The Effects of Architecture on the Tourism of Iranian Hormuz Island

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ABSTRACT

Both architecture and tourism have long history in Iranian Hormuz Island. In our contemporary world, the tourism industry has developed considerably due to the development of the urbanism, the increase of demand for travel, the increase of leisure times, etc. But although tourism industry of Hormuz Island was very prosperous erstwhile, unfortunately today the tourism is now very poor and weak in this island despite the presence of several natural and historical tourist attractions. On the other hand, the architecture is a very effective factor on the tourism of every region. Such effectiveness can be studied from two points of view: first the historical attractions and second, the provision of needed infrastructures for tourists. Since the tourism of each region can play a crucial role in the economy of that region and lead to the development or underdevelopment of it, thus the objective of this research is to study the general effects of the architecture from the both mentioned points of view in Hormuz Island. We hope that the findings of this research can lead to the development of the tourism industry of this Iranian island because we firmly believe that the architectural aspects make very important effects on the development of the tourism industry.

INTRODUCTION

The available statistics on the scale of tourism in past and the prediction of tourism growth in future show the rapid growth of this industry in coming years and decades. Since one of the national incomes of each country is indeed the tourism industry of that country, thus it is very important to pay attention to tourism industry to fulfill the desired economic development.

On the other hand, based on the provided statistics in Fars News Agency, according to the World Tourism Organization report, Iran is the 10th country in terms of the abundance of ancient and historical attractions and 5th in terms of the natural attractions among all countries of the globe. But the “tourist-attracting centers” in the region do not belong to Iran, but belong to the countries which have used to be arid deserts. For example, the hot dry desert of Dubai has managed to attract more than 15 million tourists in the Persian Gulf.

This is while the Iranian share of the tourists has been one-fifteenth of the Dubai City in the same year according to the statistics published by Aftab News Network. Based on the mentioned statistics and the fact that Iran is one of the most inexpensive destinations for tourists, and since a considerable number of Iranian provinces have several climatic, historical and cultural attractions, thus it is critically important to study the effective factors on the development of tourism industry in Iran. Hormuz Island in a widely neglected Islands in the south of Iran with significant tourist attractions historically and naturally. That is, if the infrastructural requirements of the Hormuz Island are suitable, considerably more tourists would travel to this Island. Currently, such infrastructural factors are poor and weak.

An overview on the history of Hormuz Island:

The existential cause of Hormuz city formation has been indeed the need of Iranian plateau for a suitable point which connect the commerce of Iran to the commercial network of Mediterranean area, east and south Asia, and India. Thus Hormuz city was established in a point where not only it had a suitable geographical formation, but it is indeed the focal point of the Strait of Hormuz where in turn is the focal point of the shipping network between Europe and south and east Asia. On the other hand, Hormuz Island is the entrance of the Iranian Plateau, i.e. in the path of Kerman and Makran. Thus Hormuz Island used to be a connecting point and intersection for the land transportation system and marine transportation system to connect the commercial axes of Europe, South Asia and Iranian Plateau.
Hormuz City was built in Sasanian period by Ardashir I near the estuary Minab River because the soil, water and the land of the region was very suitable for self-sufficient living at the time. In his famous book Ṣūrat al-ʿArḍ (The Face of the Earth) (977), Muḥammad Abūʾl-Qāsim Ibn Hawqal describes the Persian Sea and writes “then the coast of the sea extends to the Hormuz city where is the port of Kerman and it is a very prosperous with palm trees and warm weather”. This post used to be a center for exchanging Iranian and Indian goods and since the valuable goods and original Persian horses were exported from this port to India, the famous Venetian tourist, Marco Polo visited Hormuz City both in his travel from Italy to the East and China and his return from Beijing and Chinese costs to Italy. In fact he has returned home through the sea from China to Hormuz Port and then to Italy [5].

