

THE FEASIBILITY STUDY OF CAPABILITIES AND EFFECTS OF TOURISM IN GOLESTAN PROVINCE: CASE STUDY (ESTARABAD-E JONUBI)

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ABSTRACT

Today, tourism and the tourism economy have become one of the main pillars of the business world and many policy-makers and planners consider it as a fundamental pillar of sustainable development. Tourism plays an important role in national development and diversification of the national and regional economy. The aim of this study was the investigation of the effects and capabilities of tourism in Estarabad-e Jonubi, an area of the city of Gorgan in Golestan Province. This research was conducted in 2014. The used method is descriptive-analytic survey and data collection method was library and field research. To investigate the role of tourism, sample size was calculated 228 people from tourists who come to this area using Cochran formula and then we referred to them by simple random sampling method and the Chi-square test were used as the analysis method. The results of this study are as follows 1.) Most tourists are from the province and the studied region 2) tourists have declared their presence in the region for recreation and use of climate (43%) , visiting their relatives (26%), buying handicrafts (20%), other reasons (8%), and 4% wanted to be familiar with the customs of the people living in these areas. The results of the chi-square test showed that nature is effective in attracting tourists and statistically significant at 1%.

KEYWORDS: tourist, tourism, types of tourism, rural tourism, Gorgan.

INTRODUCTION

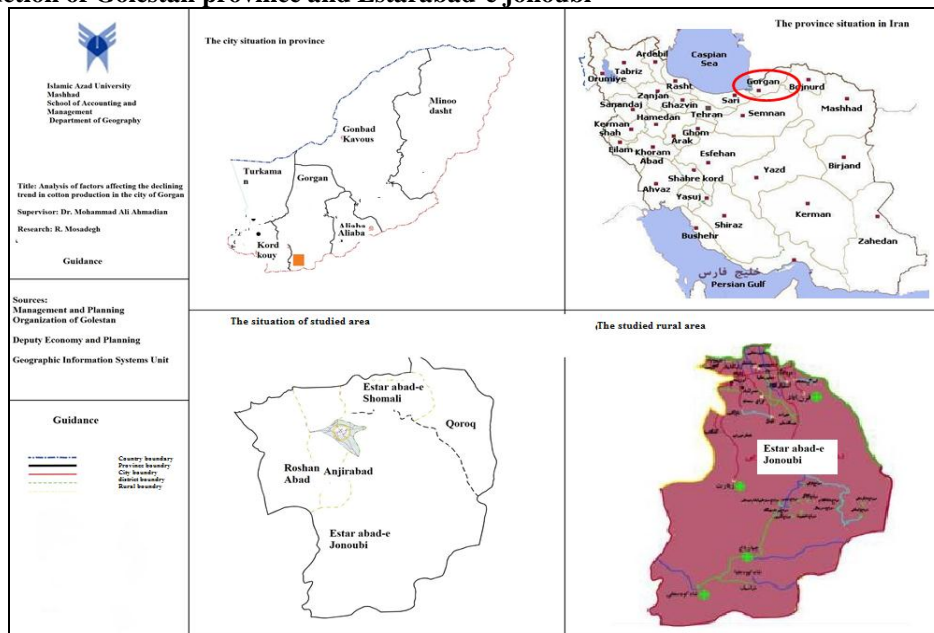
Problem definition

Tourism is one of the important industries in recent decades that have found a special place in the economic development of some countries. In addition to the revenue and exchange, job creation and cultural exchange, it allocated a share in the economic activities including exports. While tourism income all year is over billion dollars and Iran due to abundant natural, historical and cultural attraction is among the most talented country in the world but heavy reliance on exports of oil and gas revenue has caused less attention to this industry, because of this fact, despite the high potential of this industry, the tourism industry accounts has a tiny proportion of the economy of country (Dodangi and Ayanbad, 2002). In recent years due to lack of adequate government and tourism organizations attentions and also the lack of amenities and service, the lack of jobs in rural areas, and economic problems, more villages have been abandoned due to migration. The planners believe if job opportunities increase the rural economy booms, many rural parts will become even more attractive to live compared to the city (Masoum, 2003). Estarabad-e Jonubi that is a rural area in the city of Gorgan in Golestan province is also not exempted from other rural areas and the lack of government attention in these areas is evident. Remoteness of the countryside from the urban areas, lack of people attention to resources and other factors have caused the tourism potential of these areas to be forgotten. Golestan province has a diversity of geographical environment (forest - Sea - desert and grassland), beautiful nature, natural, cultural and historical potential tourism and it is considered as an important hub in country. In fact, Estarabad-e Jonubi has tourism potential, including springs, natural waterfalls, skiing, mountaineering, rock climbing, wildlife, medicinal plants, traditional and local produce, traditional fabric architectures villages, religious places, and historical places.

