

# The Impacts of Religious Tourism on Urban Sustainable Development Process; Zanjan City - Iran

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**Abstract:**-This study with the goal of examining phenomena and positive features of Zanjan city that is recognized as one of religious cities as well one of tourism poles in Iran and its buildings are registered as in the world records and its relationship with sustainable development of the region has been analyzed. Research method in this research is descriptive-analytical and data gathering was done in forms of library and field (questionnaires, observation and interviews) gathering. The results obtained from the questionnaire shows that by analysis average number of tourism in the sample city based on single- sample t test showed high levels in all the disciplines of study that it shows religious tourism in aspects of social, economic, biology physical and environmental which by better planning and management of components in each aspects can lead to improved urban infrastructure development in the study region and in all aspects being impressible was positive and most of this impressible was in the economic dimension. On the other hand, using the Friedman test shows that the highest mean rank relates to environmental aspect and the lowest it relates to economic one.

**Keywords:** *tourism, religious tourism, sustainable urban development.*

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## 1- Introduction

Tourism is widely recognized as a sector of strategic importance. According to the World Tourism Organization, most scenarios of tourism development worldwide point to growth targets well above the forecasts of other key economic industries (Silva et al., 2010). At present, tourism is becoming one of the main economic pillars and potential source for diversity it in order to reach sustainable development. Such that with better planning toward it can at destination urban areas in association with local society and its residents with tourists and tourism industry provide background for more stability in other words, the tourism industry is a multi-faceted prism that each of its faces resolves some aspects of life and needs of human communities. By the capability of reaching to opportunities such as employment, earn foreign exchange and improve the balance of payments, increased tax revenue from economic activities related to tourism, creating regional balance, adjusting for wealth, make income towards urban areas is possible (Cawley, 2008;Ostad Hosein, 2000). Also, poverty reduction in far off areas where there are rich material and non-material (such as customs, traditions and folklores) sources, help to protect the works and values, help to preserve the environment and improving the quality of the environment through tourism development will be possible (Koutsou et al., 2009 ;Chuck, 1998). Religious tourism is one of the most important tools for communication and deep understanding along with accurate understanding between nations. In this respect, the pilgrimage as a common phenomenon all of the religions with a long history, and more than any scripture always been one of the varieties of religious tourism was considered and is linking factor between "tourism" and "religion" advantages simultaneously. Today, the industry as one of the main economic sources has undeniable effects on cultural, social and economic development of countries. For this reason, many experts believe that this industry must be considered as the main source of income, job creation, infrastructure development and private sector development (Parsaeayan, 1998) however, religious tourism, is regarded as an economic, environmental, social power and a political phenomenon (Richter, 1989) and if not managed properly, can cause numerous problems and bottlenecks. The effects and consequences of this conflict and duality in some cities that to various reasons in terms of attracting tourists have higher abilities are well visible. The situation in the religious cities for the reasons and motivations to travel and visit which is concerned to worship and pilgrimage places, is much more pronounced. Officials do not show much incentive to attract tourists and as the result, do not try to improve services and infrastructure. Because it is believed that the pilgrims pay attention, to more strong incentives than facilities (Saberifar et al., 2012). Iran, as one of the most interesting countries in the world in terms of tourist attractions is one the ten top countries, and in terms of tourism diversity is one the five top countries in addition is one of three top countries in terms of handicrafts industries (Zangi Abadi and colleagues, 2006). After India, Iran has the highest rank in South Asia tourism (WOT, 2000). City of Zanjan is one of the religious tourism cities where is the annually host of domestic and foreign tourists. The city is one of important cities in Iran that is located at central area of north western of Iran and with regard to communications, because of establishment on transit road, is considered as linking point between center and west and north western of Iran. The tourism attractions of the city are scattered in all parts of it and we can take in accounts it's natural, historical, social and cultural attractions. Purpose of this study is

to investigate the development of religious tourism and its effects on urban sustainable development process in under study area and seek to answers the following questions.

- 1- Is there a significant relationship between religious tourism and urban development in the under study area?
- 2- The greatest impacts of the religious tourism were in which of economic, social - cultural, environmental and ecological indices of under study area?

