Investigating the economic and environmental effects of tourism on rural areas in Iran

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Abstract — Rural tourism refers to employment and income potential which can be an appropriate strategy for socio-economic development of rural communities in order to protect environment, civilization and rural development. So it can improve economic status of the inhabitants by creating new economic opportunities. This research seeks to identify and analyze the economic and environmental implications of tourism in rural areas based on sustainable tourism characteristics. The research method used in this paper is documentary-analytical which uses multiple papers and internet references. The results show that although attention to rural tourism as a factor of national development cannot solve all the villager’s problems, but benefiting the effects on different economic and environmental sections such as employment, income, unemployment reduction, reclamation, rangeland and natural resources rehabilitation along with making appropriate policies in order to preserve environment will lead to sustainable rural development.

Keywords— rural tourism, social and environmental development, rural development

I. INTRODUCTION

Economic diversification, enhancing human development indices, rural migrations, increasing efficiency, human labor efficiency, employment, environment preservation and sustainable development are the concerns facing the today’s world. In developing countries mono-crop and oil depended economic has caused stagnation in agriculture, rural migration, loss of arable lands and increasing slums in cities. The countries which have turned to economic diversification, are on the way to define new and common strategies[9]. In another hand, insufficient rural income is one of the most important reasons for rural migration to cities which has caused many problems, so tourism industry can create jobs for rural households to prevent migration to cities[6]. This is while rural tourism activities has a tiny proportion of the country’s economic[10]. Rural tourism which has been the key to economic growth in developing and developed countries in twentieth century is considered as the industry with the most employment and most countries are trying to strength and improve it [1]. Also rural tourism as a specific kind of tourism, can solve much of the rural part’s economic problems such as unemployment and poverty with appropriate planning considering properties, requirements and cultural, social and economic issues [7]. Residents of rural areas, tourists and the planners of human factors related to tourism, can be helpful with understanding the effects of this industry on economic and environmental factors on rural areas. This paper is trying to evaluate the economic and environmental effects of tourism on rural areas and provide solutions for strengthen positive and decreasing negative effects of this industry on the rural areas.

II. THE CORE QUESTION

Many attempts have been conducted to promote agricultural extension and education in rural areas, so that special attention to rural tourism industry in order to diversify economic activities and employment in rural areas is one of the extension’s approaches. So studies in rural development emphasize on increasing rural income, employment, meeting the basic needs of the people, poverty alleviation and etc[7]. As a matter of fact rural tourism includes different activities of the tourists. Yet different kinds of the phenomenon categorized and separated as natural tourism, native tourism, village tourism and agriculture tourism [2]. So this industry has become extremely important because of creating employment and economic opportunities for the practitioners especially for the local communities beside agriculture, livestock and crafts activities but tourist’s entrance to some rural areas caused extinction of different kinds of plants and animals, increasing pollution and environment destruction. According to the fact that Iran is considered as one of the most wonderful countries in the world from the historical, natural, cultural attractions and having villages with various point of view and that agriculture is not able to provide employment and sufficient income for rural households on it’s own, it is important to pay sufficient attention to this industry in order to protect environment. In another hand according to this fact that extension of tourism as a new approach to rural development can play an important role in economic diversification, following questions will be discussed:

- How much rural tourism improves economic development in the countryside?
- How and in which way rural tourism can provide background for the rural economic development in a way to prevent harming environment and natural resources?

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What are the effects of rural tourism on rural areas so that by identifying its negative and positive effects, we could be able to enhance rural tourism?

### III. RESEARCH PURPOSES

The main aim of this paper is to evaluate economic and environmental effects of tourism on rural parts of Iran which includes this specific aims:

1. Identifying positive effects of tourism development on rural areas employment.
2. Identifying tourism development effects on rural areas income.
3. Identifying tourism effects on environmental dimension of villages.

### IV. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study was conducted using documentary method. After taking notes from library and internet references, necessary data have been collected to present the paper.

### V. RURAL TOURISM

Rural tourism as a social-recreational activity appeared in second half of eighteenth century in England and Europe. Many definitions presented for rural tourism, each one refers to specific dimensions and aspects. From the Rural Tourism Conference point of view it includes different kinds of tourism which have facilities and services in rural areas and widely is a source of income and employment in areas facing reduction in developing crafts [13]. Also rural tourism is a valuable source of employment and income which can be an appropriate strategy for socio-economic development in rural communities. Rural tourism is in associate with agricultural policies in many countries and can be an appropriate instrument in order to protect environment, culture and rural development [5]. Totally rural tourism is a form of economic activities of tourism that is conducted around the cities and areas with rural contexts which includes positive and negative effects for environment, mankind and nature [1]. Then, rural tourism has different kinds discussed as fallows[3]:

- **Natural tourism**: This kind of tourism deals with ecologic attractions;
- **Cultural tourism**: Deals with culture, history, cultural and historical heritages of rural inhabitants;
- **Native tourism**: Is a kind of tourism dealing either with natural attractions and people’s life and social norms which is dealing with natural attractions itself;
- **Village tourism**: In this kind of tourism, tourists live in village households and incorporate with rural economic and social activities;

**Agriculture tourism**: In this kind of tourism, tourists deal with traditional agriculture activities without negative consequences on the host ecosystem or incorporate with it;

### VI. ECONOMIC AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is the growth along with increasing production capacities including physical, human and social capacities so that in economic development will cause quantitative growth in production but along with it social institution will transform, attitudes will change, productivity of existing resources will increase continuously and dynamically and new innovations will be conducted every day.

