Investigating the Barriers of Tourism Development in Mazandaran Province

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most important activities of contemporary human, evolving political, economic, and cultural statuses and human life style by creating wonderful changes in the earth face [16].

Today, tourism industry is so importance in economic and social development of countries that economists have considered it as invisible export [9]. Tourism industry can be an appropriate strategy to develop export and acquire rich foreign exchange incomes for countries and significantly influence the increase of employment, incomes related to residential places as well as state incomes of countries.

In the sixth paragraph of twenty-year perspective document, it is referred that the objective of the country is to gain the first economic place at South and West Asian Region level with an emphasis on continuous economic growth, relative per capita income growth and reaching to a perfect employment. According to this paragraph, tourism industry should be placed at the first preferences of development since in spite of high employment rate in this sector, tourism will cause the rapid economic growth followed by the improvement of income distribution in the country. Considering the fact that in natural absorptions and in historical absorption, Iran has the fifth and tenth rank in the world, respectively, it has been predicted that an annual income of 20 billion dollars should be obtained at the end of the seventh development plan (simultaneous with the end of 20-year perspective document). Therefore, planning, guiding and developing tourism industry is one of the critical sources of income and employment creation and entails many social, cultural and environmental effects [14].

With an area of 3248.4 m² and a population of 478399 people, Sari City is one of the cities of Mazandaran province. According to the last administrative divisions (2012), Sari City includes 6 districts, 4 townships and 15 rural agglomerations. This city encompasses one-fourth of area and 15.56% of population of total Mazandaran Province among which, 299790 people live in urban points and 178924 people live in rural points. Due to its certain geographical situation, this city is connected from north to Mazandaran Sea and from south to Alborz Mountains.

Keywords: Barriers, Development, Tourism, Sari City
With respect to the favorable natural and climatic conditions, abundant natural absorptions, various climatic features, beautiful ecological perspectives, proximity to Mazandaran Sea, appropriate vegetation, various wildlife, various rivers, abundant springs, mineral waters, natural parks, cultural historic buildings, and unique handcraft, Sari City is considered one of the powerful tourism poles of Iran, absorbing many tourists from different points of the country annually. But it seems that in some infrastructural constructions such as residential units, transportation infrastructures, urbane services s, etc., tourism places of Mazandaran have not a necessary facilities and wide advertisements to satisfy tourists such that currently, most of historical, cultural and religious absorptions and even many of natural absorptions have remained unknown for tourists; while introducing these regions can develop tourism in the city.

On the one hand, high regional capabilities show that the studied region has every kind of planning such as in residential units’ installations and hosting with good quality, marketing, advertising and encouraging private sector to invest in tourism or formulating a comprehensive tourism plan to absorb tourist, and can play a special role in tourism area using abundant available potentials such that it is led to tourism satisfaction, the increase of travel demand and the increase of income for tourism industry in the city.

Considering the importance of tourism, the present paper attempts to present rational strategies to investigate the effective components such as infrastructural and services facilities, marketing and advertising in tourism, and weakness in tourism management to develop tourism industry in Sari City.

Theoretical Principles:

Nowadays, tourism industry has been widely developed in the world and many countries have been able to considerable improve their situation through this industry, leading to the decrease of some problems such as unemployment, low income and lack of foreign exchange income.

Tourism has found a significant importance as an economic, social and cultural activity to develop countries. Tourism is a phenomenon which can lead to the increase of production, level of life, public welfare, and employment in case of proper planning. At the present time, tourism is one of the greatest services industries of the world in terms of income generation such that its growth is followed by many social and economic changes [9].

Sustainable Development:

Development refers to animate economic, social, political, and cultural body at national level and its continuous feeding. In the process of development, the talents of community are flourished at all levels and dimensions. Development is a time-consuming and long-term process [13].

Sustainable development is of concepts propounded and employed in the last 1980s and especially after holding Earth Summit (1992) in Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia.

The concept of sustainable development is more complex than “development”. On the one hand, sustainable in this combination refers to the issue of earth’s tolerable capacity without considering some concepts such as inequity and social justice and on the other hand, development involves a continuous economic growth considering the ability and capacity of earth or ecological power and environmental limitations. Therefore, sustainable development is something beyond development [23].