### 2- Material and methods Method

Present research applied research in terms of objective and with attention to examination current situation and analysis relations between under consideration variables and theoretical significance, research method in this research descriptive-analytical method and for collection information using field method, library method questionnaire and interview with people and officials, fiche taking of books, articles, seminars results, plans and, official stat letters PhD. Articles, master of bachelor proposals and official centers and institutions and so on, related to religious tourism has been carried on, for this purpose with direct reference to statistical centers and urban stat letters comprehensive information has been prepared for research and then through interview and field studies aforementioned research has been completed. Statistical population of the research is 349713 people that with 0.05 error and sample volume of 322, questionnaires were calculated and by Cochran corrected formula, 103 questionnaires was designed by 30 questions and randomly distributed between people. According to obtained data from statistical society through questionnaire, for drawing and decomposition and analysis of data SPSS software was used.

### 3-Conceptual foundations

Religious tourism is a means to link together people with different religions and cultures and helps to better understand each other despite of political and social stresses. According to world tourism organization, religion is considered as one of the main motivations to travel (<http://www.hawzah.net>). Available historical documents and documentation from the great civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt and other works and evidence remained from prehistory ages, indicate religious trips of thousands person of man, such that human dense masses since thousands years ago resisted against any sufferings for practice their religious duties and traveled long distances and trips. Indeed pilgrimage and religious tourism have roots in religious beliefs and creeds (Mo'meni et al., 2008). In this type of tourism, main motivation is pilgrimage holy places and shrines, that domiciles and type of facilities, however may have effects on stay time of pilgrim, but family income have no such role at main motivation to pilgrimage to this places (Fatemi,2001). Two group of religious tourists can be observed: the first group is pilgrims, or people that their motivation to travel, is just performing religious affairs, and their time and stay time duration is not function of their leisure time, and the others are religious tourists that whilst performing pilgrimages and participating in religious ceremonies, visit other tourism locations as well or in another words, their travels objectives are multi-purpose trips with the priority of pilgrimage which it in turn leads to increase trip time and as result increase travel costs (Momeni and et al, 2008). In this regard, today's tourism resources and attractions gained so much importance in all sections of tourism planning and management; but making benefits from tourism endowments isn't possible without preparing appropriate tourism development bed. So identification of attractions in the first stage and planning for their development at next stages sounds necessary (Behzadfar & Zamanian, 2007). Meanwhile to reach to best strategies in tourism affairs, necessary cooperation at sections of research, aware making , product development, human resources, marketing and supervision on rules implementation, is always necessary (Shahande,2001). Pilgrimage holy and sacred places and participation in religious ceremonies, roots in the culture of the country. According to existence of many holy places in rural areas of the country, religious tourism is regarded as one of the major patterns of tourism in rural areas. Some of the holy places in rural areas of national have national importance and have attracted tourists from all over the country. But many of these places are important at the regional and local level and attract tourists and pilgrims from nearby towns and villages, especially on weekends and special occasions. Most of these tourists are daily visitors but in some of the holy sites of national and regional importance, there are more or less visits along with accommodation (Rezvani, 2008). Therefore, many studies about religious tourism and its effects on different rural and urban issues have been carried on and are summarized in the following table.

**Table 1: Summary of studies in the field of tourism and religious tourism in recent years**

Scholar	Title	Method	Variables
Taghvaei et al (2010)	Analysis of religious tourism effects on the city Mamasani	Descriptive-analytical Questionnaire	and Economic- cultural and environmental
Goudarzi (2010)	Tourism strategies in the development of religious tourism	Descriptive -analytical And using the SWOT model	Job creation, increase revenue, reduce migration
Ebrahim-Zadeh et al. (2011)	using strategic planning process in religious tourism development of Qom	Using SWOT analytical matrix	Religious-Cultural Natural History
Shahidi et al. (2009)	strategic planning in tourism development in Lavasan village of Hamedan	Using SWOT Model	Social, natural, Cultural Environmental