Geographical location of Estarabad-e Jonubi

As Figure 1 shows, Estarabad-e Jonubi is Central District of the city of Gorgan that is limited from the north to Estarabad-e Shomali, from south to the mountainous, from the west to Damghan and Anjirabad and from the East to Qorogh. According to the census of 2014, it has 24 villages, of which 22 villages are inhabited while two others are uninhabited villages and its center is Jalin-Olia that is located almost in the geographical center (Statistical Yearbook of Golestan, 2014)

Fig. 1. Introduction of Golestan province and Estarabad-e jonoubi



Rural tourism has found importance for many stakeholders due to its job creation and economic resources, particularly local communities in association with farming and animal husbandry, and handicrafts. Since the village is placed on the northern slopes of the Alborz and in a mountainous-forest area, it has Caspian mountainous temperate climate. In addition to the cool climate and suitable weather conditions in the summer, these villages due to natural, pleasing and exquisite landscape and because of the special attractions of tourism has attracted both natural and historically wide attention of tourists, including Gorgonians. Major capabilities and features in this country in terms of tourism can be summarized as follows:

1. the beautiful forest road of Ziarat, Chahar Bagh and Shahkuh villages from Touskestan which is one of the most well-known promenade in north of Iran.
2. The hot and cold springs in and around Ziarat village that causes hot springs mineral bath construction.
3. The beautiful waterfalls in the South and the East of the village that has just a short distance from village.
4. The shrines in the above-mentioned villages (Abdullah Holy Shrine, Nour Holy shrine and Taieb Holy Shrine)
5. Having suitable path for climbing summits of Avon- Shahvar zilan that are used by climbers
6. The ancient hill of Kalchal, and Sarv tapeh in Qarnabad
7. Enjoyment of dairy products and livestock and forest fruit that brings a certain range of Gorgonians to purchase these products.
8. The handicraft workshops in Ziarat village, where Jajim, backpacks, and etc. are produced.
9. The ponds in green forests of Qarnabad
10. Paved access and nearness to Gorgan.
11. Above all, the mountain architecture and context of villages that is unique.

As mentioned, there are a broad set of features and functionality in the village and around it that can easily be properly planned to cause the radical transformation of rural economy (rural guide plan, 2013)

So far, various relevant research and studies have been conducted regarding the capabilities and effects of tourism, but this study is considered as the first studies in terms of capabilities and effects of tourism in Estarabad-e Jonoubi.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Experimental studies

Salehi et al (2014) in a study examined "the impact of tourism on sustainable development of rural areas (Case Study: Dohezar villages, Tonkabon)". The results of this study raise the necessity of sustainable tourism. It is obvious that by the increasing demands of tourism at the community level, the areas that have necessary capacity for tourism are

considered by tourists. To improve the stability and development of tourism, management requirements and the protection of the environment for future generations is necessary. Einali and Romiani (2014) in a study examined "the role of financial investments in rural development, with emphasis on second home tourism in of Boui city". The findings of this research show that there is a significant difference in all cases before and after the development of rural tourism and investment in tourism, so that the most significant difference is related to the quality of the physical components of village life and rural housing and the least significant is difference in the amount of participation of the rural population in general management with emphasis on the rural tourism. The study of regression model also showed that a positive effect of people 'personal investment in the development of rural tourism is the result of the positive effects of tourisms. The results of Dyer et al (2007) study showed that there is a significant difference between the perceptions of residents on the beach in different parts of Australia. Wing et al. (2006) in a study showed that personal characteristics of residents, tourist sites in the region, the current situation of tourism development in the region and the current situation of tourism development program are among factors that affect the perception of residents from the impacts of tourism and these effects can be included in assessing the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the tourism industry which can be attributed to their attitude about tourisms.

Research Methodology

Since the research focuses on the role of tourism in rural development, the research method is descriptive-analytic survey. In this type of study, researchers describe the objective, consistent and genuine characteristics of a situation or issue without any intervention or mental deduction and report objective analysis of situation. Census method was used for the craftsmen, i.e. all the craftsmen were studied as the sample and all the needed information was obtained by completing questionnaires designed for this purpose (for artisans).

