Studying the Effects of Ilam Province’s Tourist Attractions on Employment Dynamism

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Abstract

In recent years tourism has been among the top sources of income in the world. Since the long time ago our country has also had good potential for tourism, but due to some conditions and considerations this economic potential has not been fulfilled. Thus, while Iran has the eleventh place in tourist attractions worldwide, economically it does not benefit from tourism considerably. Ilam Province can have a significant impact on attracting tourists because of its geographical and social-cultural conditions as well as being on the way to Karbala, a holy city in Iraq. This study, therefore, aims to investigate effects of the province’s tourist attractions on the employment dynamism. This descriptive-analytic study has been conducted through a questionnaire and field research. The statistical population of the research is the population of Ilam; 384 people were selected from them using the Cochran’s Formula and the questionnaire was distributed among them based on clustered sampling. The content validity of the questionnaire was insured by the experts and Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient was used to investigate its reliability. The data were then analyzed though the Pearson Correlation test in SPSS. The results show that Ilam Province’s tourist attractions (historical, natural, and cultural) influence its employment dynamism.

Keywords: Tourist attractions, income, direct employment, indirect employment.
Introduction

Tourism had attracted the attention of human societies since a long time ago [1]. As an important economic section, tourism has been considered a clean industry that increases foreign exchange earnings for national economy and effectively improves employment and income generation. As a driving industry, tourism has played an important role in developing a series of other industries including hotel and restaurant industry (hospitality industry), national and international transportation, and handicrafts [2]. Unlike many other industries, tourist industry involves a number of service industries which in the system of national accounts are categorized with other industries as one group. The service providers in this industry include travel agencies, transportation companies (airlines, railroads, road, maritime), hotels, motels and inns, tourist centers and offices, restaurants, handicraft shops, souvenir shops, clothes, shoes, leather objects, and other items that interest tourists [3].

Based on the ranking of the Tourism Organization, Iran had the tenth place in historical attractions and the fifth place in natural attractions. This shows that Iran can earn a considerable economic-social added value, but the related data and statistics indicate that Iran is not a major county in tourism and is not even among the first one hundred countries which make a huge profit from tourism [4]. Ilam Province also with its unique natural and historical attractions including untouched and unspoiled areas, high mountains, antiquities, great rivers, and holy and religious sites welcomes thousands of travelers from both around the county and some neighboring countries that visit the province in their leisure time in spring and summer. Moreover, customs and traditions, clothes, and other cultural indicators of one of the noble ethnic groups of the country have attracted travelers and tourists. Considering the travelers visiting the province and the investments made and future ones, it might be expected that tourism would play a major role in increasing employment and revenue. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to examine the impact of tourist attractions on employment dynamism in Ilam. So, based on the purpose of the study the research question is as follows: Do the tourist attractions in Ilam affect its employment dynamism?

Review of the Literature

1. In a study titled ‘studying the tourist attractions of Naen City and determining the tourism function of the area’ Mokhtari et al. (2014) concluded that most of the tourist structures of Naen have unidirectional relations and lead to the Central Mosque as the main tourist attraction of the city. Furthermore, the Central Mosque not only influences the other tourist sections of the city but also does not have a bidirectional relation and interaction with them [4].

2. In a research titled ‘identifying the tourist attractions and tourism potentials of Amlash and their impact on attracting tourists’ Moalée Hashjin et al. (2013) confirmed the natural and cultural attractions and approved their potential for attracting local and foreign tourists and thus boosting the city’s tourism and development. Also, the city’s mountainous terrain and the country (countryside) in summer can play a significant role in this regard [5].
3. In another study titled ‘analyzing urban tourist attractions and their role in economic growth: A case study of Ardabil’ Yaghfouri et al. (2011) found out that the major barriers to Ardabil’s urban tourism development are the lack of investment, poor advertising, and weak organizational and institutional options and authority [2].

4. In a research titled ‘tourism and urban economic development: Effects of tourist industry on people’s employment and income in cities’ Mohammadzadeh et al. (2011) concluded that tourist centers and spots and sports stadiums have a positive effect on employment and in turn on people’s income. The positive influence of museums, holy places (for pilgrims), shrines as well as stadiums on employment and thus income rise reveals that these can be supported by the government and officials as employment-generating projects [3].