The purpose of sustainable development is to remove the needs of the present generation without weakening the abilities of future generation in meeting their needs. Based on such a definition, a document was obtained from U.N Conference regarding environment and development as a work design of sustainable development for the 21st century.

Sustainable Tourism :

The concept of sustainable tourism is rooted in sustainable development and given that sustainable development, in fact, is regarded a comprehensive growth and progress in economic, social, cultural, and political areas and due to the role of tourism in these area, particularly in under development countries, it is highly necessary to consider sustainable tourism [18].

In sustainable tourism, taking host communities into consideration is of high importance and these needs are specially considered during planning and management process of tourism. Tourism sustainable development is a development in which balance, maintaining values and quality of ethics and economic principles as well as economic merits are observed all together and it is tried to replace a merely economic development with a transcend, balanced and comprehensive development.

Sustainable development does not meant that tourism-caused effects do not occur but it means that those effects should not threat ecologial sustainable an so on. Sustainable tourism not only should be developed but it should be managed. Sustainable tourism cannot be discussed apart from sustainable development. Accordingly, the concepts of sustainable development in tourism sector can be explained in the form of sustainable development of macro-economy [11].
Tourism is an industry which cannot separately grow. The development of this industry depends on the growth and development of various social infrastructures and sectors. In this regard, governments play a key role but the role of private sectors’ participation and their interaction with governmental sectors, non-governmental organizations and institutes should not be disregarded. As a result, all the capabilities of community should be employed to achieve sustainable development in tourism area.

**The Challenges of Tourism Development:**

**Economic barriers:**
1. Lack of supporting investment in tourism (governmental and private)
2. Inappropriate economic policies
3. Increasing tax rate, insurance, tools, etc. in tourism industry
4. Lack of adequate support of private sector and encouragement to invest in tourism [12]

**Social barriers:**
1. Fear of destroying effects of tourism on culture
2. Lack of familiarity with tourists’ tastes
3. Cultural and religious conditioners of the country
4. The existence of some inappropriate behaviors in airport whether in passport police part or customhouse
5. Low information level of the community regarding tourism and tourism absorptions of the country
6. Lack of welfare, health and medical facilities
7. Lack of appropriate planning to fill tourists’ free time
8. Legal and administrative barrier and weaknesses such as restraining customs regulations and event issue
9. Legal problems and weak supporting rules and regulations [12]

**Managerial barriers and organization:**
1. Weak macro-management in tourism industry
2. Lack of attention to human resources development in tourism industry
3. Lack of a comprehensive and strategic plan as well as lack of Iran tourism and tourism goals and policies in form of an executive program
4. Inconsistency in cooperation with governmental organizations influencing the improvement of tourism status
5. Separated decisions of organizations
6. Lack of specialized force
7. Lack of using experienced experts familiar with tourism industry [3]

**Educational and research barriers:**
1. Lack of continuous and alternative education to train technical, executive and educational personnel
2. Lack of effective and efficient research system to recognize strategic needs of tourism industry sector

**Weak welfare facilities and services:**
1. Inadequate welfare, services and residential system in tourism industry
2. Lack of adequate supervision and effective controlling leverages regarding retrofitting, repairing and maintaining

**Cultural and advertising barriers:**
1. Mental problems, negative and inappropriate suppositions about tourists
2. Weak structure of advertisement and informing
3. Lack of applying proper methods of communicating with tourists [12]

**Literature:**
In an article entitled the potentials and barriers of tourism in Semnan Province, Damghanian identified the barriers of absorbing tourists and develop tourism. As they concluded, the lack of appropriate and desirable facilities, lack of accurate attitudes towards the importance of tourism, lack of complete familiarity with global trade principles, and so forth are considered as the barriers of tourism in Semnan Province.

In a study titled the industry of tourism in Iran: capabilities, barriers and strategies, Amin Bidokhti [1] briefly investigated the role of tourism industry on macro-economic variables such as employment, investment, fair distribution of income, and some barriers of the development of this industry and presented applied strategies for the country to achieve its main share and place in global market of tourism.