In another words rural development is the revealing and exposing process on the one hand and changing, progressing and recreation process in another hand. This process aims to changing, evolution and revealing human potential power and identifying capacities and human interaction with places and behavior algorithms. The aim in rural development is to identify capacities and powers to achieve an honored life. So rural development is not just agriculture development, but it consists of a wide range of different human activities.

### VII. ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF TOURISM ON RURAL AREAS

**A. Positive effects of tourism on rural areas**

This industry’s role in employment and income for rural communities is one thing always considered in tourism because rural tourism as an instrument for employment and economic development in the area can bring hopes for decreasing poverty[13].

1) **Positive effects of tourism development on rural areas employment situation**

Agriculture section is not responding for rural income on its own because of the reasons such as of land, periodical droughts and changes in commodity prices, also poverty and unemployment are considered as two major problems in rural areas [7]. Tourism can be helpful in this context according to undeniable abilities in employment and defining non-agriculture incomes through creating proper local and native products market for consumers and tourists, creating a tendency to form local production network in village and creating interests to establish companies related to tourism activities in villages [8]. On the another hand establishing hotels, motels, restaurants and totally recreation and sport facilities will cause employment, income, and unemployment and poverty reduction in rural communities.

2) **Positive effects of tourism on rural areas income**
Tourism as a complementary option of income can be an appropriate strategy for improving rural areas by enhancing rural life standards, decreasing poverty and inequality in rural environments according to inefficiency of agriculture and crafts occupations [5]. Villagers can enhance their family's life by working in tourism services along with taking short-term training courses. So it can be asserted that this industry can be an appropriate solution for income and developing rural areas with proper utilization of human and natural resources and human potential capacities. Apart from high employment capacity by decreasing poverty, inequality problem and income distribution.  

2) Tourism development as a factor of non-native employment

Tourism development in some tourism villages has created considerable jobs for non-native private through activities with high investment requirement. In this respect the results of some papers about native inhabitant’s attitude have shown negative attitudes about tourism employment. For example attitude of the inhabitants of a tourism destination located in Turkey showed their concerns about employment of these activities for native people because labor required for tourism activities are is provided from other regions.

3) Rural tourism development as a factor of over-attention to constructions

Increasing investments of non-natives that are seeking more profit and work specially in construction part is a threat for those villagers who make income with renting their own suits. In another hand this causes more investment in construction and though destroying rural region's environment through agriculture and garden land use change [11].

4) Rural tourism development and rivers pollution, garbage shedding and etc.

Generally irregular and non-normative constructions in riversides, garbage shedding, discharge of sewage, changing agriculture lands to residential spaces, changing ranges to gardens, non-schedule road making and illegal hunting are the most important factors of environment pollution in rural areas with high tourism potential [2].

VIII. POTENTIAL ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES OF TOURISM ON RURAL AREAS

1) Local economic diversification
2) Promoting development index in developing areas
3) Employing many labors because of the high demand of this industry to labor
4) Region’s economic bases and agriculture activities consolidation
5) Official’s over-attention to environmental aspects of the rural areas
6) Investments in order to preserve ranges and landscapes in rural areas
7) Employment, increasing income and product diversification for rural inhabitants
8) Presenting appropriate services in order to improve crofts, gardens and rivers quantitatively and qualitatively

IX. MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL OBSTACLES AGAINST TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREA

1) Tourism economic foundations insufficiency and environmental destruction
2) lack of adequate currency credits
3) lack of effective interaction between economic decision units and politic , scientific and cultural centers
4) lack of necessary encouragers and guarantees in order to expand private sector’s investment
5) legal difficulties and lack of sufficient laws in order to preserve ranges and natural resources
6) lack of sufficient and effective human labor in economic and environmental tourism sector

X. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION
Results of this paper shows that rural tourism have many effects on rural economy. Although attention to rural tourism as a factor of national development cannot solve all the villagers problems, but benefiting its effects on different economic and environmental parts such as employment, income, unemployment, poverty reduction reclamation, rangeland and natural resources rehabilitation, preventing river pollution and agriculture land destruction along with making appropriate policies can help us towards rural development.

The studies have shown that rural tourism affects different parts of rural economy. So economic gap between rural and urban areas inhabitant especially in developing countries is not negligible, this phenomenon can organize economic situation of the areas inhabitants by creating new economic opportunities. It is suggested to overcome obstacles in rural tourism development so that it’s benefits like employment in construction, hotels, recreation facilities, crafts development, employment diversity, colportage, income, poverty and unemployment reduction, get more government fund and support, reclamation and rangeland rehabilitation, decrease migration, increasing hidden export and finally commonwealth will receive to villagers.

In another hand although rural tourism has negative effects like employment reduction in agriculture section, increasing over-attending to construction and environment destruction, employment instability, increasing goods and services prices, river pollution and garbage accumulation and creating jobs for non-natives. It is possible to decrease and terminate this negative effects by appropriate management and appropriate decisions and proceedings. Although rural tourism entrance to rural areas can solve many economic problems and can be considered as an effective factor along with other necessary factors to achieve rural development.

XI. REFERENCES