With respect to the systematic study necessity on the one hand and the extent of Golestan Province, Esther Abad-e jonoubi was selected as target area of rural tourism in Golestan Province. Its short distance to the district capital of the province as the center of demographic area and its financial services that will raise the possibility of investing in tourism were another reason for its selection. The aim of this study can be outlined as follows:

1. Determination of the potential role of tourism in improving Estarabad-e jonoubi.
2. Clarification of the status and level of tourism in Estarabad-e jonoubi
3. Examination of tourism potential of the area
4. Design and planning infrastructure facilities and tourist sites

And in this study the following hypothesis is examined:

Hypothesis: In Estarabad-e jonoubi, beautiful nature is a major draw for tourists.

Given that the impact of tourism on the development of the village is considered in this research, based on expert opinions and interviews from RM Estarabad-e Jonoubi Housing Foundation, four villages (Ziarat, Shahkuh, Qarnabad and Chahar bagh) were selected that has this feature. Considering that this research is focused on tourism, on the subject of domestic and foreign tourists and the tourists entered into the area in 2014, from 10 thousand people 228 persons was determined using the Cochran formula.

$$n = \frac{N t^2 S^2}{N d^2 + t^2 S^2} = 228$$

and in proportion to the number of tourists entered into the village, the contribution of each village was determined and the tourist questionnaire were distributed among them. Table 1 compared the sample size of each village that randomly chosen in the study area and data requirements was gathered in spring and summer through the completion of questionnaires designed specifically for tourists (Table 1).

Table 1 sample size for each studied village

Village name	Entered tourists number	Ratio (%)	Sample number
Ziarat	58.34	58.33	133
Chahar bagh	1711	17.10	39
Shahkouh	964	9.64	22
Qarnabad	1491	14.91	34
Sum	10000	100	228

RESULTS

Description of the demographic characteristics of tourists

Results of Table 2 show that the total of samples includes 51.8% women and 48.2% men that Qarnabad has the highest percentage of women while Shahkough is accounted for the highest percentage for men. Also from the total of sample of whole villages, 66.2% are married while 33.8% are single in which the highest marriage status is related to the village of ChaharBagh and the highest percentage of single tourists is related to the village of Qarnabad.

Table 2. Distribution of demographic characteristics of rural tourism

Village	Item	Ziarat		Shahkough		Chaharbagh		Qarnabad		Total	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	69	51.9	7	31.8	19	48.7	23	67.6	118	51.8
	Male	64	48.1	15	68.2	20	51.3	11	32.4	110	48.2
Marriage statuses	Married	88	66.2	14	63.6	28	71.8	21	61.8	151	66.2
	Single	45	33.8	8	36.4	11	28.2	13	38.2	77	33.8
Education	illiterate	2	1.5	3	13.6	2	5.1	0	0.0	7	3.1
	Primary	5	3.8	2	9.1	1	2.6	1	3.0	9	3.9
	High school diploma	35	26.3	1	4.5	2	5.1	3	8.8	41	18.0
	Diploma and higher	91	68.4	16	72.7	34	87.2	30	88.2	171	75.0
age	Less than 20 years	18	13.5	4	18.2	3	7.7	7	20.6	32	14.0
	20 to 35 years	82	61.7	9	40.9	21	53.8	24	70.6	136	59.6
	35 to 50 years	25	18.8	8	36.4	13	33.3	3	8.8	49	21.5
	Older than 50 years	8	6.0	1	4.5	2	5.2	0	0.0	11	4.8
Life style	Parents	67	50.4	13	59.1	21	53.8	18	52.9	119	52.2
	Independent from parents	66	49.6	9	40.9	18	46.2	16	47.1	109	47.8
residency	Native Region	67	50.4	22	100.0	34	87.2	31	91.2	154	67.5
	Exotic	66	49.6	0	0.0	5	12.8	3	8.8	74	32.5
Total		133	58.3	22	9.7	39	17.1	34	14.9	228	100.0

From the total of samples 3.1% are illiterate, 3.9% have primary school degree, 18.0% have under diploma degree and 75% percent holds a high school diploma or higher degree. The results show that 14 percent of the sample ages less than 20 years, 59.6% are between the ages of 20 to 35 years and 21.5% are higher from 35 to 50 years, while 4.8% are older than 50 year.