In a study titled the barriers of tourism development in Semnan Province: presenting strategies for its future development, Saemi [2] concluded that there is a direct relation between various decision making centers, weak
marketing, weak underlying facilities, tourism services s, and lack of the culture of accepting tourist and underdevelopment of tourism in Semnan Province.

In a paper entitled explaining the problems of tourism industry of Islamic Republic of Iran, Zarei Matin et al. found 22 main problems of tourism including governmental, private, national, and international problems.

Karami Dehkordi and Kalantari [18] conducted a study identifying the problems of tourism in Chahar Mahal Bakhtiari Province using Grounded Theory. As they concluded, tourism industry of the province faces infrastructural problems, marketing and health problems, pale cultural attractions, lack of proper perception about tourism, lack of motivation in local authorities, local biases, lack of planning, research and supervision, problems related to human resources, tourism problems, government, and problems related to handicraft industries.

Taheri Mamne et al. [10] investigated the challenges of tourism in Shiraz City regarding the limit number of residential centers. In this regard, they firstly studied the ratio of tourists to the number of residential centers and revealed that in spite of mass of passengers, residential centers work below the standard capacity in many month of year. Propounding some hypotheses regarding the quality of residential centers and its effect on tourism absorption, they investigated the quality of services s in residential centers. As found, there is a significant gap between the importance and function of quality components in all dimensions of the research.

Taghavi and Oholoipour Soleimani [5] investigated the factors influencing the growth of tourism in Iran. They found that the coefficients of the variables pertain to the number of hotel rooms, foreign exchange income during the past periods, free exchange rate, and tourism agencies are significant as expected.

Madvoshti and Niazi [12] investigated the development of tourism in Golestan Province. As they concluded, three is a significant relation between underdevelopment of the province and four factors of various decision making centers, weak marketing, weak underlying facilities, tourism services s, and lack of the culture of accepting tourist.

Goudarzvand Chegini and Molaii Hashchtin [22] conducted a study analyzing the strategies of developing tourism industry in Gilan. As the revealed, ecotourism sector can be useful as one of the main strategies to develop tourism industry with respect to social and cultural conditions of the provinces and among geographical factors, sea and shores geography has had the highest effect in attracting tourist to Gilan.

Meharabi et al. [15] explored the barriers of tourism development in Islamic Republic of Iran. As they concluded, weak infrastructural facilities is of the most barrier in tourism development and after that, political and cultural barriers have the most effect on tourism underdevelopment.

Latifi et al. [20] examined the barriers influencing the development of tourism activities in rural areas of Hamedan (with an emphasis on the target of tourism) using factor analysis. Accordingly, the concluded that infrastructural, cultural, planning, and managerial factors as well as advertising totally explain 63.17% of variance.

In an article entitled the reasons of underdevelopment and problems of tourism and its management in Mazandaran (a case study of Babolsar City), Jafarian explored the problems and weaknesses of tourism. As he found, these problems include weak management, identifying infrastructural and services barriers, weaknesses of marketing, and cultural-educational problems related to tourism.

**Conceptual Model:**

**Methodology:**

The present work was a descriptive-analytical-correlation study using library and filed methods. The statistical population included tourists and passengers traveled to Sari City and tourism experts working in cultural heritage-tourism-handicraft industries organization of Sari (419 people; 384 tourists and 35 experts). Using the table of Morgan, the sample size was computed 384 and 35 experts were also investigated as the sample. To gather required data, a questionnaire was distributed among the sample. The validity and reliability of the applied questionnaire were evaluated using experts’ opinions and Cronbach’s alpha, respectively. To analyze the obtained data, Friedman test, t-test, and Pearson correlation test were used thorough SPSS software.

**Findings:**

The first hypothesis: there is a significant relation between the lack of infrastructural facilities and services s of tourism in Sari City and its tourism development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Testing the First Hypothesis.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of both groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since significance level of the tests related to the three groups is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is confirmed at the confidence level of 95%. Therefore, it can be stated that there is a significant relation between the lack of infrastructural facilities and services of tourism in Sari City and its tourism development.

The second hypothesis: there is significant relation between weak tourism marketing and advertising in Sari City and its tourism development.