In his Travelogue, Marco Polo refers to the Hormuz Plain and Minab River as a fruit-full and prosperous area with a considerable diversity of products. Old Hormuz used to be a place for Persian Gulf and Kish Island merchants. Moreover, Marco Polo refers to the position of Hormuz port with regard to its commercial connection to Indian merchants. He writes that the city is known as Decius Augustus City because of the abundance of ships which transfer the pearl and spices between Iran and India. The historians believe that the
remains of the mentioned city can be found in the northern part of current Hiroft City. Another interesting point for Marco Polo about the Hormuz city is the seasonal warm (and sometimes fatal) winds [1].

In 1301, the commercial and coastal city of Hormuz faced the invasion of Mongols. Mir Baha al-Din Ayaz, the fifteenth Hormuz King who was the ruler of the city at the time of Mongolian invasion migrated from the city fearing the destruction of the city by the invaders. He went to Jarron Island. Jaroon Island was the entrance of the Strait of Hormuz and it was strategically valuable because it was the pathway of caravans and cargos. Consequently Hormuz City got abandoned and the new city was established in Jaroon Island and later it was called Hormuz City. The remains of the old Hormuz city can still be found near Minab River.

The selection of Jarron Island (current Hormuz) as the new city followed several suitable factors including the followings:

a. Political and economic considerations and avoiding the invasion of the Mongols and Tatars who were usually reluctant to invade the sea.

b. The necessity of preserving the relations with the Indian merchants; while Jaroon Island made it possible to keep such relations due to the presence of several suitable harbors in it.

c. Strategic considerations with regard to the competition between Hormuz and other commercial centers of the time, while Jaroon Island made it possible to control the surrounding sea and marine routes.

d. Its adjacency to the sea for providing the necessities of the daily life.

The new Hormuz city developed rapidly to become an international commercial port of the region located in the path of the huge commercial path of Europe to South and East Asia. All explorers, seafarers, and geographers who had visited Hormuz have mentioned its prosperity, wealth and power. The well-known Moroccan explorer, Ibn Battuta (1304-1368) has written that “Jarron is a big and good city with large bazaars and harbors for exporting the goods to India; and the Indian commodities are export to Iraq, Syria and Khorasan from Jarron port. Moreover the Ruler of the region lives in this city”. Hormuz was known as the Persian Gold Soil and used to be a center of Persian fine and beautiful handicrafts. Luís Vaz de Camões (the Portuguese poet and seafarer) admired Hormuz for having the wealth of the world; Milton (the British poet) admired it for having the most precious jewelries of the world; Marco Polo made Hormuz City globally famous; and Afonso de Albuquerque (the Portuguese admiral) said “if the world is a ring, then Hormuz is its pearl”. Such a situation made the Hormuz ruler very powerful. He extended his governance and rule to Basra and occupied Kish and Bahrain. Due to the lack of a powerful central government in Iran, the mentioned rule continued for two centuries. Resulting from the decline of the commercial value of other Persian Gulf ports such as Basra, Siraf, and Kish Hormuz Island which had found importance, Hormuz Island had changed to become a very commercially important island with a valuable strategic and geopolitical position attracted the attention of the Portuguese admiral Afonso de Albuquerque. Consequently, he wrote a letter to the King of Portugal saying “if the world is a ring, then Hormuz is its pearl. Hormuz is necessary for keeping the control over India. Moreover, the marine routes of Hormuz are critically important for three main reasons:

a. Occupying Hormuz Island at the estuary of the Persian Gulf

b. Occupying Eden to have a control over the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb

c. Controlling the Strait of Malacca at the ending point of Singapore Peninsula

Understanding the strategic importance of Hormuz Island, he conducted his navy toward the region and invaded Hormuz Island in 1506. Despite the presence of 30,000 Persian soldiers in the Island, he managed to make Seif al-Din, the ruler of the island surrendered. The young king of the island was forced to pay 15,000 gold coins to the Portugese seeking to stop him destroying and firing the island by the admiral Afonso de Albuquerque.

The main reason for the Hormuz defeat was the lack of enough power to resist against the ordnance of Portuguese invaders and the lack of a powerful central government in Iran. This invasion was simultaneous to the kingdom of Ismail I and the formation of Safavid Dynasty in Persia. The domestic wars in Iran at the beginning of the formation of mentioned dynasty made the central government unable to confront the Portuguese invasion.