The results of the above table indicates that in lifestyle item, 52.2% lived with their parents while 47.8% were independent from their parents and in the villages, the highest percentage of living with parents is related to Shahkuh and the highest percentage of independent living is related to Ziarat. According to the results, 67.5% are native of the province while 32.5% are exotic. The highest native province is related to Shahkuh due to long distances and impassable roads while the highest percentage of non-native province is related to Ziarat village (49.6%) due to its vicinity to the city of Gorgan and historic and natural attractions and safe roads.

The results of Table 3 show that in the district level, the highest percentage distribution of tourists is related to the city and the next rank is related to the outside and the inside of the province to this area. The highest percentage of outside of province is related to Ziarat village (46.6%) and the next rank is related to city and the inside of province, but in the villages of Shahkuh (81.1 %), Chahar bagh (79.1 %) Qarnabad (100%), the highest percentage is related to the city because of the hesitancy of the most tourists that have traveled to the area to visit their relatives and acquaintances.

Table (3) Geographical distribution of tourists

Village Option	Ziarat		Shahkouh		Chaharbagh		Qarnabad		Total	
	Frequenc y	%	Frequenc y	%	Frequenc y	%	Frequenc y	%	Frequenc y	%
Residence city	52	39.1	18	81.8	31	79.5	34	100.0	135	59.2
Inside of province	19	14.3	3	13.6	4	10.3	0	0.0	26	11.4
Outside of province	62	46.6	1	4.5	4	10.3	0	0.0	67	29.4
Total	133	58.7	22	9.6	39	17.1	34	14.9	228	100.0

The results of Table 4 shows that from the total 228 people 96.38% have been declared their presence for recreation area and use of climate and scenery, 59.76% for visiting the historical places, 42.43% buying handicrafts, 17.43% visiting relatives and 9.21% acquaintances with the customs of the people living in these areas. At the village level the highest level is for entertainment and use of weather and fifth is for visiting with costume with the difference. In the Ziarat village, the fifth rank is related to visiting the acquaintances and relatives because of non-native tourists.

Table 4 prioritization of the presence of tourists in the region

Village choice reason	Ziarat		Shahkouh		Chaharbagh		Qarnabad		Total	
	Score	preference	Score	preference	Score	preference	Score	preference	Score	preference
Become familiar with traditions	7.71	Fourth	5.68	Fifth	15.38	Fifth	10.29	Fifth	9.21	Fifth
use of climate and scenery	97.56	First	97.73	First	92.95	First	94.85	First	96.38	First
buying handicrafts	48.12	Third	30.68	Fourth	35.90	Fourth	35.29	Third	42.43	Third
Visiting the historical places	67.67	Second	45.45	Second	46.15	Second	53.68	Second	59.76	Second
Visiting the relatives	3.95	Fifth	43.18	Third	38.46	Third	29.41	Fourth	17.43	Fourth

The results of table 5 shows that the highest percentage of travel time for tourism in the area (68.8%) is the summer and the arrangement of spring, fall, and winter are unclear.

Table5. Distribution of tourists' attitude towards the right time to travel in the region

	Time travel	Percent
Spring	22	9.8
Summer	154	68.8
Fall	9	4.0
Winter	3	1.3
Holidays	28	12.5
Unknown	8	3.6

The results of table 6 indicates that 96.9% of the sample (tourists) travel for landscapes, 96% for climatic characteristics, 63.4% for customs, 53.1% for handicrafts, 82.9% for the village closeness to the city and in overall 97.3% travel for tourist attractions

Table 6 tourists' attitude toward the role of each of the following categories in tourists' attraction

Agreement degree	Strongly agree		Agree		neutral		disagree		strongly disagree	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
landscapes	-	-	7	3.1	1	0.4	81	35.5	139	61.0
Weather features	-	-	8	3.5	2	0.9	82	36.0	136	59.6
Customs	-	-	70	30.7	14	6.1	99	43.4	45	19.7
Handicrafts	4	1.8	82	36.0	22	9.6	88	38.6	32	14.0
Near the town	8	3.5	23	10.1	9	3.9	125	54.8	63	27.6
Tourist Attractions	-	-	30	13.2	7	3.1	116	50.9	75	32.9
Improvement of product quality	2	0.9	35	15.4	12	5.3	145	63.6	34	14.9
Increase in sales	-	-	35	15.4	7	3.1	148	64.9	38	16.7
Access to new ideas	5	2.2	38	16.7	12	5.3	136	59.6	37	16.2
Increasing the number of tourists	-	-	6	2.6	11	4.8	95	41.7	116	50.9
Shorter supply route	1	0.4	32	14.0	8	3.5	133	58.3	54	23.7
Improvement of the economic status of residents	2	0.9	13	5.7	7	3.1	118	51.8	88	38.6
Improvement of welfare area	1	0.4	26	11.4	8	3.5	139	61.0	54	23.7

