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Study of Tourism Industry Development with an Emphasis on Religious Tourism (Case Study: Sistan Area)

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Abstract- Religious tourism, aiming at visiting sacred places and participating in religious ceremonies in order to reach calmness and closeness to God, is one of the most important kinds of tourism in today's world which dates back to ancient eras and centuries. Statistical measurements indicate that this kind of tourism assign 26% of the total tourism trends in the world. Sistan, the legendary land of Iran's ancient history, is a land that has been located in the southwest of Iran. Since Iranian people, including Sistan, accepted Islam and become the devotee of these sacred people, most parts of this land was filled with the shrine of these people in that of the most religious attractions of Sistan area, Khajeh Mountain and Bibidoust sepulcher can be named. The current study aims to evaluate the place of religious tourism in Sistan area as well as identify various attractions of religious tourisms in this area using library studies and some documents and then suggest some guidelines in developing this kind of tourism. According to the results of developing facilities and infrastructures, establishing residential facilities for tourists can finally be led to developing and progressing this area.

Keywords- *religious tourism, Sistan, Khajeh Mountain, Bibidoust*

I. INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism is one of the most current forms of tourism around the world which dates back to ancient histories. Religious attractions, shrines and sacred places attract tourists towards themselves every year (Meyer, 2004). Sistan and Balouchestan province, with an entire and attractive nature with a rich culture, is full of tourism potentials and capacities that can play a main role in improving economic and cultural conditions in the region and the whole country with detailed and exact identification and planning. Khajeh Mountain is located in Hamoun international lake and lagoon (the 7thlargest lagoon) and the biggest edible water lake in the eastern Iranian plateau. The sanctity of this mountain for the followers of three religions namely Islam, Christianity and Zoroastrian, nice landscapes round the Khajeh Mountain, existing Hamoun lagoon, surrounding plain, healthy weather, stellar sky, existing many lands, existing historical buildings dates back to 2000 years ago, surrounding rural and nomads located at the proximity of mountain are all the attractions of studied area.

Given that ecotourism, historical tourism, religious tourism and rural tourism are growing field in the world. The poor economy of this area can be treated with an exact study of the potentials and introducing religious tourism capacities and make it directed towards multi-dimensional and healthy economy and hence use tourism attractions along with agriculture and provide an appropriate context for developing the area. Thus, the research question in this study is whether Khajeh Mountain has the required potentials for tourism or not. Accordingly, the objective of this research is to investigate the capabilities and restrictions of tourism in Khajeh Mountain.

Research method is descriptive and questionnaire and inventory methods are used to collect data.

II. STUDY AREA

Sistan lagoon is a wide land extended to 8117 square kilometers. This land is located between 29 to 32 degrees of northern latitude and 60 to 64 degrees of eastern longitude and is bordered with Afghanistan from the north, to Zahedan from the south, Lout Desert Birjand pre-province from the west and western north and is 500 to 600 meters high above the sea level. The northern border of Sistan, which is crossed almost from the middle of Chaleh Hamoun and continues to Chah Shour Mountains and Dar Band Bad, is the contracted border between Iran and Afghanistan. The only natural border of Sistanis in the northern areas, Hormok Valley and Malek Siah Mountain and the middle line of Malek Siah Mountain is the border line between Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The natural western border of Sistanis ChehelDokhtaran Mountains and Palang Mountain with a height of 1500 to 2000 meters (Ahmadi, 1989: 264).

III. STATISTICAL COMMUNITY AND SAMPLE

The statistical community in this study is the aboriginal people of Sistan area. The statistical sample includes 300 native people who have been chosen at random. Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that it was tried to involve all groups of

respondents in this study. Respondent people are from Zabol and Zahak cites.

IV. Setting the Questionnaire

The questionnaire relates to asking the opinions of native people and the families' supervisors and members of Islamic councils in the region and the study is conducted aiming to asking their opinions regarding the growth of tourism in recent years in the economic, social, cultural and biological fields in religious places of Sistan.

Firstly, 20 preliminary questionnaires (Pre-Test) and it was tried to express the incomprehensible questions in such a way that it is understandable for all respondents and the options that could not be understood and made the questionnaire problematic was removed or changed.

V. Data Analysis Method

Heuristic-factor analysis technique has been used in setting data.

A. *Heuristic-factor analysis technique*

One of the ways to optimize measurements is to use factor analysis method. This method is based on the relations among the variables and scales which are in fact the tools for measurement.

The created factors are mathematical phenomena that can be considered as the classifying bases for the variables in a category. Therefore, each justifiable factor likes a curve in the matrix in which each existing variable in the regarded category is shown as points in the space of that system.

A factor is a new variable that is assessed by the linear combination of main values of observed variables as follows:

$$F_j = \sum w_{ji} x_i = w_{j1} + ... + w_{jp} x_p \quad (1)$$

In this equation, X_i is the i^{th} variable, W_{ji} is the coefficient of factor score of i^{th} variable and in terms of j^{th} factor, p is the symbol of variables and F_j is the j^{th} factor.