The main goal of Afonso de Albuquerque was to control the commercial marine ways between the Europe and Asia and to control the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. In fulfilling his goal, he imposed sever damages to the commercial relations between the Islamic lands and the South and East Asia because the Portuguese invaders imposed heavy taxes and avoided the movement of Muslim merchants in the Strait of Hormuz. Thus the commerce of the Islamic world was deteriorated at the mentioned period of time [5].

On the other hand, the famous French merchant and traveller, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605 – 1689) had travelled to Iran. He describes the Hormuz Island as follows:

“Hormuz is an island located in 92° 45’ N/ 25° 30’ E at the estuary of the Persian Gulf with an area of 2 mile2 which is mainly solid and dry. No tree can be planted there because the land is covered by a good and completely white salty. This is why the land of Hormuz is sterile. No freshwater can be found there except the rainwaters that are saved in the reservoirs. Hormuz land has a type of very black and glossy sand which is important for the residents and they use it for shedding on their inscriptions”
The Portuguese commanders of Hormuz used to send the Hormuz sand to their representatives in India; and the foreigners who was going to buy the eastern commodities in Lisbon, would identify the originality of the commodities from the mentioned sands found in the parcels of the eastern goods [2].

After the end of Portuguese governance in the Hormuz Island by Shah Abbas forces (supported by the British navy), the Hormuz Island began to decline. Since Shah Abbas lacked any navy for defending the Island on one hand, and the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz (in terms of its commercial network for Iranian economy), He moved the commercial and military role of the Hormuz Island to the northern coast of the Strait, i.e. to Bandar Abbas. Moreover, he ordered his forces to destruct Hormuz Island’s fortifications in order make them useless fearing re-settlement of Portuguese and other marine powers in the Hormuz Island because he couldn’t protect the Island for lacking a navy [5].

Hence, the prosperity and flourishing period of Hormuz Island was declined gradually. Nowadays, Hormuz is not more than an abandoned Island without any facility for the tourist attraction. On the other hand, despite its past economic prosperity, Hormuz Island is now one of the most deprived cities of Iran.

**The effects of architecture on tourism:**

**Infrastructural effects:**

One of the most important effects of the architecture on the tourism is its infrastructural effect on designing and constructions the ports, airports, terminals, hotels, motels, etc. which have the highest infrastructural effect on the accommodation of tourists because such places have to be designed in way that can meet the needs of the tourists.

Nowadays, in most cities of the world, designing some places such as the hotels, airports, restaurants, etc. are considered as the joint activity of architecture and tourism. Indeed the architects attempt not only to make their design beautiful and attractive, but to make it unique. In contemporary field of tourism, some touristic installations not only have been built to meet the needs of the tourists, but they have changed to be a tourist attraction as well. The most important principles in designing such installations and facilities we have to pay equal attention to the form and function. Indeed, although the main objective of such installations is their functionality, but we have not to neglect and underestimate their form and appearance. For example, one of the most important touristic spaces is the hotel where the designers have to consider several basic principles in its design [4].

Hotel is the accommodation of the tourists. It can contain some attractive elements to encourage the tourists to travel to that area. For example, the hotel designers for Hormuz Island have to pay attention to the following important points:

- **Security**
- **Calmness**
- **Preferably closeness to the touristic attractions**
- **Climatic peacefulness (i.e. hosting the tourists in all seasons)**
- **Accessing to the needed additional facilities in the tourists’ accommodation**
- **Having suitable health facilities**

Unfortunately, Hormuz Island lacks the needed infrastructural facilities for attracting the tourists. The access to the Island for the visitors is possible only in specific limited hours. If a visitor fails to arrive to the ship at a specific time, he/she has to stay in the island at night while there is no nightly accommodation of the visitors and tourists in the Island. On the other hand, the historical monuments of the Island are in ruin and they needed proper repair unless they will be destroyed completely in few coming years.