5. In another study titled ‘analyzing the role of tourism in generating employment and gross revenue’ Ghafari et al. (2011) found out that despite the undeniable influence of tourism on the mentioned criteria, unfortunately because of the imbalance between the number of tourists entering the county and that of those exiting it there is a negative balance of trade or trade deficit in the large part of the research time period. This can only be compensated for by reviewing related current policies as well as formulating and implementing relevant structural-functional strategies [6].

6. In a study titled ‘the role of tourist attractions in Noor City’s economic development’ Motevali et al. (2011) concluded that ecotourist attractions have increased employment in Noor and its neighboring areas [7].

7. Taghdisi et al. (2010) did a study titled ‘the role of tourism in job creation’ and found out that tourism is a revenue-generating industry, and besides being a source of foreign exchange earnings, it creates jobs and has a large share of economic activities in the world [8].

8. In a research titled ‘the impact of tourism on employment and its comparison with other economic sectors: A case study of Oramanat (in Kermanshah Province) Mirzaee et al. (2010) concluded that there is a significant relationship between the development of tourism and employment, and tourist industry has increased jobs for the youth. Moreover, by comparison with other economic sectors, tourism has created more jobs in the area and among its different fields and units, transportation hold a larger share in job creation [9].

9. Mirzaee (2009) conducted a study titled ‘effects of rural tourism development on employment in Oramanat (in Kermanshah Province) and found out that rural tourism has paved the way for seasonal employment in the area especially in spring, and has attracted people working in other economic sectors, especially agriculture [10].

10. In a study titled ‘effects of Seman Province’s tourist attractions on employment dynamism’ Miraj (2007) concluded that if there is a plan for job creation through tourism, we need to attract 325000 tourists annually in the province [11].

**Employment**

Today, the tourist industry is considered as one of the most influential industries that can produce profound economic effects on the societies and have a crucial role in the world economy. World Travel and Tourism Council’s estimation shows that in 2000 travelling and tourism created 4.506 billion dollars economic activities and in 2010 this would reach 8.454 billion dollars. In other
words, the t index of traveling and tourism economic activity will have a 4.2 percent increase from 2000 to 2010. Therefore, the potential of economic activities of tourism is huge and can respond to a high percentage of the workforce entering the labor market because tourism creates jobs that can attract economically active people who seek employment. While this industry does not need massive infrastructure investments, it involves many jobs and thus is one of the most important ways to increase employment as it does not require a lot of specialists (or skilled workers) and mostly attracts a manual or semi-skilled workforce [12].

Direct and Indirect Employment in Tourism

Lee regards tourism as a source of a job creation and identifies three kinds of employment for it:
1. Direct employment resulting from costs of tourist facilities like hotels and hospitality suits.
2. Indirect employment in commerce resulting from tourism in a secondary way such as local transportation, handicrafts, banks, and other services.
3. Induced employment resulting from the locals spending the money that they have made.

Gee believes that tourism creates both direct and indirect employment. Direct employment includes hotels, food services, airlines, shipping companies, travel agencies, recreational centers and stores. Indirect employment includes firms that prepare the products and materials restaurants need, construction companies that build hotels, airplane manufacturers etc. [9].

The Importance of Classifying Tourist Attractions

The main issue of creating, developing, and using attractions is the recognition of and planning basic and main managerial factors. Being aware of this, managers and planners can devise their development plan based on the obtained information and understanding, and make maximum use of the limited resources; to this end, the classification of attractions really matters. There are different classifications of tourist attractions like classifications according to ownership, resources, stay, etc. In short, tourism planners and operators should classify the attractions to reach a better performance of the tourism system. For instance, Cartner provides a list of the most important tourist attractions which include natural, commercial, historical, ethnic/cultural attractions, friends and acquaintances, medical attractions, special governmental occasions and events, parks, religious attractions, and other man-made attractions [6].

The Conceptual Model of the Study

Natural Attractions, Historical Attractions, Cultural Attractions, Employment in Ilam

Research Hypothesis

Ilam Province’s tourist attractions (historical, natural, and cultural) influence its employment dynamism.

