

The Dual Role of the Internet in the Development of Local Communities Through Ecotourism and Cultural Assimilation in Iran

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Abstract : In the process of globalization, geographical boundaries gradually lose their importance, and ethnic, local, and regional cultures are integrated with each other and even marginalized. Globalization has many manifestations and aspects, including economic, political, social, etc., but this paper has focused on the cultural aspect of globalization. From this point of view, one of the important issues that have always been raised is the assimilation of diverse and plural cultures, which are gradually disappearing and destroyed in the onslaught of global culture and are dissolved in global culture. In the postmodern paradigm, the tools of the globalized world can be used to preserve and strengthen cultural diversity. For example, the Internet, as a globalization tool, can play an important role in preserving and recognizing local cultures. In today's world, the world nations and ethnic groups are trying to revive their specific and native cultures in different ways in opposition to the rising cultural assimilation and challenge the globalization of culture. One of the manifestations of these actions is addressing the issue of tourism and, specifically, eco-tourism, which is being developed in Iran as well as in other parts of the world, relying on the powerful tool of globalization, the Internet. Considering the significant growth of the ecotourism industry in Iran in recent years, this paper focuses on the role of the Internet in the development of ecotourism in Iran as one of the manifestations of tourism in recent decades and how to preserve and survive diverse local cultures and strengthen local communities against global culture through it. One of the major challenges in the development of communication technology in Iran in the last decade has been the debate over the necessity or non-necessity of access to high-speed Internet in the villages of Iran. Some believe that accessing the broadband internet in the villages may lead to the disappearance of local cultures and can facilitate the spread of western culture among villagers. On the other hand, the speed of expansion of ecotourism in Iran in the last ten years is owed to the development of the Internet in villages. In this regard, we pay attention to the dual role of the Internet in cultural assimilation and, at the same time, the platform that the online space has created for the growth and development of ecotourism accommodations as a source of stable income for local communities, focusing on the Iranian experience in the recent decade.

Keywords : tourism, globalization, internet, ecotourism in Iran, cultural assimilation

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