**3.2. Attraction effects:**

Another important effect of the architecture on tourism is its attraction impact. The architecture is itself a tangible and material cultural attraction of any region for the tourists. The remained buildings and monuments of the past eras show the culture, rituals and architectural styles of those periods of time. Some of such buildings are now present in Hormuz Island including Jerry Polack’s House, Portuguese Castle, Bibi Gol Palace, Zafaran Bazar, etc. each of which are historically valuable and a part of the Iranian cultural heritage. Such monuments are undoubtedly touristic attractions for the Island. A review of the Iranian historical attractions shows that more than 85% of the Iranian attractions are indeed like the mentioned buildings and monuments. The history of Iranian architecture is full of buildings that the primary goal of their construction has not to be used as a touristic attraction in future but other objectives such as the religious, defensive, and scientific motivations had made the designers to design and build them. Since such monuments were following a specific purpose, they had met their designed function and had led to the creation of masterpieces that are now considered as the touristic attractions [4].

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Conclusion and suggestions:

The discovered archeological buildings around Iranian Plateau have several features in common implying the relationship between different parts of the plateau. If this hypothesis is true, then we have to accept that the Iranian ethnics used to travel in Iranian Plateau thousands of years BC [3].

According to new researches, in 21st century the tourism industry is the third dynamic, prosperous and developing industry in the world next to the oil and auto-making industries. Tourism industry brings considerable incomes for many countries of the world. Due to its suitable climate and the abundance of natural and historical attractions, Iran can be very active in tourism industry and play an effective role on introducing its own attractions to the global visitors [6].

One of the touristic attractions of Iran is the Hormuz Island. Despite having a long history with prosperous periods of time and possessing several natural and historical attractions, unfortunately Hormuz Island has been neglected in contemporary Iran and consequently, there is no infrastructural facility for the easiness and comfort of the visitors and tourists in this Island. The main reason for such a shortage is the current negligence of the infrastructural issue in Hormuz Island. If the local and state authorities pay more attention to the infrastructural dimensions of Hormuz island and if the invest more in this area, this island can be changed to be an important historical and natural attraction for the Iranian visitors and international tourists.

By and large, based on the mentioned points we can conclude that both the tourism and architecture in Hormuz Island have a long history. The historical attention to the tourism in this island has been a main factor for the economic prosperity of Hormuz Island in different historical eras.

However, in our current times, there are many tourists and visitors who are professionally willing to visit any region to research and study its historical architecture, culture and civilization. Since Hormuz Island is one of the oldest Island of Iran with several historical attractions, if the authorities pay enough attention to these attractions they can rapidly increase the rate of visitors and tourists of the Island. Thus we can claim that the fundamental and basic tangible architectural settings are present in Hormuz Island for attracting the tourists. Accordingly, despite the current little and tiny role of the tourism in Hormuz island in the economy of Island itself and consequently in Iranian national economy, the tourism industry in Hormuz Island can play a significant and considerable role in the Iranian economy. The fulfillment of such a goal requires paying attention to the architecture as an important and effective factor on the tourism in Hormuz Island, both from the infrastructural aspect and the attraction aspect of the subject.

In this regard, the following points have to be offered as the suggestions of this research:

a) Repairing and restoring the historical buildings and monuments in the Hormuz Island. Despite their historical and cultural values, unfortunately these monuments are being ruined rapidly.
b) Creating suitable infrastructures with a desirable architectural plan in order to attract the tourists (e.g. to construct some hotels that meet the climatic needs of the tourists and visitors)
c) Promoting and introducing each of the historical buildings and monuments of the Island that has remained from the past historical eras in order to create a touristic attraction for the Island
d) Encouraging the architects to restore the Iranian old and ancient culture and traditions as an attractive point for the tourists and visitors of Hormuz Island
e) Encouraging the private sector to invest on the tourism industry in Hormuz Island
f) Planning and managing the basic needs of the tourists in order to provide those needs for anyone who visits the Hormuz Island.

g) Since Hormuz Island is close to Bandar Abbas, it is to suggest that the planners can design and implement connected ways such as tele-cabins, touristic boats and cruses, etc. in order to attract more visitors and tourists to Hormuz Island.

REFERENCES


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