managers and librarians could plan for development and increase of library resources and services aimed at tourists and their attraction(I would remove this part but if it comes from a paper in English then you may leave it) (Tokic & Tokic, 2016). To achievement this objective, it is recommended to:

- allocate part of tax of tourism associations and cultural institutions to public libraries,
- design comprehensive cultural programs for tourist-friendly areas by the main organization of public libraries;
- Develop policy and guidance for librarians of public libraries (Smolcic Jurda & Pintaric, 2012).

Development of tourism approach along market orientation

Market direction and orientation has attracted attention of the management researchers and is one of the axial principles that influence marketing activities and entrepreneurship of an organization. This principle indicates the strategic objectives of an organization and allows to ensure its capability and superior performance. Since libraries are non-profit organizations, market orientation and customer-orientation are the main aspects that affect their performance. The results of studies show that libraries should take the strategy based on market and manage marketing services to achieve such strategic objectives so as to observe the effect of these variations. There is an increasing trend showing the acceptance of various strategic orientations such as marketing, innovation, technology, entrepreneurship and qualitative orientations and productivity in libraries (Obeidat, 2016).

Zadar public library, located in Croatia is a public and social institution that has been engaged in various social and marketing activities. This library has recognized the significance of marketing. The acceptance of marketing and its application in libraries depend on the capability of managers and librarians in perception of marketing, awareness of its principles and trend and general and specialized training (Pavicic, 2001). Public libraries should increase the interaction between their local clients and tourists in providing services and information and utilize the proposals of their clients to attract tourists and help them. Concerning provision of services to tourists by public libraries, the tourism cultural support system should be available and beside library management which requires attention and support of cultural tourism policy makers; however, public libraries should be more innovative and take into account the requirements of their tourism services (Karuza & [et al ...], 2017).

4. Discussion and conclusions

The results of this systematic review showed that the field of tourism in libraries still needs to be studied, especially at a national level. Moreover, concerning the significance of this issue, librarians and managers are required to take actions on providing resources and tourism services inspired by international studies and concerning the potential capacity that public libraries have for providing information and educational services. Meanwhile, empowering librarians and equipping them with skills through training are effective in achieving this objective.

The findings indicate that libraries can cooperate with tourism centers and provide free information to tourists. Nevertheless, they could also provide comprehensive information on the historical and cultural locations. Therefore, public libraries can be a place that provides true information related to cultural and historical events of destination to tourists. Moreover, they could provide online resources through a website and digital services, creating awareness and providing information about the cultural heritage of a place (Sadraa & Daii, 2015; Ashrafi Rizi & Kazempour, 2012; Tokic & Tokic, 2016)

Concerning the necessity of consideration of tourism by public libraries, it could be claimed that international studies are ahead in practice and have taken effective steps in this regard

which is evident in the results of studies (Bovero, 2009; Yankova & Stoykova, 2016). Concerning the significance of this matter, the authorities of public libraries are recommended to take actions on the policy development, instruction and to present solutions for creation of oral history collections in their libraries.

The managers of public libraries are recommended to take following actions in fulfilling the mission that libraries have regarding the attraction of tourists:

- Activate public relations units of public libraries to facilitate the information flow and train experienced librarians, who understand all details of communicating with tourists, in tourism development
- Provide free and voluntarily library membership for tourists and give them access to library facilities
- Establish branches of public libraries in hotels to promote tourism services,
- Change architectural style of public libraries with the aim to attract more tourists.
- In overall, the systematic review clarifies the status of researches on development of tourism services in public libraries and the research gap at national level. It also highlights the necessity to carry out more practical studies on libraries, hoping that the results of these studies lead to promotion of the quality of services in libraries.

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