Factor analysis is generally done during three stages as follows:

1. A correlation matrix is formed for all the variables.
2. Main components, which are factors, are extracted for all the variables.
3. The factors (curves) are rotated in order that the correlation between the variables and some of the factors reach to a maximum amount. The most common method in this stage is a method known as varimax.

Since the purpose of factor analysis is to connect multiple variables to form a factor, these variables have correlation coefficients more than 0.3 in correlation matrix.

B. *Sampling Adequacy*

Before conducting actor analysis, the sampling adequacy should be first assured whether the data can be used for analysis or not. For this reason, KMO index and Bartlet Test have been used (ibid).

VI. Findings

A. *Descriptive Findings*

According to the respondents, of the factors influencing religious tourism in Sistan, the following ones gained the highest score in that these factors are as follows:

- Reducing unemployment in the region
- Increasing employment of the youth and women
- Attracting surplus forces in the agricultural sector in the activities related to tourism
- Increasing people's income
- Increasing the price of the region's lands (including residential and arable lands)
- Improving the level of education, health and housing
- Increasing the level of people's awareness towards their environments
- Increasing employment in the service sector (restaurants, hotels, passenger transportations, retail, etc.)
- Increasing recreational and touristic areas
- Creating hotels residency and tourism centers
- Polluting the environments

B. *Analyzing the heuristic factor among the factors affecting religious tourism in Sistan:*

In this section, the questionnaire will be analyzed which the following results are obtained. The amount of KMO index, amount of Bartelt test statistics, degree of freedom and significance level are given in the table below:

Since KMO index equals 0.867, the number of samples for factor analysis is enough and because they are in the range of 0.8, it is called appropriate.

TABLE I. SHOWING KMO TEST STATISTICS

KMO test for sample volume adequacy	0.867
Chi-2 value	6462.086
Degree of freedom	55
Significance level	0.000

Because the unities are indicated before the extraction of factor (or factors) in the initial unity column, all the initial unities equal 1.

The bigger the value of extracted unity, the better are shown the variables by the extracted factors. The data in the following table show that the unity value is ranged from the minimum of 0.26 i.e. increasing services in the employment section to the maximum of 0.952 i.e. the value of improving the level of education and housing.

TABLE II. SHOWING THE TEST'S UNITY STATISTICS

	Extracted unity	Preliminary unity
Reducing unemployment in the region	0.803	1.000
Increasing employment of the youth and women	0.920	1.000
Attracting surplus forces in the agricultural sector in the activities related to tourism	0.898	1.000
Increasing people's income	0.822	1.000
Increasing the price of the region's lands (including residential and arable lands)	0.923	1.000
Improving the level of education, health and housing	0.952	1.000
Increasing the level of people's awareness towards their environments	0.914	1.000
Increasing employment in the service sector (restaurants, hotels, passenger transportations, retail, etc.)	0.126	1.000
Increasing recreational and touristic areas	0.896	1.000
Creating hotels residency and tourism centers	0.588	1.000
Polluting the environments	0.900	1.000

Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings relates to the specific values of extracted factor without rotation. Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings indicates the specific values of extracted factors with rotation. Initial Eigen values relates to the specific values which determine the factors that are remained in the analysis. The extracted factors are the ones that their existence is not more indicative of the variance, and because the two factors are the specific values more than one are remained in the analysis. In this questionnaire, two factors of 1 and 2 regarding the impacts of tourism industry in Sistan has the specific value bigger than one and are remained in the analysis. These two factors can explain 79% of variables' variation.

TABLE III. SHOWING THE SPECIFIC VALUES OF EXTRACTED FACTORS

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.072	64.293	64.293	7.072	64.293	64.293	6.742	61.293	61.293
2	1.670	15.185	79.478	1.670	15.185	79.478	2.000	18.185	79.478
3	.939	8.535	88.013						
4	.526	4.784	92.797						
5	.245	2.231	95.028						
6	.203	1.848	96.875						
7	.130	1.183	98.058						
8	.099	.902	98.960						
9	.058	.523	99.484						
10	.041	.368	99.852						
11	.016	.148	100.000						

TABLE IV. SHOWING THE SPECIFIC VALUES OF EXTRACTED FACTORS

	Components	
	1	2
Reducing unemployment in the region	0.888	0.118
Increasing employment of the youth and women	0.957	0.059
Attracting surplus forces in the agricultural sector in the activities related to tourism	0.940	0.124
Increasing people's income	0.903	0.080
Increasing the price of the region's lands (including residential and arable lands)	0.959	0.054
Improving the level of education, health and housing	0.973	-0.077
Increasing the level of people's awareness towards their environments	-0.277	0.915
Increasing employment in the service sector (restaurants, hotels, passenger transportations, retail, etc.)	-0.334	-0.123
Increasing recreational and touristic areas	-0.408	0.854
Creating hotels residency and tourism centers	0.762	0.086
Polluting the environments	0.931	0.182

Component matrix includes factor loadings of each variable in remained factors, since interpreting the factor loading without rotation is not simple. Therefore, the factors will be rotated.