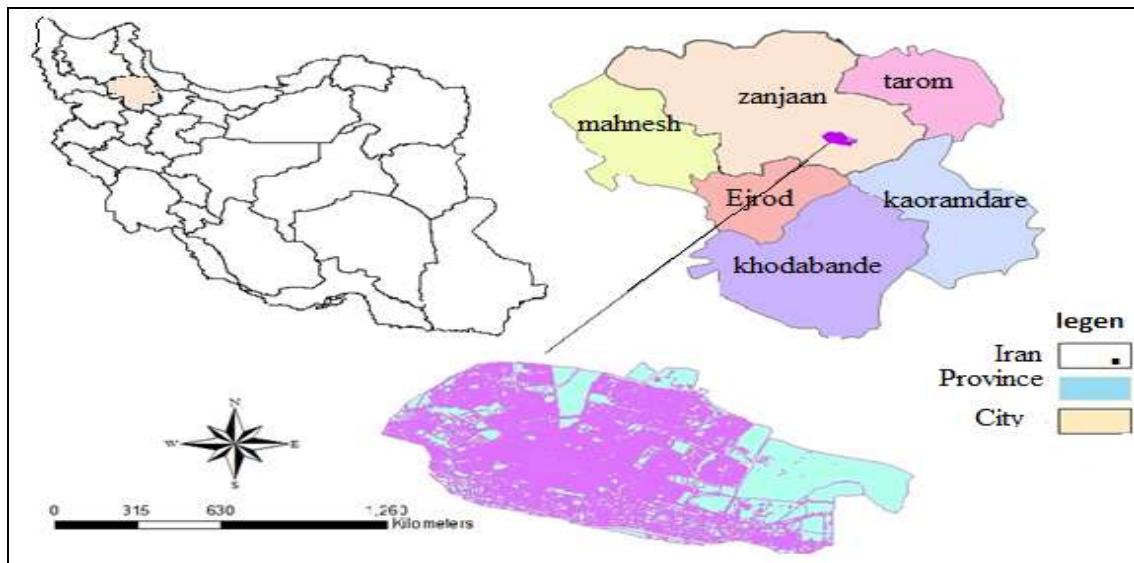
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Ranjbar et al. (2011)	Management Challenges of Religious tourism attractions	Descriptive - analytical	- Religious, cultural, historical
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#### 4- Results & Discussion

Zanjan city is located between 48 degrees and 26 minutes to 48 degrees and 36 degrees at east longitude and between 36 degrees and 39 minutes to 36 degrees and 41 minutes at north latitude line. The city is 330 kilometers away from the city of Tehran, and is limited from north to Taron, from south to Khodabandeh, from west to Mahneshan and from east to Abhar in Zanjan province. The city has an area of 2,469 square kilometers, which is 17% of the total area of the Zanjan province. According to the latest census results of year 1385, with a population of 250-500 thousand people, the city is regarded as political-administrative center of Zanjan province. Location choosing of Zanjan city was done on a narrow plain with gentle slope 1.5 to 2.5 percent from North West to the south east, such that the height difference between north and south of city is about 100 meters. Therefore, due to the gentle slope, in terms of climate attributes has a dry and cold climate and relatively flat terrain came to exist.



Shape1: City of Zanjan map

In this regard that the city contains excellent nature-wandering, historic and religious places such wind mills, unique cultural heritage as well specific culture of people, has very high capabilities for attracting tourists. In religious tourism people come to visit the places to which are interested in their preservation. Cultural traditions, such as the religious performances, folk traditions, societal norms, battle arenas and historical buildings are also the same. This type of tourism includes natural-cultural heritage sites, gardens and areas related to wild life and also valuable cultural sightseeing. Regardless attractions related to the history and culture it is said that historic and religious tourism is like seeking something that relates past and present to each other is an issue that is connected to nostalgia such that families go vacations to somewhere that sees the place where their ancestors live (Simbar, 2003). Among Iranian cities Zanjan is regarded as one of the ancient cities of the country and there are still some phenomena and elements of the old town, including the historic Market, Jame-Mosque, Chehelsotoon Mosque – ValiAsr Mosque- Sayed Ibrahim Shrine- laundry Museum – Stone caravansary - Museum of the Martyrs - Historical Sardar Bridge - Zolfagharie Building- Darayie Construction and others. Also old works of the city from various periods can be found there. The historical and cultural buildings have the essence for acceptance of hundreds of domestic and international tourism daily. But the need to actualize the essence is the existence of a supporter and a determined one for repairing these great buildings .the central texture of Zanjan city as the main core of the center, it has the ability for helping in promoting role and position of Zanjan in different levels of performance in Municipal - Provincial and Regional from one side and On the other side, is the field of urban Sustainable Development particularly in economic, social and environmental contexts. This requires an understanding of the possibilities and limitations of city development in both structural and functional states based on Formulation and its heritage. The duty of the center of Zanjan for the goal of huge sustainable development of tourism in the Zanjan city can be outlined as follows:

- Underling to urban sustainable development in the six contexts of social, economic, environmental, physical access and management
- - Helping to organizing and promotion of the role of tourism in Zanjan city, especially in attracting tourists to stay out of range with improving their facilities and leisure facilities.

**Table 2: The relationship between landscape of development of Zanjan city and religious tourism**

Filed	Explanation	The responsibility of central area
landscape	Sustainable development of Zanjan	-Underling to urban sustainable development in the seven contexts of social, economic, environmental, physical ,management and democracy
major goals	Sustainable tourism development based on natural and cultural tourism development in Zanjan Renovation and development of service sector  Development and improvement of the quality of urban life, prosperity and social justice	-Attracting a wider range of tourism for staying More - improving its leisure facilities  -The establishment of professional services with superior performance levels of municipal, provincial and regional in itself- -Granting refining approach for systematic development of service sector  -To help the reduction of the unemployment rate in the city by creating new sources of revenue (promoting tourism performance) -Organizing leisure makers, improve housing quality, improve accessibility, active protection of natural and historical resources

**Table 3: Descriptive characteristics of respondents in the sample village:**

	The most responders	Number of responders
Age	40-50	35,5
education	Diploma and above	33,8
gender	woman	38,2
marital	married	41,2
Job	Free	36,7
Number of households	3 to 4 people	41,2

Among the characteristics of the questionnaire respondents, aged 50 to 40 (35.3 percent) and 24 people, education (diploma and above) 33.8 percent and 23 people, 38.2 percent of female respondents (36 people) were included. Also, 41.2% of respondents (38%) were married. Meanwhile, 36.7 percent of employed respondents to the questionnaire were (self-employed), which is composed of 25 members, is dedicated. 41.2% of the total (28) of respondents is living in a 3-4 member's families: Among the characteristics of the questionnaire respondents, aged 50 to 40 (35.3 percent) and 24 people, education (diploma and above) 33.8 percent and 23 people, 38.2 percent of female respondents (36 people) were included. Also, 41.2% of respondents (38%) were married. Meanwhile, 36.7 percent of employed respondents to the questionnaire were (self-employed), which is composed of 25 members, is dedicated. 41.2% of the total (28) of respondents is living in a 3-4 member's families:

**Table (4) has been examined the relationship between religious tourism by single-sample t-test**

Components	mean	T test statistic	Numerical desirability test = 3			
			Freedom degree	significant	The difference in mean	Confidence interval Low High limit limit
Socio-culture	3.50	6.114	107	0.002	.50253	.3381 .6669
Economic	2.75	3.207	107	0.007	.24488	.3976 .0921
Physical	2.78	2.773	107	0.013	.21967	.3781 .0612
environmental	2.77	-2.560	107	0.000	.22951	-.4088 -.0502

Analysis of the mean number of single-sample t-tests of tourism in the study area revealed high-level of research in all of the study issues that indicate Religious tourism in the social, economic, and environmental and physical dimensions. With better planning and management, components in each dimension can lead to improvement of urban infrastructure development in the area of study and in all dimensions, the effectiveness was positive and the maximum effectiveness was in the socio-cultural and economic dimensioned.

As Table 3 shows that by including the spectral range of between 1 to 5 based on Liker scale in households living in the city, is fluctuating. This rate is less than the number desirability 3, is evaluated indicating a positive impact on physical and socio-economic and environmental aspects of the residence households. The difference in Alpha level 0/01 is significant and the difference of the numerical desirability distribution is positively estimated.