The results of the research:

In this study, we examined the following hypothesis

First hypothesis: In Estarabad-e jonoubi, beautiful nature is a major draw for tourists.

The null hypothesis: In Estarabad-e jonoubi, beautiful nature is not major draw for tourists.

According to the results table (8), it is observed that the observed chi-square (37.97) with degrees of freedom of 2 is greater than the expected chi-square (9.210) at 1%, so the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is confirmed. So we can say that nature is effective in tourist attraction.

We can also generalize the results of this test with about 99% confidence level to the statistics population.

Table7. Distribution of frequencies of observed, expected, and residual chi-square test.

Statistics Option	Observed	Expected	residual
Against	42	76	-34
No idea	69	76	-7
Agree	117	76	41
Sum	228	-	-

Table8. The results of chi-square about the nature role in tourist attraction

Variable	chi-square	Degrees of freedom	significance level	chi-square (0.01)
Beautiful nature	37.97	2	0.000	9.210

CONCLUSION

Good planning is essential for tourism industry and can bring benefits for rural communities, which ultimately will lead to an increase in income, but to achieve this goal and become this kind of tourism, culture of different communities are faced with many problems that directly or indirectly affect tourism. This study tries to examine the position of Esterabad-e jonoubi that is located in Gorgan city. The results of this research are as follows:

Tourists have declared their presence in the region for recreation and use of climate (7.56%) , visiting historical places (67.67%), buying handicrafts (8.12%), other reasons (3.95%), and 7.71% wanted to be familiar with the customs of the people living in these areas. In this case it should be stated that about 63% of travel to these areas is for recreation and use of weather and purchasing handicrafts that is a significant figure and it can be used to stimulate the sale of products in the planning of handicrafts.

The tourism boom and the increase in tourists in the area can have a positive impact on improving the economic situation of the residents of these areas, migration reduction, rural development, increase employment, boost agricultural production market specifically in these areas, as well as product advertising, sales, getting new ideas, become more competitive in terms of quality of goods among the artisans of the region and in overall prosperity and development of the area that requires planning and special attention of government.

Recommendations

Implications of this research are presented in both short and long term as follows:

A) Short-term recommendations.

1. Informing the passengers and tourists about ecotourism attractions in the publication of maps and brochures, as well as advertising through mass media (radio and television).
2. Creation of ecotourism associations, mountaineering and local leaders to encourage and guide tourists to visit nature prone areas such as Shahkuh, Qarnabad, pilgrimage and ChaharBagh.
3. The establishment of tourism agencies in the form of one day or multi-day tours that take tourists to the area's natural attractions.
4. Teaching villagers to deal effectively with tourists and awaring them about the benefits of tourism and its role in improving the welfare and living area
5. The maintenance of roads, tracks and the river and determination of land used in mountainous areas to increase tourism income, and finally the development and prosperity of the region.
6. The development of trade and handicrafts shops to sell needed products for rural tourism.

B) Long-term recommendations

1. According to the findings, more tourists travel in summer to these areas. Therefore it is recommended that hotels and motels, etc. to be constructed in the study area and prone areas.
2. The provision of adequate and affordable rental housing under the supervision of government be provided for tourists who want to stay in this area.

3. The implementation of joint projects with the private sector in developing the facilities (hotels, restaurants).
4. The feasibility study and construction of pharmaceutical plants in adjacent areas for the production of medicinal plants that create jobs and income for rural people, especially women.
5. The establishment of parks, ski resort on the slopes of Mount Zylan, tele cabins for visitors of mountain, Internet kiosks to provide general information to different groups using the funds of the private and public sectors.
6. Feasibility study of construction of the park in mountain of Shahkuh and Chaharbagh villages and putting recreational facilities such as Restaurant, café, cafeterias, traditional food, Pergola, amusement park and so on.
7. Construction of parking for tourists.

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