### Table 2: Testing the Second Hypothesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>0.398</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>0.332</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of both groups</td>
<td>0.357</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since significance level of the tests related to the three groups is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is confirmed at the confidence level of 95%. Therefore, it can be stated that there is a significant relation between weak tourism marketing and advertising in Sari City and its tourism development.

The third hypothesis: there is a significant relation between weak tourism management in Sari City and its tourism development.

### Table 3: Testing the Third Hypothesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>0.325</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of both groups</td>
<td>0.313</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since significance level of the tests related to the three groups is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is confirmed at the confidence level of 95%. Therefore, it can be stated that there is a significant relation between weak tourism management in Sari City and its tourism development.

The fourth hypothesis: there is a significant difference between the experts and tourists’ opinions regarding infrastructural and services barriers of tourism development.
Table 4: Testing the Fourth Hypothesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: T-Test Results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Computed T</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the significance level is greater than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected at the confidence level of 95%. Therefore, it can be stated that there is no significant difference between experts and tourists’ opinions regarding infrastructural and services barriers of tourism development.

The fifth hypothesis: there is a significant difference between experts and tourists’ opinions regarding advertising and marketing barriers of tourism development.

Table 6: The Mean of Experts and Tourists’ Opinions regarding Advertising and Marketing Barriers of Tourism Development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: T-Test Results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Computed T</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the significance level is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is confirmed at the confidence level of 95%. Therefore, it can be stated that there is a significant difference between experts and tourists’ opinions regarding advertising and marketing barriers of tourism development.

The sixth hypothesis: there is a significant difference between experts and tourists’ opinions regarding management barriers of tourism development.

Table 8: The Mean of Experts and Tourists’ Opinions regarding Management Barriers of Tourism Development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: T-Test Results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Computed T</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the significance level is greater than 0.05, the hypothesis is confirmed at the confidence level of 95%. Therefore, it can be stated that there is a significant difference between experts and tourists’ opinions regarding management barriers of tourism development.

To investigate the opinions of the experts and tourists regarding tourism development in Sari City and comparing the opinions, Friedman test was used.

Table 10. Friedman Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indices</th>
<th>Rank Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructural and services</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising and marketing</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The importance level of tourism development barriers in Sari City includes weak advertising and marketing, weak management and weak infrastructure and services, respectively.

Table 11: Friedman Test Results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Computed $X^2$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>73.22</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>70.53</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of both groups</td>
<td>68.46</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the table, since significance level of the test related to the experts, tourists and both of them is less than 0.05, it can be stated that there is a significant difference between the mean ranks of tourism development barriers in Sari City at the confidence level of 95%.
Conclusion:

Mazandaran Province is one of the beauty spots of Iran. With respect to proximity to the capital (Tehran), having natural tourism resources (climate, jungles, mountains, sea, and so forth), it has been considered by domestic and foreign tourists as a desirable tourism destination. As the provincial capital of Mazandaran, Sari City also has abundant tourism attractions such that millions tourists travel to this city every year. However, there are some problems and barriers for Sari Tourism and these problems can cause the instability of tourism if they are not properly managed.

The purpose of the present study is to present some strategies to remove the problems and barriers of tourism development in Mazandaran Province.

To determine the lack of relation between the variables investigated in the research hypotheses, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. As the research findings revealed, there is a significant relation between the lack of infrastructural and services facilities and its tourism development. A significant relation was also found between weak advertising and marketing in Sari City and its tourism development. Moreover, a significant relation was reported between weak tourism management and tourism development in the city.

To compare the opinions of the experts and tourists regarding each of the barriers influencing tourism development in Mazandaran Province, t-test was used. As found, there was no significant difference between the experts and tourists’ opinions regarding infrastructural and services barriers of tourism development. There was also no significant difference between the experts and tourists’ opinions regarding advertising and marketing barriers of tourism development. Additionally, no significant difference was found between the experts and tourists’ opinions regarding management barriers of tourism development.

Finally, to rank the barriers of tourism development in Sari City from the perspective of the experts and tourists, Friedman test was used. The importance level of tourism development barriers in Sari City includes weak advertising and marketing, weak management and weak infrastructure and services, respectively. As the test results showed, there is a significant difference between tourism development barriers in Sari City.

REFERENCES

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