Research Method

With regard to the purpose, this study is an applied one; considering the methodology, it is a survey, and the analysis is descriptive-analytic. The research instruments include a researcher-
made questionnaire and documents. To determine the sample size, the Cochran’s Formula was used and 384 people were selected randomly through simple stratified sampling from Ilam and the questionnaire was distributed among them. Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient was used to investigate the reliability of the questionnaire before preparing the final version; it turned out to be .77 which is quite satisfactory.

The Area Studied

Ilam Province is located between 31° 58′ and 34°15′ N latitude and 45° 24′ and 48° 10′ E longitude. It is parallelogram is shape and is situated in the southwest of Iran. It is bound to the north by Kermanshah, to the south by Khuzestan, to the east by Lorestan and to the west by Iraq with about 400 kilometers of common border. In 1956, Ilam was a part of Kermanshah Province, and in 1966 because of changes in the country divisions it became the Municipality (Governor General) of Ilam and Pushtkooh, and finally in 1976 it became a province by itself and its counties were Ilam, Dehloran, Mehran, and Badreh. In 1365, it had 5 counties (Eyvan and Abdanan were added), 17 districts, 15 cities, and 36 rural districts. Now as Malekshahi is considered a county by itself, Ilam has 8 counties including Ilam, Mehran, Abdanan, Darrehshahr, Dehloran, Shirvan-Chardavol, and Malekshahi [13]. Based on the last census, Ilam has a population of around 700000.

Results

Table 1 shows the frequency of men and women in the sample of study. About 21.1 percent of the respondents were women and 78.9 percent were men.

Table 1: The Frequency of the Respondents by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 indicates the frequency of the respondents by age. As you see, most of the respondents aged 30-40.

Table 2: The Frequency of the Respondents by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30 years old</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30-40 years old</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-50 years old</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-60 years old</td>
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Table 3 presents the frequency of the respondents by education. Most of them, 48.2 percent, had a bachelor’s degree.

Table 3: The Frequency of the Respondents by Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(High School) Diploma or lower levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree and higher degrees</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Research Hypothesis

Ilam Province’s tourist attractions (historical, natural, and cultural) influence its employment dynamism.

Table 4: The Relationship between Tourist Attractions and Employment Dynamism
Independent Variable/ Dependent Variable/ Historical Attractions/ Natural Attractions/ Cultural Attractions/Employment Dynamism/ Frequency/ Pearson Correlation Coefficient/ Level of Significance

As Table 4 shows, the level of significance for the relationship between the tourist attractions and employment dynamism is .000 which is statistically significant (p < .05). Also, as the Pearson correlation coefficient indicates, the historical attractions variable has the most significant relationship with the employment dynamism (.488) while natural and cultural attractions are in the second place. These results reveal that Ilam Province’s tourist attractions (historical, natural, and cultural) influence its employment dynamism. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the directional hypothesis is accepted.

**Conclusion and Summary**

In short, the findings show that the tourist industry is considerably employment-generating, and thus has a special place in regional planning. With regard to investment, it can be said that units related to this industry show high returns. In comparison with other industries regarding the two factors of effectiveness and being influenced by other industries, tourism has a moderate position.

In the present study after the analysis and hypothesis testing the findings confirm the stated hypothesis in the studies. The statistical tests showed that travelers and tourists have caused an increase in the income and the creation of jobs. Also, the respondents emphasized that travelers and tourists have caused a reduction in unemployment, job creation, and public services which have two-way benefits.

As the Pearson correlation coefficient indicates, the historical attractions variable has the most significant relationship with the employment dynamism (.488), and thus it has the greatest influence on the employment dynamism, while natural and cultural attractions are in the second place.

Based on the findings of the study, the following policies and suggestions are recommended:

1. Increasing the share of construction budget and investment in the tourist industry, compared to other economic activities, can advance the province’s economic development and make the tourism sector grow because the tourist industry has a high employment-generating potential.
2. If policymakers and officials in Ilam Province aim to address the problem of unemployment in the province, especially in Ilam City, developing tourism can be the most important measure to be adopted as the tourist industry involves noticeable indirect job creation. As a result, we suggest that in future planning and policies investments in tourism should not be decreased.
3. Tourism development and increasing investments in this industry which lead to positive and significant job creation can be achieved through improving the business environment, especially in the private section, and in turn through increasing investments in this section. Therefore, paving the way for attracting investment from the private section is very crucial to the tourist industry.

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