**Table (5): the significant difference of Freedman mean rank for each dimension of urban sustainable development**

Components	number	Standard deviation	mean	Freedman mean rank
Socio	107	.64195	3.50	3.77
Economic	107	.59635	2.75	1.93
environmental	107	.70018	2.77	2.11
Physical	107	.61876	22.78	2.18
Chi-square test			2.508	
Freedom degree			3	
Significance level			.0000	

Table (5) has been examined the relationship between religious tourists and urban development by Freedman test. Friedman test shows a significant difference between the mean ranks of each dimension of urban sustainable development in households study cases by the alpha level of 0/01.meanwhile, the highest and lowest mean ranking is related to environmental and economic dimensions, respectively. Quantitative analysis of data from the mean rank of urban development represents a low level of household life with respect to the economic and social aspects. The level of environment dimension is above the average.

The result is that in all dimensions such as physical, social, economic and environmental planning is needed for leading to urban sustainable development.

**Table (6) the correlation matrix of quadruple capacity at the statistical community of case study.**

		economical	physical	environmental	social
economic	Pearson Correlation	1	.971**	.657**	.800**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	107	107	107	107
physical	Pearson Correlation	.971**	1	.697**	.790**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	107	107	107	107
environmental	Pearson Correlation	.657**	.697**	1	.354**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.005
	N	107	107	107	1047
social	Pearson Correlation	.800**	.790**	.354**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.005	
	N	107	107	107	107

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Analysis: Nonparametric correlation between four capacity indexes; socio - cultural, economic, physical and environmental in the city of study shows that there is a direct relationship between these four indexes. As shown in Table (5), with increasing the capacity of one existing capability, the other capabilities will have the significant increase in the level of alpha 05/0 percent.

### 5-Conclusions

According to studies by library and survey methods in Zanjan city, it is indicated that tourism is as a dynamic industry with distinctive and unique characteristics and it is dedicated the most important part of the economic and productive activities of developed countries or developing countries to itself. And among the various branches of tourism, religious tourism is among the oldest and the most prosperous tourism at past or in the present in the world that the climate difficulties or bad weather don't hinder it and the antiquity of it back to the antiquity of the religious culture. Nowadays, with all components and different species, due to structural and functional characteristics could be placed in the context of global tourism, So that the whole world is covered by its domain of influence. According to estimates of world travel and religious tourism organization, religious tourism has been dedicated 26% of the world's current tourism to itself. Tourism experts believe that because of the Iran's' special cultural-religious position among the other countries, religious tourism has a specific growth and developmental place in our country. With this condition, religious tourism with 8919 sacred religious places still hasn't the professional and focused organization and this situation can be seen even in major cities such as Mashhad and Qom. . According to existence of many holy places in urban areas of the country, religious tourism is considered as one of the major patterns of tourism in regional areas. Some of the holy places in urban areas have significant national importance, which attract tourists from all over the country. Religious places in Zanjan are a sample of places that attract a lot of visitors every year. However, these visits of the different regions of the areas is caused to creation of occupations in different fields; Such as making petrol stations and town construction industry and increasing the citizens' incomes, improving infrastructure (paving roads), removing and isolating towns and cities. Social and cultural trades have positive effects on urban areas. It also due to strengthening and supporting of local services such as: public transportation and health care, creating facilities and new attractions such as cultural facilities, entertainment or sporting facilities. Enhancing social relationship with other remote communities and making opportunities for cultural exchange, creating greater awareness of

local cultures corrections, professions and cultural identity. Refilling rural areas, because tourism makes the reduction of immigration from this city and it caused Income generating, motivation for conservation, protection and development of the natural environment. On the one hand, led to more attention to development of this historical and religious place and the other historical places in this region, and from the other hand the old and abandoned buildings are being rebuilt and with proper management and planning and organizing this type of tourism, It can be used as effective agents for the alleviation of poverty and deprivation in urban areas. The results of this questionnaire show that the average number of single-sample t-tests revealed that the typical tourist town are in high levels in all parts of research and religious tourism in all social, economic, environmental and physical dimensions with better management and planning is due to Improving infrastructure urban development in the study area and in all dimensions the effectiveness is positive and the most effectiveness is in economic dimension but the Freedman test shows that the highest rank of average is related to environmental dimension and the lowest is for economic dimension. The evaluation of average rank of data from Quantitative analysis of urban development represent the low level of living standard of households with respect to economic, physical and social dimensions. The level of environmental dimension is above average level.

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