TABLE V. SHOWING THE COMPONENT MATRIX

	Components	
	1	2
Reducing unemployment in the region	0.890	-0.106
Increasing employment of the youth and women	0.942	-0.179
Attracting surplus forces in the agricultural sector in the activities related to tourism	0.941	-0.112
Increasing people's income	0.895	-0.146
Increasing the price of the region's lands (including residential and arable lands)	0.943	-0.185
Improving the level of education, health and housing	0.923	-0.315
Increasing the level of people's awareness towards their environments	-0.042	0.955
Increasing employment in the service sector (restaurants, hotels, passenger transportations, retail, etc.)	-0.354	-0.037
Increasing recreational and touristic areas	-0.184	0.928
Creating hotels residency and tourism centers	0.559	-0.932
Polluting the environments	0.947	-0.054

The rotated matrix includes factor loadings of each variable in the remained factors after each rotation. The more the absolute value of this coefficient, the related factor plays more roles in the whole changes of the related variable.

In this stage, we name the factors as follows:

- Factor 1: employment and economy
- Factor 2: environmental and infrastructural

The point worth considering in the discussion of factor analysis is that it is not essential that each factor be connected with given the bigness of its correlation with the factor. There is time when a variable can be connected to another factor instead of connecting a variable to a concerned factor (Momeni and Ghayoumi, 2012: 181).

TABLE VI. NAMING THE MAIN FACTORS

Factor name	Loaded factors	Factor loading
Employment and economy	Reducing unemployment in the region	0.890
	Increasing the employment of the youth and women	0.942
	Attracting surplus force in agricultural (or livestock) sector	0.941
	Increasing peoples' income	0.895
	Increasing the price of region's lands	0.923
	Increasing employment in the service section	0.354

The data in the table above show that 6 variables namely Reducing unemployment in the region, Increasing the employment of the youth and women, Attracting surplus force in agricultural (or livestock) sector, Increasing peoples' income, Increasing the price of region's lands and Increasing employment in the service section have a high and positive loading on the first factor. These factors can be called employment and economy; for all of these factors are related to economy and employment. In other words, religious tourism have had the above impacts on the issue of employment and economy among the people living in Sistan area.

Also, two variables namely polluting the environments and improving health, education and housing levels have a high and positive factor loading on employment and economy factors, but they are not involved in this factors given the literature review.

VII. CONCLUSION

1. Internal tourism is more widespread than external tourism in Sistan. Most tourists and pilgrims that travel to the religious parts of Sistan aimed first for pilgrimage and then for journey, recreation, visiting relatives, working etc.
2. Weekends is the most often visited to these places based on the beliefs of our people which can increase the chance for employment for the local people in that time.
3. Of the problems and difficulties of many people in travelling to this region is the lack of suitable tableaus and appropriate advertisement for the identification of touristic and even religious places for the travelers in that many local people have no enough knowledge of the tourism facilities of Sistan area.
4. Lack of existing residential places and suitable spaces surrounding religious places cause that people more use of internal spaces for pilgrimage for the rest in that this issue causes some problems for the pilgrims, especially in busy and press times as well as making injury to religious places.

In a general, evaluation, it can be said that Sistan has many religious attractions which can attract many tourists. The relative increasing process of the number of native travelers to the religious places in recent years indicates Iranian society needs, especially urban people, to traveling and recreational tourism as well as passing their leisure time and annual weekly holidays. Undoubtedly, there is a direct relationship between growing the Iran travelling phenomenon and developing residential and homage and also infrastructural facilities etc. Hence, to achieve development objectives and policies in various fields, presenting sectional and principled designs and programs in a short and long period of time seems necessary. It seems that given the existing historical and religious attractions in Sistan, the designing of tourism development in the region causes emerging tangible and tremendous evolutions in this industry which is led to more flourishing of the region's economy.

Therefore, the following suggestions are presented for the aim of promoting the qualitative and quantitative level of religious tourism.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

1. Developing residential facilities and hospitalization units such as building equipped hotels, nice and modern stores and restaurants with food diversity for the realization of various tastes and incomes in the travelling paths of travelers and pilgrims.
2. Developing infrastructures and providing the context for easier presence of internal tourists from the entrance of the city and renovating and developing the accessible paths to religious places and other touristic attractions of the region.
3. Developing and expanding tourism culture travelling in a local society using Medias and the like and training the proctors of historical and religious places and giving advertisements and distributing various reviews in the field of tourism potentials of Sistan area.
4. Reconstructing and renovating the historical and religious locations of the area.
5. Providing investments potentials for the development of infrastructure facilities and for tourism development including financial and technical supports of the government and giving banking facilities and encouraging the private sector for the investment in the tourism part of the region.
6. The need to establish wider interaction of the Organization for Cultural Heritage and Tourism with administrative organizations for the collecting and producing required statistical data for designing suitable programs in the field of tourism and being aware of required facilities and establishments for the tourists.

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